

*The Second Generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani Women in Brighton and Hove*

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**Abstract**

This paper will explore the achievements of second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women in formal education. Existing literature shows disparities in their educational achievements when compared to the mainstream population. In the research I am studying the lives of the second generation women, their performances in education and trying to understand their identity formation. There is evidence of the stereotyped perception of the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women as 'traditional Asian women' in school. This paper will highlight these factors in the context of their performances in education. The identity of the Asian pupils may determine the attitude of the teachers and in due course impact their academic performance. This paper will highlight the academic performance of the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women and how their identity, teacher's attitude and socialisation impacts their educational achievements. My argument through my research is to explore whether education guarantees social justice.

Keywords: Second Generation, Identity, Education, Bangladeshi, Pakistani.

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## **Introduction**

My professional experience as a Black and Minority Ethnic community worker in one of the deprived areas of Brighton and Hove led me to ask questions about the identity formation and social integration of the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women, with whom I work very closely. I observed that there is limited participation from the Bangladeshi and Pakistani residents in community activities. There is also a continuity of their lower participation in the formal labour market and limited uptake of higher education through two generations. For the second generation low social and educational participation has sustained. As a professional these observations led into further observations and unsubstantiated theorising about the roots of these problems of social participation and inclusion. Some specific challenges for the second generation is restricted communication between parents and children. This is due to language barriers between the 'home' language of the parent and English spoken by the children. The first generation (parents) Bangladeshis/Pakistanis are socially isolated as they choose to socialise only within the Bangladeshi/Pakistani community. This creates unfamiliarity with the British culture and identity and therefore results in difficulty to communicate with their children. These observations were based on my limited professional experience with a small section of the population. This alerted me to the absence of systematic studies in Brighton and Hove on the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women, and I took this up as my Doctoral research topic.

## **Context**

The growth of the Bangladeshi and Pakistani community in the UK with a relatively young demographic profile suggests that it will remain a feature of the U.K population in the coming years. In 2009 it was recorded that 36.5% of the ethnic minority population are UK born which accounts for a sizeable proportion of the population (Dustmann, Frattini, Theodoropoulos, 2010). There is a considerable increase in the population of the Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in the U.K. and the Census report shows the population of the Bangladeshis have gone up to 402,428 in 2011 from 259,710 in 2001. The Pakistani population records a total number of 1,028,459 in 2011 from 657,680 in 2001 (ONS Table S104 and Table DC2201EW, cited in Ali, 2015). The Bangladeshi population facilitate the migration of more Bangladeshis from the home country through marriage. In the UK, Bangladeshis have "larger families compared with the rest of the population" and they are expected to contribute to the growth of "human capital" (Tackey et al, (2006, p.1).

Between 2011 and 2013 the rise in U.K born Pakistanis is "statistically significant", rising from 457,000 to 502,000 (ONS, 2014). The overall Muslim population in England and Wales increased from 1,546,626 in 2001 to 2,706,066 in 2011 that is a 75% increase (Ali, 2015). The growing population of both the communities attaches additional value to their performance in education and employment. Focussing on their achievements and addressing the issues affecting their performance can result in a positive change in the society.

## **Education**

Research shows that there is evidence of an “ethnic penalty” towards the Bangladeshi community and they are “most seriously disadvantaged.” (Sanderson, 2006, pg 36). According to Pathak (2000, pp 1-2) “A large proportion of young Bangladeshis and Pakistanis are not in education, training or employment (14% and 9% respectively compared to 6% of whites) ..... 53% of Bangladeshi women and 40% of Bangladeshi men have no qualification” (Pathak, 2000, pp 1-2). There is an identifiable gender difference in labour market participation. Out of the total number of Muslim full time students, 43% are female compared to 57% male and only 29% of Muslim women are in full time employment as compared to half of the general population (Ali, 2015, pg. 62). Additionally, national data from PSI survey shows the economic activity of Pakistani and Bangladeshi women is lowest, at about 10% compared to 72% of the white women (Dale, 2002, pg. 13). Through my research I aim to understand the level of academic performance and labour market participation of the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women in the U.K thereby contributing to debates around these areas.

There are various Government initiatives that are aimed at addressing the “achievement gaps for pupils” from minority ethnic groups which indicates that the Government is showing increasing interest in the academic achievement of the groups (Arnot, Schneider, Evans, Liu, Welply, Davies-Tutt, 2014, and pg. 14). There are cultural, language and ethnic diversity that must be addressed in order to tackle the cause for different performance levels (Arnot, Schneider, Evans, Liu, Welply, Davies-Tutt, 2014). Educational credentials are an important step towards employment and the statistics show that the applications from Bangladeshi and Pakistani women for degree courses have increased sharply over the last twenty years. Applications for degree courses record “an increase of 95 per cent for Bangladeshi women and 71 per cent for Pakistanis women between 1994/5 and 1998/9” and simultaneously a drop in applications from white men (Higher Education Statistics Agency Table 10A, cited in Dale, 2002, pg. 9 ). A recent article by The Times Higher Education highlights that although the young Bangladeshi and Pakistani members are achieving higher levels of attainment, as a group they are much more likely to have no qualifications when compared with the white British (Times Higher Education, March 2014).

The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant has been introduced by the Government “to narrow achievement gaps for pupils” belonging to the minority ethnic group and “to meet the cost of some additional support” required by the bilingual learners (DfES/0283/2004, pg. 2). There is a lot being done today to address the gaps in education for the minority ethnic pupils. The identification of the problems for the bilingual learners is leading to various changes being made in schools, like providing additional help, and teaching the language structure of the subjects (Department for Education, 2012).

