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BSc Management (Human Resources)

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SOUTH ASIAN FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES PERCEPTIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
Abstract

Inequalities in the UK labour market are still prevalent today, in spite of many improvements and changes that have been made by the government to reduce these. Amongst other factors, gender and race remain inequalities that are of focus, since they impact everyone in the labour market in some way. It is therefore of interest, as to what the next generation of graduates, perceive their employment opportunities to be, and also their barriers and inequalities. This study focuses on both ethnicity and gender, but has a clear focus on undergraduate South Asian (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Indian) females, from The University of Manchester. By having a specific focus; it not only adds to the very few insights surrounding this specific group of females, but also allows for other issues that could influence perceptions to be analysed, such as, culture, background and family. In depth life history interviews are carried out with 15 participants, to provide an idea of how their perceptions of their future employment opportunities have come around. Findings indicate that background, culture, and family, all have a part to play, and that decision, with regard to future employment opportunities, are made and instilled in this ethnic group from an early age. The implications of this are that earlier intervention could be needed to maybe help influence these perceptions, and also improvements in current initiatives towards ethnic groups by the government. Future research would be necessary to uncover what these could be.
Statement of Originality

This dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted for any assessment or award at The University of Manchester or any other university.
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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Introduction</td>
<td>8-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Literature review</td>
<td>11-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1-Aims of Literature Review</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2-Women in Employment - Where are they now?</td>
<td>12-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3-Ethnic Women in Employment - Where are they now?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4-South Asian Females in Employment - Where are they now?</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5-South Asian Females in Employment - factors to consider.</td>
<td>17-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1-Arriving in the UK.</td>
<td>17-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2-Progression in Education.</td>
<td>19-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.3-Patriarchal Culture.</td>
<td>23-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.4-Religion and Cultural Stereotypes/Influences.</td>
<td>24-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.5-The work environment.</td>
<td>27-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6-Conclusions</td>
<td>29-31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Research Aims and Objectives.</td>
<td>32-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Methodology</td>
<td>34-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1-Methological Stance</td>
<td>35-36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2-Explanation of research design</td>
<td>36-37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3-Justification of Methods</td>
<td>38-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4-The Research Process - the interview schedule</td>
<td>40-41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.1-Piloting the interviews</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4.2-The Interviews</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5-Ethical Considerations</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6-Data analysis</td>
<td>42-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.1-Technique</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.2-Developing the template</td>
<td>42-43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6.3-Revising the template</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7-Interpreting and presenting the template analysis</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Findings and Analysis</td>
<td>44-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1-Background</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2-Family</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3-Religion</td>
<td>46-47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4-Education</td>
<td>47-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5-University</td>
<td>49-52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6-Subject choice at University.</td>
<td>53-54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.7-Experiences of work</td>
<td>54-56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.8-Marriage</td>
<td>56-57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9-Employment and the future</td>
<td>58-63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9.1-Children and family pressures</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9.2-Ethnicity</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.9.3-Gender</td>
<td>62-63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. Introduction
1. Introduction

This study is concerned with the perceptions of South Asian female undergraduate students towards their employment opportunities. The study aims to examine experiences of employment thus far, and also, the extent to which family pressures and cultural barriers influence perceptions of employment opportunities. The extent to which current workplace barriers influence their perceptions will also be a factor to consider.

Ethnic women and their employment progression is an area of concern, as although there has been some progression, their position in the labour market is below that of their White counterparts (Bhavnani and Coyle 2000). Further to this, areas of success within employment seem to be in specific areas, such as manual work (The Office of National Statistics, 2004) or work involving other ethnic people (Fearfull and Kamou 2006). Reasons as to why this is the case have been sought, and as a result, initiatives to improve educational achievement in order to reduce disparities have been used (Cabinet Office Report 2003). Further to this, government initiatives, such as the Equality Act 2010 designed to streamline and strengthen discrimination law in Britain, are being used to tackle such inequalities.

Some studies have been conducted that treat this specific ethnic group (South Asian) as part of larger studies focussing on ethnic women in employment generally (Davidson, and Burke, 2000). Other research focuses on particular groups of South Asian women in areas such as education, and only looks at Pakistani or Bangladeshi women of a South Asian background (Dale et al, 2002). Further to this, other studies have focused on looking at South Asian females already in employment (Rana et al, 1998). Studies, such as that of Bagguley and Hussain (2007), do look at women from all these backgrounds; however, the focus of their study is on education rather than employment or perception of employment. This study will therefore build on this work, and will also focus on young women from Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani backgrounds. It will therefore be able to draw upon the differences among South Asian women, and focus on how these differences influence perceptions.

Further to this, the study will draw upon the importance of culture to assist in explaining some of the perceptions, another area of particular focus, and a difference in comparison to other research. Also, by segmenting ethnicity and looking at areas such as religion and culture, the study aims at presenting a more focused piece of research by appreciating the differences involved between the ethnic groups. Although there are limitations involved; by conducting the study in this way, it should provide a hint of direction for new initiatives for the future. This could aid in providing this particularly disadvantaged group, with better chances of both entering, and progressing within the labour market.
The following chapter will examine current research in the areas of employment, gender and ethnicity, and will then focus on ethnic females, and South Asian females in particular. The subsequent chapter will set out specific research aims and objectives to assist in giving the methodology a clear direction. The methodology will then follow, outlining the perspective of the research, and also explain why in-depth life history interviews have been chosen. The findings from these interviews will then be presented. They will also be discussed in relation to previous literature, and lastly, conclusions will be offered with regard to the current perceptions of employment of the South Asian females interviewed. Limitations of this research and suggestions for possible further research will also help in providing some conclusions to this study.
2. Literature review
2. Literature review

2.1-Aims of Literature Review

This literature review aims to explore the current climate of employment for females, and more specifically, females of a South Asian background. The research will endeavour to uncover some of the common family pressures and cultural barriers that influence the perceptions of South Asian females towards their employment opportunities. The common attitudes and experiences towards employment that are uncovered, will help to paint a picture of perceptions towards employment, for the next generation of South Asian females in the UK. More specifically, ultimately, from looking at previous research, this study hopes to uncover factors influencing the perceptions of South Asian females embarking on employment, exploring issues such as cultural barriers and pressures or discrimination already existing in the work place.

Although there has been much research into gender and management (Davidson and Burke 2000, Powell 2000) and also ethnicity and management (Davidson 1997, Bhavnani and Coyle, 2000) there seems to be less research that segments both gender and different ethnicities, with regard to employment.

This literature review will start by looking at employment for females generally, and will then focus on ethnic women in employment. It will then look more specifically upon employment opportunities for South Asian females, taking into consideration factors that may influence their decisions and perceptions, when embarking upon employment from an undergraduate level.

2.2-Women in Employment - Where are they now?

Women and employment is a well-researched and interesting topic for not only academic writers, but also for the media (Gribben, The Telegraph 2010, Allen, The Guardian 2010). The social and economic changes in society, such as changes in family structure, have meant that there has been an increase in women in employment, with almost three quarters seeking work by the year 1999, compared to only half in 1971, (Wilson, 2004 p99). Women have clearly made progress in entering the workplace and also in other areas too. The Telegraph's Tim Robey, in the review article on the recent film 'Made in Dagenham', highlights the progress that women have made since their protest at
the Ford plant demanding “equal pay for all!”, and protesting against classifications such as “unskilled workers”. The desire for equal pay and the protests against sexual discrimination were instrumental in paving the way for the Equal Pay Act in 1970 and the disparity of pay has now decreased.

The Office of National Statistics Labour Market Bulletin (2011), stated women aged 16-64 now constitute 65.5% of the UK workforce. The government have also introduced new legislation to make work more accessible for women. According to the Direct Gov website, employees have the right to 26 weeks of ordinary maternity leave and 26 weeks additional maternity leave. These government initiatives are there to improve the ‘work-life balance’ and also enhance the ‘family-friendly’ aspect of work for women (Dickens, 2007 p465). However, even with these initiatives to encourage and make it easier for women to enter the work place, discrimination like the glass ceiling still exists. The BBC’s website (2011) revealed, that in a recent survey, 73% of the 3000 mangers interviewed, felt the glass ceiling was still present.

Burke and Vinnicombe (2005, p165) explain that the term “glass ceiling” was created in the mid 1980’s to explain the “invisible” but “impermeable” barriers that face women in their career advancement. They further explain how women have made progress, however real progress, has been slow. Davidson and Burke (2000, p3) comment how the majority of women are still in the “lower levels of management”. In the UK, women hold 11% of FTSE 100 directorships, according to the Sex and Power report (2008). This is evidence that inequalities between men and women in the work place are still prevalent.

Another example of this is the gender pay gap. The National Office of Statistics (2009) reported that between the ages of 50-59, the gender pay gap was at it’s largest in the favour of men. It reported that for full time employees it stood at 17% and 17.4% for part-time employees. There have also been measures to drive forward the representation of women as board members of major companies. Gardiner and Tiggerman (1999, p103) suggest that many questions have been raised for the reasons as to why women are so underrepresented, as there are still only 33% of managerial roles held by women in the UK.

Explanations for this lack of progress have been sought and according to Powell (2000, p242) it could be suggested that a “women’s presence at top levels of management violates the norm of
men’s higher status and superiority”. It has also been suggested that entering into this kind of career they face an unsupportive environment and the old boys network (Nelson and Burke, 2000). Facing such an environment and clear disparities, it has been suggested that women may be ‘put off’ entering into such a career. Indeed this slow progress into the work place has also had a negative impact on the view of embarking on such a career. Further to this, a recent article in the Guardian newspaper (2010) highlighted that that 53% of UK undergraduates were female, but that percentage decreases to 30% with regard to MBA students. For women entering into a management profession, it is clear that gender is a barrier to entry, in firstly gaining entry to the workplace and secondly facing discrimination, such as pay once they have gained entry. It is interesting to note at this point some of the government legislation that is in place in order to tackle this discrimination.

According to The Government Equalities Office (2010) their aim is making Britain a fairer place, and with regards to the workplace this means giving women equal opportunity. The Equality Act of 2010 is set to streamline and strengthen anti- discrimination law in Britain. The new law will consolidate and strengthen all existing equality legislation, such as law regarding religion and race, which will take effect from October 2010. However, even with these progressions, it stated, that the employment rate for women of an ethnic minority background is significantly lower than White females. It also stated that the employment rate for women of an ethnic minority background stood at 49.8%, while for White females it stood at 67.5%.
2.3-Ethnic Women in Employment - Where are they now?

Although this legislation is in place to tackle discrimination both in terms of gender and race for women generally, it begs the question if this is the case; do ethnic women face a double barrier to entry? It has been understood by Davidson (1997, p12) that this is indeed the case in management, as she states, “ethnic minority managers, particularly women, are doubly disadvantaged in terms of upward mobility and high levels of work”.

Further to this, it has been suggested that the position of Black and ethnic women in employment has actually worsened as opposed to improving. The Focus on Ethnicity and Identity report by The Office of National Statistics (2005), revealed that Indian, Pakistani and Black African women, were around four times more probable to be employed in manual work such as packers or bottle or can fillers. According to Bhavnani and Coyle (2000, p225) Black women are more disadvantaged than White women in the labour market and are less likely to be managers.

Further to this evidence, The Business in the Community, Race to the Top Report (2008), highlighted that indeed gender issues were a concern at senior director levels. It has also been found that, in relation to White women in higher-grade employment, Black and ethnic minority women continue to be underrepresented (Wilson, 2004). The Government Equalities Office fact sheet (2007) also indicated that that ethnic women are 33.6% more likely to be employed in the public sector. Fearfull and Kamenou (2006), further indicate that ethnic women find greater success in certain areas such as voluntary work or employment specifically involving other ethnic people.

In addition to this it has been noted by Fearfull and Kamenou (2006, p891) in their research, that career success was measured by participants based on the amount of “mainstream organisational success”- clarified as “high powered jobs in the private sector”. They therefore suggest that participants were faced with a rather difficult situation in “valuing the validity that mainstream success could afford them while at the same time believing that, realistically, such organisations failed to provide the support necessary for them to build sustained careers” (p.892). This therefore may account for the greater numbers in the public or voluntary sectors.
2.4-South Asian Females in Employment - Where are they now?

