"Choosing" their own Partners: South Asian Women's Lived Experiences and Responses to Intimate Partner and Familial Violence

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“Choosing” their own Partners: South Asian Women’s Lived Experiences and Responses to Intimate Partner and Familial Violence

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Abstract

Discourses specific to South Asian women's experiences of marriage tend to primarily focus on arranged marriages (Pande 2016, 2014), and especially its coupling with forced marriage (Siddiqui 2003b) and honour based violence (Siddiqui 2011). Black Feminists have highlighted how this coupling is not binary and that there exists a complexity in women's experiences across the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage (Anitha and Gill 2009, Gill and Hamed 2016) and where forced marriage is situated within the "Continuum of Violence" (Siddiqui 2013). This thesis looks beyond arranged and forced marriage by examining South Asian women's transgressions of social norms of marriage by choosing their own partners together with their experiences of intimate partner and familial violence. A qualitative research approach used Black Feminist Standpoint Epistemology employing intersectional analysis to give voice to South Asian women's experiences and an insight into the workings of gendered control at the intersections of gender, age, poverty, religion, education, citizenship and culture. The study involved detailed narrative/interviews with fifteen women who had chosen their own partners and experienced domestic violence.

A thematic analysis determined key themes; women's experiences of concurrent familial and intimate partner violence; women's agency and the absence of fathers in their lives. Choosing a partner becomes the very barrier to leaving that violent relationship. In what I term the "see-saw of power", women's responses consisted of resistance and resilience to power from multiple perpetrators, in different situations. Women cited familial violence, over intimate partner violence, as the biggest site of trauma which for some women resulted in the rejection of their heritage. This all points to a spiral of survival, rather than a continuum of violence, where the women's responses of resilience and resistance to familial and intimate partner violence centres on their survival and that of their children. Black Feminist Standpoint Epistemological approach demonstrated the complexity of women's experiences of choosing their own partners and the need for more qualitative studies in this subject area.

Key words: Black Feminist Standpoint Epistemology, Intersectionality, Continuum of Violence, South Asian Women, Power, Agency, Domestic Violence

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“I think it is important that we speak and get heard”. These are the words of a participant that stayed with me throughout this research, and it is here that I wish to start with my thanks and appreciation. Without the participants’ support and willingness to share their experiences, this research would not have been possible.

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Glossary

BFT – Black Feminist Theory is a feminist epistemology rooted in Black women's lived experiences and their knowledge. It includes the exploration and understanding of Black women's oppression through multiple social locations including gender, class, race, and sexuality.

BME – Black and Minority Ethnic is the term ascribed to people in the UK of non-white descent (Institute of Race Relations 2018).

Ethnicity or Ethnic Group – Members of a group who share a common heritage through language, culture, religion, and ancestry (Institute of Race Relations 2018).

Karva Chauth - a custom observed by married women in Northern India. They fast for one day to ensure the safety and longevity of their husbands. Part of the ritual is to move the thali (tray) in circular motions in front of the husband.

LGBT – is an acronym used to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people (Stonewall 2017)

Race – a social construct, is the division of humans on the basis of physical characteristics (Institute of Race Relations 2018).

Racism – Discrimination, physical and abusive behaviour conducted through a belief that groups or "races" of people are superior to others. An organisation's discrimination through practices and policies is referred to as institutional racism, and a distinction is made from State racism, which is the way in which laws (such as immigration laws) and procedures discriminate against BME people (Institute of Race Relations 2018).

South Asian – (as used in this research) refers to people whose ethnic heritage derives from countries within the Indian subcontinent: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan.

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Context

Marriage is considered as one of the most significant of intimate relationships (Chantler 2014). The practice of arranged marriage is prevalent amongst diasporic South Asian[1] groups in the UK (Pande 2014, Siddiqui 2000). Black Feminist epistemology has highlighted South Asian women's specific experiences of marriage including arranged marriage (Pande 2016, 2014) and their specific experiences of domestic violence including forced marriage (Siddiqui 2013). The focus of critique has been on the complexity of South Asian women's experiences across the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage (Anitha and Gill 2009, Gill and Hamed 2016). South Asian women's experiences of forming autonomous intimate relationships of choice are largely overlooked and not generally interfaced with the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage. The Continuum of Violence (Kelly 1988) refers to the range and prevalence of violence that women can experience in their daily lives. South Asian women's experiences of forced marriage and honour based violence are part of their experiences of the Continuum of Violence (Siddiqui 2013).

The focus for this research is South Asian women who live in the UK and who have grown up with social norms of marriage that include arranged marriage. They transgressed these social norms to form an intimate relationship, which may include marriage, with a partner who was then violent in the relationship. In addition the women may have also experienced domestic violence from their families. As well as acknowledging South Asian women's experiences of specific forms of domestic violence, key to this research is the recognition in the literature that the perpetrators can be their family members as well as their partners. In this study, the research covers women's experiences of the Continuum of Violence from their families as well as from their intimate partners.

Choice, coercion, and consent are the foundations that lie at the heart of forming intimate relationships in social, policy, and legal discourses (Enright 2009, Wilson 2007, Anitha and Gill 2009, Stark 2007). Black Feminism has brought attention to the varying degrees of choice, coercion, and consent that can influence women's agency in forming intimate

[1] The term 'South Asian' as used in this research refers to people whose ethnic heritage derives from countries within the Indian subcontinent: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bhutan.

relationships (Anitha and Gill 2009, Siddiqui 2014). Such differing manifestations can spill over from forming an intimate relationship to experiences of domestic violence. Women's experiences of power within families especially on the subject of marriage are complex, due to the power struggles between women and their families (Anitha and Gill 2009, Gill and Brah 2014, Wilson 2006). Power manifests through subtleties of coercion which can result in differential power women have in relation to their family and their intimate partner. Women's responses to power, their agency, and their negotiation with families and with intimate partners are to be explored in the context of women's lives (Mahmood 2005, Patel, P. 2003a) and the social constraints they face (Anitha and Gill 2009). Given that choice, consent, coercion, power, agency, and negotiation run through women's experiences of forming intimate relationships and can also span into their experiences of domestic violence, the focus for this research is the bridge between these two "sets" of experiences. Women can experience domestic violence, on a continuum, with subjugation from families and intimate partners. This research brings together these two areas of women's lives but specifically looks at the overlap between them, where choice, consent, coercion, power, agency, and negotiation influence both.

Black Feminist epistemology is used to explore and understand South Asian women's experiences of the complexity of power and control when forming intimate relationships and also their experiences of familial and intimate partner violence. Hence the importance of an epistemological position to make representative, knowledge produced by South Asian women, about their lives (Collins 2000a). Black Feminist epistemology provides a new understanding and knowledge by acknowledging how South Asian women are at the margins of society and then centring them in the research through their own voices (Collins 2000a). Before explaining in further detail, the reason for underpinning this research using a Black Feminist epistemological approach, the aim and objectives of the research are described, and the relevance of this study given.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to critically examine, through a Black Feminist lens, South Asian women's lived experiences of transgressing social norms of marriage, with a view to understanding their negotiation in responding to the consequences they faced, as a result of such transgressions, and hence, to inform service delivery practice in the field of domestic violence. The objectives are:

1. To examine, through their own voices, South Asian women's lived experiences of choosing their own partners using Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology, with intersectionality as an analytical tool.

2. To discuss South Asian women's negotiation and responses of resilience and resistance to power within the Continuum of Violence from both the intimate partner and the family.

3. To evaluate South Asian women's own narratives of forming an intimate relationship and their negotiation in response to familial and intimate partner violence and their reflections on their experiences.

4. To provide evidence-based recommendations to service delivery agencies and practitioners.

1.3 Relevance of this Research

Much of current feminist scholarship focuses on the web of intricacies of domestic violence (Brown, Brady and Letherby 2011, Thiara and Gill 2010a). South Asian women's specific experiences of marriage, including arranged marriage, have been extensively researched (Pande 2016, 2014). Research also exists on their specific experiences of domestic violence, including forced marriage (Siddiqui 2013). Much scholarship has focussed on understanding the complexity of South Asian women's experiences of marriage and domestic violence by examining their experiences of choice, coercion, and consent within the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage (Anitha and Gill 2009, Gill and Hamed 2016). Very little attention has been paid to South Asian women within the diaspora in the UK who have transgressed social norms of marriage, such as arranged marriage, and chosen their own partners. Furthermore, scholarship has highlighted that there can be multiple perpetrators of domestic violence towards South Asian women, by examining familial violence such as honour based violence (Siddiqui 2011) or domestic violence from the partner (Gill 2004). Very few studies have examined how women can experience both familial violence and intimate partner violence at the same time. This research brings together all these threads into one study, by researching South Asian women living in the UK, who have transgressed social norms of marriage, by choosing their intimate partners and who have also experienced intimate partner and familial violence. Firstly I set out the theoretical framework that underpins the ontological assumptions and epistemological position of this research.

1.4 The Colour of Feminism

This section employs feminist epistemology (Letherby 2003, Stanley and Wise 1993). A number of "epistemological approaches" (Collins 2000a: 286) are engaged and the suitability of Black Feminist epistemology to interpret South Asian women's own voices of their experiences within an understanding of the context of their lives (Collins 2000a) is explored. It is noted that whilst many scholars use the term Black Feminist Theory (Mirza 2015, Collins 2000a) Black Feminist Theory comprises of a range of Black Feminist epistemologies (Reynolds 2002, Collins 2000a). I will be using the term Black Feminist epistemology to signify the epistemological approaches of Black Feminist scholarship taken in this research to engage with the critical examination of South Asian women's experiences of choosing their own partners and subsequent experiences of domestic violence.

The ontological view comprises a reality of the world in which women's experiences are situated within historical, cultural, and social contexts (Stanley and Wise 1993). Constructionism conveys how "social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors" (Bryman 2016:29). The ontological position of South Asian women, their intimate relationships, and their experiences of domestic violence all warrant a constructivist lens that underlies how agency in forming relationships and marriages, is being continually revised.

Scholars have explained that a researcher's ontological assumptions inform the epistemological stance which in turn influences the methodological approach appropriate to the research (Holden and Lynch 2004, Blaikie 2007). But this is not completely straightforward. Stanley and Wise (1993: 47) maintain that the "'masculinist world view'" is entrenched as the only scientific way to understand social reality. Therefore feminist epistemology is important for feminism in effectively challenging traditional discourses and ways of working. They go on to define feminist theory as "a set of beliefs but also a set of theoretical constructions about the nature of women's oppression and the part that this oppression plays within social reality more generally" (Stanley and Wise 1993: 64). Power relations influence women's agency and negotiation in their choice of intimate partner in the context of the spectrum of marriage practices. Researching the complexity of South Asian women's subjectivity and agency requires an understanding of their social and cultural settings, especially in relation to gender, class, race, and sexual oppression, and so feminist epistemology lends itself to the study of South Asian women's location

of gendered subjectivity within power relations, structurally, within the family, and in relation to their intimate partner.

Feminists have articulated how feminism and feminist epistemologies are rooted in social change and emancipatory knowledge of women's lives and subjugated experiences (Collins 2000a, hooks 1981, Harding 1986, Letherby 2003, Stanley and Wise 1993) and so feminist epistemological knowledge is derived from the perspectives of women, "the situated knower" (Anderson 2017). With this in mind, the three main feminist epistemologies that have been developed, namely Feminist Empiricism, Feminist Postmodernism, and Feminist Standpoint Theory, are explained before the exposition of the reasons for the epistemological position taken for this research. Harding (1986), in her critique of the dominant scientific theories and approaches, sets out three main feminist epistemologies, as outlined below.

1.4.1 Feminist Empiricism

Harding (1986) defined Feminist Empiricism through questioning the way in which scientific research is produced, arguing that male biases in science result in "bad" science, but that they can be overcome by adhering strictly to empiricist methods and norms for producing scientific research. Feminist Empiricism has developed since Harding's definition, where "bad" science is considered too simple an explanation, and promotion of scientific research methods has become the norm (Grasswick 2016). Feminist Empiricism has many manifestations, which can include social and political contexts for scientific research (Hundleby 2012), evaluating assumptions held, and placing objectivity within scientific communities rather than with individual scientists and thereby reducing individual biases (Intemann 2010).

I argue that Feminist Empiricism is fundamentally a positivist approach with emphasis on facts, data, evidence, and objectivity within research (Hundleby 2012). Core themes of coercion, control, and choice run through the spectrum of marriage practices and domestic violence, highlighting the complex and fluid nature of South Asian women's experiences. The emphasis for this research is on women's own narratives about their partner choice and their experiences of domestic violence at the hands of their intimate partners and possibly their families too, due to perceived transgressions of socially sanctioned codes of marriage. Therefore "objectivity" within research is more akin to a scientific approach, which I argue would not provide a deeper understanding into women's own experiences and the complexity of those experiences resulting from forces of patriarchal power and pressure. Although a question has emerged whether women

choosing their own partners influences their decision to leave the abusive relationship due to social and family pressures, this is not a core hypothesis to be tested in the research but a means from which to explore and understand women's experiences and their agency. I have not used an empirical framework for this research because an empirical approach takes a positivist stance and my study is based on qualitative empirical research. As such, a positivist approach would not have centred women's own voices reflecting the complexity of their experiences.

1.4.2 Feminist Postmodernism

Postmodernism questions whether there is one true, objective reality. Influential postmodernist thinker Lyotard (1984) rejected theories like Marxism in what he referred to as "grand narratives" used to explain the social world of heterogeneous groups of people. Instead "knowledge is contextual, historically situated, and discursively produced" and human behaviour is socially determined where people "are constituted within networks of power and knowledge" (Gannon and Davies 2012: 71). Postmodern research approach as the "task of re-situating the human subject … who is constituted through particular discourses in particular historical moments" (Gannon and Davies 2012: 71).

Feminist Postmodernism rejects theories that advocate a universal reality that is dominated by one group and instead supports multiple perspectives, which are fluid where no-one dominates (Anderson 2017: 13). However it does not explain how social categories of race, class, and gender are influenced by structural powers (Agger 1991). By advocating that there are many truths and none are more privileged than others poses a problem because it means feminist knowledge of women's oppression is on an equal footing with other knowledge produced about women's oppression (Letherby et al. 2013: 86). A further criticism of Feminist Postmodernism is that the focus is on differences between perspectives, rather than commonalities of experiences (Anderson 2017). This reference to sameness and difference is not necessarily straightforward and is too simplistic because dominant groups can exist within oppressed groups (Collins 2000), reflecting relational power bases. In her nuanced understanding of difference and sameness Crenshaw states, "it is fairly obvious that treating different things the same can generate as much inequality as treating the same things differently" (Crenshaw 1997: 285). This research will examine the influence of power, both in social pressures and in structural forces, and how it influences women's experiences. It is the examination of power within multiple categories rather than difference and sameness

(Collins 2000a) that aids understanding of women's experiences of relational power with the intimate partner, the family, and the community. Although Feminist Postmodernism does support multiple categories there is less emphasis on the intersections of these categories and how power plays its part, which is an important element in this research. A postmodern approach has not been adopted for this research. It builds on some of the critiques within postmodernism, including understanding women's experiences within their social context and the deconstruction of concepts of power and agency.

1.4.3 Feminist Standpoint Epistemology

Feminist Standpoint Epistemology gives prominence to women's experiences which lead to a view (i.e. a "standpoint") critiqued through feminist theory and political struggle (Harding 1986) and so the theory claims an "epistemic privilege" (Anderson 2017). Feminist Standpoints project the perspectives of the subjugated (Harding 1986). It expounds the situated knowledge where women's social location influences their experiences and how they view the world (Intemann 2010). According to Harding (2012), research that has as its core the daily lives of women, theoretically produces more comprehensive accounts of social life. Harding (2012) maintains that Standpoint research provides "themes", including the way knowledge and power are linked, how people's agency is linked to social structures, and where they are in such societal hierarchies. Harding (2012) acknowledges society's hierarchical organisation of social categories including race, gender, and class. Many feminists' epistemological position has been Feminist Standpoint in order to give voice, in particular to "marginalised experiences" when researching gender-based violence (Skinner, Hester and Malos 2005: 14); to position the participants as the experts in the knowledge of the experience of choosing an intimate partner and then experiencing domestic violence (McCarry 2005); to empower the participants and inform policy and service delivery (Hague and Mullender 2005).

A major criticism of Feminist Standpoint epistemology is that the perspective of one group can overshadow other groups, therefore conveyed as "more real, more accurate and better than that of others", potentially suppressing other voices (Letherby et al. 2013: 85). Furthermore, "Any standpoint position brings with it the danger of viewing a group of people as all the same" (Letherby et al. 2013: 85). In her study of "involuntary childlessness" and "infertility", Letherby (2002) shows the complexities and differences of women experiencing infertility. The collective standpoint was women experiencing loss and grief but they had individual experiences of living their infertility. Taking this

further, Letherby's (2003: 46) comment on Feminist Standpoint Epistemology is that not all women identify with other women solely on gender. Social categories such as race, faith, age, disability, sexual orientation, as well as class are forms of oppression that affect women's lived experiences and hence form a particular standpoint. Letherby's (2003: 57) critical point is women share exploitation, oppression and inequality "but women are not all oppressed in the same way".

Standpoint approach can be non-essentialist, recognizing women as a heterogeneous group with their own experiences and perspectives (Letherby et al. 2013, Letherby 2003). The epistemological approach in this research is of standpoint but one that represents South Asian women who experience familial and intimate partner violence but recognizes the women experience gendered violence in different ways due to their age, their poverty, their faith, their race and ethnicity.

The two main ideas behind Feminist Standpoints epistemology, the epistemic privilege or advantage and the situated knowledge, are key to understanding South Asian women's lived experiences in transgressing social norms of marriage by choosing their own partners and their experiences of specific forms of domestic violence, from multiple perpetrators, including from the intimate partner, and from the family. These experiences in their daily lives warrant the argument that South Asian women have epistemic privilege and situated knowledge in these areas. A standpoint approach, which focuses on race or ethnicity supports the centring of South Asian women's experiences and illuminates how meaning is brought within the social and cultural contexts of their lives. It provides a framework for understanding how women's lives are influenced by structures of power. Thus the voices of South Asian women, as situated knowers with epistemic privilege, are accorded space within this thesis by embracing Feminist Standpoint Epistemology. It does this by emphasising the role of race, ethnicity, culture, and faith within Black women's own narratives of their lives. Black Feminist epistemology upholds both of these main ideas within Feminist Standpoints epistemology and provides Black Feminist perspectives.

1.5 Russian Dolls or Chess Pieces: The Case for Black Feminist Standpoint Epistemology

Feminist scholarship cites the emergence and understanding of violence against women rooted in second-wave feminism and women's activism in the 1970s (Beetham 2012). It cannot be an understatement to point out how Black Feminists have long argued that

Black women's experiences have been erased, omitted, or not considered within the generic project of feminism (Carby 1982, Amos and Parmar 1984, hooks 1981, Lorde 1996). Put robustly, "Black feminism is not white feminism in blackface. Black women have particular and legitimate issues which affect our lives as Black women, addressing those issues does not make us any less Black" (Lorde 1996: 113). So to explain the phrase "Russian dolls or chess pieces" in the title of this section, I draw on Collins (2000: vii), who states "I have deliberately chosen not to begin with feminist tenets developed from the experiences of white, middle-class, Western women and then insert the ideas and experiences of African-American women", where the larger dolls refer to white feminist theories and the smaller dolls inside refer to Black Feminist theories; and by contrast the chess pieces refer to the similarities and differences on an equal epistemological footing between Black Feminist theories and epistemologies and other feminist epistemologies.

Specific features of Black Feminist Standpoint Epistemology include opposing oppression, particularly at the intersections of social locations, the empowerment of women, and the connection between experience and consciousness which feeds into scholarship and activism (Collins 2000a). The universal essentialist construction of "woman" which excludes Black women (Collins 1990) provides common ground with other oppressed groups who have similar objectives including women of colour (Collins 2000a). Black Feminist Theory is not confined to African American women alone (Collins 2000a) and so South Asian women are included within the Black Feminist project and share the common ground of exclusion within feminism (Bhavnani and Coulson 2005).

The sharing of common ground and inclusion of heterogeneous groups of Black women, points to the acknowledgement that there many perspectives within Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology or indeed standpoints. Reynolds (2002) argues that certain experiences (victimhood of Black women with respect to racism and sexism) are privileged over others and indeed certain demographics of Black women, African-American women, are given centre stage. This results in "an essentialized and reductionist image of black womanhood" (Reynolds 2002: 603) and so "…black feminist standpoint must take a more contextual, more reflexive, and locally based approach to understanding black women's lives so that the scope, complexities and diversity of black women's lives can be successfully captured" (Reynolds 2002: 604).