## **Identity**

Research around the lives of the second generation migrants emphasises the dichotomy between the two cultures they represent, the home country and the host country. It either highlights the strain that it imposes on the second generation immigrant or the benefit of creating a multicultural identity. It is important to define the other sets of conflict that come hand in hand with the contrast in the culture of the

two nations. There will be an interplay of the other aspects like, “traditional/Western”, “religious/secular”, “parents/peers” (Bhimji, 2008, 414). The formation of identity uses resources from history, language and culture to become what we are, thereby creating tradition. It is also about the discourses that makes us social subjects (Hall and Du Gay, 1996, pg. 6). In my research I will specifically look at the way the society perceives the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women to understand how the identities of these women are shaped as they are constructed to be social subjects.

Identity is not just about claiming to be an individual, it has to be sanctioned by ‘others’ in the society and here we need to recognise that “power operates in and through the spaces within which we live” that shapes an individual identity (Valentine and Sporton, 2009 p. 735-736). In the process of socialisation this element of power that lives with us in the form of family, school, peers, and religion gives us an identity. The school has a major and perhaps the primary role to play in the socialisation of any child. “There has been limited critical examination of the probable impact of teachers’ attitudes, school provision and curriculum” on the performance of the children and it is also important to note “negative stereotypes of Asian pupils, particularly girls, can lead to lower expectations for them by teachers” (Tackey et al, 2006, pg 48). The common perception about the Muslim women is that they come from an essentially patriarchal structure of family and are usually “the oppressed victim” (Ahmad, 2013, pg. 13). The idea of the ‘victimised Muslim women’ can come in the way of their progression. The identity of the Asian girl fails to surpass the boundaries of stereotypical social perceptions. The continuity of lower performances in education that passes through two generations within the Bangladeshi and Pakistani community and is much related to social perceptions about their identity and culture.

The local Council and the practitioners in Brighton and Hove are taking an active step to bridge the gap in the performance levels of the black and minority ethnic pupils. As a professional I have facilitated the formation of after school clubs for children from minority ethnic backgrounds. These clubs create a space for children and parents to come together and are supported by workers. There are also widespread low cost English classes that the first generation migrants attend. This strengthens their language skills and is a step towards bridging communication gaps between parents and children. The performance levels of the Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils in school that can be attributed to reasons like identity and socialisation can be addressed through these simple initiatives in the community.

## **Socialisation**

The second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women grow up in a society that is diverse and multicultural. Brighton and Hove in particular has a mix of various cultures and residents from all over the world. This exposes the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women to cultures and values highly dissimilar to their own. The feeling of oneness and belonging to the wider society is the precondition to ‘emotional relatedness’ to the ‘life world’. This belonging or connection with the society depends on the ‘socialisation and enculturation’ that is often a challenge for the second generation immigrants (Crul, Schneider, Lelie, 2012, pg. 287-88). The second generation immigrants experience a dualism in their lives that is composed of

two different culture, at home and in the wider society. This may prove to be the cause for the challenges they frequently face towards integrating with the society. The second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women live in a society that has a diverse population. Hence the contrast is not between the home and the society, but also within the wider society there is a mix of many cultures. Terms like multiculturalism, diversity, multi ethnicity, highlight the prevalence of 'heterogeneous elements' leading towards the context/question of social integration (Crul, Schneider, Lelie, 2012, pg. 288). Social integration in a multicultural society is the key towards forming shared national identities and commonalities. In the context of my research I aim to study the social integration and socialisation of the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women and how it impacts their performance in education and employment.

"The Fourth National Survey of Ethnic Minorities in 1997 found that only four per cent of Bangladeshi and 28 percent of Pakistani women aged 45-64 years spoke English fluently or well". Looking at the age range, we could say that this set of data is most likely representing the first generation immigrants and thus establishes the fact that there will be a difference in the use of a primary language between the first and second generation. The curriculum will also seem to be quite unfamiliar to the parents that affects the supervision children receive at home. An indifference towards the education of the children can be influenced not just by the cultural values of the parents but also the unfamiliarity with the curriculum. The difficulty in using their mother tongue as a first language, coupled with the difficulty of performing well at school due to the parents' difficulty in speaking English results in the underachievement in education and in later years' employment. The second generation immigrants can have a difficulty in using their mother tongue as the primary language. Living in the UK would require the use of English in the outside world which includes the school which forms a primary agent of their socialisation. Not being well versed in the mother tongue can create a gap between the parents and the children that in turn shapes the lives of the second generation immigrants. "When parents remain foreign monolinguals as their children shift to English, conditions are created for internecine family conflict and loss of parental authority" (Portes, 2010, pg 891).

Language, culture, ethnicity, identity, social perceptions jointly impact the socialisation of the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women. My preliminary research and work experience has evidenced that these factors may influence the performances of the women in education. This has led me to question if social justice can be achieved through education.

## **Conclusion**

Generally, the Bangladeshi and Pakistani population have a lower performance in education but the issues that can explain this relates to cultural and ethnic identity. There is a lot being done to address the problem of underachievement in education that can simultaneously result in changes in their participation within the job market. The growing population also indicates that the Bangladeshi and Pakistani population are expected to contribute significantly to the growth of the country's economy. The lower performance in education has been explained by various factors which are created by the society. I have identified identity, socialisation and schooling to be the

contributing factors towards the lower performance of the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women in education, at this of my research.

Through my research I aim to bring forward the views of the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women. As a professional I have had the chance to work with them closely and taken short term initiatives in the form of community projects to support the women. These projects have empowered the women and helped them take the first step towards independent learning and community cohesion. The second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women have formed community groups where they share their views, opinions and problems and get a space to share ideas and knowledge. Community projects have come a long way to support minority ethnic residents in Brighton and Hove. By the end of my doctoral research I hope to answer the questions that I have raised leading towards the educational performances of the second generation Bangladeshi and Pakistani women.

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