With a glum state of affairs for ethnic women generally, despite some improvements and initiatives in place as noted, it is necessary to note the employment position for South Asian females working in the UK. According to Wilson (2006, p147), Asian women that settled and that have been educated in the UK, now hold some professional jobs. Further to this it was stated that, “16% of Indian women and 9% of Pakistani women held professional/managerial jobs.” Although this is the case, it is further explained that even though these figures today, are probably higher, the low paid workers, in cleaning jobs, sweatshops or exploitative factories are still likely to be Asian women (Wilson, 2006 p147). The Government Equalities Office fact sheet (2007) highlighted, that woman from the South Asian backgrounds, Pakistani and Bangladeshi, had the lowest employment rate of all ethnic groups at 26.5%. Further to this Bagguley and Hussain (2007) comment that they remain the lowest paid in the workforce and that they still experience a large “ethnic penalty” (p8).

In researching South Asian women, the Anissa UK report suggests that it is evident that this group faces inequalities. As Bagguley and Hussain (2007, p7) state “as a whole, South Asian women are much less likely to be economically active than White women”. It has been suggested that the reason for this is because South Asian women were immigrants in the UK. Castles and Kosack, (1985, p477) stated “we therefore speak of two strata within the working class; the indigenous workers, with generally better conditions and the feeling of no longer being right at the bottom of society, from the higher stratum and the immigrants who are the most underprivileged and exploited group of society form the lower stratum”. The Anissa UK report further highlighted that Asian women had to adapt to be able to fit into this new separate class social class.
2.5-South Asian Females in Employment - factors to consider

2.5.1-Arriving in the UK

Having understood that migrating to the UK has had a significant impact on the current position of South Asian females in employment, it is essential to understand the process of their arrival and how they have progressed in order to obtain employment in the UK.

It is understood that links with the UK, with women from African, Asian and Caribbean backgrounds can be traced back to Roman times. This was mainly in the form of slavery to aristocracy, showing that links with Britain have been around for a substantial amount of time (Bhavnani, 1994). It wasn’t until the 1950’s, 1960’s and 1970’s however, that the majority of Black and ethnic minority women arrived in the UK (Davidson, 1997 p8).

Understanding when and how women of different ethnicities arrived in the UK, is important in accounting for some of the inequalities and differences that are prevalent in the UK today. It is understood that Indian and Afro-Caribbean women arrived early in the migration process which could have given them a ‘head start’ in Britain, allowing them to familiarise themselves to the culture and way of working much faster. Bhavnani (1994) explained that Pakistani and Bangladeshi women arrived much later on in the migration process. It is also explained that one of the reasons for this is that they were dependant on their husbands finding work first, and then they joined them later (Dale, Fieldhouse, Shaheen and Kalra, 2002). Bhavnani (1994) agrees that this later migration is a possible reason for their position in the labour market today. This may also help to explain the reasons behind the greater success of Indian women in the UK, as they arrive earlier on in the migration process. This is further supported by Bhavnani and Coyle (2000, p226) that state, “Indian women are more likely to be in the professional category” such as teachers and doctors.

In looking at the position of South Asian women in employment, factors such as migration have been considered. In order to conduct the next part of the study effectively, it is important to understand other factors that influence South Asian women and employment.
Figure 1.0 below shows the disparities between those of a South Asian background and those of a White British background. It also shows the disparities between the different South Asian backgrounds. Although explanations such as looking at the different times of migration has been sought, other research offers alternative perspectives for the differences between those of a White British and South Asian background, and also those of the different South Asian backgrounds.

Figure 1, Source: Bagguley and Hussain (2007, p7). Shows the economic rates for selected ethnic groups by their gender and their age.

The Anissa UK report (p10) states, “the lack of adequate information of South Asian women in employment, has been the idea of culture imposing restriction on these women, without realizing that cultures are not static but forever changing and developing within the environment which they develop in”. This suggests that culture imposing restrictions have an impact on employment and therefore potentially have an impact on perceptions of employment.
2.5.2-Progression in Education

At this point, with education being one of the main ways through which people gain employment, it is necessary to understand progression in education enabling South Asian females to attend University. Although as highlighted, ethnicity and gender have played a role in the progression of South Asian females in employment, it is interesting to note the cultural factors influencing decisions such as going to university. The first part of this next section will therefore be concerned with the progression though education, followed by the impact of culture on both their view of education and employment opportunities.

In a Cabinet Office report (2003), it was suggested that in order to reduce disparities and disadvantages in the labour market, the levels of educational achievement and skills of ethnic minorities needed to rise. It further commented that their aim was to see ethnic minorities living in Britain, no longer facing disproportionate barriers accessing and gaining achievement in the labour market. However, it is accepted that ethnic minorities in education have made considerable progress, in particular students from an Indian background. A recent article on the BBC website (2010) highlighted that Indian students performed well a GCSE level. It further explained that children of migrants in the UK, were often pushed to achieve in their education.

However, interestingly, it has also been noted that this progress does not represent all ethnic groups from South Asian backgrounds (Battu and Sloane 2004, p535). This is further shown from evidence such as Figure 2 below from the Office of National Statistics (2004).
Figure 2, Source: Office of National Statistics (2004). Shows Pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C at GCSE/GNVQ: by sex and ethnic group.

The graph shows the number of pupils achieving 5 or more A*-C at GCSE/GNVQ by sex and ethnic group. Evidently, it highlights that the highest achieving South Asian ethnic group is Indian, with around 72% of Indian girls and 62% of Indian boys achieving the A*-C pass rate. Those from a Bangladeshi origin were behind those of an Indian decent; with boy’s achieving a 42% pass rate and girls a 56% pass rate. Lastly Pakistani males achieved a 38% pass rate, and girls achieved a higher 52% pass rate.

An explanation for the variation in success between each ethnicity could be due to class factors. Modood et al (1997), suggests that different South Asian ethnic groups have different social class profiles and experiences of education. This asserts two things. Firstly that the differing South Asian groups typically fit into different classes. And secondly, that this social class has an impact on their experience of education. With regards to education after GCSE’s, Bagguley and Hussain (2007, p9), suggest in making the decision to go to University, much research emphasises “the importance of class factors, while ethnicity and gender are seen as secondary”.
In addition to this, it Reay et al (2001, p872), suggests that the idea of a mass system of higher education is far too simple. Instead, it is affirmed that it is necessary to recognize the complex institutional hierarchy, and the continued reproduction of racialized and classed inequalities within the system. Further to this, it states that “Higher education is not the same for all, neither is it likely to offer the same rewards for all”. This supports the idea that race and class would impact the progression of South Asian females within education. It also could therefore also impact upon their view on the likelihood of experiencing inequalities further to their university career.

Further to this, Reay et al (2005), note that class background and educational qualifications of parents, influence the educational outcomes of their children. Bagguley and Hussain (2007) in their study found that less than 10% of the Pakistani women they interviewed had fathers attending a British university. For all three ethnic groups that they interviewed, Indian, Bangladeshi, and Pakistani, 80% of their mothers had no experience of university. For many South Asian females, it could be suggested that views their parents hold towards education impact their own perception on education, and also the view they hold towards employment.

From the latter statistic, it also highlights a large disparity between males and females within the South Asian community attending University. However notably, from the graph above it also shows that girls from all three South Asian backgrounds did better than their male counterparts. Evidence shows that entry into a University education is far less for some specific South Asian groups. Figure 3 below shows that the Indian ethnicity is the only group where the pass rate at GCSE level for females, and the University participation rate positively correlate. Both the Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups negatively correlate with the pass rate at GCSE, and their University participation rate. The next part of this literature review will explore some possible reasons for this.
As discussed earlier ethnic women find greater success in employment where they work with other ethnic people. However, Bagguley and Hussain (2007) found that subject choice of the South Asian females they interviewed, mainly chose subjects such as Law, Medicine and Dentistry as their families did not view subjects such as English, Sociology and Psychology as academic disciplines, that ensured the security of work further to studying. Further to these findings regarding subject choice, a report by Race for Opportunity, part of Business in the Community, noted that 16.6% of ethnic minorities’ students studied business and administrative studies.

Their research also showed that they also favoured subjects that were more entrepreneurial and where they were therefore more likely to become self-employed when they graduate. The report states “descendants from the Indian Sub-continent are divided in the subjects they study. Law is the third most popular subject for both British Pakistanis at 11.1%, and British Bangladeshis at 8.8%, yet does not feature in the top five for British Indians who prefer medicine and dentistry” (p11).

The research in the report highlights religion as a differentiating factor for subject choice. Exploring possible reasons for this, Tyrer (2006), in the report of Muslim women in Higher education, points out, that for some of his respondents, deviating away from subjects that have a lower number of South Asian participation, made some individuals feel somewhat alone. In relation to this, it was noted, “people do tend to stick to their own community” (p16). With many South Asian students studying the same subjects, it is likely that there would also be a high proportion in the same types of
employment. However, as the research discussed earlier, there still seems to be a disproportionate amount of women that study professional subjects at University, and then subsequently gain employment. In analysing some of the religious/cultural barriers may help explain.

\subsection*{2.5.3 Patriarchal Culture}

Interestingly, Bagguley and Hussain (2007), note that out of all the South Asian females they interviewed, over 60% of the Pakistani mothers were housewives, with a fifth being in some form of middle class employment. However, they found that 40% of Indian mothers were working in some form of working class job and less than a fifth were housewives. They further note that they found “very distinct ethnically specific profiles of economic activity” (p10). The disparity between ability to get to University, and subsequent economic activity cannot be ignored.

It is still widely accepted that education amongst the South Asian community is very much emphasised and gaining qualifications is valued (Tyrer 2006). In addition to this, Ivy (2010, p401) uses Figure 4 below, to display the different reasons why those of a South Asian background choose to attend University.

![Figure 4: Source Ivy (2010, p401). Perceptual map showing the relative motivations for students applying to University.](image-url)
The results highlight that Pakistani and African students “were strongly influenced by family to apply”. He also classified Asian Indians as what he calls the “embedded” chooser type, stating that these choosers have “extensive support”...and that “higher education is considered normal and expected” (p401). This emphasises the variations in attitudes towards education between the different ethnic groups, particularly considering that typically the different backgrounds typically follow different religions. As discussed later in the literature review, specific religions are commonly associated with people from the different South Asian backgrounds, these being, Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism. Those from a Pakistani Muslim background tend to have very different stereotypes of the role women play in the house, as opposed to those from an Indian Hindu or Sikh background. This may however shed some light on the 20% disparity on those mothers from an Indian and Pakistani background that were housewives. This religious difference in particular will be discussed in more detail in the next part of the literature review.

2.5.4-Religion and Cultural Stereotypes/ Influences

It has been suggested that there are other factors influencing the attitudes of Pakistani and Bangladeshi South Asians with regard to progressing to university. With regard to culture, Tyrer (2006, p 6), comments that these differences in participation has led some to conclude that “culture, religion and patriarchal constraints play instrumental roles in restricting Muslim women’s education and economic participation”. With the specific reference to Muslim women’s education, it is essential to analyse the impact that religion has on South Asian females, particularly as this evidence suggests that it is a restricting factor to both education and economic activity.

According to The Government’s Communities and Local Government Report (2009), 98% of Pakistanis in England were Muslim. Similarly, The Government’s Communities and Local Government Report (2009) focussing on the Bangladeshi community noted that, 92% of Bangladeshis classified themselves as Muslim. The National Statistics News Release report (2006), suggested that the within the Indian community, the most predominant religions were Hinduism, which made up 45% and Sikhism, which made up 29%. With religion evidently playing a big role amongst the South Asian community, therefore no surprise that much of the culture of South Asian females is rooted in their religion.
Looking at the implications of religion is an important aspect to uncover, as highlighted above, much of the culture surrounding those of a South Asian background, is based around religion. In doing this it should provide a much fuller explanation of some of the possible cultural barriers with regards to employment often facing South Asian females. The research carried out by Fearfull and Kamenou (2006) is one of the few pieces of evidence of research in this area. They contend that other factors such as religion do influence women from ethnic minorities in career success (2006, p885).