The call for more inclusivity within Black Feminist Standpoint Epistemology emphasizes Collins' (2000) argument that centring Black women's experiences shows the complexity

of experiences or perspectives and are not static where one group can be replaced by another but are fluid and show the theorising from "multiple angles of vision" (Collins 2000a: 25). Collins argues that focusing and including Black women's experiences not only gives us new knowledge but affords us "new ways of thinking about such knowledge" and that "intersectionality constitutes an interpretive framework that can be seen as one outcome of such centering" (Collins 2000b: 44). Collins centres African American women. I have chosen to centre stage South Asian women living in the UK. By centring their experiences of familial and intimate partner violence and recognizing that women experience such violence in different and individual ways, offers new thinking of intersectional frameworks for analysis.

By focusing on this cohort of women and their experiences, new knowledge is produced but also the thinking behind how the production of such knowledge is generated. I am not replacing African American women with another group, South Asian women in the UK, but utilising a framework that incorporates an intersectional analysis, that is the thinking behind how the knowledge is created in this study. My use of Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology is not to infer a static homogenous, not fluid, one size fits all but to convey a version of Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology that centres the experiences of South Asian women living in the UK and their experiences of intimate partner and familial violence.

To convey these women's standpoint, still allows for the specific angle of vision from which to interrogate the multiple sites of oppression the women occupy. This then highlights the complexities of how women's experiences are intertwined and affected by their ethnicity, as part of the diaspora in the UK, as women, as poor women, as young women, as girls, of a religious background. The women share exploitation and oppression as a cohort in this study and with other women from ethnic minority backgrounds. The use of Black Feminist Standpoint approach is to illustrate the collective oppression as a group but also to detail that which is distinctive and specific to this cohort of women.

Black British Feminists "reveal o*ther ways of knowing* that challenge the normative discourse" (Mirza 1997a: 5) and through their diversity as Black British women "reveal the distorted ways in which dominant groups construct their assumptions" (Mirza 1997a: 5). Black Feminist epistemology provides the paradigmatic shift from universality of "woman" to enable the deconstruction of the concept of "South Asian woman" in terms of the social locations she occupies and then reconstruction, with new understanding

and knowledge of the lived experiences of South Asian women, which is not wholly based on tropes that replicate notions of victimhood nor essentialism such as that personified by the veil (Gill and Brah 2014).

Collins (2000) makes a link between the everyday knowledge and actions of African American women and the specialised knowledge produced by Black intellectuals. The two are interdependent because they influence one another. For a researcher, the epistemological position is to make more representative the knowledge produced and created by South Asian women, and to produce representative accounts of their lives and experiences. "The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish" (Spivak 1988: 308); this is a call to arms for women researchers to do justice to the subjects studied – an epistemological call to arms. The response to the call is to utilise Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology to explain and give prominence to a form of knowledge produced by South Asian women about how they locate their experiences of choosing an intimate partner and then their responses to intimate partner and familial violence. Black Feminist Standpoints provide new understandings and knowledge by acknowledging how South Asian women are at the margins of society and then centring them in the research through their own voices (Collins 2000a).

The sum of these arguments is that Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology underpins this research through giving voice to South Asian women, a marginalised group within society. The epistemological stance seeks to create a "South Asian-centric" feminist sensibility within Black Feminist Standpoints. Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology recognises and theorises via this "special angle of vision that Black women bring to the knowledge-production process" (Collins 1990: 21), which can serve the authenticity and diversity of South Asian women's voices which are sought in this research. Researching South Asian women's subjectivity and agency requires an understanding of their social and cultural settings. Black Feminist Standpoint lends itself to the "angle of vision" (Collins 2000a: 12) through which South Asian women see their world, from their perspectives, or standpoint, arising from their lived experiences of transgressing social norms by choosing their own intimate partner and of intimate partner and familial violence within the context of power and gendered norms.

In this thesis I will be using Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology with intersectionality to engage with the interpretation of South Asian women's experiences of choosing their own partners and subsequent experiences of domestic violence. Section 2.5 provides a

more detailed discussion on the use of intersectionality. I provide a briefer account here for context. Black Feminist scholarship is rooted in understanding, exploring and analysing Black women's experiences of race and gender (Davis 1981, hooks 1981, Lorde 1996, Guy-Sheftall 1995, The Combahee River Collective 1995). Black women's experiences are located in multiple axes of oppression including age, race, faith, sexuality, as well as gender. Analysing Black women's experiences of gender alone does not capture the totality nor the depth of understanding of their experiences. Crenshaw (1991) argued that multiple axes of oppression do not operate as separate entities of oppression in Black women's lives. They are co-constitutive and so cannot be separated out for analysis (Collins and Bilge 2016) which is why it is pertinent to use intersectionality in this research to analyse South Asian women's experiences of intimate partner and familial violence because they occupy multiple axes of oppression.

1.6 Thesis Outline

Chapter 2 engages with scholarship on the discourse and debates on the two main threads to this research; those of marriage and of domestic violence, hence the title "The Lie of the Land". The section "The Spectrum of Marriage", explores feminist scholarly work on the complexity of South Asian women's experiences along a spectrum of marriage that includes a range of autonomous choice at one end, through arranged marriage, with forced marriage at the other end. Family and intimate relationships are at the core of the prevalence of domestic violence that South Asian women can experience (Patel, P. 2003b, Patel 1997, Siddiqui 2003a, Gill 2004). The literature on the concept of the Continuum of Violence (Kelly 1988) is useful here with the aim to cover and extend current discourses on South Asian women's experiences along the continuum (Kelly 2015a, Siddiqui 2013). South Asian women's experiences of specific forms of domestic violence are situated at the intersections of multiple social categories (Pande 2014) and so intersectionality is employed to provide an in-depth understanding of how they work together to oppress women; beyond the understanding that a single-axis, gender-only interpretation would achieve (Siddiqui 2013, Collins and Bilge 2016). There then follows the conceptual framework for this thesis, which incorporates the focus of this research: the overlap between forming an intimate relationship or marriage and experiencing violence on a continuum from the intimate partner and the family, underpinned by Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology with intersectionality.

The research encompasses a qualitative approach to the research design and this is detailed in Chapter 3, "Research Methodology". Research methods for data collection,

including one-to-one and group interviews and case studies, are described including the use of social media to recruit South Asian women who have chosen their own partners and experienced domestic violence; a group of women considered a "hidden' population". I describe the coding process and the use of thematic analysis to determine the themes to be explored in the findings/analysis chapters. Feminist research is a strong advocate of reflexivity and hence I have acknowledged my positionality as a South Asian woman researching a cohort of South Asian women. My reflexive account details elements of my position as a former practitioner in the field of domestic violence, which provides a lens into the way I conducted the research, such as the types of questions asked and how I interpreted the data from the fieldwork.

The thesis then presents the empirical findings within the overall examination of the aim in the next three chapters using Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology and intersectionality to interpret and analyse women's experiences. Chapter 4, "The See-saw of Power", demonstrates the effects of power on women's lives and how oppression works through power, at the intersection of multiple social categories. The forces of power through patriarchy are explored by examining women's experiences of familial and intimate partner violence on a continuum. It is the fluidity of power that is the core focus of this chapter. In response to intimate partner and familial violence women can assert control over their lives and so are empowered and at the same time can experience subjugation and are subordinate to power.

Power cannot be discussed without "agency" and "choice", the subject of Chapter 5, "Making Connections – Choice and Agency in Forming Intimate Partner Relationships". The women participants' acts and decisions are explored within the context of social and structural constraints. How women made sense of choice within a gendered socialisation of marriage is explored. The influences of key events that occurred in their earlier lives and then go on to affect their decisions when forming intimate relationships are examined. This chapter also explores women's own reflections on their choices and agency situated within the social norms of marriage that they had grown up with. Women's experiences of choice and agency in forming an intimate relationship within the context of the gendered social and cultural constraints of their lives are examined. The chapter explores how women's experiences of choosing an intimate partner conform to the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage.

To understand how the culmination of power that women experienced, their agency, and their reflections on choice of partner and negotiation of familial and intimate partner

violence, Chapter 6, “Through the Looking Glass: Resistance, Resilience and Identity” presents three case studies of South Asian women who have exited violent intimate relationships. The case studies detail their perspectives on their experiences of intimate partner and familial violence and show the complexity of their responses to the violence they experienced due to their transgressions of social norms. The women’s responses to their religion, culture, and community are explored. The women’s narratives concern their gendered socialisation, the power structures that worked through multiple axes of their gender, age, faith, and culture, and the effect on their agency. The women also talked about their perspectives on future partners, on marriage, faith, and their roles as mothers.

This ends the empirical section of the thesis. The final chapter, Chapter 7 “Discussion and Conclusions” draws on the themes that derived from the women’s narratives and gives space to the new areas of knowledge produced. The research has taken further the critique of the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage to suggest the fluidity and complexity of women’s lived experiences when choosing an intimate partner that is currently omitted from the spectrum. This thesis focusses on women choosing their own partners and their experiences of both intimate partner and familial violence. The two main areas explored are those of forming intimate relationships and women’s experiences of violence on a continuum from family and intimate partner. This chapter discusses how these two areas merge in women’s lives. The concept of the see-saw of power has been introduced (in Chapter 4) to understand and analyse women’s experiences and responses to a fluidity of power that is a consequence of the multiple simultaneous situations they may find themselves in. The intersectional analysis of South Asian women’s experiences of power at multiple social axes including gender, age, culture, poverty, and faith demonstrates how researching gender alone omits understanding of other axes of oppression that women experience and which cannot be separated out. Therefore to omit consideration of other axes is to omit understanding of elements of women’s lived experiences. For example, the intersectional analysis provides a more nuanced understanding of how mothers and daughters can experience oppression at the same time but in different ways. The culmination of the new areas of knowledge feed into a revised conceptual framework. A number of evidence-based recommendations are given for service provision for supporting women who have chosen their own partners and areas for future research. The thesis ends with the core tenet of this research, with the women’s voices reflecting on the research and their experiences.

1.7 Conclusions

The aim of this thesis is to explore South Asian women's experiences of transgressing social norms of marriage to form intimate relationships and their experiences of violence within the intimate relationships as well as familial violence. The study brings together two significant subject areas of scholarship relating to South Asian women that of forming intimate relationships and that of the Continuum of Violence. The women's voices show how complex their experiences can be when these two areas converge in their lives. The next chapter reviews the literature and begins with an exploration of the current scholarship pertaining to South Asian women, marriage, and domestic violence.

Chapter 2 The Lie of the Land

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 1 set out the reasons for using Black Feminist Standpoint as the epistemological framework for understanding South Asian women's experiences of forming intimate partner relationships of choice. The title of this chapter covers its essence, to detail the current discourses and debates relevant to South Asian women who have transgressed social norms and chosen their own intimate partners. Social and cultural norms prescribe how intimate relationships are formed within boundaries of ethnicity, faith, gender, and class and where partner choice may be situated anywhere along the spectrum from a collective familial decision to an individual's decision. Anitha and Gill (2009) argue that researching one particular group to uncover the specificity of their experiences aids understanding and informs responses to the specific forms of violence that women may experience. For some South Asian women, partner choice can be a potential arena of abuse and violence (Amos and Parmar 1984, Dustin and Phillips 2008, Anitha and Gill 2009, Siddiqui 2013).

Black British Feminists have long advocated the awareness of the specific experiences of domestic violence that South Asian women can experience, such as forced marriages (Patel 1997: 260, Brah 1996: 106). The focus of this chapter will, therefore, be on South Asian women who have formed an intimate relationship with a partner of their "choice" and who then go on to experience domestic violence within that intimate relationship and for some, violence from the family too. The cohort of women in this research will be South Asian women within the diaspora in the UK, of whom the majority are British citizens. It therefore follows that the chapter is divided into the conceptualisation of marriage, the conceptualisation of domestic violence, and then both conceptualisations are brought together.

The chapter begins with exploring the social norms of marriage and South Asian women's experiences of marriage including arranged marriage and forced marriage. The legal and social frameworks for these social norms are explored together with the context of the reality of South Asian women's experiences.

The chapter goes on to examine the specific forms of domestic violence that South Asian women can experience. Women's agency in "choice" of partner will be examined together with the power relations within the family, the community, and the intimate relationship itself. This research will explore South Asian women's agency in negotiating

social or cultural norms of “arranged marriage” with their families and communities. South Asian women’s experiences of familial and intimate partner violence form part of the Continuum of Violence which is the subject of the following section, examining how the Continuum of Violence applies to this cohort of women.

Part of this examination requires a deeper critique that goes beyond just looking at gender in order to investigate the social categories that influence South Asian women’s experiences of choosing their own partners and their subsequent experiences of familial and intimate partner violence. The understanding of the force of power through multiple social categories to oppress women is central to Black Feminist epistemology (hooks 1981, Lorde 1996, Collins 2000a, Mirza 2013). Intersectionality, born out of Black Feminist epistemology, (Crenshaw 1991), is justified as the analytical tool to gain a deeper understanding of how multiple axes of oppression subjugate women in their experiences of domestic violence including forced marriage (Mirza and Gunaratnam 2014, Siddiqui 2014, Anitha and Gill 2011).

The women in this study have chosen their own intimate partners and an area that is overlooked is the overlap between forming an intimate relationship and experiences of the Continuum of Violence from their family and their intimate partner. This study applies a Black Feminist framework with intersectionality to gain a deeper understanding of women’s experiences at this juncture: how their gender, age, faith, poverty, for example, work together to influence their agency in responding to domestic violence in different relationships and at different times. All these threads are brought together in section 2.6 which describes the conceptual framework from which to explore and interpret South Asian women’s experiences of transgressing social norms, choosing their own partners and experiencing violence in a continuum from their intimate partner and their family.

2.2 The Spectrum of Marriage

2.2.1 Human Rights and Marriage

The human rights of the people involved is fundamental to marriage. The United Nations have enshrined marriage within article 16 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

> (1) Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality, or religion, have the right to marry and to have a family. They are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution.

(2) Marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of the intending spouses. (United Nations 1948: 4–5)

The declaration regards consent and agreement to be central to the human rights of people entering marriage. Consent is a key feature of women's human rights in marriage. The UN international treaty *The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, article 16, clause b, states "The same right freely to choose a spouse and to enter into marriage only with their free and full consent" (Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights 1979: 6). Consent is therefore the cornerstone of recognition of entry into marriage.

The most often cited definition of marriage used in legal terms in the UK is from *Hyde v Hyde* (1866: 133): "the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others". "Voluntary" is necessary to the definition of consent and consent is an essential legal component of marriage legislation in the UK, featuring prominently (Gilmore and Glennon 2012: 27). All persons marrying have to give their consent. In England and Wales, for persons aged over 16 and under 18 consent is required from whomever has legal authority to give consent, such as the parent or legal guardian (Marriage Act 1949, s.3). If the person authorised does not give consent then upon application the court can override the refusal and give consent. In Scotland, parental or guardian consent is not required for anyone aged 16 or over (Marriage (Scotland) Act 1977, s.1). Consent and choice are significant to South Asian women's experiences of forming an intimate relationship or marriage because they form a large part of the women's experiences of adhering to or transgressing social norms of marriage: specifically arranged marriage and forced marriage. Consent and choice also form the distinction used within legal and policy frameworks between arranged marriage and forced marriage.

Legal and policy frameworks came to the fore in part due to media and public responses to cases such as that of Rukshana Naz (Siddiqui 2005). In 1998, Rukshana, a nineteen-year-old pregnant mother, was killed by her mother and brother after she refused to abort her baby. Rukshana wanted to divorce her husband, to whom she had been married at the age of fifteen, in order to marry her lover and the father of her unborn child (Hall 1999). Women's groups campaigned for a public inquiry into her death (Siddiqui 2005), and against this backdrop a Home Office Working Group on Forced Marriage was set up in 1999 with a remit to look at forced marriages within South Asian diasporic communities in the UK (Uddin and Ahmed 2000).

A definition of an arranged marriage is taken from the report published by the Working Group, entitled *A Choice by Right*:

> The families of both spouses take a leading role in arranging the marriage, but the choice whether to solemnise the arrangement remains with the spouses and can be exercised at any time. The spouses have the right to choose – to say no – at any time. In forced marriage, there is no choice (Uddin and Ahmed 2000: 10).

The report defines forced marriage as a "A marriage conducted without the valid consent of both parties, where duress is a factor" (Uddin and Ahmed 2000: 4). This shows how choice and consent are used to define arranged marriage and distinguish it from forced marriage, suggesting a clear-cut binary definition. The report marked a watershed where forced marriage was recognised as an abuse of human rights for the first time by the Government (Siddiqui 2013: 176).

Since then the definition of forced marriage has been reworked by the Government to recognise and expand on the notion of duress and where consent may not be within the capacity of the victim (Foreign and Commonwealth Office et al. 2010: 8). Consent and duress in this context are brought into line with consent and duress as inscribed in the Matrimonial Causes Act 1973 (Gill and Harvey 2017). The definition was further developed to recognise forced marriage as a human-rights abuse:

> A forced marriage is where one or both people do not (or in cases of people with learning disabilities, cannot) consent to the marriage and pressure or abuse is used. It is an appalling and indefensible practice and is recognised in the UK as a form of violence against women and men, domestic/child abuse, and a serious abuse of human rights (Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office 2017a).

The definition prescribes consent on entering the marriage and respect for human rights; the two essential elements within article 16 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (United Nations 1948: 4–5) as described earlier in this section, and it implicitly positions forced marriage as the binary opposite to arranged marriage. The definition also recognises that power and pressure to marry can be imposed on people.

The Government distinguished between forced and arranged marriage in order to avoid South Asian communities' perception of criticism of their practice of arranged marriage (Dustin and Phillips 2008: 410) and to gain support from community leaders (Phillips and Dustin 2004). However, it enforced the misleading concept of the dichotomous nature

of arranged and forced marriage where consent is the distinguishing factor between the two (Anitha and Gill 2009). Legal rulings also prescribed this binary notion of arranged marriage and forced marriage.

The case *NS v MI* (2006) was a significant development for the recognition of duress and lack of consent to a marriage. A young woman aged sixteen was taken to Pakistan under the pretext of a holiday. Her mother took her passport from her and a marriage was arranged despite protestations from the young woman. The marriage was never consummated. Upon her return to the UK the young person petitioned for the nullity of the marriage stating lack of consent as grounds. The court differentiated between forced marriage and arranged marriage (Douglas 2006) and ruled that she had been emotionally pressurised over a period of seven months. It also recognised that the partner in the marriage did not cause the fear nor acted to impose duress. According to Gilmore and Glennon (2012: 28) the recognition that a person's will was influenced by duress, and therefore not autonomous, made it easier for forced-marriage victims to obtain nullity of the marriage. This suggests that consent and choice are central to distinguishing between arranged marriages and forced marriages in legal discourse. Black Feminist scholarship does not advocate such a clear-cut view between arranged and forced marriages as a binary notion, as in legal and policy distinction, because it does not match the reality of the diversity of South Asian women's experiences of coercion and consent in relation to arranged and forced marriage (Siddiqui 2003a, Anitha and Gill 2009, Enright 2009, Pande 2014).

The Council of Europe convention, called the Istanbul Convention, has three overarching principles: preventing domestic violence, protecting victims, and prosecuting accused offenders. Article 37 instructs member states of the Council of Europe to "take the necessary legislative or other measures to ensure that the intentional conduct of forcing an adult or a child to enter into a marriage is criminalised" (Council of Europe 2011: 17–18). The criminalisation of forced marriage has been introduced within Europe as a way of controlling the flow of immigrants into Europe, propelled by the fear of "bogus marriages", where immigrants entering Europe are using marriage to obtain residency (Kool 2012). Siddiqui (2003b) argues that it is the responsibility of the State to protect women but the State's main interest and actions are in relation to immigration. Due to the "culturalisation" and "exoticisation" of violence against ethnic minorities, the gendered nature of power and women's inequality is undermined, with emphasis on culture or religion as the root cause (Siddiqui 2016). The subsequent concern is that

tighter immigrations controls could be the result, which feminists regard as race-based solutions shrouded in the pretext of tackling forced marriage (Siddiqui 2016).