In research conducted by Dale, Fieldhouse, Shaheen and Kalra (2001, p11), in regard to older women, they found that there was “an acceptance that a woman should not work outside the home and this was often justified with reference to Islam. However, some such as Tyrer (2006, p12) suggest that many Muslim women in his study were actually pushed to enter into higher education by their families. Fearfull and Kamenou (2006, p894), further suggest that encouragement from ethnic minority families is because they are aware of some of the potential barriers their children may face in the workplace. These contrasting opinions may help to explain some of the reasoning and choices of South Asian females when making decisions for their future. It also highlights some religions may hinder South Asian females from making progress, due to the restrictions they present. Indeed it may also help explain some of the disparities within the figures shown in terms of success at GCSE and then further University participation.

Another cultural barrier to note with regard to the progression of education and subsequent employment is marriage. Bagguley and Hussain (2007:19) suggest that marriage was essential to the plans of the sample of South Asian females they interviewed. They further suggest that for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women, marriage was more concern than for those from an Indian background and many decisions around education were based on the fact that they anticipated marriage. Furthermore according to Tyrer (2006) some of the women interviewed suggested that education gave them more options when it came to thinking about marriage.

With constraints such as this at this stage in their career progression Tyrer (2006, p12) suggests, “existing discourses of South Asian and Muslim family structures situate them as inherently oppressive and presenting barriers to women’s participation in higher education and the labour
market”. However, as highlighted above, this is not the case in all family structures, as some parents encourage progression through education. As discussed it is clear that marriage can either be viewed positively or negatively with regard to education, however as highlighted, the differences in family structure can also be viewed as a barrier.

Fearfull and Kamenou (2006, p88) emphasise, that “structurally-related factors” like family and aspects of the organisation are “central in the analyses of the work experience of ethnic women”. They further highlight, that “cultural dimension” being the “culture of the organisation” and also “social group culture i.e. their ethnic/religious culture”, particularly impact their experience. Bhopal (1997, p4) describes culture as “…. a complex term frequently important to people’s sense and identity of self…the diverse cultural differentiation include ethnicity, class, gender, religion, language and dress”. Taking this into consideration, it is evident that organisational and family structure, and organisational and family culture, plays a role in the experiences of South Asian females. The next part will focus on the combination of the two and their impact.

However, at this point it may be worth considering that indeed not all women want to follow a career path, regardless of their ethnicity (Fearfull and Kamenou 2006). They further comment that decisions with regard to entering employment, are often made with family duties and considerations in mind. Furthermore, they argue that these family duties and cultural pressures that ethnic women contend with can make way for difficult situations at work. Rana, Kagan, Lewis and Rout (1998) comment in regard to South Asian women, that previous research has concentrated on providing an “ethnocentric” focus with regards to gender and race. They further suggest that previous research fails to regard ethnic women as being affected by cultural issues, and also fails to consider their position being influenced by different kinds of patriarchal constraints from both the workplace, and at home.

Such constraints are again brought to light with regard to culture. Rana et al (1998) propose that South Asian women are inferior within the family structure, however, that because it is inherent within the culture it is accepted. They further suggest that a woman as an individual within a South Asian family and the community, is not as important as the family as whole. They therefore suggest such things as aspirations and ambitions, must therefore be in line with the family customs and protect
their reputation. In addition to this, Kamenou and Fearfull (2006, p889) suggest this can lead to stereotyping. Rana et al (1998, p227) explain that the continuation of “stereotyping by British society which view ethnic minorities as being inferior to the dominant white culture, appears to be carried forward in the workplace”. With stereotypes about their culture already existing and evidence to suggest their submissive nature, they suggest “it can make it harder”.

2.5.5-The work environment

Other barriers that researchers suggest are issues surrounding culture and religions, are those that highlight the difficulties that women of an ethnic background face, particularly when working in a predominantly White environment. Fearfull and Kamenou (2006, p885), suggest that women of an ethnic minority have to juggle not only their gender and race but also their culture. This is with particular regard to family and religious duties.

Fearfull and Kamenou (2006), further suggest that barriers to employment or progression are accentuated, particularly if differences are externally displayed such as religious attire. It has been suggested that this could be viewed negatively in the work place within some organisations, as much of this is associated with extreme fundamentalism. They suggest that because of this some women may compromise on their religious requirements in order to get further in their career. They also assert that there may be feelings of selling out. In addition to this Rana et al (1998, p227) commented that of the women they interviewed, some felt changes needed to made in accordance to the environment they worked in, such as wearing clothes that were more English.

Further to this Atewologun and Singh (2010), in their study of UK Black professionals, suggest how members of ethnic minority groups that are often negatively stereotyped, try and adapt their behaviour accordingly. They explain this as “shifting” as being “heightened self monitoring, managing feelings and altering behaviours to cope with stereotypes” (p342). Changing appearance could be an example of this “shifting”.

Another example of this that they highlight is people changing their name. It is suggested that this is done in order to blend in; something they suggest challenges their personal identity. One of their respondents highlighted some of the reasons for this, and suggested that giving himself a
Westernised name was easier for people to pronounce, conveying that this change helped him to feel less segregated. He also suggested that people avoided talking to him if they could not pronounce his name. He concluded by saying “you can choose your battles when it comes to these issues” (p342). This idea of a “battle” is reflected in other literature and is interesting as it shows how some ethnic minorities view the workplace as something to overcome. This was also reflected by Bagguley and Hussain (2007), who stated many of the women they interviewed suggested, that in getting an education and pursuing a career they felt like “pioneers” (p ix).

In addition to this they suggest that one of the key issues for women of an ethnic minority background in employment is the stress of living “two separate lives”. The term used to describe this: “bi-cultural stress”, is defined by Thomas and Aldefer (1989, p135), as “that set of emotional and physical upheavals produced by bicultural existence”. Further to this Denton (1990), suggests that bi-cultural stress can refer to not only the demands on role from the dominant culture, but also from those significant people in life, such as relatives.

The consequence of this bi-cultural existence, is that for women of an ethnic minority, a harder situation for paid employment and personal life integration is created. This has been suggested to encourage greater segregation between the two environments (Kameou 2008, p107). However, this tension and stress has also been described to be created by other issues such as family, community and religion as discussed. Rana et al (1998), suggest that for women of a South Asian background, family and domestic responsibilities play a large role in their career progression, particularly extended family. In South Asian families it is common for people to live with extended family which adds greater responsibility and commitments to their responsibilities at work, often creating difficulty in fulfilling multiple roles in the home and the workplace. This is a major difference in culture, which creates a large amount of added cultural pressure for people of a South Asian background. It maybe that many choose against pursuing a career in fear of not being able to cope with the pressure of two lives.

As discussed, earlier the lack of appreciation for some of the wider issues that face ethnic minority groups has been suggested to lead to feelings of ‘resentment and tokenism’ (Kamenou 2008, p108). Zimmer (1988, p64) states that ‘tokenism explains women’s occupational experiences and their
behaviour responses to those experiences in terms of their numerical proportion’. Furthermore it states that “barriers to women’s full occupational equality can be lowered by the hiring of more women in organisations that are highly-skewed male”. Applying this to ethnicity, it would follow, that by hiring people of an ethnic minority barriers to full occupational equality would be lowered. This would mean that to an extent, they would be hired not as a result of ability, but rather to increase equality.

Further to this evidence, Atewologun and Singh (2010), in their interviews of UK Black professionals, highlighted that some interviewees saw advantages in being the token, as they realised it offered them opportunities. However, it is important not to overlook the impact or danger of tokenism within the workplace. Davidson (1997, p38) notes other problems linked to tokenism, which were “performance pressure, racial stereotyping, isolation and lack of same colour role models”. With regard to performance pressure, it was noted that women of an ethnic minority felt that they had to try harder in order to justify their position in the work place. All of these issues pose added pressure to the bi-cultural stress previously discussed.

2.6-Conclusions

This literature review aimed to explore the current climate of employment for females of South Asian background. The aim was to uncover other issues that may influence the perceptions towards employment, for the next generation of South Asian female undergraduates towards their management opportunities.

It has been evidenced by both current statistics, (The office of National Statistics 2010) and the media (The Telegraph, The guardian, BBC), that there are sill many inequalities between women in the workplace. Other research over the years has highlighted that there are also inequalities for ethnic women in management, although slight improvements have been made (Davidson 1997, Fearfull and Kammenou 2006, Business in The Community 2008, Office of National Statistics 2004).

More specifically, the literature review then drew upon research concerned with South Asian Females in employment, taking into consideration background factors, such as the migration process of arriving in the UK. In analysing this, the research drew conclusions as to why specific South Asian
groups had made improvements as opposed to others, suggesting that settling into work earlier had given some groups an advantage (Bhavnani 1994, Dale, Fieldhouse, Shaheen and Kalra 2002). Other factors influencing their position in the workplace, was their progression in education, which is a key influence for anyone gaining employment and was therefore necessary to analyse (Cabinet Office Report 2003, Battu and Sloan 2003, Bagguley and Hussain 2007). Evidence showed that there were improvements for ethnic minorities and in particular noted that the Indian community had particularly thrived in their education (BBC 2010). This again highlighted the specific differences with regard to each different South Asian background. Negative correlations were found for females of a Pakistani and Bangladeshi background, choosing not to progress into further education.

In discussing this part of the literature review, other influences were taken into consideration. The patriarchal culture of the South Asian community emphasised that in some specific South Asian communities, certain attitudes towards the role of women were more prevalent (Hussain and Baggulaey, 2007). This was then followed by other possible explanations such as the role of religion and culture. This emphasised that indeed there were very distinct differences between females following different religions and the constraints that were placed on them with regard to employment because of this. Although these differences were within the South Asian community, the pressures of these were analysed with regard to being in a predominantly White working environments. Evidence flagged up pressures of juggling these differences (Kamenou and Fearfull, 2006) and what implications these had. Issues, such as feelings of “shifting” in ethnic minorities (Atewologun and Singh, 2010) and also “bi-cultural stress (Thomas and Aldefer, 1989) were noted as emphasising segregation at work, and also enhancing feelings of being the token (Kamenou 2008).

In concluding this literature review, Figure 5 below, summarises the factors that have been discussed which have been highlighted as having a potential impact on the progression and also experiences of South Asian females in employment.
Figure 5, Shows factors having a potential impact on the progression of South Asian Females in employment.

In writing this literature review, there was very little current research into female ethnic minorities presently in management. Further to this there is even less evidence of research that segmented different ethnic groups. The research to draw upon is therefore limited. In the task of finding research, there was very little to be found that solely looked at perceptions of the next generation of South Asian females, about to embark on their career. Instead, there was only research into education and higher education with regards to ethnic minorities. However, some research was segmented and did look at various different ethnic minorities, gender and religion. This piece of research therefore endeavours to shed light on these areas that have not been researched in great detail, and should highlight areas where further research could be conducted.

Although the research discussed has been from South Asian females across a wide age range, issues surrounding difficulties both though education and employment, were the same for all in the research discussed. Further to this, more often than not, the issues highlighting barriers were based around their own culture and lack of support or understanding regarding the other issues many South Asian women face. In conducting the next part of this study, the methodology and research, it will be interesting to see if the next generation perceives this still to be the case.
3. Research Aims and Objectives
3. Research Aims and Objectives

The literature review presented in chapter 2 raised a number of questions with regard to South Asian females and employment. This study aims to help uncover the answers to some of these, and more specifically, to consider the following areas for investigation:

1. The extent to which family pressures and cultural barriers influence South Asian females’ perceptions of employment.

2. The extent to which current workplace barriers influence the perception of South Asian females and their perceptions of employment.

By answering these questions the aim is to uncover which factors influence the perception of employment the most. Further to this, by uncovering such information, it may provide areas that should be of more focus, in improving employment opportunities for females of a South Asian background.
4. Methodology
4. Methodology

4.1-Methodological Stance

Research can be based on different perspectives, and examining the assumptions underlying different research is essential. Ontology is a branch of philosophy that is concerned with the nature of what exists. It is the study of theories of being, theories about what makes up reality (Blaikie, 1993). With regards to research, ontology explains that researchers make assumptions about what they believe to be existent in the world.

One specific ontological view is that the world is objective and is external to the researcher. Another ontological view is that we view the world through individual interpretation and by attaching meaning to this interpretation. Although ontology looks at the way we view the world, we can also look at epistemology, which is concerned with how we gain knowledge of the world. In philosophy, epistemology refers to a theory of knowledge, a theory of how human beings come to have knowledge of the world around them- of how we know what we know (Blaikie, 1993). Understanding knowledge is therefore explained by both ontology, with what we assume to be true about the world and how, and epistemology, about how this knowledge is gained.

From this, it is understood that there are different perspectives by which research can be carried out, the first one being positivism. This is an approach that emphasises the use of the methods presumed to be used in the natural sciences (Gill and Johnson, 1997). From this perspective reality is based on an objective viewpoint, on a cause and affect basis with no need for interpretation. Because of this it is often quantifiable measures that are used to test a specific theory/hypothesis, for example, positivists would be likely to focus on more universal and casual links and take a more survey or questionnaire approach. Taking this perspective then suggests that direct conclusions can only be acquired through direct observation and experimentation, rather than through theology. Although this means that correlations can be accurate, the perspective does not account for differences that are based on the individual.

The second perspective by which research can be carried out is an interpretive perspective. This is a subjective view and therefore does account for these individual differences. This perspective suggests that there is no independent or objective reality, which exists ‘out there’ which takes on the ontological view. Instead however, this perspective suggests that in order to understand the world,
human experience is necessary, and that data and information is gained through this. This view also suggests that individuals create the social world and that they interpret and modify the world differently. It can also therefore shift and change through time (Hatch, 2006). Using an interpretivist methodology would therefore be best suited in conducting this study effectively as the study is interested in how South Asian females understand the reality of the organisational world. Further to this interviews have been chosen as the research method as they are the most frequent method of gaining qualitative research (King 2004, p11.). They can also provide a rich data set, with answers that provide a useful amount of detail.

4.2-Explanation of research design

Although there are various qualitative methods from which to conduct research based in an interpretivist perspective, interviews will be used to help reveal the perspectives that South Asians have towards their management opportunities. The approach should be effective in exploring issues such as cultural barriers and pressures and also discrimination.

The interviews included South Asian females, studying at the University of Manchester. Some participants were found as they were mutual acquaintances, and others were found by simply asking if they would be part of the study. All participants when asked were informed of the nature and intent of the study and were contacted subsequently via email to clarify details and to request a time to meet for the interview. Due to the distinctive nature of the population, non-probability sampling was used. The key criterion was to find female undergraduates from a range of South Asian backgrounds.
An overview of the interviewees can be found in the Table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate number</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Place of upbringing</th>
<th>Course at University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Bolton</td>
<td>Management (Marketing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Old Trafford</td>
<td>Management (Human Resources)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Newcastle</td>
<td>Management (Marketing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>Manchester</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Bolton</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Old Trafford</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Bury</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Milton Keynes</td>
<td>Criminology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Essex</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Wrexham</td>
<td>Management (Accounting and Finance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Blackburn</td>
<td>Dentistry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>Blithe, Newcastle</td>
<td>Management (Accounting and Finance)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Bradford</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>Bradford</td>
<td>Pharmacy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Shows the number of participant, their ethnic background, the place where they were brought up and also the subject they are studying at University.*
4.3-Justification of Methods

The method of interviewing is the most frequent method of gaining qualitative research and is best for gaining understanding into how and why participants have reached certain opinions or perspectives (King 2004, p11). However the end result of an interview has been suggested to vary depending on the empathy of the interviewer (Siedman 2005). Furthermore, because interviews allow candidates to play an active role in the direction of the interview rather than merely giving answers to the interviewer’s list of questions, it gives them the opportunity to actively participate and shape the interview (King 2004, p11). In addition to this, because of the loose structure of interviews it allows for much more flexibility in following up questions appropriately. An essential part of interviewing is to follow up and explore what the participant says as it demonstrates that the interviewer is actively listening. Furthermore this is essential in the progression of the interview as it allows the interviewer to progress through the questions in the interview depending on answers given by the participant (Siedman, 2005).

In employing the use of interviews within the study, issues such as time and recruitment of participants can be somewhat problematic. It has been highlighted that interviews can require a great deal of concentration and also produces large amounts of data, which can sometimes result in an overload of information (King, 2004:21). In order to reduce the problems within the interview situation itself and to avoid unnecessary amounts of data, a pilot interview will be employed in an attempt to reduce negative factors such as this. Although these negative factors must be considered, for the purposes of this research the interview technique will be the best method of gaining information.

Although as discussed interviews can be useful in providing useful and interesting data, they also can present various challenges. In assisting researchers in creating and conducting interviews (King 2004) presents four steps to make the challenges easier to deal with. The first step ‘defining the research question’ is essential in ensuring the interview has a focus. The second step, ‘creating the interview guide’ ensures that the topics are suitable and follow up questions are used. The third step is concerned with ‘recruiting the participants’, ensuring that there is diversity in participants if necessary. Finally, the fourth step is finally ‘carrying out the interviews’, which is concerned with the more practical issues of the interview such as the questions and being prepared for any difficulties that may arise.
The life history approach to interviewing is the technique that will be employed to form the structure of the interview and these four basic guidelines will also be applied. The approach can be defined as "the story a person chooses to tell about the life he has lived, told as completely and honestly as possible, what is remembered of it, and what the teller wants others to know of it, usually as a result of a guided interview by another" (Atkinson 1998:8). The approach is based on the perspective chosen: interpretive epistemological perspective and is therefore an appropriate method. Further to this, the approach focuses on allowing participants to discuss their past, present and future and also allows for insight into how environment and experience is made sense of by people. These questions will be based on the research questions and will form the basis of the interview guide.

The approach also accounts for the fact that experiences are not completely individualistic but that they are shaped though social and cultural context (Musson, 2004). Also the life history technique usually covers the main topics of childhood, family background, work and later life issues such as marriage and children. These are all areas that are necessary to uncover in the research and therefore the interview benefits from being based around the past, present and future structure (Thompson and Newby 2005). Because the study is solely based on South Asian females, the mix of participants will need to reflect each group of ethnicity: Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian. A pilot interview will also be necessary before the interviews are carried out and issues of ethics will also need to be considered.

Bias within research is a challenge and is something that inevitably this research will have to overcome in order to maximise quality and validity. Understanding the relationship between the researcher and the participant in the life history method is something that is important to consider. The approach does not disregard any form of impartiality, but rather accounts for the fact that the researcher will invariably bring theories into the interview situation. The balancing of this is will be the challenge to the researcher (Musson 2004).

In addition to this, there may be issues concerned with the shared ethnicity of the researcher and the participants involved. In research concerned with ethnicity and race, results have often been warped because shared ethnic groups often share the same views and experiences (Anderson 1993). It has also been suggested that the information produced is 'ideologically determined' (Stansfield, 1993, p4). It may also create the unethical issue of assumed friendship (Rana, Regan Lewis and Rout, 1999).
In contrary to this opinion there are also advantages of shared gender and ethnic background. Having an awareness of issues and a personal understanding may give insight into areas that may have otherwise been overlooked. It may also add to the informality of the interview and create and establish a rapport between the interviewer and the participant (Rana, Regan, Lewis, and Rout, 1999). Furthermore the ambiguity of whether participants disclose greater or lesser information in situations where race and gender are different is somewhat questionable.

The interview technique will be piloted before hand as discussed, in order that the questions are clear and can be adjusted if any noticeable flaws are revealed (Ball 1993). There are also other benefits of piloting interviews especially to those that are less experienced in interviewing. Further to this it is, pilots have also been used to access bias (King, 1993).

4.4-The Research Process -the interview schedule

Although research methods in exploratory research can be relatively flexible, the interview followed a guide. However as discussed, techniques of exploring and following up answers where necessary, were be used. The interview was split into three broad sections these being the past, present and futures of the participants involved.

The first stage entailed identifying the background of the participants, including information such as where they grew up, family and educational history. The second part involved looking at what they were currently doing e.g. studying at University and endeavoured to uncover how decisions surrounding this were made. The third part was based their future aspirations, and included information such as employment expectations and factors they considered to be barriers or obstacles.

From the interview, the information provided was compared to the findings of previous research of women from a South Asian background, currently in employment. The aim was to provide new information about where the next generation of South Asian females see their barriers and pressures to be (if any). Further to this, the interviews aimed at encouraging the discussion of culture and discrimination; however such information was disclosed at the discretion of the participant, opposed to direct questions on such topics.
4.4.1-Piloting the interviews

Before conducting the interviews, pilot interviews were done. As discussed pilot interviews can avoid problems within the interview situation and they can also be beneficial in refining the interview questions as discovered within this research. The pilot interviews were done in an informal environment and were done on various members of my family. This was beneficial as they fitted the criteria of the study, however were not used in the interviews as they were not students from The University of Manchester and also would have had previous experience of doing the interview which may have caused bias.

As a result of the pilot interview, the interview questions were changed, as was the number of questions in the interview. The pilots revealed that the interview worked well in the informal setting and that some questions needed follow up questions as they were too broad to extract specific information that was needed. The original interview guide can be found in the appendix, as can the final version of the interview guide.

4.4.2-The Interviews

The Interviews took place within several locations of the campus of The University of Manchester. As the interviews were scheduled around the convenience of the candidates, some of the interviews were held at their residence. The candidates had all received an information sheet with all the relevant details prior to the interview, so they were aware of all the interview process and the length of time the interview would run for. On average the interviews lasted for around 20 minutes, however as expected there was variation in the interview length. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.
4.5-Ethical Considerations

This research was conducted in full adherence with both the University of Manchester Ethical Guidelines and also the Economic Social Research Council, research Ethics framework (ESRC, 2010). All research participants were made aware of the purpose of the research and took part in solely a voluntary capacity. They were free from any form of coercion and were able to pull out at any time. All interviews took place as and when it was most convenient to participants and at a location they found most appropriate and comfortable. Further to this, anonymity and confidentiality was maintained, and all interviewees were referred to by pseudonyms. All participants had an information sheet to read and a consent form to sign prior to all interviews. Both can be found in the appendix.

4.6-Data analysis

4.6.1-Technique

The template analysis technique will allow for a clear and systematic data analysis, which is encouraged by the thorough approach of creating the template. As well as this the template analysis is a method that is not fixed but a method that can be modified depending on the study at hand. The method of analysis provides a degree of simplicity, which is useful for those like myself, unfamiliar with qualitative analysis. Further to this other advantages of the method have been noted, particularly with regard to research inked to perspectives of various groups in an organisational context (King 2004).

4.6.2-Developing the template

In the process of developing the template it was necessary to first create an initial template. The initial template formed by using the interview guide and the first few interviews that were carried out. The initial template and the finished template is made up of hierarchal coding, which indicates a particular theme of issues revealed by the data. The hierarchical order will ensure that similar data is grouped together in an organised fashion. As King (2004:258) also suggests, hierarchical coding makes it easier to analyse the text at different levels at varying depths. It is further suggested that
“higher order codes can give a good overview of the general direction”, whereas “the detailed lower-order codes allow for very fine distinctions to be made”.

4.6.3-Revising the template

The process of coding the transcripts involved working through the transcripts in order to have codes that most accurately reflected the data, and that also reflected the aims of the research. This meant that the initial template was revised during this process. The initial template was then modified by the use of insertion (including a new code), deletion (removing a code noted to be unnecessary), changing the scope (making the code broader or narrower) and finally making adjustments to the higher order classification (adjusting the higher order codes and sub categories). Copies of the appendix can be found in the appendix.

4.7-Interpreting and presenting the template analysis.

The next stage of the template analysis involved interpreting and presenting the data. It is important to note that the process of coding the transcripts and developing the template is merely a tool to then interpret the text by which the amount of data can be organised and appreciated within the limitations of a dissertation. In analysing the data effectively, three methods identified by King (2004) will be used namely: listing, selectivity and openness. Listing involves listing the codes and noting the number of times they appear, selectivity involves investigating themes of most importance to the study and openness ensures not disregarding themes that seem of little relevance as these contribute to the ‘full story’. A mixture of these are used in order to fully appreciate the richness of the data and in particular, graphs are used as part of the listing to assist in presenting and understanding the importance of particular themes.