After a consultation in 2011 (Home Office 2011) the Government concluded in 2012 that it would criminalise forced marriage (Gay 2015). Forced marriage and the breach of forced marriage protection orders became criminal offences in England, Wales, and Scotland in 2014 (Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, s.120-122). With public-spending cuts reducing BME women's domestic-violence service provision (Sandhu and Stephenson 2015), many women's groups contested the criminalisation of forced marriage, arguing that the Act did not provide protection for women to enable them to seek support and advice from agencies, especially due to austerity policies (Siddiqui 2013: 179).

Dominant discourses often situate arranged marriage in relation to forced marriage (Enright 2009, Bhopal 2011). The notions of choice and consent are endorsed in the definition of arranged marriage, and are utilised to provide a binary distinction between arranged and forced marriage within legal and policy frameworks. Black Feminists argue that this binary distinction does not reflect the subtle emotional pressures South Asian women can experience from their families when forming intimate relationships (Wilson 2007). Structural barriers such as immigration add to the complexity of choice and consent for South Asian women when entering marriage or intimate relationships. These frameworks do not operate in isolation and are linked to social and cultural norms of marriage and arranged marriage and the way women form intimate relationships.

2.2.2 Social Norms of Marriage

A social norm, according to Scott (2014: 519,) is defined as "a shared expectation of behaviour that is considered culturally desirable and/or appropriate". Marriage is one such social norm (Coontz 2005). Scott (2014: 441) states that "Marriage is traditionally conceived to be a legally recognized relationship, between an adult male and female, that carries certain rights and obligations". He goes on to express the liberal view to include cohabitation but exclude gay relationships. There was a change in law in England and Wales to introduce same-sex marriage (Marriage (Same Sex Couples) Act 2013) and within public discourse the term "same-sex marriage" is now widely used (Jowett 2014), reflecting the changing nature of marriage as a social norm.

Historically, heterosexual marriages were formed for economic and political reasons rather than individual desire or choice (Coontz 2005). Such marriages originated as a

way of combining support for organising daily life, raising a family, and providing a way of obtaining frequent sex (for men and women), and as such many societies throughout history did not view “love” as a valid basis for marriage (Coontz 2005). The “institution” of marriage has changed over time within the Western world, where specifically in Western Europe and North America from the eighteenth century people began to consider love as a basis for marriage where individuals chose their own partners (Coontz 2005). However, feminists have long advocated that marriage is a complex institution consisting of social norms and beliefs, defined roles, and differing locations of women’s experiences as a result of race, class, and sexual orientation and resulting inequality (Bernard 1982, Stanley and Wise 1993, hooks 2000, Christina 2002, Walby 2011).

However, heterosexual marriage as a social or cultural practice is universally accepted across the globe. The worldwide trends of marriage and cohabitation from 1970 to 2014 show that the majority of men and women still marry, although there is a global decline and the rate of cohabiting heterosexual couples is increasing (United Nations 2016). Marriage in the UK is still a strong tradition, although also declining (Office for National Statistics 2017). According to Lowe and Douglas (2015), the reasons for the declining trend in marriage are cohabitation of couples and the acceptance of same-sex relationships within society over time, which gives rise to people’s rights to marry and to choose whom they marry. Marriage, and more specifically arranged marriage, is still a prevalent tradition for South Asian women in the diaspora (Pande 2016).

2.2.3 The Practice of Arranged Marriage

Many scholars have highlighted the contrast between the individualistic notion of choosing a marriage partner in contemporary societies and the family-based system of influence in other parts of the world (Zaidi and Shuraydi 2002, Pande 2014). Family-based systems include “arranged marriages” as a way of affirming an intimate relationship. The social construct of arranged marriage is practised by many diasporic communities in the UK including Middle Eastern, Turkish, African, Chinese, Japanese, and Jewish communities as well as South Asian (Brah 1996, Siddiqui 2003a, Zaidi and Shuraydi 2002). The societal objective of arranged marriage is to secure and preserve status within family, kinship, and communities, which has meant that arranged marriage has been “a key instrument for economic, social, and political stability in South Asian communities” (Bhopal 2011: 434). Partners are selected on the basis of caste, religion, family wealth, and status (Bhopal 2011), with parents or other family members taking the lead role of administering and mediating the process and where prospective partners

can be encouraged to meet each other (Pande 2014). This definition is one understanding and practice of arranged marriage.

Arranged marriage, along with many social norms, is not a fixed entity; it evolves and changes (Pande 2014, Siddiqui 2003a). Experiences of arranged marriages within the South Asian diaspora also demonstrate this fluidity. In her study of women of the Indian diaspora, Bhopal (2011) found that they experienced different manifestations of arranged marriage. Bhopal (2011) distinguishes between "traditional arranged marriage" where South Asian women's experiences are enmeshed, although subordinate, to the needs of community and family, with adherence to notions of honour, and arranged marriages where women negotiate and exercise "varying degrees of choice" of partner whilst still meeting criteria of wealth and social status (Bhopal 2011: 443). Gill and Harvey (2017) also found differing perceptions and experiences of arranged marriage. In their study of British South Asian young people's attitudes and responses to forced marriage and the right to marry or not, they found that experiences of arranged marriage could also involve arranging a number of prospective partners to meet the parents and then the young people, in consultation with their parents decided on the most suitable partner. The use of technology to form intimate relationships illustrates the overlaps between romantic love and arranged marriage, where South Asian young people use internet dating to assess suitability of partner against criteria of race, religion, and social status (Chantler 2014). Mohee (2011) points out that an arranged marriage can provide a safeguard of family protection if a woman faces difficulties in the relationship. This highlights the fluid and complex nature of the practice and understanding of arranged marriage. It infers that people's understanding and experience of choice and consent in arranged marriage is also fluid and complex and may not necessarily be clear cut as the legal definition defines and requires.

2.2.4 Arranged Marriage and Forced Marriage Dichotomy

Arranged marriages can bring about multifaceted experiences and situations within families (Pande 2014). If social and cultural norms prescribe "arranged marriages", then the concepts of "choice" in a partner and "agency" in forming marriage or intimate relationships can be problematic for South Asian women (Wilson 2006, Anitha and Gill 2009), as stated in section 2.2.1. Wilson (2006) contends the problematic nature of the binary distinction between arranged and forced marriage for South Asian women. As women, interacting with their families around the subject of arranged marriage can be very complex and often subtle emotional pressures from families coerce women to

acquiesce in order to please their parents (Wilson 2006). Siddiqui (2003b: 76) claims that families justify forced marriage to "protect the interests of young people and to preserve religious and cultural heritage and a strong identity". The resulting reality is that many women feel there is no distinction between arranged and forced marriage (Siddiqui 2003a) and it can be a "grey area" (Phillips and Dustin 2004: 12) or a "fine line" (Siddiqui 2013: 171, Bhopal 2011: 435) between the two marriage practices. This reflects the subtleties that can exist around choice and consent for South Asian women. Multi-faceted experiences that influence choice can range from personal and family struggles to racism faced from agencies when seeking support (Anitha and Gill 2009). "Family-arranged marriage is often an arena of struggle, which may be emotional or physical, and is affected by a complex set of interacting issues, from emotional blackmail and low self-esteem to isolation and exclusion as a result of racism" (Wilson 2010: 64), and so South Asian women's experiences within families cannot be separated from wider structures of racism (Anitha and Gill 2009).

In addition to racism, some feminists highlight the contradictory nature of neoliberalism on the realities of South Asian women's lived experiences of violence within families. Neoliberalism holds that each person "is held responsible for and accountable for his or her own actions and well-being" (Harvey 2005: 65) and holds in high regard the protection of individual choice (Harvey 2005: 64). The UK Government's neoliberal ideology of the right to choose does not acknowledge how power relations within the family together with community pressure can result in no choice for South Asian women (Wilson 2006: 33), which results in a lack of recognition of their practical situation and leaves them vulnerable. In the eyes of the State there is the "protection" of the law but in reality the coercion from family and community can render women powerless, without agency (Anitha and Gill 2009). Enright (2009: 348) argues that "helping women to overcome cultural obstacles to free choice in marriage has not been matched by an equal commitment to tackling those barriers which are seen to originate 'outside culture'", and so the "liberal state" does not look at other factors intersecting with culture that curtail women's freedoms. "[T]his means that freedom of choice in marriage is facilitated only in the formal sense, while substantive support is sorely lacking" (Enright 2009:348).

Others argue that the dichotomy is situated within an essentialist view of deviant cultural values falling below standards of human rights which are practiced by the British majority (Enright 2009, Pande 2014). Enright (2009: 339) argues that culture is pathologised so that forced marriage is framed within the context of practices of imported foreign cultures

which positions forced marriage as a cultural issue rather than one of gender inequality. Culture is also used to dichotomise arranged and forced marriage in order to distinguish "between acceptable cultural diversity and unacceptable cultural difficulty" (Enright 2009: 340), where arranged marriage is viewed as a "legitimate cultural variation" in contrast to forced marriage which "is condemned by all communities" (Phillips and Dustin 2004: 6). The report *A Choice by Right* (Uddin and Ahmed 2000) led to the demonisation of South Asian women and Asian culture by the media, where South Asian women were portrayed as devoid of agency, less mature than their white peers, and helpless victims needing to be saved by the UK state (Wilson 2007: 32).

The UK state's approach is considered to be gendered, with a focus on transnational forced marriages, specifically UK South Asian women with men from South Asian countries (Wilson 2007: 32). In section 2.2.1 I discussed the UK State's focus on immigration controls as a way of tackling forced marriages, rather than focus on protection of women. Similarly, it is argued that there is a need to focus on arranged marriage and forced marriage but with less attention on forced marriage involving overseas spouses (Phillips and Dustin 2004: 30). Table 2-1 shows that UK cases of forced marriage were included in the statistics for the first time in 2014 and that previously the focus was on transnational marriages, with the overwhelming number of cases reported from Pakistan. For this research South Asian women in the diaspora may experience coercion into forced marriage to partners who are resident in the UK, as well as transnational forced marriages.

Year	Total No of Cases	UK %	Pakistan %	Bangladesh %	India %
2016	1428	11	43	8	6
2015	1220	14	44	7	6
2014	1267	23	38	7.1	7.8
2013	1302		42.7	9.8	10.9

Table 2-1: Cases of Forced Marriage 2012 to 2016 (Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Home Office 2017b)

These figures are taken from a larger set and only includes data relevant to the three highest volume countries, that is Pakistan, Bangladesh and India and so percentages do not add up to a hundred. Of the total number of cases in 2016, 43% related to a victim at risk of being taken to or who had been taken to Pakistan. For Bangladesh and India the figures were 8% and 6% respectively. A cautionary note: these figures only relate to

the cases that the Forced Marriage Unit (FMU) is aware of, and the true figure may be higher (Warnes 2014). The FMU's limited resources constrain its service provision for British women; a larger proportion of women tend to use the services of BME specialist services and even more do not access any type of service at all (Enright 2009: 346). Moreover Phillips and Dustin (2004: 19) argue that the lack of focus on forced marriages occurring between people who have settled in the UK results in little understanding of the complexities surrounding the comparisons of arranged marriage and forced marriage of UK residents, with arranged and forced marriage of those involved in transnational marriages.

This also means that the requirement of the legal framework for a specific distinction between arranged and forced marriage is problematic because it may not necessarily match the lived experiences of South Asian women. Thus legal free will in the context of arranged and forced marriage does not capture South Asian women's experiences of the subtle forms of coercion where consent "is constructed in the context of power imbalances and gendered norms" (Anitha and Gill 2009: 171). These differing experiences and understandings of arranged marriages highlight how a binary distinction between arranged and forced marriage does not match the lived experiences of South Asian women.

The fluid and complex nature of arranged marriage means that South Asian women can experience different manifestations of choice and consent. Subtleties of pressure on women by families illustrate how it can be difficult for women to distinguish between arranged marriage and forced marriage. This research will explore the diversity and complexity of South Asian women's experiences of arranged and forced marriage as social norms and their bearing on their decisions in choosing a partner.

2.2.5 The Spectrum of Arranged Marriage and Forced Marriage

Feminists have long referred to women's experiences of arranged and forced marriage that show the blurring of the boundaries between arranged and forced marriage as the "spectrum" of arranged marriage and forced marriage (Dustin and Phillips 2008, Wilson 2006). The spectrum refers to the range of experiences that women can face, at one end no exertion of pressure in the arranged marriage, and complete force and subjugation in forced marriage at the other end (Gill and Harvey 2017, Dustin and Phillips 2008, Wilson 2006). In her study of British Indians' practices of arranged marriage, Pande (2016: 390) identifies four practices which she collectively describes as the "spectrum of arranged marriage practices", as shown in Figure 2-1, illustrating fluidity in

choice and marriage arrangement. The four practices are “traditional arranged marriages, semi-arranged marriages, love-cum-arranged marriages, and arranged weddings, which make up the meaning of the term ‘arranged marriage’” (Pande 2016: 390).

Figure 2-1: The Spectrum of Arranged Marriage Practices (Pande 2016: 390)

At one end is the traditional arranged marriage, where members of the family, such as parents, arrange a “meeting”: in essence a social event for the would-be couple to meet with no dating. Semi-arranged marriage is where the partner is chosen in consultation with the family members and the couple meets; the match is made and then the couple dates for a certain period of time. In a love-cum arranged marriage partners meet by chance and the chosen partner has the parents’ approval. Arranged weddings represent the situation where, once a couple has fallen in love and decide to get married, the parents make the arrangements for the wedding and so “the parents’ role is restricted to providing their blessings to the couple with their financial support” (Pande 2016: 390).

Parental involvement reduces with each of the four practices, with most involvement in traditional arranged marriages and least in arranged weddings. Pande’s label “traditional arranged marriage” is the same term used by Bhopal, as mentioned earlier in section 2.2.3. According to Majumdar (2007) the label serves to enforce dichotomous notions of “traditional” versus ”modern”, where traditional is not progressive; Pande (2016) augments this with a love marriage versus arranged marriage dichotomy. Participants’ agency in partner choice is situated within marriage only. The boundaries between “love marriage” and “arranged marriage” are blurred. Pande (2016: 391) states that “a significant choice allowed to them by their parents and family members” regarding the type of marriage shows how parents are still seen to be holding the ultimate power. Parents enable the choice; they affirm the agency that follows the choice. Although not explicitly mentioned, there is an assumption that consent runs throughout this spectrum. In particular, that women give consent to all four types of marriage practices.

I have discussed how legal framework, social norms, and family pressures can invoke subtleties of choice and consent and how arranged marriage practices are fluid and changing. Figure 2-2 shows the arranged marriage and forced marriage spectrum as critiqued within Black Feminist scholarship. Although not shown explicitly in the figure it reflects a range of experiences reflecting many subtle manifestations of coercion, choice, and consent, where degrees of choice and consent are reduced moving from arranged marriage to forced marriage and gradations of coercion increase.

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Figure 2-2: The Spectrum of Arranged Marriage and Forced Marriage

Figure 2-3 represents the women in this research, who have chosen their own partners and so the spectrum is extended to reflect the further diversity of choice, coercion and consent in the way women form intimate relationships.

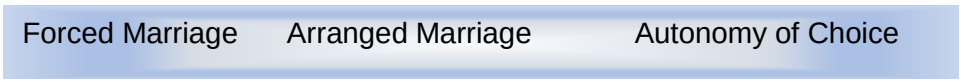

Figure 2-3: Extension of Spectrum of Arranged Marriage and Forced Marriage

Pande's spectrum of arranged marriage practices reflects the fluidity of the practice of arranged marriage and the different manifestations of choice. The focus for this research is a group of women who have chosen their own intimate partners and their experiences may sit along all three spectra. It therefore follows that all these spectra can be overlaid and extended to include the extent of the complexities of coercion, choice, and consent with respect to forming intimate relationships, including marriage, for South Asian women. Rather than focus on one type of marriage arrangement or practice, Figure 2-4 emphasises the range of women's experiences when forming intimate relationships. Women may have stepped outside social norms of arranged marriage and experienced sole autonomy in forming intimate relationships of choice at one end of the spectrum, and experienced forced marriage with no autonomous choice at the other end of the spectrum. This spectrum of forming intimate relationships, for South Asian women in the UK, includes varying degrees of coercion, choice, and consent. It brings together legal,

social, and cultural norms of marriage and how coercion, choice, and consent sit within those norms.

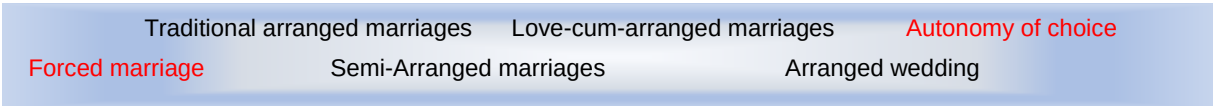

Figure 2-4: The Spectrum of Forming Intimate Relationships

The failure to capture the subtleties of South Asian women's experiences is perpetuated by the dichotomy of arranged marriage and forced marriage within legal and policy frameworks. Researching the realities of South Asian women's lived experiences necessitates the importance of recognition of the gradations of differences that exist from arranged marriage to forced marriage. The focus for this research is to explore South Asian women's experiences of choosing their own partner and so requires studying their experiences that extend beyond the stark dichotomy of arranged marriage and forced marriage to consider a spectrum of experiences of forming an intimate relationship that includes individual autonomy in choice of partner at one end and forced marriage at the other end. Wherever a woman's experiences may lie on this spectrum, the women in this cohort experience domestic violence - the subject of the next section.

2.3 Domestic Violence

The focus of this thesis is on South Asian women in the diaspora who have chosen to depart from social norms of marriage, formed an intimate relationship and then experienced domestic violence in that relationship of choice. The spectrum of forming intimate relationships as described in section 2.2.5 includes forced marriage, itself a form of domestic violence that South Asian women can experience. Kelly (2015b: 114) lists the many forms of violence, including "sexual harassment, rape, sexual assault, trafficking, and intimate partner violence", that women and girls all over the world can experience. Black Feminist activists' resistance to violence against women and girls in the UK have included the campaign against virginity testing (Bryan, Dadzie, and Scafe 1985: 172), setting up specialist refuges for BME women, supporting striking South Asian women workers (Wilson 2010: 57), and tackling violence against women and children (Dustin and Phillips 2008: 407). Emerging from the activism has been Black Feminist scholarship on specific forms of violence experienced by South Asian women and girls, including forced marriage and honour based violence (Gill 2003, Meetoo and Safia 2007, Phillips and Dustin 2004, Wilson 2007). With the increased understanding and research

into violence against women and girls came the need to have an international definition (Kelly 2015b, Beetham 2012).

2.3.1 Definitions of Violence Perpetrated against Women and Girls

The term “domestic violence” arose out of the need to highlight coercion and control within abusive relationships as well as physical violence (Kelly 2015b: 116). International and national definitions are shown in Table 2-2.

Author and Reference	Definition of Violence against Women	Comments
United Nations (United Nations 1993)	*Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW)* The term “violence against women" means any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual ,or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.	The UN Assembly adopted the *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women* (DEVAW) in 1993 (United Nations 1993).
Council of Europe (Council of Europe 2011)	*Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* This is commonly known as the *Istanbul Convention* as it was open for signature in Istanbul, Turkey. “Violence against women” is understood as a violation of human rights and a form of discrimination against women and shall mean all acts of gender-based violence that result in, or are likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life;	The definition used in the Council of Europe's 2011 Convention on Preventing and Combating Gender Violence and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) uses the UN definition (Council of Europe 2011). UK signed the convention on 8 June 2012 but has not ratified it (Council of Europe 2017). The definition positions violence against women as a violation of human rights and within the public and private sphere.

Table 2-2: International and UK Definitions related to Domestic Violence (Continued overleaf)

Table 2-2 International and UK Definitions related to Domestic Violence (continued)

Author and Reference	Definition of violence against women	Comments
Council of Europe (Council of Europe 2011)	*Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)* All acts of physical, sexual, psychological, or economic violence that occur within the family or domestic unit or between former or current spouses or partners, whether or not the perpetrator shares or has shared the same residence with the victim;	The Istanbul Convention definition of domestic violence does not include coercion and does not recognise controlling behaviour.
UK Government Home Office (Home Office 2016)	*Domestic Violence and Abuse: New Definition* Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening behaviour, violence, or abuse between those aged sixteen or over who are, or have been, intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. The abuse can encompass, but is not limited to: Psychological physical sexual financial emotional	Coercion and controlling behaviour are recognised within the UK government definitions of domestic violence and abuse.