Lastly, in representing the data the details of the chosen themes are provided, as are illuminating quotations from the interviews to provide insight into the data involved.
5. Findings and Analysis
5. Findings and Analysis

There were 15 female South Asian undergraduates that were interviewed for an average of 20 minutes in order to help reveal some of the answers outlined within the research aims and objectives. The answers uncovered some interesting themes and areas that were clearly of importance to the participants involved. The different backgrounds of each of the participants also revealed some distinct differences and also some notable similarities. The following sections will outline the main themes uncovered by the interviews with the aid of the systematic process of the template analysis. The process of listing, as discussed in the methodology will also be used, with graphs where appropriate.

5.1-Background

The interview uncovered background information of the participants involved to build up a picture of their past. The data revealed that the majority of the participants came from and grew up, in an area that was predominantly South Asian. The general consensus among participants was that this had been a positive experience and that they enjoyed growing up where they did. Those from areas that were not predominantly South Asian also revealed that they too, had enjoyed their upbringing, with only one, revealing that her family had experienced racism that caused them to move to a different area before she was born. The majority of participants were from the North of England, with 12 being from old industrial cities. Only two of the participants were from the South of England.

5.2-Family

General details of the participant’s families revealed that majority described their families as “supportive”, “close” and “family orientated”, some commented that their families were also “relaxed” and “easy going”. There was a contrast in the parenting style between the mother and the father figure of the household. One participant described the difference as,

“Erm ...dad is really strict, a typical Asian man and my mums a softie, but it helps cos my mum was brought up here but my dad was brought up in Bangladesh”

Another participant commented,

“My mum was brought up in London, so she is quite westernised...my dad was brought up in India so he’s quite close to family morals and culture”
5.3-Religion

The religion of the family was discussed as part of the interview and the graph below shows the different religions followed by the participants.

![Graph to Show Religion of Participants](image)

*Figure 6, Graph Shows Religion of Participants*

Interestingly each one stated they followed a particular religion however variances were evident in those that actively practiced their religion and those that did not. As the graph highlights, majority identified themselves as Muslim and all but one stated that they were practicing their faith. Those that stated they were following a different religion to Islam were all not practicing their faith. Distinct contrast was made between the culture and religion by a few of the participants for example,

“I know about the culture but not so much on the practicing the religion. I think its culture that’s had more of an impact”

“I think being Indian has held me back more than being Hindu has”

“It’s been there in my upbringing it does affect but then again so has… culture and society so it’s not everything”
The majority of the participants didn’t refer to their religion as holding them back from their education but one participant stated in reference to her religion (Islam),

“Not a lot of people in my family have gone to uni; I’m the second girl to go…”

Further to this, it was evident that for those practicing their religion, decisions they made were filtered through their religious beliefs first. One participant stated,

“I’m obviously going to make decisions with a bias, thinking what am I allowed to do or not allowed to do islamically…it takes over your life”

Others, reflected on other aspects and influences of their religions, stating that they felt it had given them “morals”, and helped them to be “a good person”.

5.4-Education

Throughout the interviews there was heavy reference from the participants with regard to their mothers and their sisters. This was particularly evident in reference to their families’ education. Firstly with regard to their older sister, the general consensus seemed to be that if they were educated, then they too were also able to follow through and continue in their education. The comments below highlight this,

“Cos in my family, education wasn’t a key thing, so my older sister was the first to go to uni…and that was because when we went to the mosque we saw all the other girls that were doing the uni degrees, doing dentistry all the science degrees and I guess we saw them, and started following”

“I mean there’s my big sister, and she’s really educated and probably started the ball rolling”

“My big sister was doing something in science as well, so I got motivated”

Further to this, the data revealed that their mothers were also a driving force for them in regards to pursuing their own education. Comments such as these below particularly highlight this,

“My mum she graduated in civil engineering back home but she never got a chance to work, like she got married and the placement wasn’t suitable then came here so she’s always pushing us”

“Like my mum she didn’t go to uni and had kids now, although she’s working now, but that’s why she wants to push us”

“My mum said it straight out that you’re all gonna get properly educated, she motivated me”
“But my mum, she always says get a degree and get a good job as she's from an educated background”

Other comments highlighted that their families were educated and that they worked hard. With regard to the wider family, usually a big factor in South Asian families some stated that they had family living close by and extended family also living with them. However in stating this, nothing negative was expressed, but some suggested it made family life more enjoyable.

Most participants stated that they had a pleasant school experience, and commented that their school was either predominantly Asian or predominantly White and three of the participants had attended an all girls’ school. The ethos of the family towards education was one of the main areas upon which participants had most to say and the range of answers revealed some interesting themes.

Each of the 15 participants stated that education was valued in their household and the majority also stated that it was actively encouraged and highly prioritized. Interestingly, many highlighted that the process of continuing in education was the only route they saw to take and gave the impression that the thought to do something else did not even cross their mind, or would not have been accepted within their families. Some of the comments highlighting this are below,

“Very strict, my dad in particular…He’s always had certain plans for us…I didn’t even know you could leave after 16”

“It was just assumed that I would carry on into A-levels…”

“Don’t think it was a choice, cos that’s what my sisters and cousins had done as well”

“Definitely bordering on forcing children into education… my family and my mum in particular even my dad there not up for any ho- ha or not cop out”

“Yeah definitely really really encouraged, it’s almost expected…”

Another interesting area revealed by the interviews in discussing the attitudes towards education within their households, was that some of the participants saw education as a way of getting out of other things such as marriage or being expected to be at home. They therefore highlighted that they welcomed the ethos towards education that was held within the family.

“For me it was almost like a way out cos I saw my mum and dad and I didn’t want their life, I didn’t wanna be a housewife- like just a housewife, and my dad was working all hours and I didn’t want that”
“It wasn’t encouraged or discouraged; I can’t see myself sitting at home so that’s why I came to uni”

Others also provided reasoning as to why they felt education was respected and therefore highly prioritized within their households. Some suggested that it was because their parents came from educated backgrounds and other members of the family like grandparents and cousins were educated and therefore they were expected to follow suit. Others highlighted that their parents thought that education was the only way to succeed, as one participant put it,

“...they’ve seen how hard it is trying to make something of yourself especially as they weren’t born here... Like they’re always saying that we’re not originally from here so we have to work twice as hard and it’s difficult, living here is difficult”

Another interesting comment from a participant stated that within the Asian community, children’s education was a way of gaining status and respect and therefore in order to not be looked down upon, they were pushed in their education. She stated,

“The parents wanna show off their kids you know, my child’s got a degree in this and my child’s got a degree in this, and if your child’s not got a degree it’s sort of like letting them down....”

5.5-University

Moving on in the interviews to discuss their current university education, other interesting ideas were uncovered, such as choices they had made, their experiences and also the influence of family. Aspects of culture and strong preferences were uncovered and a theme highlighted by majority of the participants, was the issue of being at university and the either living at home, or at university. The graph below shows that it was quite an even decision.
Figure 7, Graph Shows Where Students Live At University

From discussing whether they lived at home or not, the idea of families not being comfortable with their daughters living away from home was discussed. Most participants expressed awareness at the fact that it was an issue it wasn’t easy to decide upon. Some also expressed that it was not viewed in a positive way by their parents or other people of the Asian community, which can be seen by the statements below,

“Moving away for uni is seriously seriously frowned upon, out of all my cousins like first cousins there’s only me and one other girl that didn’t stay in the Newcastle area and moved out”

“Oh leaving home was never an issue for me, but with a lot of girls I know, they weren’t allowed to do anything after they left [college] and they found it weird that I was moving out…and with other parents when I told them I was moving out they were like ‘aww your mum and dad letting you go?’”

This theme carried through and further ideas were uncovered. Participants mainly suggested that it was culture and tradition that was the reason behind them being constrained not to move away. Another area touched upon was the idea of participants breaking away from what their parents saw as the route in life they should take. This was both in terms of the way that they felt they should behave, through to other areas such as progressing on into getting a job and getting married. Both can be seen below,
“But it pretty taboo in Muslim culture for girls to be moving out I mean its changing now but there’s still a lot of parents that don’t like them going out as they think they’ll change or they’ll go bad…they don’t trust their kids…like they’ve put too much constraint on them so they know their gonna go wild”

“I think my dad felt like that because of culture. Like all of my cousins are all at home, and after their degree they’ll get a job, have an arranged marriage and that’s how everyone seems…like I’ve seen all my cousins do it…and I’ve broken away from that...He knew I would do it...it’s not me. Like I’ve seen my cousins do it and they’re unhappy and they have all told me, just do it just move away, as much as you might argue with your parents as you’ll regret it if you don’t…and that’s mainly why I did it…”

Knowing this, others expressed their feelings of gaining “freedom” while others appeared to have felt quite desperate to gain their independence and move out,

“Basically, I wanted to get as far away from home as possible, so I wanted to go to the north as I’m from the south...erm and I was like oh my god get me out of here”

Some that had moved away expressed that because their older sister had moved away first, their families showed less resistance to the idea. Others expressed that they had tried commuting from home to university, but due to it being too tiring their parents had agreed to them living away from home. One of the participants stated that her parents were fine with her living away as their main concern was they she got an education.
Discussion around choosing university also covered issues such as the course offered by the university and also the university itself and its location, i.e. if it was campus based or non-campus based or in a big city. In discussing how participants had found their experience at university, majority of them highlighted that they had enjoyed meeting and being exposed to different cultures. Some from predominantly White areas expressed that they had enjoyed meeting people who were also South Asian. Others highlighted that they had enjoyed making new friends, living in a new area and also meeting people of a different religion. The graph below indicates which part of their university experience participants enjoyed the most.

Figure 8, Graph Shows Which Part of the University Impacted the Participants The Most
5.6-Subject choice at University

Further to the discussion of university was the decision of choosing the subject that they were studying. Many suggested that they had enjoyed the subject at school and therefore it had made sense to continue with the subject at university. Others however, revealed some more interesting revelations as to why they had chosen/not chosen to study particular subjects, as the following statements show,

“I thought that not many people chose this degree especially Asian girls or Asian guys as a lot of people do the old medicine or dentistry…I did it to be different and to stand out”

“but I never thought I would do a business course as it’s such a typical Asian thing to take… erm I think the professional degrees that people do they are particularly respected and there were just loads of Asians in my school that did business…but I mean there’s nothing wrong with it but I think a lot do it cos there parents are self employed…but what I’m doing is not business its marketing and has less of an Asian lazy stigma, like all my friends are doing it so I’m just going to pick it and its just a doss…”

Another area that subject choice uncovered was some intriguing themes, which drew on the impact that the influence of family and parents had. Some felt that their parents had encouraged them to take subjects that would ensure that they would have a job at the end of their degree, which many stated made sense to them also. One particular participant stated that she chose a subject that she knew would be approved by her parents and others commented on the fact that their subjects were influenced by the “Asian mentality” of taking professional subjects. The comments below reflect these findings,

“I remember when I was about 7 and they were like you’re going to become an accountant!”

“I don’t know, I think with Indians including my parents, going to university their opinion is, do a degree that is going to help you in the future, like do something science related so you’ll be a doctor or law or business…it was always one of those options. As well I thought about the fact that my parents would be happy with me studying business as well”

“Errm I think the professional degrees that people do…I mean in Asian households they are particularly respected”

“But it is that Asian thing that comes in like which job are you going to get after your degree and stuff”
The fact that older sisters and other family members had done the same degree was also an influencing factor and a couple of the participants gave the impression, that although there was a preference for a particular subject, their parents would not have minded if they had chosen to study something else.

5.7-Experiences of work

The interviews continued discussing the present details of the participants, and moved onto discussing their experiences of work. This part of the interview touched on a number of different themes, of which, the main ones will be analysed.

All of the participants had some form of experience in the workplace, ranging from part time work in retail, call centre, to work placements in pharmacies. A couple also had experiences of full time employment in gap years, which included experiences in a bank and also a marketing company. A more prominent theme uncovered was the experience of interacting with people of other cultures, and their experiences of how they found this. A number of them seemed quite surprised that they had managed this, coming from backgrounds where they were used to being surrounded by people of the same culture, both in their home area and also their schools. This was highlighted by some of the comments below,

“Most of the people working on placement were white and I thought it would take me a while but it was good having them 8 weeks and realising I could do it ...here you're surrounded by a big Asian community and there’s that your own people factor, because there wasn’t many Asians that I was like oh my gosh will I be able to get along with them? But they were nice…”

“I don’t know I worked in Super Drug for like a week but they were all people I wasn’t used to socialising with... they were all English...and it was ok surprisingly, I mean initially you have to put on a different persona but after a while it was normal...its surprising to see how many barriers you put up yourself…”

A couple of the participants gave reasoning for their anxieties and feelings towards interacting with those of different cultures, revealing that cultural differences and dress were the main reasons. This can be seen by the comments below,

“I mean I had the hijab on and there was a lot of sort of things going on at that time, I didn’t know if people were anti social or didn’t know how to socialise, cos I was quite happy and chirpy but it seemed like they didn’t want to and that made me more unhappy”
“They actually didn’t have any issues with me being Muslim or me wearing a scarf, or anything like that”

“Obviously there were worries about like if I would be able to get on with them and conversations in free time and stuff but fortunately they were all really nice”

Other participants expressed that although there were other cultures at their place of work, they didn’t feel the need to interact. These participants stated different reasons for this, with one presenting the idea that she felt she would have looked better for not interacting with the others and the other stating that she felt she would have to change herself to fit in socially. Both can be seen below,

“But I guess I kept myself to myself as I didn’t really know anybody, and a lot of them I didn’t really chit chat or anything as I just wanted to get my work done... and I wasn’t really there that long but I guess I wasn’t really as open as what I’d normally be as you can’t... was cos it was a new place, I don’t know I just...didn’t really know, I just felt like it would look better for me to just get on and stuff instead of trying to make friends”

“Yeah I did summer jobs and stuff but when I first came out of uni I had my first professional job, but when I started working there it was predominantly white, and I felt a bit stigmatised ...I chose not to try fit in and socialise, because I did that at uni you know, I was a bit of a party animal, and I did conform like going out and partying and from that, I just thought, I don’t need people to accept me I don’t give a monkeys”

There was little evidence that many felt the need to change, however interestingly, this was for a number of reasons. A couple of the participants stated that they felt comfortable being themselves because they were from predominantly Asian areas and therefore their places of work were used to the “Asian presence”. For example,

“I mean had I worked in a pharmacies that had less of an Asian presence, but because there was an Asian presence it just did feel comfortable. I mean one of the pharmacies I worked in there was only one other Asian, but because they were all aware of like wearing the scarf and praying, and they’d already seen it so I didn’t have to go through the whole explaining thing....”

“Basically, I think in our area cos there’s a lot of Muslims and quite a lot of Hindus, and Christians so we’re all pretty comfortable so you don’t really feel like the impact of the other cultures imposing on you as there so many of yourselves that you don’t feel like oh I have to change as everyone is like you”
Others felt that their work experiences had been positive and their main priority was acting professional and getting along with everyone. Interestingly these comments were made from participants not studying pharmacy, but other subjects such as management. Other experiences involve mixing with people of different ages and also different religions.

**5.8-Marriage**

In looking to the future, the topic of marriage was discussed. It was evident that marriage was a big part of South Asian community, especially for the females. The themes mainly focused around their expectations and also the expectations of their parents. Many of the participants commented that the topic of marriage was only discussed as a “joke” but it was evident that there were underlying anticipations that they knew it was approaching, as many made reference to their older sisters impending marriage. This was reflected by the comments below,

“I’m quite shy talking about stuff like that. If it does come up it’s more like you can’t marry this or you can’t marry that (in reference to a different religion) but then they just laugh it off”

“It’s touched as a joking manner. Get a degree, come home, and get an arranged marriage”

“Probably because my sister’s older she’s like 24 it is discussed more as they’re like when will she get married and stuff so yeah it’s discussed more and we kind of just joke around with the topic in general”

“Erm not particularly, its not really discussed that much, only in a joking way not in a serious way”

“Yeah its discussed all the time its like a joke but a joke in a positive way like its not like its seriously gonna happen but they love to mention it, like aww you’re getting older now...not just my mum and dad but extended family”

“Its kind of like joked about…my mum and dad are like save us the headache find someone yourself, yeah its just discussed but kind of light-hearted… But obviously cos my sister’s older I hear it and stuff and she hates it…I hear it on that end but not directly to me”

Further to this underlying anticipation, many commented that their parents encouraged them to complete their education first and then contemplate marriage. Other anticipation was noted by one participant who commented that there was also expectation from the South Asian community, and if they as females were not married early enough, they could find it hard in the future. Some of the anticipation was also note because of these thoughts are revealed in the statements below,
“It’s discussed more now that I’m older and finishing my degree. But at the same time they want me to get a job and be settled in my career. My mum is more the one that says ‘oh yeah you should get married in a couple of years’. I think that might have something to do with my mum being a woman, she understands what it’s like for women in the Indian community, as if your not married by a certain age you might be judged in the community”

“They’ve always said like finish all your studies first and then you can get married kind of thing, well its up to you if you wanna get married before but its better after you finish”

“Yeah its discussed a lot these days cos I’m finishing, so its discussed a lot”

Participants commented that marriage had not been a constraint to their education, but one made reference to the fact that she had not chosen to do a longer course at university, as she knew it would maybe hinder her from getting married sooner. Another participant made reference to the fact that she others felt her efforts at university were somewhat pointless, as she would be getting married soon. Both of these can be seen below,

“Well if I wanted do medicine I would have but it was us ourselves that thought of it as ‘oh no its going to take too long’, when we do our degree as well you think of marriage and children in the future, I dunno it’s how we were brought it’s just in our culture like that”

“My mum says ‘I don’t know why you try so hard for uni as your only gonna get married’ or comments I don’t do much housework at home so they’re like ‘I don’t know what you’re gonna do when you get married, your gonna have to do this and that’ and just trying to prepare me for it really, cos I am 22 so I do have to start learning”

“I think in our culture it’s a general thing anyway that you do your education as we all know you’re gonna get married at one point, like we just know that at the age of 23 or 24 you’re gonna get married so you just plan you stuff”
5.9-Employment and the future

The interview progressed to uncover what the participants felt would be their employment opportunities for the future. Those not studying pharmacy expressed they would like a graduate scheme or a job to start once they had finished university. More notably, many of the participants studying pharmacy stated that their preference was to work in community pharmacy, and more specifically they expected to become a locum. Overall 5 out of the 6 students studying pharmacy expressed this as their expectation. It was explained this meant they would work as the pharmacist that temporarily holds the place of the main pharmacist. The statements below show the range of answers given,

“Emm I’m hoping I can get onto a graduate scheme”

“I expect to get a graduate job with a law firm”

“Ideally I want to be a locum- they just call you in whenever”

“Well I want to go into pharmacy and hopefully community not hospital”

“I mean I’ll probably go into community”

The participants also gave reasons as to why they had chosen their stated expectation. For those expressing preference to get a graduate job or a job elsewhere, their main reasoning was to get a good job. For those expressing their preference for a specific route in pharmacy (the majority of those studying pharmacy) the main theme uncovered was because it offered them a flexible lifestyle. Markedly other themes arose with a few of the participants stating that they had reservations as to whether they would work at all and offered culture and marriage for their reasoning. This can be seen below,

“Hopefully after uni, get my pre-reg pharmacist job-but I don’t really wanna work! I just want to sit at home! That’s our life ambition, that’s what we talk about all the time like, I’m gonna become a housewife”

“I mean I’m sure I’d work but cos in our culture as well its like the men always provide...so after your married it’s like that’s the way it is… I do want the option to work, which is why I’m doing this degree”

“I probably won’t work a lot when I’ve got kids anyway but with pharmacy, you can do Locum work and just work 2 days a week or something. I think it’s good that I did pharmacy as I said I can do the part time work and if and when I do get married I’ll be able to contribute, and having a degree will help, even if I don’t work straight away later on I can go back to working”
"Well that’s another thing that influenced my pharmacy career was that I’m the boss and I choose, I get to decide and that’s another reason, like before working for someone else they made all the decision and I followed but now its up to me and the balls in my court, so I will follow my rules I know I have to follow legal rules but anything else like the hours I want to work, I choose that, and that goes with my lifestyle"

“You can have a flexible lifestyle, and just leave when the shop closes and with family commitments its something I’m considering you know, if I have kids or whatever… in hospitals you can’t do that so I probably will sacrifice my own satisfaction in terms of doing clinical pharmacy for a better lifestyle"

The remaining participants had rather low expectation for starting their career, giving reasons such as not being successful with graduate job applications as the reason. This can be seen below,

“At this point I’ve realised after applying for so many jobs that its pointless having too many expectations"

“It’s difficult as when I was younger I really wanted to be in a profession and be really powerful and independent and be a career woman but now coming to uni and this last couple of months I’ve been putting so much effort into graduate schemes and programmes and not getting any luck…its kind of a waste of time"

In relation to these comments it was interesting to note that many discussed what their parents’ employment was. This was not surprising as throughout the interview it was evident that their parents had strongly influenced their decisions. Interestingly many referred to their mother’s job, with 6 out of the 15 participants stating that their mother was a housewife and did not work. Interestingly, all of these women followed Islam, although they were from different backgrounds (2 Bangladeshi, 2 Indian, and 2 Pakistani). One participant also stated that because her mother was working, she was looked down upon in the community where they lived. Others referred to their sister’s employment and stated that after they were married, they stopped working. Although they didn’t necessarily expect this, they referenced it, as part of their expectations, especially towards the issue of whether they would work. From their anecdotes it was clear that this would be their husband’s decision. These can be seen below,

“My sisters husband didn’t want her to work-he’s a pharmacist and she did enjoy her job but cos they’ve got a big family at home her mother in law found it hard cos there was like 8 adults to cook for so my sister wanted to help more so she quit work for 6 months and then she got pregnant so she wasn’t going to go back in the near future. She didn’t mind but at first that’s what I thought that ‘oh he’s making you stop going to work’. She said she’s enjoying it though…”
“Even now in Bury in the Asian community the women don’t really go out to work. They look down on you if you go to work or don’t wear the appropriate clothes like the scarf. Back home we’re from a city area but here the women were from the more village areas”

“But it would suck if you couldn’t work after you were married…but I know I wanna do work and that’s why I did this degree so I could have the option”

The final part of the interview covered barriers and pressures that participants thought they may face at work. They were also asked to just choose one they felt might affect them the most. The answers showed some quite remarkable themes and findings. The graph below shows the barriers and pressures noted by the participants and which ones were mentioned the most,

**Figure 9, Graph Shows Perceived Barriers and Pressures**

From the graph it is evident that the children and family was perceived as the biggest barrier and pressure, followed by their gender and ethnicity. As shown by the graph, other barriers and pressures were notably: the working environment, religion, interacting with different cultures, marriage and lastly the general state of the economy. Below are a few comments on the main themes highlighted by the graph: children and family pressures, ethnicity and gender.
5.9.1-Children and family pressures

“If I was still career based when I was still 30, I think I would get pressure from family to settle down...I think they would say stop your career and settle down and stuff”

“Not now but maybe in the future I think the pressures of settling down and getting married and having a family as whilst having an education and getting a career sorted has been at the forefront, I think my parents when I got to a certain age they would want me to get married and settle down”

“I think family life, I think having kids will stop you or definitely slow down so its like would you be at home or work more, so yeah its defiantly family life”

Evidently from the comments, family play a part in the pressure for them to settle down and have a family. They also highlight that at a certain point in their career they anticipate being slowed down.

The comments below highlight the comments made with regard to ethnicity being a perceived barrier and pressure.
5.9.2-Ethnicity

“From studying criminology I’ve learnt about barriers and pressures and in the police force it’s just so bad… I learnt how they employ black people and they don’t let them go higher or let them succeed and it’s just really sad - the racism they suffer”

“At the same time being an ethnic minority might be the same. I don’t think I’ll come across any prejudice, but just that feeling of maybe sort of if I get to the position that I want to be, the fact that I’m female and ethnic minority other people might see that and think how has that female and she’s an ethnic minority and how has she got that far up… I think I might come across those kinds of prejudices”

“I guess you’ll always have the factor or facing racism as your different colour”

Evidently from the comments, some of the participants were aware of some of the barriers in the workplace due to ethnicity. Racism is also mentioned as a possible issue.