Table 2-2 International and UK Definitions related to Domestic Violence (continued overleaf)

Table 2-2 International and UK Definitions related to Domestic Violence (continued)

Author and Reference	Definition of violence against women	Comments
Women's Aid (Womens Aid 2015)	*What is Domestic Abuse?* Definition of Domestic Abuse An incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive, threatening, degrading ,and violent behaviour, including sexual violence, in the majority of cases by a partner or ex-partner, but also by a family member or carer. It is very common. In the vast majority of cases it is experienced by women and is perpetrated by men. Domestic abuse can include, but is not limited to, the following: • Coercive control (a pattern of intimidation, degradation, isolation, and control with the use or threat of physical or sexual violence) • Psychological and/or emotional abuse • Physical or sexual abuse • Financial abuse • Harassment and stalking • Online or digital abuse	Women's Aid is a national domestic-abuse agency.

Table 2-2 International and UK Definitions related to Domestic Violence (continued overleaf)

Table 2-2 International and UK Definitions related to Domestic Violence (continued)

Author and Reference	Definition of violence against women	Comments
Women's Aid (Womens Aid 2015)	*What is Domestic Abuse?* Women's Aid definition of domestic abuse specific to BME women Domestic abuse exists as part of violence against women and girls; which also includes different forms of family violence such as forced marriage, female genital mutilation, and so-called "honour crimes" that are perpetrated primarily by family members, often with multiple perpetrators.	Women's Aid also recognises forms of violence that can be specific to BME women's experiences.
Southall Black Sisters (Southall Black Sisters n.d.)	*What is Domestic Violence?* Domestic violence is physical, psychological (emotional), sexual, or financial abuse that takes place within an intimate or family-type relationship and usually forms a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour.	Southall Black Sisters' definition specifically refers to intimate and family relationships.

Table 2-2 International and UK Definitions related to Domestic Violence

At the root of coercive behaviour is gender inequality (Stark 2007). Coercion, controlling behaviour, and loss of personal freedom are elements that run through the definitions of violence and within policy and practice in the UK. Some women's agencies, like Southall Black Sisters, use the term "domestic violence". Women's Aid uses the term "domestic abuse" in response to making terms accessible to victims because not all victims experience physical violence (Womens Aid 2015). Terms used are contested within feminist scholarship. Kelly (2015b) posits that the term "gender-based violence" is redundant as nearly all violence is gender-based, including male-on-male violence. In contrast, Beetham (2012) argues that the term reflects gendered power dynamics and encompasses the diversity of violence against people based on gender, identity, age, and disability. Another term, "intimate partner violence", ensures that there is no confusion between violence perpetrated by family members and that committed by intimate partners (Kelly 2015b: 116). This research emanates from South Asian women's lived experiences of violence carried out against them. The perpetrators may be family as well as intimate partners, as highlighted by the definition of domestic violence by Southall Black Sisters (n.d.). I will therefore use the term "domestic violence" in this thesis. In addition I will, on occasions, need to distinguish between violence carried out by family members such as parents and violence carried out by the intimate partner, and for clarity I will use the terms "familial violence" and "intimate partner violence" to make the distinction.

As part of the definition of domestic violence, Southall Black Sisters (n.d.) refer to forced marriage and violence perpetrated in the name of honour, which are some of the specific forms of violence that women from diasporic communities can experience (Kelly 2015b). South Asian women's socialisation of behaviour according to family honour is relevant to women who have stepped outside social norms.

2.3.2 The Gendered Socialisation of Honour

Exploring the socialisation of women in social norms of marriage aids understanding of the influences that can exist for South Asian women and how these may affect their decisions and outlook on marriage, with the backdrop of society's acceptance of the way that women form intimate relationships and marriages. One of the most prevalent forms of socialisation is honour, which encompasses expectations of behavour and of its relation, shame, which relates to transgressions of these expectated traits of behaviour (Gill and Brah 2014) and the consequences for women (Sen 2005, Siddiqui 2013, Gill

and Brah 2014). The specific notion of honour will be discussed after exploring the gendered socialisation of women and girls.

2.3.2.1 The Socialisation of Girls and Women

Social and cultural contexts influence gendered norms, which lead to the internalisation of stereotypes and gendered differences of men and women (Fine 2011). Oakley (2016a) describes how from birth children are socialised into gender roles revealing how one gender is privileged over another; for example, mothers hold their boy children for longer periods of time than girl children and girls being directed towards caring toys such as dolls. Richardson (2015: 10) points out that this learning of "specific ideas, practices, and values associated with gender" is referred to as "the process of becoming gendered". Feminism's focus has been on understanding men's and women's different status and value in society. Gender-role expectations on women in particular emphasise that a woman's primary role is to be a good wife and mother; which is in essence, women's socialisation of marriage (Okin 2002). This socialisation can limit girls in myriad ways as they grow up, especially in terms of educational aspirations and the type of jobs they might end up doing" (Richardson 2015: 11). Emphasis on women as mother and main carer of the family above other roles ensures that successful careers outside the home do not upset the balance of power within the home between husband and wife (Oakley 2016a: 139). Women are also socialised into reproducing masculine notions of the father's status as protector (Hearn 2013).

For South Asian women, experiences of culture are part of socialisation and becoming gendered and living as gendered beings. Dominant discourses construct the South Asian woman as good wife and mother (Kallivayalil 2010). Sexually, South Asian women are expected to fulfil their husband's needs and desires (Cowburn, Gill and Harrison 2015). Women's socialisation can be a form of coercion, for example, valuing success in relationships at all costs (Anitha and Gill 2009). In the context of domestic violence the socialisation is gendered such that "cultural traditions have always oppressed women while liberating men" (Patel, P. 2003b: 249). Patel goes on to explain how men are the decision-makers of values that communities hold whereas women "face very real consequences if they find themselves transgressing the norms of their community, whatever the reason. It is important to understand why cultural values keep a woman silent and close down her options. The balance of power within a marriage and in the community is important to understand" (Patel, P. 2003a: 249), as well as how that power is manifested through the specific forms of socialisation called "honour" and "shame".

2.3.2.2 Honour and Shame

Honour and shame are social constructs in which women are socialised into adhering to such concepts (Lindisfarne 1998, Sen 2005). Notions of honour and shame exist within many minority communities in the UK including South Asian, Middle Eastern, and African communities (Siddiqui 2013). The word "izzat" has Persian and Urdu origins derived from Arabic-"izzat" meaning "glory" (Oxford University Press 2018). Various translations of "izzat" are given as "'honour', 'self-respect' and 'prestige'" (Takhar 2005: 186); "family honour, respect, and pride" (Toor 2009: 242); and "shame" ("sharam") "bringing shame upon oneself or family" (Toor 2009: 242), of which the opposite is "bizati" ("dishonour"). Toor (2009: 243) explains the relationship between "izzat" and "shame" and "dishonour"; "Damaging the family's izzat leads to shame/sharam. Sharam is the opposite of izzat; the corollary of dishonour/bizati, the double-edged sword. The possibility of bringing bizati and sharam to one's family and community is regarded with the greatest severity". This shows there are many names for and hence manifestations of honour. Lindisfarne (1998) attests to the need for understanding the context behind the words honour and shame, which is demonstrated through people's lived experiences and how manifestations of honour can exist. She argues for the need to go beyond just using the terms to see how the different manifestations of gender work within hegemonic masculinity.

For the purposes of this research the term "honour" will be used to represent izzat, as it is the term most often used in scholarship. Sen (2005: 47) takes up Lindisfarne's arguments and offers a theory consisting of who has interest, and so defines honour to be "vested in person (including conjugal honour), family, tribe, clan, community, collective". She goes on to describe what behaviour can constitute dishonour, such as choosing an intimate partner for oneself, and the actions to mitigate the consequences of honour, to include amending the person's behaviour such as forcing them to marry or removing them completely, that is, killing them" (Sen 2005: 47). Such actions to mitigate the consequences show the coercion involved in such acts. Lindisfarne (1998) asks why certain behaviours are considered honourable and others shaming. Honour refers to the reasons and motivations behind the violence perpetrated, rather than the actual violence meted out. "If the act of violence is on one side of the coin, then honour or the reason for the violence is on the flip side" (Siddiqui 2013: 170).

Thus honour and shame are used to reinforce gender inequalities (Lindisfarne 1998: 246). Black Feminists have emphasised the gendered nature of shame and

honour that are ”used to control female sexuality and autonomy” (Siddiqui 2005: 264), especially where women maintain and men uphold family and community honour (Gill and Brah 2014). The constructs enforce moral rules and codes of behaviour to ensure conformity by women and girls with respect to their own bodies (Toor 2009). “Social constraints regulate women’s lives in ways that lie beyond statute and codified laws and have significantly more meaning attached. Women’s sexuality is at the heart of concerns and social anxiety about women’s behaviour in ways that inform prescriptions on their movements and relationships” (Sen 2005: 48) and in essence the social constraints are about the control of women’s bodies.

Foucault (1977) charts how the body becomes a signifier of control, of power, and of domination, for example, how bodies are trained in certain behavioural traits. He outlines the insidious nature of power and control and how pressure can be applied to enforce certain behaviours. The investment in power and domination is manifested through the preservation of South Asian women’s sexed bodies; as it bestows and is reflected by family honour. This results in the surveillance of bodies to enforce social norms, by family and community (Meetoo and Mirza 2007, Gill and Brah 2014). Sen (2005:51) argues, “In cultures where codes of honour operate, there is an overwhelming drive and motivation to collective morality, values, and behaviours that conform with prevailing codes. What this means is that it is difficult for individuals to act in ways that challenge, contradict, or contest (including by going beyond) these collective codes, and to do so incurs social costs” (Sen 2005: 51).

The maintenance of shame and honour is visible in the context of gendered violence (Siddiqui 2013) with a warning from Gill (2003) that shame” and “honour” are not static, but rather are fluid and ever-changing. It is women’s transgressions of such codes that become the legitimising avenue for violence and an area of interest for this thesis. Feminists have charted examples where “izzat” is considered to be violated and family honour brought into disrepute (Siddiqui 2013), for example, pregnancy outside of marriage (Meetoo and Mirza 2007: 187) or choosing an intimate partner (Siddiqui 2005), as is the focus of this research. As well as the acts themselves, it is the public knowledge of such violations of “izzat” that causes families to experience “sharam” and dishonour in the face of the community (Toor 2009). Thus honour is enforced with social penalties for deviation (Gill 2003), where families may therefore undertake action to try and redeem their family “honour” in the face of the community in ways such as forced marriage, ostracism of the “shamed” from family, and violence (Siddiqui 2013, Toor 2009,

Coomaraswamy 2005). Therefore this research will examine if notions of honour and shame influenced women's decisions in transgressing social norms of marriage and forming intimate relationships of choice. The research will also explore how honour and shame may permeate women's actions to the extent that they act as barriers when South Asian women wish to leave that relationship of choice because it is violent. Fear of consequences of shame and honour can act as barriers for South Asian in seeking help (Siddiqui 2013).

Considerable literature focuses the pervasiveness of honour, the way redemption of honour is carried out by families and the severe consequences for women (Gill 2003, Meetoo and Mirza 2007, Chakravarti 2005). Less attention has been paid to redemption of honour by families after a relationship of choice has failed. This research will explore such experiences of women with their families. I have described how feminists regard family honour as situated within patriarchal ideology (Brah 1996) and as an expression of hegemonic masculinity (Lindisfarne 1998). The next section considers forces of patriarchy and power when South Asian women choose their own partners and experience domestic violence.

2.3.3 Patriarchy and Power

Feminists have detailed how patriarchy works to control and subjugate women, with men possessing power and privilege over women (hooks 1981) through access to economic resources as well as unequal distribution of political power between men and women (Davis 1981). The term "patriarchy" itself is considered by some to be problematic. Brah (1996) advocates the use of "patriarchal relations" to position patriarchy and its interdependency with class, race, gender, and sexuality. Some argue that gender inequality is central to the definition of patriarchy (Frias 2010: 543), whilst others believe that sexism and the power relations emphasised by the term "patriarchy" are no longer visible in research (Valentine, Jackson and Mayblin 2014). hooks' (1981: 15) straightforward definition of patriarchy as "institutionalised sexism" shows that "patriarchy" is a useful term to define the structural systems and power imbalances that can influence South Asian women's lives in relation to marriage decisions. I therefore concur with Kelly that the term "patriarchy" is helpful in understanding and theorising women's oppression (Kelly 1988: 21) and so it will be used in this research, within cultural and historical specificities of South Asian women's experiences.

Ethnic minority women's specific experiences have led Black Feminists to reject the homogenous tendency of White Feminism to universalise all women's experiences and

lead them to argue that specific experiences and knowledge serve to locate patriarchal experiences together with experiences of race, sexuality, and class (Amos and Parmar 1984, Mirza 1997b, Bhavnani and Coulson 2005, hooks 1981, Collins 2000a, Lorde 1996). Patriarchy subjugates women in different ways and so the experience of oppression differs amongst women (Lorde 1996), and the historical and present context of race and class oppression faced by ethnic minority women is crucial to understanding how power relations work to subjugate women (Amos and Parmar 1984:9). South Asian women's specific experiences within patriarchal and structural constraints of marriage, divorce, and intimate relationships can be contested areas within families where patriarchal control and power determine the status of women, privilege men's status, and enforce the control over women's lives (Wilson 2006, Anitha and Gill 2009). To explore women's experiences of transgressing social norms of marriage and facing domestic violence requires an understanding of the context of their lives both politically and socially.

Patriarchal practices are not wholly a binary notion in which women either comply or do not. For example, women may negotiate "trade-offs" to protect their own interests, for example choosing financial security that their partner provides for themselves and their children over leaving the relationship and plunging into poverty (Walby 1990). Some feminist scholars have argued that this recognition of negotiation is not attributed to all populations of women. Narayan (2001: 418) states that liberal feminists need to respect how women of other cultures also negotiate everyday patriarchy within the limits and constraints they experience and should not be portrayed as being wholly "prisoners" or "dupes" of patriarchy. Within the multi-layered subjectivities of South Asian women in the diaspora, the representation of South Asian women as only occupying one level is flawed; there is a diversity of negotiation that South Asian women undertake in responding to patriarchal structures of marriage, for example negotiating with parents for a partner that is a more preferable match to them (Pande 2014, Bano 2010).

Griscom (1992: 406) is critical of the binary modes for defining power - "power over" and "power for" - arguing that this is too simplistic because it ignores the complexities of lived realities, where power is more than dominance and coercion: it is relational. Mahmood (2005: 9) disrupts the notions of the dichotomy of resistance vs subordination; it is "critical that we ask whether it is even possible to identify a universal category of acts - such as those of resistance - outside the ethical and political conditions within which such acts acquire their particular meaning". She argues that the way in which resistance

within power is analysed fails to understand and see “forms of being and action” (Mahmood 2005: 9) that are subverting or re-inscribing norms.

These complexities fit into the manifestations of relational power that can exist between South Asian women and their families (Anitha and Gill 2009, Wilson 2006) and may span the spectrum of forming intimate relationships as referred to in section 2.2.5. It is relational power that influences women’s choice, pressure of coercion and subtleties of consent. Power can be different in diverse categories of social locations (Yuval-Davis 2011: 13), where a South Asian woman may feel she has differential power relative to her family, for example her parents may have greater power over her, as opposed to her intimate partner, where she believes she is an equal partner in the relationship.

Power and control within the family necessitates the consideration of family relations within it - between men and women and other family members such as children (Morgan 1996). Kelly (1988) identifies power relations between parents and children within sexual abuse. She excludes the power relations that South Asian women can experience, where parents coerce daughters into marriage to maintain honour in the community. Such power dynamics show that power and patriarchy are linked: power is exerted by families to control the behaviour of women, and agency is exerted by women which may defy that very family power. Women, family members, and community members can perpetuate patriarchal forces to subjugate women (Gill 2003, 2004, Meetoo and Mirza 2007). South Asian women may be perpetrators of abuse and violence towards other women in efforts to enforce conformity to patriarchal structures of marriage, which offer them power, for example perpetrating violence to uphold honour of the family (Balzani 2010). South Asian women can therefore be the “vehicles of power” (Foucault 1980: 98) as well as the casualties of power.

Current scholarship is limited in the area of South Asian women’s negotiation and responses to power with both families and with intimate partners alongside each other (Siddiqui 2013, Patel, P. 2003a, Chakravarti 2005). The multiplicity of South Asian women’s negotiation with families in relation to departing from social norms of arranged marriage will be explored to understand the patriarchal constraints such as honour and shame within which the women negotiated. Furthermore, women’s negotiation within such constraints when they formed a relationship of choice and then experienced domestic violence from their partner and family, will be explored. This research is about the agency of choice that women exercised in forming an intimate relationship. It is

therefore important to explore women's agency and choice to deconstruct how power and agency influence the complexities of women's experiences.

2.3.4 Agency and Choice

Black Feminists have long pointed out the representation of South Asian women as passive bystanders, without agency (Amos and Parmar 1984, Mirza 1997b), and the need for feminist scholarship to counter hegemonic practices (Mahmood 2005). Pande (2014: 81–82) argues for the need to study concepts of agency and power without evoking essentialist notions of victimhood of South Asian women, and the need to produce feminist knowledge that includes the lived realities of South Asian women, including agency stemming from non-western cultures and the strengths they believe they attain from exercising agency. Similarly Majumdar (2007) is critical of feminist scholars who enforce the binary notion of "traditional" versus "modern" and who situate South Asian women's agency within progressive mainstream society.

Within political discourse on community cohesion and forced marriage, politicians position freedom of choice as adhering to British values and hence British belonging, and so forcing someone to marry is outside the bounds of acceptable behaviour that warrants British belonging (Enright 2009). It is argued that a "new discourse of personal freedom" on marriage choices is required, where South Asian women's experiences, agency, and understanding of the structural constraints in their lives are acknowledged and acted upon (Anitha and Gill 2009: 179). This sheds light on agency within the context of choice, coercion and consent.

The existence of social structure relies on social practices occurring over time, in different places and actioned by people (Giddens 1984). In what he terms the "duality of structure", Giddens (1984:19) argues that daily activities and actions reproduce the structure we live in. Frias (2010), in her poststructuralist examination of the Mexican state and its patriarchal structures towards intimate partner violence, found that patriarchal structures can be resisted or changed by implementing strategies where, for example, women move out of their homes temporarily whilst court proceedings take place. Mahmood (2005: 15) advocates the importance of understanding women's agency within the context of their lives and not just as binary resistance versus subordination. This research will explore the context of South Asian women's agency in departing from patriarchal structures of arranged marriage, their experiences of familial and intimate partner violence, and where they may alter or negotiate these patriarchal structures over time.

Giddens (1984) disagrees with the argument that every action considered as agency must be intended and asserts that the emphasis is on being capable of social action. South Asian women's agency in choosing a partner outside social norms may have many unintended consequences, such as the family losing status within the community (Anitha and Gill 2009). However there is a degree to which the woman may have *suspected* that the family and community may not agree but chose to exercise agency regardless. This poses a limitation to Giddens' assumption that an actor with agency is completely unaware of unintended consequences. I argue that South Asian women are aware of the possible consequences, such as loss of contact with family, in transgressing social norms of marriage and being considered to violate family honour as described in section 2.3.2. This may lead women to decide to refrain from forming an intimate relationship; or they may choose to stay with their family, a form of agency itself which shows resilience (Wilson 2007, Anitha and Gill 2009). Phillips and Dustin (2004) argue that the Government's initiatives on forced marriage have placed emphasis on women leaving the (possible) forced marriage and as a result exiting from their family and community, together with the use of immigration policies, to address forced marriage, rather than implementing criminal sanctions against perpetrators within minority groups. This position dichotomises the realities for South Asian women and ignores the complexities of their experiences wherein women are aware of the possible consequences such as that of losing contact with one's family. Fear of losing contact with one's family shows how effective coercion and control is in influencing a woman's agency of choice. Exit from one's family due to "suspect" arranged marriage or forced marriage denotes Western notions of freedom of choice and implies that South Asian women exercising freedom of choice are confirming their British belonging and so adhering to British values, in contrast to their parents' arranging or forcing marriage on their children, who are thus disaffirming their British belonging (Enright 2009: 341). Reitman (2009) is critical of the claim that women from minority groups who exit their family, culture and group due to oppression is a positive force because it will bring about transformative change within that group. Rather she claims alternative avenues for change should be sought.

This research will examine South Asian women's experiences through their own narratives about agency and choice in forming a relationship. I draw on Mahmood's critique of agency. She questions the assumptions held within feminist discourse, "that all human beings have an innate desire for freedom, that we all somehow seek to assert our autonomy when allowed to do so, that human agency primarily consists of acts that challenge social norms and not those that uphold them" (Mahmood 2005: 5). I will also

explore women's agency and choice in leaving or remaining within an intimate partner relationship where they have experienced domestic violence and will examine whether women's agency to leave a violent relationship has been influenced by their decision in choosing the relationship in the first place.

South Asian women's agency and choice in forming intimate relationships may involve negotiating social norms with their families and communities. This reflects patriarchal power dynamics and shows that patriarchy, power, and agency are linked; patriarchal power is exerted by families to control behaviour and agency of women who may defy that very power of families. Mahmood stresses the need to question the lens through which feminists view agency because there is a tendency to see agency in opposing "subversion or resignification of social norms" (Mahmood 2005: 14). She explains that "what may appear to be a case of deplorable passivity and docility from a progressivist point of view may actually be a form of agency - but one that can be understood only from within the discourses and structures of subordination that create the conditions of its enactment" (Mahmood 2005: 15). The complexity of autonomy of choice in forming an intimate relationship will be explored, as well as how choice is embedded within the spectrum of forming intimate relationships as South Asian women experience them. What may be seen to be South Asian women's resignation to domestic violence from their intimate partner and their family, requires an understanding of the context of women's experiences of violence and subjugation from possibly the family and the community as well as from the intimate partner, with possibly daily occurrences. The prevalence of violence in women's lives provides another layer of context for their experiences of familial and intimate partner violence.

2.4 Continuum of Violence

In her classic book Surviving Sexual Violence (Kelly 1988: 76) cites two definitions of the word "continuum" from the Oxford English Dictionary: "'a basic common character that underlies many different events'" and "a continuous series of elements or events that pass into one another and which cannot be readily distinguished'" (Oxford English Dictionary 2018, cited in Kelly 1988: 76). She goes on to expand on this definition: "The basic common character underlying the many different forms of violence is *abuse, intimidation, coercion, intrusion, threat, and force men use to control women*" (Kelly 1988: 76). Kelly (1988: 76) is forthright in her use of the term "continuum" because it supports women to make sense of their experiences of and to name the range of abuse, intimidation, etc. and at the same time understands that men's behaviour cannot be

slotted into “defined and discrete analytic categories”. In other words, essentially there is a fluid nature to the violence that the Continuum of Violence encapsulates, hence the phrase “elements or events that pass into one another” (Kelly 1988: 76). As well as the range of experiences and forms of violence, Kelly argues that the prevalence of sexual violence that women experience in their daily lives and over their lifetimes, that they are more likely to experience on numerous occasions is of importance (Kelly 1988: 76). She is keen to emphasise that her research did not advocate nor differentiate the seriousness of the different forms of sexual violence and she is critical of studies that research only one type of sexual violence or over a limited time period. She argues that this limits the understanding of the extent to which women experience sexual violence and its effects on their lives (Kelly 1988: 91).

Kelly’s astute analysis of the categories of sexual violence within the lived experiences of women’s lives is a major contribution to the scholarship of sexual violence, domestic violence, and the ways that women make sense of these experiences. She does cite the exclusion of the experiences of women from ethnic minorities as a limitation to her study (Kelly 2015b, Kelly 1988: 95).

In section 2.3 I described Black Feminism’s contribution to emphasising how South Asian women can experience specific forms of domestic violence, such as forced marriage and honour based violence (Siddiqui 2013, Gill 2004, Thiara and Gill 2010a, Patel and Siddiqui 2010, Siddiqui 2003a, Siddiqui 2013). I have discussed arranged and forced marriage and concepts of honour, shame, and violence against women as a result of perceived transgressions of social moral codes. Sen (2005) argues that honour crimes are distinct from other forms of violence against women because of the gendered nature of power to control women’s behaviour, the role of women in policing the behaviours, and the community’s power to enforce the control of behaviours possibly through the use of violence. Siddiqui (2013) disagrees and attests that forced marriage and honour based violence are forms of domestic violence. Furthermore Siddiqui (2013) argues that South Asian women experience such forms of domestic violence on a routine and daily basis and are thus situated within the Continuum of Violence (Kelly 1988). This is illustrated in Figure 2-5 where I have produced a visual representation of the Continuum of Violence (Siddiqui 2013, Kelly 1988).

Figure 2-5: Types of Violence within the Continuum of Violence

Forced marriage is a form of honour based violence because it can be meted out by family and family honour forms the motive behind the violence (Siddiqui 2013). In essence the Continuum of Violence is the superset of all types of violence that South Asian women can experience. Siddiqui (2011) maps the gendered violence that BME women can experience on a daily and routine basis. She uses case studies to highlight this, for example, the case of Banaz Mahmod, who was killed at the age of twenty by her father and uncle for dishonouring the family by leaving her husband and forming a relationship with another man. Banaz experienced physical violence from her father, forced marriage, and domestic violence at the hands of her husband. She was followed and her movements monitored by her family. Banaz was tortured, raped, sexually assaulted, and murdered by three men hired by her uncle to kill her. These forms of violence that Banaz experienced were on a continuum in her daily life. This research will investigate the range of violence that South Asian women can experience and how the acts of violence can merge into one another. This research will look at violence perpetrated by members of the extended family as part of the Continuum of Violence that women experience. Little attention has been paid to women's experiences of multiple perpetrators within the Continuum of Violence. Family violence, as South Asian women experience it, is not considered to be part of the Continuum of Violence. This research will examine domestic violence from the family, as well as the intimate partner

as part of the Continuum of Violence with the focus on women who have chosen their own partners. In order to understand South Asian women's experiences that overlap forming an intimate relationship with the Continuum of Violence, this research will explore further manifestations of the Continuum of Violence as applicable to this cohort of women. These examinations show that such an overlap declares how there may not be clear boundaries in South Asian women's experiences of forming intimate relationships and experiences of violence on a continuum. A central tenet of Black Feminist epistemology is the analysis of the intersections of multiple social categories that women may occupy.

2.5 Intersectionality

Black feminist scholars have long advocated the need for feminism to research women's subjectivity located in multiple social relations, such as race, class, gender, and sexuality (Brah 1996, Davis 1981, Collins 2000, hooks 1981, Lorde 1996, Mirza 2009). The interlocking and multiple axes of oppression that can work together to dominate and oppress people was brought to the academy's attention by a classic paper written by critical race scholar Crenshaw in 1991. Crenshaw (1991: 1244) states how "the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black women's lives in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately". Collins (2000:18) defines how the intersecting social categories are organised in society within "structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power", in what she terms "the matrix of domination". Social locations of race, gender, religious belief, and age are not individual "add-ons" (Yuval-Davis 2006: 199) but co-constitutive (Collins and Bilge 2016).

Brah and Phoenix (2004) revisit intersectionality, looking at the work of feminist and abolitionist Sojourner Truth for insights that apply today. Truth was born into slavery in 1797 and became an abolitionist advocating women's suffrage within the anti-slavery movement (Guy-Sheftall 1995). In her powerful speech entitled "Ain't I a Woman?" at the Women's Rights Convention in Akron, Ohio, in 1851, she illustrated, through subjectivity, how the different axes of race, class, and gender together conspired to oppress her within slavery (Guy-Sheftall 1995: 35). Brah and Phoenix (2004: 76) state that "by fundamentally challenging all ahistoric or essentialist notions of 'woman' – it neatly captures all the main elements of the debate on 'intersectionality'…The concept emphasizes that different dimensions of social life cannot be separated out into discrete and pure strands". The bare-bones components of the definition of intersectionality stem

from “the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities” (Collins 2015a: 2). Intersections of social categories inform the complexities surrounding South Asian women’s agency and their responses to power.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology has at its core the location of Black women’s lived experiences through multiple social categories in the context of the social world they occupy. Intersectionality provides a critical insight into the way the different social locations work together to shape women’s experiences and their lives. There has been some intersectional analysis of South Asian women’s experiences (Siddiqui 2011, Smith and Marmo 2011) but it still remains relatively undeveloped (Collins and Bilge 2016). This thesis adds to the growing body of research that uses intersectionality as an analytical tool of critical inquiry.

That said, intersectionality is not used to represent the totalising of experiences. Rather it is the identification of the social categories that come into being in the specific experiences of the participants that are analysed using an intersectional lens. Thus intersectionality with Black Feminist epistemology have been intrinsically linked throughout the history of Black women’s suffrage; this still applies today and forms the conceptual framework for this cohort of South Asian women. The next section details the use of Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology, and intersectionality, to interpret the experiences at the overlap between forming an intimate relationship and the Continuum of Violence.

2.6 Conceptualisation of the Research

This chapter has detailed the current landscape of scholarship on forming an intimate relationship, including marriage and domestic violence, in the context of South Asian women’s lives in the UK. Themes of choice, human rights, and consent run through the definitions of marriage. The corollaries to these notions - no choice, coercion, controlling behaviour, infringement on human liberties - run through the definitions of domestic violence and hence the Continuum of Violence. These connections warranted bringing together the spectrum of forming a marriage or an intimate relationship (hereafter referred to as forming an intimate relationship) together with the Continuum of Violence and is the area identified as the focus for this research study and form part of the conceptual framework. Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology is suited to critiquing

South Asian women's experiences in the overlap between forming an intimate relationship and the Continuum of Violence. As described in Chapter 1, it illuminates the standpoint of South Asian women's subjectivities and its epistemological position examines the social and cultural contexts of women's lives. Black Feminist Standpoint, as an epistemological stance, creates a "South Asian-centric" feminist sensibility that provides the special angle of vision that South Asian women's experiences bring to scholarship.

Such understandings are important to show the need for a conceptual framework that explicates South Asian women's lived experiences at the intersection of gender, race, class, and other inequalities in order to gain a deeper understanding of women's experiences of gendered socialisation of honour and shame and how power relations influence their agency in forming intimate relationships. Intersectionality provides a means for further understanding of the social categories that work together to influence women's experiences and behaviours. The challenge then is to employ a conceptual framework that can aid a deeper understanding of the complexity of South Asian women's experiences of partner choice when transgressing socially sanctioned norms of marriage and their experiences of subsequent violence on a continuum, where the framework would give voice to the complexity of the lived realities of women's lives.

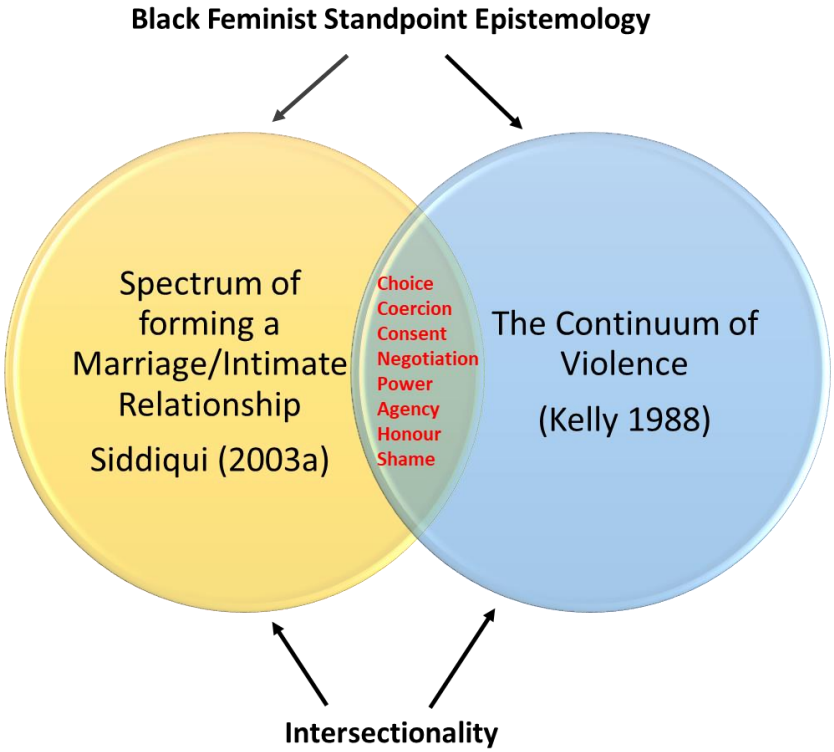

Figure 2-6: Conceptual Framework

2.6.1 The Overlap of the Spectrum of Forming a Marriage/Intimate Relationship and the Continuum of Violence within the Conceptual Framework

South Asian women's experiences of choice, coercion, and consent are varied and complex and reflect the context of power imbalances, and so South Asian women's experiences of forming an intimate relationship can include any along the spectrum from autonomous choice to forced marriage. Choice, coercion, and consent can be traced through both the forming of an intimate relationship and the Continuum of Violence and therefore sit at their junction. Understanding how women make choices, how women consent, and how women can be coerced requires an understanding of how forming an intimate relationship and domestic violence overlap, with no concrete boundaries, in women's lives. These power imbalances come to the fore in gendered norms when South Asian women transgress social norms and choose their own intimate partner, as encapsulated in the yellow circle. Women's transgressions can be a violation of honour, which bring shame on the family. Honour and shame are moral codes enforced through power and patriarchy. It is within such contexts and social constraints South Asian

women exercise agency and negotiation in complex and varied ways. In the redemption of family honour, women can experience domestic violence on a continuum, from the family and from intimate partners, as encapsulated in the blue circle. The Continuum of Violence is an infringement of choice and consent, where power and patriarchy enforce the reign of coercion. For women in this research such experiences show how forming an intimate relationship or marriage can collide with the Continuum of Violence. That is where the two circles merge. Black Feminism challenges the normative discourse of South Asian women (Mirza 1997a), and aids understanding of the diverse ways in which women negotiate and respond to the subtle and complex pressures they face when transgressing social norms.

2.6.2 Black Feminist Standpoint Epistemology within the Conceptual Framework

Reynolds (2002: 603) emphasises how it is important that Black Feminist Standpoints encapsulate "black women in developing knowledge and understanding of black women's experiences". Mirza (2009: 5) is more specific, referring to the experiences of women as a result of living in a British racist society which views them as living within "oppressive gendered practices of marriage within their own communities". Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology locates the family both as a site of inequality and as respite from racism and other oppressions (Amos and Parmar 1984, Bhavnani and Coulson 2005, hooks 2000) and so lends itself as part of the conceptual framework for this research. Black Feminist Standpoints recognise the complex range of South Asian women's experiences when forming an intimate relationship, from autonomous choice to forced marriage (Pande 2016, Pande 2014, Anitha and Gill 2009). This complexity, born out of South Asian women's experiences of choice, coercion, and consent, will be explored. South Asian women's diverse interactions with family, their "empowerment", manifestations of negotiation, and resistance to the power of social norms when transgressing them in forming intimate relationships, will all be analysed using Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology. It is these very everyday experiences within the context of their social world that a Black Feminist Standpoint lens gives authenticity to through women's voices.

Critical to this research is the analysis of the relationship between agency, power, and structure. "Indeed, a challenge to Black Feminist Theory is explicating the interplay between agency and social structure" (Brewer 1993: 15). Brewer (1993) explains that analysis that places agency in lived experiences within structural constraints is required.

South Asian women's agency requires understanding their gendered socialisation of honour and shame because it captures the context of their actions and decisions. Patriarchal structures privileges men and subjugates women (Patel, P. 2003a). This reflects the gendered nature of power imbalances when women transgress social norms of marriage, and then face intimate partner violence and familial violence.

Black Feminist scholars have a long tradition of making visible within academia women's experiences of violence (Collins and Bilge 2016, Collins 2000a, Patel and Siddiqui 2010, Thiara and Gill 2010a, Davis 1981, hooks 1981, Wilson 2010, Lorde 1996). Black Feminist epistemology has explicated South Asian women's specific experiences of domestic violence including forced marriage and honour based violence. Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology is rooted in women's activism in the area of violence against women with links to scholarship (Patel 1997, Patel and Siddiqui 2010, Thiara and Gill 2010a, Takhar 2007, Collins and Bilge 2016, Collins 2000a) and the need for services that prioritise support and protect South Asian women from forced marriage and honour based violence (Siddiqui 2016). Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology allows the exploration and understanding of the context of South Asian women's agency and negotiation along manifestations of resilience and resistance to domestic violence from the family and the intimate partner without notions of victimhood or cultural tropes. It positions, for example, multiple familial perpetrators and issues of honour and shame within the context of gender inequality as opposed to constraints of cultural and religious beliefs (Enright 2009, Patel 2013). Multiple family perpetrators are one of the manifestations of the Continuum of Violence as experienced by South Asian women (Siddiqui 2013).

2.6.3 Intersectionality within the Conceptual Framework

Phoenix (2016) argues that intersectionality recognises the different levels at play within social structures and how people express social structures through every day cultural experiences. Mirza (2013: 6) contends that intersectionality provides a framework for analysis because it connects the different social categories to show how they "structure the material conditions which produce economic, social, and political inequality in women's real lived lives". It shows how South Asian women experience these inequalities and how the combined inequalities affect women's experiences when they make decisions in their lives about choosing intimate partners and the consequences thereof.

Section 2.3 discussed how power positions South Asian women differently in their relationships with their family and their intimate partners. Pande (2014) stresses the importance of intersections of race, ethnicity, class, and religion to arranged marriages precisely because the experiences are situated through these social relations. Pertaining to women's experiences along the spectrum of forming intimate relationships, intersectionality can help to explicate the workings of relative power that South Asian women experience via the different social locations they occupy when they choose their intimate partners; for example, how their age and socio-economic status as well as their gender work together to influence their agency, negotiation, and resistance towards family and community as well as the intimate partner. These all occupy different levels of patriarchal power.

Black Feminists have employed intersectionality to address structural forces of immigration and patriarchal power of forced marriage that South Asian women can experience. Siddiqui (2013) highlights how the need to protect South Asian women from familial and intimate partner violence is caught between the intersection of race and gender where anti-racists do not wish to have South Asian women's stereotypes reinforced, and so gender inequality is maintained through multiculturalist policies. Black British Feminists argue that intersections of race, gender, and class should ensure united responses to familial and intimate partner violence, forced marriage, and honour based violence (Siddiqui 2013: 183). In order to protect South Asian women's human rights, the effects of racism and gender inequality have to be addressed together (Siddiqui 2013: 176) and the key to eradicating violence, such as forced marriage, lies in empowering women rather than the introduction and implementation of immigration controls that further subjugate women (Siddiqui 2003b).

South Asian women's experiences of specific forms of domestic violence including forced marriage and honour based violence are also manifestations of experiences of the Continuum of Violence as well as of multiple perpetrators. Social categories have different positions of power (Yuval-Davis 2011) and this positionality is situated historically and is fluid (Yuval-Davis 2006: 198). Intersectionality provides a useful tool to understand how power manifests itself through different social locations when women experience familial violence due to transgressions of social norms whilst also experiencing intimate partner violence at the same time. By analysing the way the multiple social locations that women occupy intersect and work together, a deeper insight

is provided into the diversity and complexity of women's negotiation and resistance within the cultural constraints they face.

Neither the link between power and violence against women, nor the link between power and intersectionality can be understated to understand how power weaves its way through different and overlapping social locations (Cho, Crenshsaw and McCall 2013: 797). Power threads through choice, coercion, and consent and manifests as notions of shame and honour where choosing one's own partner is behaviour that denotes dishonour (Sen 2005). Women's transgressions of social norms of marriage are a response to the workings of power through moral codes and hence intersectionality provides a critical insight into how women's gender, their age, and their culture worked together when women experience familial and intimate partner violence and their capacity to respond to such patriarchal forces.

2.7 Conclusions

Violence is prevalent in women's daily lives as they can experience violence on an everyday, routine basis. Violence is fluid and events that constitute it can merge into one another. I have discussed how South Asian women can experience no distinction between arranged marriage and forced marriage and where forming an intimate relationship can fuse into forced marriage. It follows that forming intimate relationships can merge into the Continuum of Violence, the focus for this research. The conceptual framework will help explore these complexities by giving voice to the very women who have had such experiences; South Asian women who have chosen their own partners.