The comments below highlight the comments that some made with regard to gender being a perceived barrier and pressure.

5.9.3-Gender

“I think as a female you are going to have a barrier straight away, especially if you’re promoted”

“I’ve been applying for graduate schemes in big companies like boots, Tesco and the Co-Operative and I think with being in that big corporate environment, being female will make it more difficult”

“Well you always read about women facing a glass ceiling so I never know how that might affect me say 10-15 years down the line but I just hope it will have improved”

These comments reveal that some perceive this to be an automatic barrier. And one was also aware of the glass ceiling.

Within these themes, a couple of comments highlighted other issues that were of concern for a few of the participants. One participant told of how she had felt she had faced a barrier in one of her part time jobs, as she felt like she had been selected as the token ethnic. The short account below describes what happened and how she felt,
“I think people employ ethnic girls to meet their quota, they will just stick you in so it wouldn’t feel like you actually earned it, I know that some people would be like ‘wow that’s a good thing’ but I would be like no because your just filing their quota and they just want a ethnic minority girl…and they do it a lot. One of my jobs was working at Hollister and the process is really stupid like you have to have a photo taken as its based on your looks and just a couple of questions and that’s basically the interview… and I’m not being funny everyone there is really stunning and I thought I’ll just apply. Anyway I got it and when I was there I was looking around and wasn’t any Asian girls, and I was just thinking they just got me as they needed an Asian. Everyone else was white…I think I just got the job cos of that. It scares me that it’s still going on. Hopefully down the line ethnic women won’t have any barrier and will get whatever because of their talent and their ability, but I do still think its always going to be there people are always going to have their opinion and stereotypes in the back of their head so it’s hard to change that”.

Finally, a couple of the participants referred to their decision of choosing a pharmacy degree, as a way of not facing as many barriers and pressures in the work place.

“Well I think that pharmacy is quite polite, I’ve seen Muslim females that are doing the job their really happy, it’s a convenient career and the only pressures they face are just work pressures, and ill be the boss so…”

“With science it’s a degree for anyone and you’ll always get respect for it no matter who-even if it’s a racist person that comes in to the pharmacy, or goes to the doctors, they will always treat you with respect as your doing them a favour at the end of the day whereas in law and things like that with the corporate ladder and stuff you get into the political side and there’s always racism faced and a lot of people that won’t like you because of your race”

These comments highlight that some participants chose their degrees in order to avoid some of their perceived barriers and pressures. The fact that they would be doing a well-respected job was also part of this reason. It seems that they chose their degree with this in mind.

The findings and analysis has clearly displayed an array of data that both conforms to and deviates from that found in the literature review. In the next section-the discussion, these similarities and differences this will be looked at more closely.
6. Discussion
6. Discussion

The findings presented in chapter 4 addressed some of the main factors that were highlighted as having an impact on South Asian females, and their perceptions towards their employment opportunities. The findings showed key themes that were prevalent, and which identified the ways in which culture, experience of employment and family, to name a few, have impacted their decisions towards employment thus far. The findings and analysis also illustrated potential barriers perceived by the next generation of South Asian females potentially headed for employment. The gaps, similarities and differences to previous research, will be the main focus of this discussion. These were class, family background, community and educational choice, marriage, culture and dress, gender, and ethnicity.

6.1-Class

Gaining information with regard to the background of participants, revealed mainly two factors; firstly, the impact of class, and secondly the impact of the community. Modood et al (1997) asserts in regard to the South Asian community, that class impacts their experience of education. However, this did not seem to be evident within the findings. Most participants came from quite ‘inner city’ areas of the UK; as one participant stated, “bog standard”.

Class did not seem to impact their decision to attend university; neither did the classed inequalities within the system (Reay at al 2007, p872), affect their progression through education. As this wasn’t the case, it could be suggested that with no experience of classed inequalities at this stage of their lives through education, they may not perceive it to be an issue throughout employment. Certainly from the data collected, this seemed to be apparent.

6.2-Family Background

However, what did seem apparent in relation to this, were the class backgrounds and educational qualifications of their parents and the influence this had. It was clear from the data that their parents’ educational background played a significant role in pushing their daughters. Notably however, this was not only from parents that were well educated, but also from those that were not. The data strongly showed that mothers in particular were a strong influence behind their daughter’s perusing
education, even though as the data revealed, that 6 of their mothers were housewives. Evidence from Bagguley and Hussain (2007) showed that from their interview, over 60% of Pakistani mothers were 'housewives' as were 40% of Indian mothers. From the data collected in this research, 2 of the mothers were Bangladeshi, 2 were Pakistani and 2 were Indian, and all of them followed Islam. Although the data did not find that Muslim women were restricted in their education, as many of their mothers were educated and they themselves went university, it did reflect that they were restricted in their economic participation (Tyrer, 2006).

This idea was further supported as the issue of being able to work or not seemed to be a prevalent one, particularly as previously mentioned, by those following Islam. It could be suggested that this supports evidence by Dale, Fieldhouse, Saheen and Kaira (2001, p11), that women not working outside the home is accepted in reference to Islam. It could be questioned therefore, as to why these participants are strongly encouraged by their mothers if this is the case. It was clear by their answers of wanting to work part-time as a Locum in pharmacy, that the option to work was very important, regardless of whether they worked full-time or part-time. In addition, this research found that some of the participants had described education as a "way out".

Furthermore, it was also found that many were indeed encouraged to continue in their education, by their parents and as found within the research it was a top priority for nearly all of the parents of the participants within the study. Although the evidence, that ethnic minorities are supported by parents because some are aware of some of the potential barriers in the workplace was supported by one of the participants, (Dale, Fieldhouse, Shaheen and Kaira 2001, p11), the majority of the participants, not just those following Islam were pushed to enter education by their families (Tyrer, 2006) this research also uncovered some other issues.
6.3-Community and educational choice

Face in the community was one idea presented and so was the idea that any other route to ‘success’ was not accepted within families and therefore education was the assumed route. It could be suggested that all participants were the “embedded chooser type” whereby education was “expected” and “normal” (Ivy 2010, p402). This research however, has found it was for all participants not just those of an Indian background.

Furthermore evidence in the literature review reflected that in the South Asian communities some subjects were followed more than others (Bagguley and Hussain, 2007) and that subjects that were less traditional were not considered as “serious academic disciplines”. This theme was very prevalent throughout the data found. The research showed that parents of the participants were more of the opinion that their daughters studied subjects, whereby they would have the security of a job once they graduate. Further to this, the research by Bagguley and Hussain (2007) showed that subjects that could lead to being self-employed were also favoured. Although participants did not explicitly state that they wanted to be self employed, it was evident from those studying pharmacy, all of which were Muslim, have a degree of independence within the workplace was important, and played a role in them choosing the subject.

Moreover, the data found within this research-supported evidence by Tyrer (2006) that concluded, in relation to subject choice, South Asians tended to “stick to their own community”. With regard to subsequent employment for those studying pharmacy, this was very much the case, as the presence of other Asians, or lack of other Asians, was noted numerous times as being important. However, as discussed earlier, another reason the data showed that this subject choice was popular, was because it provided participants with the option to work, even though the traditional route of being a housewife was on the horizon.
6.4-Marriage

Marriage was discussed as part of the research, as evidence showed it was essential to the plans of South Asian females (Bagguley & Hussain, 2007). The research supported this, and the data showed it was important for all of the participants. It also partially supported Tyrer (2006) in the findings that it was more of an issue for those of a Pakistani and Bangladeshi background, and that decisions were based on this anticipation. One of the participants (Bangladeshi) was already married, and one of the participants also commented that her decision not to study medicine at University was based on the fact that she knew she would soon get married. One key theme, which seemed to be a gap within the literature review, was the idea of marriage being discussed as a “joke” within the family. This was the main way that participants in this research stated the topic was discussed, however it was also evident that there was also a very real anticipation of its arrival.

Although marriage did not seem a constraint to their education, it was again presented as a possible constraint to them working, as from the data, some suggested their husbands may not want them to work, and also that family constraints such as in-laws, could also be a further potential constraint. This idea was also presented within the data by one of the participants that gave the example of her sister not working, as her husband wanted her to stay at home and help cook for her in-laws and extended family. This supports evidence by Rana et al (1998) suggesting that a woman as an individual in the South Asian community is not as important as the family as a whole.

6.5-Culture and dress

Continuing with this theme, the evidence within the literature review commented that women of an ethnic minority have to juggle not only their gender and race, but also their culture, particularly in relation to family and religious duties. With regard to displaying religious attire as part of their religious duties, it seemed evident that participants in this research did not foresee this as an issue with regard to employment or progression, but saw it as an issue for other reasons. The data showed that choice of subject had been again a purposeful choice in avoiding juggling with such pressures, which was evidenced by a few participants who commented on their pharmacy career. One noted that she felt that pharmacy was “polite towards Muslim women” and other comments noted that they
would be their own boss and could therefore make decisions based on their lifestyle. Another noted that the Asian presence in the pharmacy had meant wearing religious attire was not an issue.

In contrary to the findings in the literature review the data collected did not particularly evidence that participants experienced any form of “shifting”. This was an idea presented by Atlewologun and Singh (2010, p342). In relation to this their “heightened self monitoring, managing feelings and behaviour altering”, was not discussed in a manner that suggested that it was done to “cope with stereotypes”, but rather, it was done to act in a professional, work-like manner.

However the issues of working in a predominantly white environment were discussed with the data, in particular in relation to their previous work experience. The most prominent issue that arose was anxious feelings towards interacting with different cultures. It was here, with regard to interacting in the workplace, that cultural differences and dress were highlighted as issues, rather than as barriers to progression or employment. In relation to this, some participants within the data had suggested that they didn’t know if they could make conversation with those of different cultures. One also suggested that she decided that she would not conform or change to get along with those of different cultures, but rather she would just be herself.

The literature review discussed this bi-cultural stress in relation to its definition of, “role demands not only from the dominant culture...but also from people significant in ones lives”, such as relatives (Denton 1990). Evidence also cited by Rana et al (1998) suggested that for women of a South Asian background, family and domestic responsibilities play a large role in their career progression. In regard to fulfilling these multiple roles in the home and in the workplace, it was evident from the data collected from the research that participants most definitely viewed this as an issue.

Although having a family was viewed as their biggest barrier, as it was clear from the data in the research it was stated as a barrier in terms of them progressing-not necessarily as a barrier in juggling their home and their workplace. However, if the interview was conducted later on in their lives, they may have stated otherwise.
6.6-Gender

Further to this the next biggest barrier they noted was their gender. The data showed that this was in relation to the general barriers faced by women entering the work place. Again at this stage in the interviews it was not noted in regard to juggling their gender with regard to the home or their workplace. It was interesting to note that many viewed this as a barrier, without having experience of full time employment. It could be suggested that government initiatives such as those noted in the national statistics labour market bulletin (2010), and evidence from the media such as the BBC website, has made such issues very well known.

6.7-Ethnicity

The third largest area of perceived barriers and pressures that the data from this research highlighted was ethnicity. The literature review showed that ethnicity was a barrier, particularly for women in private and corporate environments, and success was based on their “mainstream organisational success” such as “high powered jobs in the private sector” (Fearfull and Kamenou 2006, p891). They suggest that this is because ethnic women are aware of the lack of support offered by such paths for their lifestyles, and therefore opt for working in the public sector and working with other ethic people (Kamenou 2006).