Kelly (1988: 27) contends that the complexity in the workings of power is evident in women's everyday experiences of subjugation to power, and so patriarchal forces of power span across both circles of the conceptual framework; that is the spectrum of forming marriage/intimate relationship and the Continuum of Violence, in essence affecting and influencing women's capacity to choose, coercing, or influencing women's consent to marriage and intimate relationships. The women's agency and negotiation work through the constraints of the power experienced. This suggests complexity in the nature of choosing an intimate partner for the cohort of women in this research. Furthermore their experiences of violence on a continuum add to the complexity of experiences, with no clear-cut boundaries and some overlap between choosing an intimate partner and Continuum of Violence experienced. Women's experiences sit at the juncture where forming an intimate relationship can fuse into the Continuum of

Violence, and differing elements are not easily distinguishable from each other. The epistemological approach of Black Feminist Standpoint as a lens through which to interpret this cohort of South Asian women's narratives and the complexity of their experiences at the collision between forming intimate relationships and the Continuum of Violence forms part of the conceptual framework. The final element, intersectionality, aids understanding of the oppression the women faced through the multiple social locations they occupy when forming an intimate relationship collides with domestic violence.

The next chapter follows on from this to define the methodological approach suited to Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology and the research methods that align with it.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology

"Research is an endeavour characterised by politics, power, and emotion, and it is important to reflect on the implications of this" (Letherby, Scott, and Williams 2013: 2).

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the theoretical basis of marriage and domestic violence, by exploring the forming of an intimate relationship or marriage and the Continuum of Violence with respect to South Asian women who have chosen their own partners and then experienced domestic violence in that relationship and, for some, from their families too. The two were brought together to show how for South Asian women the spectrum of marriage practices and that of domestic violence may both collide when they choose their own partners and hence transgress social norms of marriage. The conceptual framework discussed in Chapter 2, defined how the theoretical underpinning of this research addresses the complexity of choice, coercion and consent using Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology and Intersectionality. South Asian women's experiences that show a blurring of forming an intimate relationship with Continuum of Violence is interpreted through a Black Feminist lens that puts at centre stage women's knowledge of their experiences with a deeper understanding of how the different social locations work together to shape their lives.

This chapter traces the routes I followed to conduct the research. It begins by defining the research design of a qualitative approach as suited to the conceptual framework including the data collection methods. I give reasons for choosing qualitative research approach and how it fits with Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology. I detail the data collection methods I used for data collection in qualitative research. I justify the use of group and individual interviews, case studies and the use of narratives and artwork to collect data from the women participants. I describe the criteria for the sampling frame and some challenges I faced which led to the use of Facebook. I provide some thoughts on the usefulness of social media in areas of the research process.

The next section engages with the fieldwork; how participants were engaged in the research with details of the interviewing that took place. I then describe the tasks undertaken in the transition from fieldwork to analysis including transcribing and coding. I justify the use of Thematic Analysis.

I explain why ethics is important to this research involving South Asian women who have experienced domestic violence. Moving towards the end of the chapter I focus on my positionality and reflexivity within the research process and locate myself as a South Asian woman researching South Asian women in this study. I then describe the challenges I faced in recruiting the participants. I end the chapter with pen portraits of the participants to provide some background of the women for subsequent chapters.

3.2 Research Design

Qualitative research explores how people interpret the world they live in and examines the social properties that arise out of people's interactions with each other (Bryman 2016). Qualitative research therefore aims to give voice to the experiences of the researched. Skinner, Hester and Malos (2005) emphasise the key to feminist research is to use those approaches that most closely align to capturing the experiences of women. Scholars have explained that a researcher's ontological assumptions inform the epistemological stance which in turn influences the methodological approach appropriate to the research (Holden and Lynch 2004, Blaikie 2007).

A Black Feminist epistemological position requires the reconstruction of South Asian women's lived experiences in their own voices. Skinner (2005) argues that in order to hear the voices of women, the research process must be democratic. The relationship between the researcher and the researched and resulting power dynamics have been acknowledged by feminists with the aim of reducing the power imbalance (McCarry 2005). These three pillars of social research (voices of the researched, the relationship between researcher and researched and power balance) are particularly relevant to researching women participants who have experienced domestic violence where sensitivity is required when undertaking research conducted in a non-hierarchical way.

The ontological position is how women experience their realities through the social, historical cultural contexts of their lives (Stanley and Wise 1993). The epistemological framework of Black Feminist Standpoint raises the profile of Black women's voices by according them "agents of knowledge", legitimising what they have to say through analysis (Collins 2015b: 2350). South Asian women's experiences are at intersections of race and gender (Gill 2004, Siddiqui 2016) and so how those experiences are situated amongst multiple social locations that women occupy lends to the use of intersectionality. Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology and intersectionality lend to a qualitative

approach to provide a theoretical lens to determine the views, voices and reflections of South Asian women of their lived experiences.

Simply put, qualitative research is about words (Bryman 2016). The words come from what is spoken. This research aims to give voice to South Asian women, by examining their narratives of forming intimate relationships and how they negotiated and responded through interactions with their intimate partners and family when experiencing violence from them at the same time. Qualitative research facilitates South Asian women as agents with everyday knowledge, to understand the complexity of their resistance and agency within the context of the social norms they experience and the social positions they occupy for example as women, as young women, as poor women.

It follows that qualitative research approach supports the aim of this research to examine South Asian women's lived experiences of transgressing social norms of marriage with a view to understanding their negotiation in responding to the consequences they faced as a result of such transgressions. In order to understand the women's experiences and to discuss their negotiation of responses to power within the Continuum of Violence from their intimate partners and their families, the conceptual framework, as described in Chapter 2, provides the mechanism for interpreting through their own voices, the participants' experiences, by using Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology and Intersectionality.

The research methods employed within the qualitative research approach facilitate the centring of the women's voices. The criteria for the participants was that they were adult South Asian women who were living in the UK and had chosen their own partner and had experienced intimate partner violence in that relationship. The next section covers the data collection methods used in the qualitative research in this study.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

I utilised the following specific qualitative data collection methods to capture participants' lived experiences:

- Group interview with four current and ex-service users of a specialist domestic violence agency
- One-to-one Semi structured interviews held with eleven women participants
- Case studies of three women participants (who were part of the eleven interviewed individually)

- Narratives and artwork – one woman wrote an account of her experiences and another produced art to represent her reflections of her experiences

3.3.1 Group Interview with Participants

Bryman (2016) argues that there is very little difference between focus groups and group interviews and so due to the minimal distinction between them, the terms are used interchangeably. Bryman (2016: 501) gives the following distinctions between the two groups:

- Focus groups concentrate on a specific theme, rather than a general subject area
- Group interviews save time and resources by interviewing a number of people at the same time and place.
- The interactions amongst the attendees of the focus group are of interest

Focus groups allow insight into the range of participants' views about a subject and their interactions with each other (Conradson 2005). Participants can adapt or adjust their views and challenge others when hearing accounts from other participants in the focus group (Bryman 2016). Focus groups also provide an additional benefit, namely an insight into the collective subjectivity of the participants. The shared and individual participants' experiences, facilitated via focus groups, is also a key feature of Black Feminist epistemology because they reflect the collective standpoint of Black women and hence input into Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology (Collins 1990, Potter 2008). The definitions of focus group and group interview are helpful here. Although elements of both focus group and group interview occurred, for the most part, I conducted a group interview. This was due to the fact that the group interview had to be conducted in four languages, and so each participant was asked the same question in turn. However towards the end of the interview the women participated in a group discussion without the need for any questions from me but for some interpretation by myself and the facilitator and so I will use the term group interview.

The group interview enabled a small-group discussion where participants shared, in a safe and confidential environment, their experiences of forming an intimate relationship and of domestic violence. I conducted one group interview. The women in the group interview were all current or ex-service users of a national BME domestic violence agency and were selected by the agency. In a pre-meeting with the practitioner, I detailed the criteria for the participants. The practitioner identified and selected those women who matched the criteria and reviewed the list with me prior to the group interview.

The practitioner facilitated the group interview with me. As she knew the participants already, she set the ground rules with the participants. I gave an overview of the research, obtained informed consent and agreement for audio recording. Four different languages were spoken by the women participants; Hindi, Punjabi, Guajarati and English. I had speaking fluency in three of the languages and the practitioner was able to interpret for me at times when I did not fully understand. The group interview was more structured than the one-to-one semi-structured interviews I held. I asked the same question to each woman in turn. In the last forty-five minutes of the two-hour meeting, the women interacted in a conversation style. Participants related their stories and narratives, triggering contributions from other participants which added to the depth and provided a richer cumulative insight into the women's experiences. There were similarities in their experiences but also variations which showed the complexity of women's lives and constraints they lived in.

3.3.2 One-to-one Semi-Structured Interviews

According to Valentine (2005: 111) "the aim of an interview is…to understand how individual people experience and make sense of their own lives". Semi-structured interviews enable interviewees to "construct their own accounts of their experiences" (Valentine 2005: 111). Letherby (2003) points out that there are various ways of undertaking interviews, from formal to totally unstructured where participants are involved in the process. I held semi-structured interviews with eleven women participants. The questions based on themes identified in the literature review. Section 3.4 provides details of the interviews that took place in the fieldwork.

3.3.3 Case Studies

Case studies are suited when deeper exploration of some social phenomena is warranted (Yin 2018). Yin (2018: 15) explains "…you would want to do a case study because you want to understand a real-world case and assume that such an understanding is likely to involve important contextual conditions pertinent to your case". A central tenet of this research is how South Asian women, through their voices, bring meaning to their experiences which collide at the overlap of choosing an intimate partner and their experiences along the Continuum of Violence. Such experiences are 'real-world' where the real world is understanding the social and cultural context of women lives and their view of their social world emanating from transgressing social norms of marriage and choosing an intimate partner.

The value and meaningfulness of such data has been acknowledged (Josselson and Lieblich 1993) where narratives can be complete and coherent but at the same time the narratives represent "human complexity and contradiction" (Josselson and Lieblich 1993: xii). A participant's narrative recalls past experiences and "future expectations" (Rosenthal 1993: 65) which is reflected in what they choose to talk about. Yin (2018) states a researcher can compile their own narratives from the themes that emerge during analysis. I compiled narratives for three women participants, Anita, Sara and Krishna to produce case studies. I chose these women because their narratives of forming intimate relationships were rich with complex experiences, containing some similarities but also differences which illuminated my analysis. The three women also differed in age and so their responses were relative to the time that had passed since the intimate relationship ended. All three women's experiences highlighted varied negotiation and responses to family and intimate partner violence.

3.3.4 Narratives and Artwork

Letherby (2003: 90) refers to life histories, as "an account of 'group lives' where the narrator weaves her story with those of her 'significant others': her children, parents, partner, lovers, friends and colleagues". Letherby (2003) argues that life histories provide an insight into the experiences of participants who are in similar situations. Personal accounts enable the participants to reflect, unlike interviews which provide a 'snapshot' of responses at that given time and also reduces reliance on the focus-group and semi-structured interview meetings as the only opportunity to give voice to their experiences, especially where time is limited (Letherby 2003).

During each interview I followed up my requests for narratives from the women participants but did not make too enthusiastic an endeavour in order to avoid further burdens on their lives and situations. One participant, Harjit, wrote an account and sent it to me. She reflected on her experience of talking and writing about her experiences of domestic violence from her intimate partner. She stated, "I felt it; I thought about it but never articulated it", (Research Diary 13 January 2016) and on writing her account she was surprised at how quickly "it all came flooding out" (Research Diary 13 January 2016). This provided an opportunity for both Harjit and me to reflect on the process of narrating experiences outside of the interviews and how it provided a greater insight into the women's own reflections of their experiences.

I was keen for other participants to have an opportunity to reflect in this way but one that was less of a burden for them. I attended a conference, 'Domestic Abuse -

Understanding and Facing the Challenges Ahead', where Professor Liz Kelly, in her presentation on a longitudinal study of women and children who have exited domestic-violence services, discussed the use of artwork and photographs by participants as a methodological tool, where women could express their reflections on their experiences as an alternative to interviews (Kelly 2016). Kelly (2016) argues that this is another way for women to express their "voices" and to identify the experiences that are significant to them. I decided to adopt this approach and from then on in every interview I asked women to contribute a photo of an object or an artwork which, for them, personified and captured their experiences and for them represented how they perceived what had happened to them. I asked them to email me the photo with a brief narrative of what the image in the photo meant to them in the context of their experiences. Again, one participant, Krishna, produced her own drawing portraying her leaving the storm of domestic violence behind her, moving forwards with her family to a better life protecting herself and her children. I discuss in this more detail in Chapter 6.

3.3.5 Triangulation

Each individual method offers strengths in enabling participants to reveal their stories and reflections of their experiences. It is the combination of methods together that provides further rigour to the data-collection phase. Triangulation is the technique where multiple methods are used as ways of capturing and reflecting on women's experiences (Letherby 2003, Valentine 2005). By using the group interview it confirmed how women both conformed to social norms and challenged them by initially answering the questions and then as the meeting progressed they challenged other participants and collectively discussed their shared experiences of their oppression. The one-to-one semi-structured interviews provided an opportunity for the women to talk about their experiences that were most significant to them. The case studies enabled a deeper exploration of some of the women's personal histories in order to explore those areas that were common to all the women. The narrative and artwork was an opportunity for the women participants to convey their experiences without any direct interaction with the researcher or other participants. Together the tools facilitated a deeper understanding of the participants' attitudes, views, and behaviour of the barriers, violence, and oppression the women faced, within familial, community, and intimate relationships. All the tools were used, some to a larger extent than others. The next section describes the process for identifying participants.

3.4 Interviewing

The criteria defined for the participants were adult South Asian women (over eighteen years age) who identified belonging to the ethnic group of South Asian and were living in the UK, at the time the fieldwork was undertaken. The women themselves determined they had chosen their own partners and had experienced intimate partner violence, although they used the term “domestic violence”.

The locations of the interviews were held at a mutually agreed time and place. The primary objective was to ensure the safety of both the participant and me. The interview had to be held in an environment where the women felt they could speak about their experiences without being overheard.

Due to the sensitive nature of the research I anticipated that participants would primarily be recruited via agencies that provide services to women experiencing domestic violence. Feminist research approaches have pioneered non-hierarchical relationships between researcher and “researched” (Letherby 2003, Oakley 1981). To this end researching vulnerable groups of participants requires not only sensitivity in the research approach but also trust between the researcher and the ‘researched’. Trust is also needed between the researcher and the gatekeepers. For agencies to identify participants, they needed to trust my professionalism and be confident that my approach to the participants would not reproduce the victimisation of them. This is in addition to university ethics approval. Practitioners had to place their trust in me, as the researcher. I draw on a theory from economics (Polanyi 2001) to inform practice where there is mutual respect and trust between the main parties, that is, within the reciprocated relationships between researcher and researched and researcher and gatekeeper.

In his description of the rise of the market economy Polanyi (2001: 64) argues that economic transactions should be undertaken on trust and reciprocal understanding of both parties, “usually embedded in long-range relations implying trust and confidence”. Granovetter (1985: 487) develops the argument that economic activities are carried out through networks of social relations “embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations”. Thus, people’s economic activities are embedded within their network of social relations where there is trust between actors in the transaction. I argue that there are similarities to be drawn where research activities require trust between researcher and agencies, or gatekeepers, and the trust is embedded within networks of social relations between researchers and academics and other institutions and agencies.

Granovetter (1985) further asserts that trust in social relations positions people in a more vulnerable state within social relationships because of the belief and confidence actors place in the partners within the social relationship, in a way they would not consider with strangers. It is the historical association with the individual that is used to decide if that individual is trustworthy to deal with, and not the actual institution they work for (Granovetter 1985: 491). Molm, Whitham, and Melamed (2012) argue that reciprocity within social exchanges builds trust and protects against conflicts. In light of this my approach to determining participants for the research involved contacting domestic violence service providers, with which I had a historical association through my voluntary and professional work. I believed they would have trust in me as a researcher. Furthermore, agencies can act as gatekeepers to their service users (the participants for this research) (McCarry 2005). The gatekeepers were local and national specialist domestic violence and sexual violence service providers, including BME providers. They did act as gatekeepers, for example by not responding to my requests, or informing me that they could not support the research. These tended to be service providers that I did not have a historical relationship with or did not know of me via networks and so were "strangers" and may have been warier of trusting me.

I was spending a lot of time contacting domestic violence service providers, awaiting their responses, only to find that when they did respond, I could not engage with participants. I therefore decided to try a variety of other routes. I contacted local politicians to see if they could support me. I contacted local BBC TV and radio through my contacts. They did not feel this was enough of a story to warrant a piece. I tried online media such as jiscmail and mumsnet. With the latter I discovered the demography did not lend itself to the experiences of South Asian women. One agency suggested I create a Facebook page and they would "like" the page so that their online users could see the page. This made me consider using social media as a way of identifying and engaging participants in order to broaden the reach to participants and have an improved response rate.

3.5 Use of Facebook in Social Science Research

3.5.1 Why Facebook?

The rise of social-media use has been phenomenal, from just under 1 billion to 2.28 billion at the end of 2016 with projected rises to just over 3 billion in 2021 (Statista 2017a). The rise of Facebook users has also been meteoric, from 372 million active daily users in the first quarter of 2011 rising by nearly a billion to 1.325 billion in the second quarter

of 2017 (Statista 2017b). There is a growing body of literature using Facebook in social science research. Researchers have conducted studies of online activity in Facebook groups (McLean, Maalsen, and Grech 2016) and have conducted online surveys (Barratt et al. 2015) across a number of countries. Barratt et al. (2015) used Facebook to access "hidden populations".

Use of Facebook as a tool for identifying participants has been employed in different ways. Lijadi and van Schalkwyk (2015) recruited "hard-to-reach" participants for their closed online focus group by posting in specific groups to publicise their research. Mohee (2011) used Facebook to search for relevant groups and then asked the administrators of such groups if she could attend in person in order to recruit participants. Due to the sensitive nature of the research area and the possible trauma and stigma South Asian women may feel, this group of women participants is likely to have low social visibility. Using Facebook seemed an avenue worth exploring in order to recruit participants.

3.5.2 Setting up the Facebook Page for This Research

After ethical approval from Coventry University, I set up a Facebook page dedicated to this research. There were some considerations I had to manage, for example, whether to put my name on the page. I decided against this in order to protect myself from online abuse. I felt vulnerable going public due to the nature of the subject. It was important to consider the language style and the pitch to achieve a balance between, on the one hand making the research outline accessible to all with varying degrees of English language comprehension, and on the other, promoting it as a serious intellectual project. Due to the global reach of Facebook, there were criteria I had to state explicitly. For example, I had to state the explicit criterion that women participants had to be living in the UK and over the age of eighteen.

I created a post which I pinned to the timeline so that it would always appear at the top. I also created a leaflet which I added and circulated physical copies (please see Appendix E). I informed all the contacts in my excel spreadsheet about this Facebook page and requested that they "like" the page. This may seem an unusual route but my reasons for doing this were not to 'make friends' on Facebook because I did not want to create networks. The sole reason for the page was to recruit participants.

3.5.3 Response to Facebook

After five weeks the page had a reach of 403 Facebook users (Research Diary 21 March 2016) and two days after that the page had reached 993 Facebook users (Research Diary 23 March 2016). I contacted Facebook through a friend who works at the company to ask how I could increase the reach. After a number of correspondences (via Facebook messenger) they responded to say that my use of Facebook went against the objective of Facebook, which was to link as many users as possible to each other and to build networks within networks of users (Research Diary 10 April 2016). I wanted a one-to many-relationship where the participants did not know who else had contacted me. On reflection it would have been more effective to spend more time recruiting via Facebook, by regularly posting messages that were related to the subject area and also to find closed groups to ask if I could join a group used by other researchers (Marks et al. 2017).

I found that the use of Facebook removes agencies which act as gatekeepers. This meant that participants could access the research and contact me directly. Participants who contacted me via Facebook did so because they had been following the Facebook pages of domestic-violence service providers but had not engaged with the agencies directly for support for fear of being judged. They were interested in being part of the research and in sharing their lived experiences. Other women had been supported by agencies in the past but found out about the research via Facebook. Comments from participants via Facebook messenger included the following.

“I would be happy to assist. I was in a marriage of my choice but the marriage was full of domestic abuse. You are more than welcome to contact me.”

“Am happy to help.”

“I would definitely be interested in participating.”

“Having read your post I would like to take part in your research.”

3.5.4 Facebook and the Research Process

Although my original intention was to only use Facebook in the fieldwork phase, to recruit participants, I found it useful in subsequent phases of the research process. I posted on the timeline to keep the women informed of the progress of the research process. So for example when I was transcribing I posted the following:

> Having transcribed all of the interviews I have listened to the interviews a second time, and read and reread the transcripts to ensure I have transcribed accurately but

> also to hear the participants' words in their own voices. Brings it more to life and gives me a deeper insight into the experiences and reflections. I have been privileged to hear the participants' courage amidst the most difficult experiences and the sheer testament of holding down jobs, and bringing their children up in loving, caring, and safe environments (Sandhu 2017).

This enabled me to "stay in touch" with the participants and kept them involved in the research process beyond fieldwork once their own interviews had been completed.

Facebook also facilitated the use of the "snowballing technique". The snowballing sampling (or chain-referral sampling) method involves increasing the number of possible participants where existing participants suggest and refer others whom they know who meet the participant criteria (South Asian women living in the UK, had chosen their own partners and had experienced intimate partner violence) (Abbott and McKinney 2013, Biernacki and Waldorf 1981). Feminists have used the snowballing technique to obtain a significant sample of participants (Letherby 2003, Marshall 1994). Snowball sampling is most suited to research where the subject matter is sensitive (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981), particularly where potential participants do not wish their involvement in the subject area to be known (Faugier and Sargeant 1997: 791) or there is an element of stigma (Noy 2008) and so makes it difficult to produce a sample. South Asian women can have low social visibility due to the sensitive nature and stigma of domestic violence the women may feel. This posed more challenges in recruiting appropriate participants.

In total fifteen participants were recruited; six participants via Facebook, either directly or via snowballing; six participants were recruited via domestic violence agencies who acted as gatekeepers; one participant was recruited via a jiscmail message I sent, and two participants were recruited directly from my own professional networks as shown in Figure 3-1 Recruitment Routes of Participants.

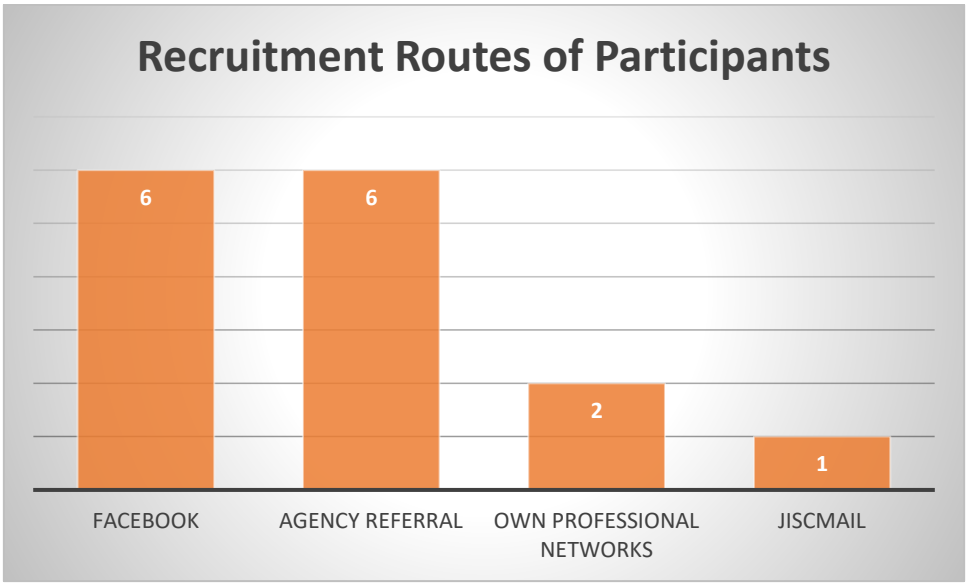

Figure 3-1: Recruitment Routes of Participants

The next section describes the fieldwork undertaken to gather women's narratives.

3.6 The Fieldwork

The methodological approach was an iterative one where as issues rose they were resolved and research design reworked to feed into the rest of the fieldwork.

3.6.1 Engaging the Participant

Letherby and Bywaters (2007) emphasise that the key to successfully gaining access to gatekeepers and participants is by clearly communicating the objectives of research to them. The first time I was in contact with a participant I gave details of the research and stated that it had been approved by the ethics committee at the university, to give assurance to the prospective participant. I also stated the importance of keeping the women's identities anonymous and their contributions confidential. If a woman got in touch with me via Facebook messenger I would progress it from there. Where an agency referred a participant, I contacted the woman if she had agreed to her contact details being passed onto me or she contacted me. I had a separate mobile phone which I used solely for interacting with the participants. I sent the participant the interview pack via email or Facebook messenger. The interview pack consisted of the Participant Consent Form (Appendix D), Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C), and a list of agencies they could contact for support (Appendix F).

Letherby (2003) points out a 'sandwich' style of interviews and focus groups, where interviews can be conducted initially which lead to focus groups and onto further interviews. I discussed the potential for this process with a practitioner. Her response was that women's lives were too complex and chaotic to guarantee attendance at a number of different meetings. This would also require additional resources for facilitation which, as a voluntary organisation, did not have to expend. She was confident that women would not feel inhibited from talking about their experiences. I noted in my research diary that she stated that because the women participants trusted the agency then they in turn would trust me (Research Diary 16 December 2015). This chain of reciprocated trust (Polanyi 2001), between the practitioner and the service users and between myself, the researcher, and the gatekeeper, and the network of social relations (Granovetter 1985) meant that I could interview the women and trust was present from the outset.

The practitioner was right. The women did not feel inhibited and were very open and willing to talk about their experiences, which meant that everything was covered in one session. Similarly other women participants, for example those recruited via Facebook, were also willing to talk to me about what were traumatic experiences for them. I believe that for some women the process was a cathartic one. My research diary entry for an interview refers to the participant speaking to me after the interview to say she had found the interview draining but was glad she had spoken about her experiences (Research diary 14 April 2016). As well as the process of adjusting the number of interviews, I found the fieldwork to be an iterative process.

Letherby (2003) highlights how interviews can vary from totally formal to completely unstructured with participants involved in the process. My initial approach was to conduct semi-structured interviews, to allow the participants to talk about what they deemed to be important, but with some structure to ensure that themes identified in the literature review were covered. After two interviews I found that the participants wanted to talk about faith and religion; subjects I had not anticipated. My approach did not fully allow the women participants to talk about what they wanted to talk about within the scope of the research because I was rigidly sticking to my questions from the interview schedule. For example, I asked questions about honour, izzat and shame and found that women were responding with their definitions but I was not exploring how these social constructs were part of their lived experiences. I questioned the true efficacy of my approach as truly feminist, reflexive and without undue power hierarchies, where

women have a right to talk about what they feel is important to them. In response to these outcomes I moved to a more "unstructured", semi-structured approach where I asked some questions initially and subsequently where I felt I needed clarification or to explore further something the participant said whilst remaining within the scope of the research question.

I started each interview by asking women about their backgrounds. I found that they were very willing to talk. One participant talked for two hours after my initial question and before I asked another question. In fact, I found each interview to be "conversational, fluid form, each interview varying according to the interests, experiences, and views of the interviewees" (Valentine 2005: 111). Each interview was a conversation, which travelled a course depending on what the participants chose to talk about. If I had not carried out the interviews in this manner then I do not believe I would have had the opportunity to get a deeper understanding of the women's experiences of religion or of their mothers' experiences, which enabled me to make connections during analysis, as described in chapters 4 and 6. As I conducted further interviews, the function of my interview schedule changed from being a proforma of questions to a crib sheet that merely reflected the broader discussion areas to cover in the interview which is detailed next.

3.6.2 Interview Schedule

As I adopted an iterative approach to the interviews, adapting the interviews and hence the interview schedules too to support the interviews I was conducting (See Appendix A). In her research on the violence of fathers, Harne (2005:181) adopts strategies for interviewing by having "a topic sheet with a list of the issues I wished to explore" in order to avoid misinterpretations of meanings. Harne (2005) combined the topic sheet with open-ended questions in interviews to explore in depth particular experiences, the approach I adopted.

The interview schedule for women participants, both for the group interview and semi-structured interviews, centred on their family background, their experiences in forming their relationships with their intimate partners, leaving the violent relationships, relationships with their families in childhood as well as adulthood and their thoughts about their futures. The objective was to hear the women's own narratives and the emphasis or importance they placed on key events, situations, family responses, and relationship with their partners. The following section outlines the actual process of interviewing the participants.

3.6.3 Interviewing

Fifteen participants were interviewed; of these, eleven were interviewed in one-to-one interviews and the remaining four were interviewed in a group interview. The interviews were carried out between January 2016 and October 2016. The group interview and one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the women took place in a number of different locations as shown in Figure below 3-2 below

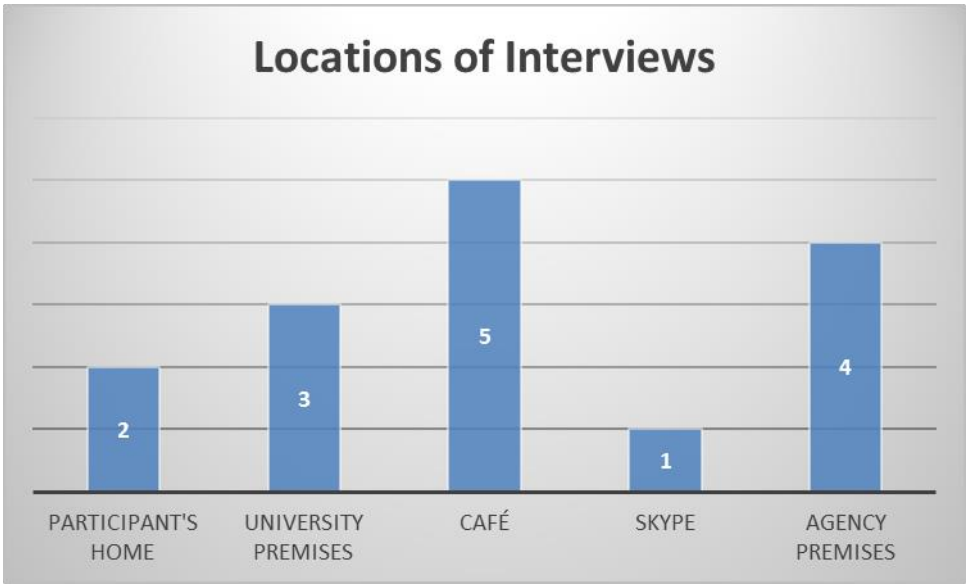

Figure 3-2: Locations of the Interviews Held

Most of the interviews with the women were held in cafes in the town or city where the participant lived and they chose the particular venue. The group interview took place in a meeting room in the domestic violence agency's offices, referred to in figure 3-2 as "agency premises". Two of the interviews were held in the participant's own homes. I followed the university's ethical and safety guidelines and "checked in" with my Director of Studies, which meant I sent her a text message every 30 minutes to indicate that I was safe. On both occasions the women were alone in their homes during the interview. One interview was held using voice over internet technology, Skype, because the participant lived a long distance from me and on a number of occasions an interview had been arranged but the participant had to cancel. Using Skype allowed her to cancel at short notice without wasting travelling time. I conducted the Skype interview in my home, in a room where I was not disturbed. The participant was in her home and there was no other household member present during the interview.

At the start of the interview I introduced myself to the participants, described the research topic and objectives, and handed out the participant information-sheet (Appendix C) and ensured they had time to read it and ask questions. I explained the consent form (Appendix D) before handing copies out and asking the women to provide informed consent by signing the form. The participants had their own copy of the consent forms to take away with them. The "ground rules" regarding confidentiality were agreed. I always explained how I would anonymise their identities and use pseudonyms in the research analysis and final thesis to ensure their safety and anonymity. As there was a possibility that the participants may become distressed as they "relived" their experiences and so may require support, I handed out briefing note with details of agencies that they could choose to access should they require services such as counselling (Appendix F).

With the women's permission I audio-recorded all interviews and emphasised that they were in control of the audio-recording and could switch off the recorder at any time during the interview. Also participants in the group interview could choose not to contribute to the discussions.

In what I felt was the most effective way to maximise the women's anonymity and hence safety I used pseudonyms such as Participant 1, Participant 2, etc. In this way the participants could not be identified at all. However, upon writing the analysis I found that the women's narratives became impersonal, and there seemed to be a disconnect between what I was writing and the women as human beings. This was further reinforced by comments from the supervisors. I contacted the participants to request that I change their pseudonyms to names. Some women chose the names themselves and others were happy for me to choose names.

3.7 Transcribing

The interviews were audio-recorded, with the consent of the participants. The audio-recordings were transcribed *verbatim*. Transcribing is time-consuming but it is useful in the analysis phase (Bryman 2016). I read through each transcript and then transcribed verbatim (Braun and Clarke 2013). I then listened to the recording whilst checking for transcription errors. I undertook this process a third time to ensure accuracy in the transcription process. Even at the third pass I still found minor errors, which could lead to misinterpretation. In some of the interviews women used Punjabi words, and this repeated checking ensured that the transcription process accurately captured these.

Harjit's narrative was hand written. I typed it up into a MS Word document and checked the electronic copy with the hard copy for transcription errors. Thereafter I treated it as a transcript in the same way as others.

The group interview was undertaken in four different languages. I was fluent in two of the languages but less so in the other two. I commissioned an interpreter to quality-check my transcription. The interviews conducted via Skype had technology interferences and so warranted a third pass to ensure the transcription process was rigorous. This repeated listening to and reading of the transcripts increased my familiarity of the data, which helped immensely during coding and analysis. The electronic transcripts are held in a secure platform and are password-protected.

To stay true to the balance-of-power relations between researcher and researched (Letherby 2003), I sent the transcripts to the participants and asked them to review them so that the participants could participate in the final transcripts and have control over the content (Kelly 1988). The value of this became evident when one participant commented that I had missed out the word "not", which would have distinctly changed the meaning of the sentence. Two participants responded to the transcripts with corrections which I duly updated on the transcripts. Once all of the transcripts had been transcribed and reviewed I undertook analysis of the transcripts. The next section describes the analysis method I chose and why.

3.8 Analysis

The core of Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology has been to make visible, previously erased Black women's narratives and place them on a par with Black men's and White women's narratives of oppression (Cho, Crenshsaw and McCall 2013). In order to produce "new insight and information" (Flowerdew and Martin 2005: 189) data analysis is a crucial part of the research design. Coghlan et al. (2007) define analysis as an ongoing process throughout the research project where any change that occurs needs to be taken account of. A central tenet of this research is to give voice to South Asian women's experiences. It follows that an inductive, bottom up approach is suited. I considered three approaches to analysis: Grounded Theory, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis and Thematic Analysis. No new theory will be developed and so Grounded Theory was not considered as a methodological approach for this research. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is a complete theoretically informed methodology with its own ontological epistemological framework for research (Reid,

Flowers and Larkin 2005). As this research employed Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology and Intersectionality a complete methodology was not required. For these reasons I applied Thematic Analysis.

3.8.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic Analysis is a method within qualitative research, where important or significant themes (patterns) are identified from the data and its flexibility means it can be used with an epistemological approach to further analyse the meanings from the themes (Braun and Clarke 2006, 2013). This research is using Black Feminist Standpoint as the epistemological framework to theorise South Asian women's experiences from their world view. I have argued that Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology provides a constructivist lens where meaning to women's experiences are socially produced. Thematic Analysis "seeks to theorize the sociocultural contexts, and structural conditions, that enable the individual accounts that are provided" (Braun and Clarke 2006: 85). Thematic analysis is flexible to allow its use with Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology and so a good match for finding out the experiences and reflections of South Asian women who transgress social norms of marriage and experience domestic violence within the intimate relationship and possibly the family, within the social and cultural contexts of their lives.

Thematic Analysis is a pattern-based analytic method. I looked for patterns to identify themes emerging from the transcripts of interviews; an inductive approach. Rather than the themes being merely descriptive elements, I interpreted meanings from the themes as part of the analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006: 84). The coding, labelling and analysis was facilitated using the software application NVivo which enabled an effective and efficient way of determining recurring themes, categorising and grouping the relevant quotes in order to obtain a sense of flow and coherence of knowledge obtained and to identify interesting relationships. I clustered these sub-themes together around a central organising concept or main theme (Braun and Clarke 2013: 224). For the central organising concept of Time and Space, there were subthemes of 'Reflections', 'Rebuilding my life', 'Re-framing Asian culture, faith and identity' and 'Emotional tensions'. After producing the thematic diagrams showing the main themes and sub-themes I produced a paragraph of each theme which gave an overview of the theme and the sub-themes and how they are related (Braun and Clarke 2013). Three key overarching themes emerged. The first theme encapsulated women's experiences of power within the family; the relationship between power and the different family

members. Patterns appeared highlighting the participants' mother's experiences as well as their own. The women also talked in detail about their childhood experiences within social constraints they faced. The second overarching theme centred on women's agency and negotiation in response to power. Significant subthemes emerged which showed the complexity of women's experiences of forming intimate relationships and their decisions to stay or leave the relationships. An important theme centred on their own view of the choice of intimate partner. The third theme showed a nuanced and depth of women's experiences and their reflections of their experiences. This was detailed in case studies of Anita, Krishna and Sara.

3.8.2 Coding

Charmaz (2014) advocates the usefulness of transcriptions for analysis with the development of ideas from the coding. Coding is the process of assigning labels which reflect the content of the section of transcript and the checking of repetitions in other interview transcripts (Charmaz 2014, Bryman 2016). The software tool NVivo was used to code the transcripts, identifying significant subject areas relevant to the research (Braun and Clarke 2006: 82). I coded every single line of transcript text with varying amounts of text per code. The first pass contained nearly four hundred codes.

After this first pass I reread the codes and data extracts under the codes and I identified patterns that were relevant to the research question which linked codes together under a "parent" node which reflected a "theme". "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun and Clarke 2006: 82). For example, I looked for issues or concepts that reflected abusive relationships or comparisons of an abusive relationship with an intimate partner to that with family, and similar patterns of reflections by participants. I then determined if the themes could be linked together under another theme thereby building a tree with a number of grandparent, parent and children nodes. As mentioned in section 3.8.1, I produced a thematic map to help visualise the codes within a theme and the different levels of themes in order to produce overarching themes with sub-themes under them (Braun and Clarke 2013). Figure 3-3 shows the thematic map for chapter 4 with the main themes that emerged from the coding, such as the father's absence, and the participant's use of structural power.

Whatever method or combination of methods, the ethics of undertaking research were of paramount importance, especially for women who had experienced domestic violence. An ethical approach provides a solid foundation for a qualitative study but also a non-

exploitative one. The next section outlines the approach to ensure that ethical considerations were made explicit and adhered to throughout the research process.