This is not reflected as such within the data in this research. This research uncovered that some of the South Asian undergraduates were aiming for private sector roles especially those studying subjects other than pharmacy. However comments stated that some were struggling at this stage to get any form of employment of this kind. Although comments did not explicitly state that they thought this was due to their ethnicity. Only time will tell how many of them gained employment in corporate and private sector environments. This suggests however, that they were willing to take a chance and face some of the barriers and pressures they were concerned with, such as family. This could show that although they thought it was an issue, it was a secondary thought in the process of their career pursuit. It must be also noted at this point; that all accept one of these participants was of an Indian background.
6.8-Conclusion

On the other hand, those whose ethnicity was reflected more overtly, in other things such as their religion, had chosen to follow other well respected career routes, such as pharmacy and dentistry where their perceived barriers and pressures would not be a problem. It is worth noting at this point that all these participants were Pakistani and Bangladeshi, all except one wore a Hijab. It was evident that for these students they were not willing to take a chance, and fitting a family and lifestyle in to their job was a primary factor in making their decisions towards their career. It was evident that the idea of having a job was therefore secondary. As highlighted, this process of thought had been worked out early in their peruse of a career, as they had chosen a subject where lifestyle would fit their job.

In conclusion, in the summary at the end of the literature review, Figure 5 from the literature review was presented as a summary, of factors that potentially impact the progression and also experiences of South Asian females in employment.

![Figure 5](image)

*Figure 5, Shows factors having a potential impact on the progression of South Asian Females in employment.*

Having conducted my research, presented the findings and analysis, and discussed the findings; the model has now been revised. The Figure 9, below summarises these findings and highlights in red the main barriers and pressures perceived by participants involved.
Figure 10 Shows the perceived barriers and pressure of undergraduate South Asian females.

The models highlight some perceived barriers and pressures that were not highlighted within the research, these being the economy, getting married, being new, culture and the main one evidenced in the findings and analysis, having children and a family. This shows that has time progressed, other factors such as ‘the economy’, for example, have become a perceived barrier and pressure. This indicated that not all barriers and pressures are linked to the main inequalities of gender and race. The main new finding on this figure, is ‘having children and a family’. This shows that, from an early age, females from a South Asian background, see this as a main focus, and also as a main perceived barrier and pressure. The figure also highlights some areas that are the same as the previous figure, such as gender and ethnicity.

Realising the limitations of this study, in that there was only a small sample size, is important to note at this stage. Although these perceived barriers and pressures were highlighted, if the sample size had been bigger, more solid conclusions could have been made. However, some conclusions can still be made from this research as it provides a platform from which further research can be conducted and gives some clue as to the direction it may go in. The final stage of this dissertation, the conclusion, will discuss these.
7. Conclusion
7. Conclusion

For South Asian females, the top three most commonly perceived barriers and pressures were having a family and children, this was followed by their gender and lastly their ethnicity. Although other barriers and pressures were highlighted, the conclusion will mainly focus on these three.

With regard to their culture, this had a clear impact on them wanting a family and children. Most of the participants made it clear that they had strong family connections. It was also evident throughout that the opinions of their family, particularly their parents, strongly influenced their decisions. It seemed that certain decisions stemmed from this firm rooting with family tradition and culture. Decisions such as getting married, were only a matter of time away and it was clear that participants didn't really have an option, as all of them stated it was discussed in the house, even if it was only in a joking manner. Further to this, none of them stated that they didn't want to get married.

Another decision firmly rooted in this, is their educational decisions. There was a strong ethos towards education in most households as participants discussed. They suggested that their parents were a strong driving force, particularly their mothers. From this, some conclusions could be drawn that there seems to be improvements within the two generations of South Asian females. Some of the participants stated that their mothers were housewives, but some were also educated. It seems like for some South Asian females of this generation, their aim would be to use their education and gain employment.

Certainly there seems to be progression in this area, as from the data collected, for those studying pharmacy, the idea of doing part time work, in a career where they were the boss and had employment that fitted their lifestyle, in terms of both culture and religion, seemed like perfect option. It also showed that for those of a Pakistani/ Bangladeshi background, this approach of fitting lifestyle to their job was a main focus.

Previous research, such as that outlined in the literature review, suggested that this is done in order to avoid barriers and pressures they perceived they might have faced such as difficulties like bi-cultural stress, religion and dress. This was also discussed in the data as these participants reflected to the Asian presence within the pharmacy career. From this, government initiatives, such as the Equality Act (2010), maybe somewhat in vain, as clearly for some South Asian females as the data
showed, particularly those of a Pakistani/Bangladeshi backgrounds, they had very clear career paths, based on their lifestyle.

For those not studying pharmacy it could be the said that these government initiatives are not in vain and enhancing the employment opportunities for South Asian females is needed. For these participants mainly of an Indian decent, it seemed that they were wanting to go into employment and face whatever barriers and pressures they perceived to be there.

With regard to their gender, it was clear that although many had not experienced full time employment, many still perceived this to be a barrier. Further to this, the number of participants stating this was more than anticipated. A possible explanation for this could be that within their household there seemed to be a very traditional family set-up, with male dominance. It was seemed that they also expected this to follow through into the workplace. On the other hand, it could be because the subject of gender and employment is widely discussed in the media.

Ethnicity was the next barrier and pressure perceived to be an issue. It seemed that for some, this barrier and pressure was inevitable. On the contrary, some didn’t view this as an issue. This could have been because they felt it was inevitable, however, it could have been because they had not experienced their ethnicity being an issue in previous employment or growing up. The issues of being a token ethnic was also mentioned by one participant, who stated that “people are always going to have stereotypes in the back of their head, so it’s hard to change that”.

With regards to the limitations of the study, it could be suggested that my own personal background was a negative factor. As a South Asian female myself, participants may have assumed certain things were common knowledge. This could have resulted in some information not being disclosed. However, it could have also been a positive factor, as participants may have felt more comfortable discussing certain things, without feeling embarrassed or shy. Another limitation could have been that all the participants were from the University of Manchester. If participants were used form other Universities, certain areas such as class factors, may have revealed further information. Finally although limited conclusions can be drawn, these have to be done with caution with regard to the different South Asian groups. It is hard to draw firm conclusions from a sample of this size. However, it could be argued that this was offset by the fact that in-depth qualitative data was done, which provided a rich data set.
Overall, in relation to the main perceived barriers and pressures, the statement above seems to hold true. This research has highlighted those that are willing to face up to this challenge and those that were not. Further to this, even though there may always be stereotypes in the back of people’s mind, there also seems to be a degree to which culture and family tradition will hold South Asian females back in regard to employment, another area that this research has highlighted. As there seems to have been progression made between the two generations of mothers and daughters thus far, further research could observe how this progression continues.
8. References
8. References


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9. Appendix
9. Appendix

9.1-Appendix A

Faculty of Humanities
Consent Form for Participants Taking Part in Student Research Projects
Title of Project:……………………………………………………………………………………….
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………………………
Name of Researcher BLOCK LETTERS:…………………………………………………………
School:………………………………………………………………………………………………...
Participant (volunteer)
Please read this and if you are happy to proceed, sign below.
The researcher has given me my own copy of the information sheet which I have read and understood. The information sheet explains the nature of the research and what I would be asked to do as a participant. I understand that the research is for a student project and that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded unless subject to any legal requirements. S/he has discussed the contents of the information sheet with me and given me the opportunity to ask questions about it.
I agree to take part as a participant in this research and I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason, and without detriment to myself.
Signed:………………………………………………………………………………………………...
Date:…………………………………………………………………………………………………
Family Name BLOCK LETTERS:………………………………………………………………….
Other Name(s) BLOCK LETTERS:…………………………………………………………….
If the participant is under 18 or a vulnerable adult a parent/guardian or other responsible adult must also sign the form:
Signed:………………………………………………………………………………………………....
Family Name BLOCK LETTERS:………………………………………………………………….
Other Name(s) BLOCK LETTERS:…………………………………………………………….
Relationship to Participant BLOCK LETTERS:………………………………………………
Date:……………………………………………………………………………………………………
Researcher
I, the researcher, confirm that I have discussed with the participant the contents of the information sheet.
Signed:………………………………………………………………………………………………....
Date:……………………………………………………………………………………………………
My name is Preeya Almas and I am currently doing my dissertation at the University of Manchester as part of my Management (Human Resources) Degree. The aim of this dissertation research is to uncover what influences perceptions of South Asian females embarking on a professional career.

In order to do this, interviews will be conducted with voluntary participants for a maximum of 30 minutes. All participants will be expected to answer questions honestly and to the best of their ability.

Participants have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time and unfortunately there will be no reimbursement given for travel expenses, as contribution is voluntary. However, arrangement of time and location will be made based on the convenience of the participants involved.

Please read and sign the attached consent form if you understand the above details and are willing to be part of this research.

Thanks very much for your time and co-operation it is greatly appreciated.

Preeya

Contact details:

Email Address: preeya.almas@gmail.com

Mobile Number: 07856 494127
9.3-Appendix C

Interview Guide-Life History Interview

Past

1) Can you describe the place you were brought up?

2) What is your family like?

3) Do you all follow a particular religion, and does this have any impact on you?

4) What was school like?

5) What was your family ethos towards education?

6) After GCSE’s were you encouraged to progress to further education?

7) With regards to marriage, was this ever discussed in your home

Present

8) What was the process in choosing where to study for University?

9) How did you decide to leave home?

10) How did you decide what subject to study?

11) How would you say your University experience has been?

Future:

12) What are your employment expectations for the future?
13) With regards to any barriers or pressures, do you think you will face any?

14) If you had to choose one thing that you thought may hinder you in terms of your employment progression what would it be?
9.4-Appendix D

Interview Guide-Life History Interview

Past

1) Can you describe the place you were brought up?

2) What is your family like?

3) Do you all follow a particular religion, and does this have any impact on you?

4) What was school like?

5) What was your family ethos towards education

6) After GCSE’s were you encouraged to progress to further education and higher education.

7) With regards to marriage, was or is this ever discussed in your home?

Present

8) What did you go through in choosing where to study for University?

9) Did you take any advice- who from?

10) How did you decide to leave home?

11) How did you decide what subject to study?

12) How would you say your University experience has been?
13) Have you had any experience of work so far?

14) Tell me about them....

15) Did you alter your behaviour in any way to feel more comfortable?

Future:

16) What are your employment expectations for the future?

17) With regards to any barriers or pressures, do you think you will face any?

18) If you had to choose one thing that you thought may hinder you in terms of your employment progression what would it be?
9.5-Appendix E

Initial Template

1. Background
   1.1 Area where born
   1.2 Community
   1.3 Proximity of family

2. Family
   2.1 Details
   2.2 Religious behaviour
   2.3 Education
   2.4 University education
   2.5 Advice

3. Education
   3.1 School
   3.2 Ethos
   3.3 Benefits

4. University
   4.1 Proximity to home
   4.2 University choice
   4.3 Their experiences
      4.3.1 Friendship
      4.3.2 Different cultures
      4.3.3 Different area
   4.4 Subject choice
   4.5 Parents

5. Work
5.1 Dress
5.2 Work Experiences

6. Marriage
   6.1 Constraint
   6.2 Parents

7. Employment
   7.1 Expectations
       7.1.1 Housewife

8. Barriers and Pressures
   8.1 Children and Family
   8.2 Working environment
   8.3 Ethnicity
   8.4 Religion
9.6-Appendix F

Template

1. Background
   1.1 Area where born
   1.2 Community

2. Family
   2.1 Details
   2.2 Religious behaviour
   2.3 Family Education
   2.4 Proximity to wider family

3. Education
   3.1 School
      3.1.1 Diversity of school
      3.1.2 Subjects at school
   3.2 Family ethos

4. University
   4.1 Proximity to home
      4.1.1 Living away from home
      4.1.2 Living at home
   4.2 University choice
   4.3 Course at University
   4.4 Their experiences
      4.4.1 Friendship
      4.4.2 Different cultures
      4.4.3 Different area
      4.4.4 Different religions
4.5 Subject choice
   4.5.1 Parental/Family influence on subject choice

5. Work
   5.1 Dress
   5.2 Work Experiences
      5.2.1 Interacting with different cultures
      5.2.2 Interacting with different ages
      5.2.3 Interacting with different religions

6. Marriage
   6.1 Constraint
   6.2 Parents
   6.3 Expectations

7. Employment
   7.1 Expectations
   7.2 Parents/family employment
      7.2.1 Housewife

8. Barriers and Pressures
   8.1 Children and Family
   8.2 Working environment
   8.3 Ethnicity
      8.3.1 Token Ethnic
   8.4 Religion
   8.5 Gender
   8.6 Being new
   8.7 Difference in culture
   8.8 Economy
8.9 Marriage