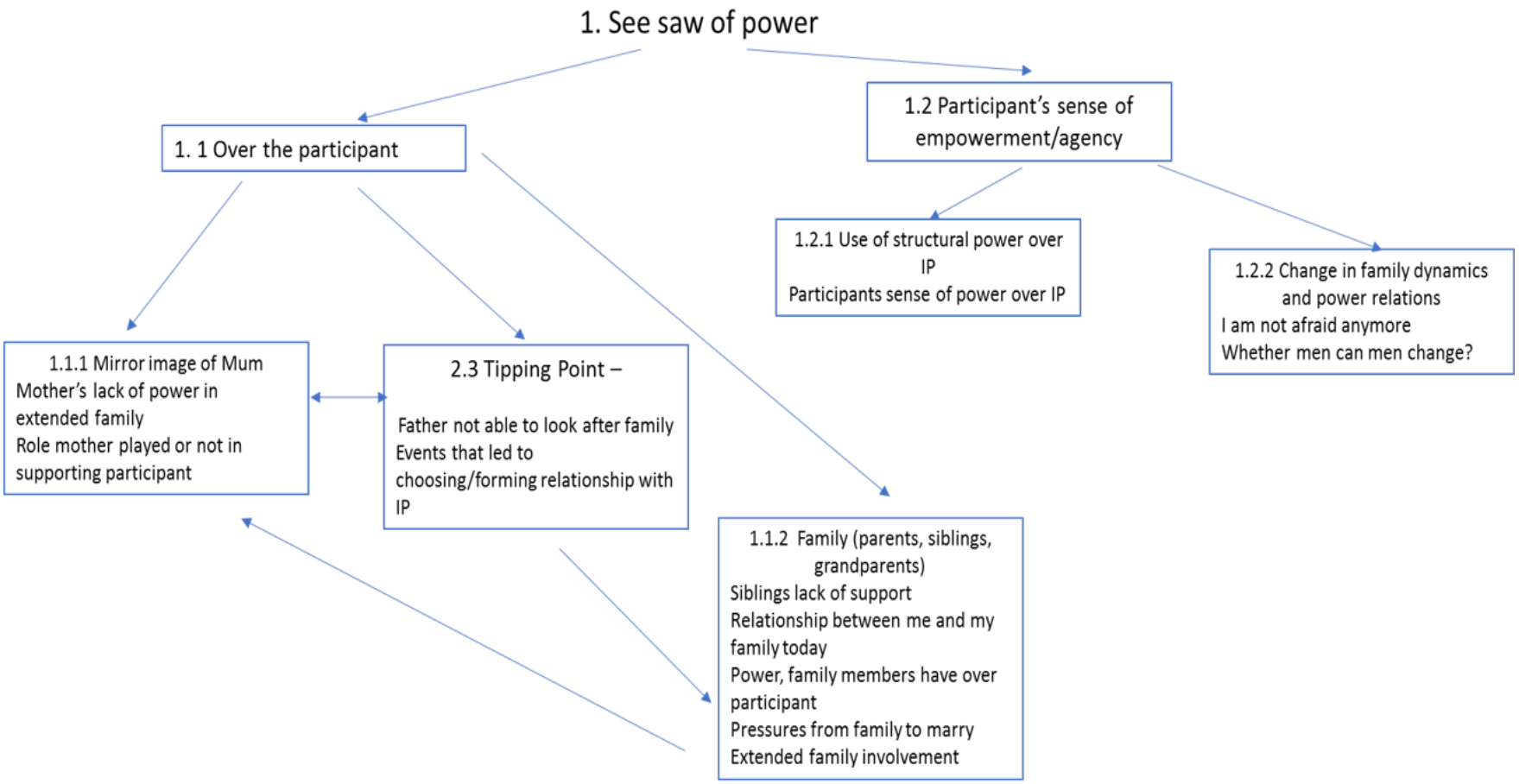

Figure 3-3: Thematic Map for The See-saw of Power Chapter

3.9 Research Ethics

Coventry University's ethical guidelines and process (Coventry University n.d.) were adhered to and ethical approval given. Ali et al. (2007: 80) set out the importance and applicability of ethical considerations throughout the research process. This is upheld by the British Sociological Association (2017) and extends further cover over other areas of the professional lives of sociologists including teaching and supervision. Due to the nature of domestic violence, not only the safety of participants but also the emotional distress resulting from participation, require an adherence to the emotional well-being and care of the participants (World Health Organisation 2001, British Sociological Association 2017). The process of engaging participants required trust and building relationships not only with the participants but also with gatekeepers. A vital part of this was ensuring consent was obtained using the informed consent form (see Appendix D).

McCarry (2005) emphasises the importance of the informed consent form containing information about the research, including the aims and objectives, so that participants have as much knowledge as possible when consenting to the research. Participants could also withdraw from the research process at any time. The process undertaken to obtain informed consent, included giving the participants of the research a personal copy of the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix C) and the Participant Consent Form (Appendix D). The completed and signed consent forms were scanned and electronic versions stored within the computer platforms of the university which were password protected. Hard copies are stored in secure areas on university premises. Actions to protect the confidentiality of participants and their data, including transcripts, were of paramount importance to ensure participants' safety. The safety and wellbeing of participants who have experienced domestic violence were critical to this process.

Maynard (1994) emphasises the importance of the researcher being aware of the possible negative effects of the research process on participants. The option of providing support for participants was discussed with the specialist agencies who introduced participants to the research. Participants experiencing any trauma during the group interview and one-to-one interviews could be supported. In the data collection phase I worked with agencies to ensure that support was provided for participants after the interviews. Where participants engaged with the research through other means, such as Facebook, I provided a sheet of agencies signposting them for support. Bryman (2016) provides a useful checklist for considering ethical issues, which was used as a guideline to ensure I covered what was important for this research for example ensuring

I followed ethical guidelines that did not bring any harm to the participants, especially important for this research as the participants would be talking about their experiences of domestic violence.

Edwards and Mauthner (2012) present a series of guidelines for ethical research practice borne out of feminist ethics, including consideration of whom the researcher identifies with, who is 'othered', and the interpersonal power relations exhibited throughout the research process. Oakley (1981) has argued that research ethical dilemmas are reduced where there is sharing of socialisation and gendered life experiences. My reflexive approach in the research is to acknowledge one's own bias. Edwards and Mauthner's (2012) guidelines provide a useful set of considerations and principles to ensure that bias is acknowledged and participants are not objectified during the interviewing stage.

3.10 Reflexivity and Positionality in the Research Process

Feminists have argued that social research is affected by the experience of the researcher and feminist accountabilities, power and intellectual privilege (Letherby 2003, Stanley and Wise 1993). Labelled as reflexivity the researcher is located within the centre of the research analysis questioning their own situation, ethics and (sub) conscious motives. In her now classic text, Oakley (1981) stresses the importance of this location and for a non-hierarchical relationship between researcher and participants. The importance of the researcher as the 'subject' and the context of their experience can support non-hierarchal research relationships (Letherby 2003: 9). Such a feminist philosophical approach to ethics in research provides the framework to give voice to community resistance and political change (Christians 2011).

Charmaz (2014: 13) positions the social reality of the researched and the researcher as constructed and therefore the "researcher's position, their privileges, perspective and interactions are an inherent part of the research reality. It, too, is a construction". An important element within the research process is the researcher's subjectivity (Charmaz 2014). Therefore as the researcher, my acknowledgement of and how I am a part of the study, from data collection to analysis and theory production is critical. Letherby (2003) acknowledges the privileged position of the researcher in the collection, analysis and interpretation of the data but warns the importance is to not generalise experiences or to claim objectivity. She goes on to claim there is no detrimental effect on the participants "sense of self-identity and self-assurance" (Letherby 2003: 119). Similarly in their

teaching of thematic analysis Clarke and Braun (2013:122) use reflexivity by asking students to reflect on assumptions held, their values and life experiences which "might shape how they read and interpret the data". As a researcher who shares a similar history with the participants it is important to ensure that the participants' accounts are carefully analysed and interpreted. Mirza (2009: 5) refers to the positionality of a South Asian researcher who can give voice to the researched whose voices may otherwise be silenced. As a South Asian woman it is important to me to describe my positionality as a gendered, racialized South Asian woman researcher, researching other South Asian women.

As a researcher with my own experiences at the intersections of gender, class and ethnicity has "bearings upon the relationship between the researcher and the researched" (Bhopal 2000: 73). Altheide and Johnson (2011: 591) argue that good quality research requires the researcher to show their hand and highlight problems encountered during the research process and how they were resolved or dealt with. The location of my life history and experiences can affect questions asked and the conduct and style of interviewing and subsequent analysis means, for me, there is simply no getting away from it and is acknowledged in the research process. I therefore situate my positionality as a South Asian woman who herself did depart from social norms of arranged marriage. As a South Asian woman born and raised in the UK and who negotiated arranged marriage, forced marriage and intimate relationship of choice, it is woven into my identity and experience. I locate myself in the research and acknowledge the motivation for the research.

I have worked in the domestic violence sector for over two decades, including undertaking voluntary work, running a domestic violence refuge and services and undertaking research in this field. Positionality is not an automatic entrance to a conducive relationship between researcher and researched. Oakley (2016b) revisits her argument that the nature of interviewing in the name of 'objectivity' was not in keeping with feminist research and that such relationships can be complex. She reflects on the contribution of feminist social research to the ethics of conducting research and argues for "reflection, negotiation and discussion" in order to give the participants choice versus the task of improving scientific quality of research (Oakley 2016b: 209). The participants and I although South Asian, come from different socio-economic, religious and cultural backgrounds, with differing immigration and British residency status. This reflects the

heterogeneous, complex social and political positions we occupy, as researcher and researched and as South Asian women in the UK today.

As a privileged custodian of data and first-hand experience of what the women participants say and how they say it, the words they use, both in English and other languages, the acknowledgement of shared experiences forced me to strive to produce research that does not stereotype or position South Asian women and culture as 'backward' or wholly 'oppressive'. Bhopal (2001: 282–283) stresses how the influence of background, age, race, class and gender impacts researcher's ability to listen and interpret participants' narratives during interviews which can "challenge our own dominant stereotypes that affects the interpretation of research and how this is reported" which I heeded for this research.

My positionality as a South Asian woman who herself has departed from social norms of arranged marriage is key to how I know things and the resulting interpretation I place on "what was happening". Gender and racial identity of the participants and the researcher can have an impact on the research process, as participants may choose to reveal or not to reveal certain shared experiences based on their own gender and race and that of the researcher (Bhopal 2001). Participants who feel there is shared lived experiences between themselves and the researcher may reveal more about their lived experiences (Bhopal 2001). Black Feminist researchers researching intimate partner violence have found that their gender and racial identity has led participants to reveal their experiences, and in particular, their perceptions of white people, resulting from their experiences of violence and the criminal justice system (Potter 2008). Shared lived experiences contribute to the black women's standpoint because Black women researchers have experiences as situated knowers (Collins 2000a).

Upon revealing her experiences of miscarriage to her participants, Letherby (2003: 12) found their responses "demonstrates both the reflectivity of respondents and the importance of responsiveness and reflexivity in researching feminist issues". Although I did not offer my own "back" story it did come up in a couple of interviews. Towards the end of her interview, Sara broke down in tears and sobbed for some minutes. She had been talking about how she could not go into Asian shops or wear Asian clothes or even cook Asian foods. With this in mind and a woman in front of me in such tears I decided to tell her some of my own story in order to provide some sharing of narrative that may provide some solace or comfort to her. She was very interested and keen to ask me about what I had told my two children. On another occasion I was asked outright. Samia

said “I don’t know any of your story obviously cos you haven’t really said” and also “I’m sure you’ve got a very interesting story” at the end of the interview and we shared experiences of leaving family and being married to white men and bringing up mixed race children. I felt very sensitive to their experiences which connected with my own personal and professional experiences.

I felt a huge sense of loss and grief for both Sara and Samia. In Sara’s case, I felt a sense of a dehumanizing effect on her when she described how she could not enter Asian shops. It connected with my own sense of loss, grief and isolation in my personal experiences of familial violence and retriggered feelings especially during my return journey after Sara’s interview when I cried for most of it. Ochieng (2010) described how she felt angry and sad when she heard the participant’s stories because she shared similar experiences and struggles. The root cause of my emotions were the injustice of the women’s experiences and struggles. Sampson et al. (2008) discuss feminist researchers’ concerns about emotional risk to themselves over physical risk when undertaking qualitative research especially in relation to sensitive subject areas. It was not just that domestic violence was sensitive but the injustice I felt about the women’s lived experiences of isolation, fear, trauma, loss of connection with their culture and families resulting in a dehumanisation that was the “risk” to my emotions. I recognised my emotions are an important part of fieldwork.

When Taslin described how she stood up to her uncle, I will never forget her facial expressions, the boldness of her stance. The physicality of her words resonated a sense of joy, pride and admiration towards her. This was a woman who had experienced such fear from her uncle, had no protection from her parents, and was abused by her husband and his family. Taslin was sent to Pakistan and married in the space of three weeks and, in order to return to the UK, had non-consensual sex with her husband. From such experiences, she emerged to face her oppressors. Taslin found a sense of power from within, where many women, including myself, are not able to access. The anger, grief, and loss, I felt reflect strong emotions and which must be acknowledged within research (Letherby 2003, 2000). Emotional labour that is how we manage our emotions at work and specifically in the research process is important and needs to be managed (Letherby 2003). Hochschild (2012) argues emotional labour is a coordination of mind and feeling integral to our very individuality. Researchers’ emotional responses to the object of study and critical reflexivity is important and cannot be separated out in the research process (Gray 2008: 947, Letherby 2003, 2000).

The uniqueness and compelling nature of Taslin's personal narrative added richness to the data. The tension between receiving rich data versus "such use" of participants is ameliorated, it is argued, by the fact that researchers are giving voice to the research participants (Sampson et al. 2008: 924). I was acutely aware of the traumatic nature of the participants' experiences because I had been in similar situations defying my family and in addition my experiences with service users whilst working in the sector. I did not feel uncomfortable about the fact that I was accessing rich data. I felt humbled by their willingness to talk to me in trust. The ethnicity of the contributors to the project that (Sampson et al. 2008) undertook was not part of their analysis. The rich data was a vehicle for not only making the women's voices heard but also to counter the stereotype and invisibility of South Asian women. This made me more determined as a South Asian woman researcher researching South Asian women, to make sure their voices were heard.

Hendrix's (2002) raises as a paradox the credibility and validity of research undertaken by scholars of colour. The researcher's race is questioned as bringing bias into the study when subjectivity and reflexivity within qualitative research is encouraged. This resonated with my own fears and considerations as a South Asian woman researcher researching a study of cultural subjects of arranged, forced marriages and honour and shame and could cast me as a researcher only associated with such subjects (Hendrix 2002: 161). Hendrix (2002: 168) cites her personal history within the political context as the origin of her awareness of her position as a Black woman and a Black woman scholar. Hendrix (2002: 168) argues that her acknowledgement of such personal history makes for "a heightened sense of reflexivity that can make me a better researcher than White Colleagues inexperienced with assessing their social and/or professional position". As a South Asian women researcher with a high degree of reflexivity through my personal experiences and trauma of familial violence because of my choices to lead an independent life, I concur. It is here that I draw on Gray (2008) and introduce the researcher's relationship to the subject of their study and the research process, with emphasis on the researcher's own biographical relationship to the subject. Gray (2008: 941) writes that she sees research as "involving emotion work that shapes modalities of thinking and writing". Gray (2008: 942) acknowledges her connections, that give rise to emotions and feelings, which can be a "source of defiance and urgent curiosity" that led to her motivation to study migration. The social and political context of the gendered nature of domestic violence as experienced by South Asian women, is what is close to my skin and what motivates me to study this subject. It is more than urgent curiosity. My

sense of social injustice that women can experience such brutality in their lives but also my admiration for the women who hold down jobs, raise their children and live their lives without inflicting the examples of brutality they experienced.

Earlier I referred to interviews conducted like conversations and so I felt comfortable in being asked about my experiences but also I found it interesting that it was almost as if Samia knew there was a 'story' to me and a story that she was interested in. Furthermore there are not many spaces were South Asian women can talk openly about such experiences and, as a feminist researcher I recognised that both myself as the researcher and the participants, as the researched, found some support and comfort in these conversations. Researchers can research people who are not in the image of themselves. As academia is not fully diverse and representative of society and so to not undertake research can result in certain sections of society are not researched. This implies that minority researchers cannot research participants who are not the image of themselves either (Letherby and Bywaters 2007: 47). As a South Asian woman, who, physically is in the shared image of the participants, and who also experienced familial violence when departing from arranged marriage places me as an 'insider' to the research process and interactions with the participants (Bhopal 2001). However, I found my experiences did not easily fall into this dichotomous insider/outsider opposing terms. I found that there were indeed experiences that did not place me in such a situation and that I was completely outside. For example women in the group interview talked about Karva Chauth ritual. I was not aware of this despite sharing faith, culture and ethnicity with the participant who first mentioned it. However the ritual as a cultural custom meant that I was familiar with the reasons why women performed this ritual and indeed when the participants shared their jokes I could share the humour too. Letherby (2003: 132) points out that connections between the researcher and participants show that insider/outsider is complex.

Insider/outsider is fluid and renegotiated (Naples 1996) and can change at different points within the research process, with different groups and individuals (Ochieng 2010: 1728). In her research with African and African Caribbean families, Ochieng (2010) is an insider with African families because of shared African heritage and an outsider due to cultural and ethnic differences with African Caribbean families. Ultimately she shares common experiences of struggles against racism in the UK with all the participants. As a researcher of South Asian origin and Punjabi/Sikh heritage, I am an insider with women of similar heritage and an outsider to women of differing religious

heritages. The major site of my insiderness was shared cultural experiences of arranged marriage and patriarchal notions of honour and shame; the ties that bound me to all of the women participants.

Due to my personal experiences and consequences of familial violence I acknowledge my bias within the research process, specifically the way in which I view and interpret the women's experiences and my sense of injustice over the women experiences. There is a complexity and fluidity to my own insider/outsider position. Undertaking qualitative in-depth research in such a sensitive topic means that there will be emotional consequences for the researcher as well as the participants. Support is paramount for both. Specifically for the researcher, the support provided by the supervisory team and from other networks is a vital aid to enable the researcher to continue with the research in emotional health.

3.11 Challenges Faced

This section details some of the challenges I faced during the research design and fieldwork. The actual experience of contacting agencies drew a very mixed picture, and one that I was not expecting. I believed that my experience and professional reputation would enable me to recruit the participants despite it identified as a risk. In total I contacted seventy-six agencies and professionals to request referrals for participation in the research. I made the first contact on 7 December 2015 and the final contact on 4 October 2016. I communicated by a combination of email and telephone to fifty-two individuals and twenty-four agencies. Three of the agencies were able to support me in identifying participants. A fourth agency tried to engage a service user who had been to prison as a result of her experiences of domestic violence but she felt it was too traumatic to share her story with me. The remaining agencies gave a mixture of responses: some did not respond at all; others said they would forward my communication to their service users and staff but there was no further response; and a couple said their service users did not fit the criteria I was looking for. One agency's immediate response was to state that the women had experienced domestic abuse and would not want to talk about it with me (Research Diary: 22 February 2016). I questioned why they did not contact their service users to check if this was the case. This made me wonder about their true mission to give voice to women. They chose not to. Many agencies did not have the time nor resources required to support the facilitation of contacting participants.

However, due to the difficulties I encountered in recruiting women participants I never reached a situation where I had more than a single woman participant waiting to be interviewed at any one time (except for the group interview which took place right at the end of the fieldwork). Indeed in the early stages one participant was interested and I asked her to wait until I had an optimum number of women for a group interview; when that did not materialise, and I contacted her again she did not respond to my telephone calls. In order to have some level of involvement from interviewees I worked with practitioners to review the questions for the interviews and the process of undertaking interviews, and to ensure the interviews would be conducted with sensitivity and confidentiality. These research findings will be disseminated to domestic-violence agencies and so support action change (Kesby, Kindon, and Pain 2005).

In section 3.4 I referred to the importance of historical association between the researcher and agencies, a history which instils trust and confidence in the researcher in a way that would not happen if they were strangers (Granovetter 1985). The issue of practitioners who were "strangers" to my Director of Studies also came to light. When I contacted one agency, the chief executive immediately asked me the name of my professor because through her previous interactions she had some concerns about a particular scholar at Coventry University. When I mentioned my Director of Studies by name she was contented. She stated that they were very stretched but would raise the subject with her staff as she felt I would "do good quality work" (Research Diary 7 December 2015). This brought up interesting dilemmas. With reference to Granovetter, it was certainly a case of not only of my reputation but also of that of my Director of Studies. This was something I had not anticipated. A further issue arose as to whether I should inform my Director of Studies of this encounter; I chose not to at the time but I included the incident in my research diary to reflect on it. Documenting it here in the thesis is an appropriate time and place. The next section describes some limitations to this research.

3.12 Limitations to the Study

It is important to acknowledge the sample size of participants is fifteen. As explained in the previous section there were many challenges to overcome. However the richness of data from the women participants has not in any way detracted from the findings and conclusions reached to the field of research in domestic violence.

A context which is important to this area of study but not included within this research is that of participants identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT). All of the participants were heterosexual and cis women. Therefore, the reference to marriage and cohabitation or intimate relationships is, in this study, specific to relationships with persons of the opposite sex. If any of the respondents had been LGBT then they would have been included in the research. Hence this shows a limitation of this research and it is an area that warrants further study. The next section provides pen portraits of the women participants, providing background information for reference in subsequent chapters.

3.13 Women Participant Profiles

The profiles give a summary of each participant to provide some background to their lives. In total there were fifteen participants. One participant identified her marriage as forced. Her narrative has still been included in the findings as she made the effort to attend the group interview and wanted to give her account; her voice should be heard. Her contribution was relevant to the discussion in the group interview and I believe I would be failing my feminist principles if I excluded her.

3.13.1 Harjit

Harjit is a 57-year-old woman. She is of Indian heritage born into the Sikh religion. She was born in the UK and is the eldest sibling with one younger brother and two younger sisters. She has a professional job and works in the education sector. Her father died when she was in her twenties. She has three children. She ended a previous relationship with an intimate partner because he was of a different caste and she felt her mother would not approve. An advertisement she placed in a marriage bureau was erroneously advertised outside the UK, and through this she met her future husband. He was of the same ethnicity, caste and religion. She married him at the age of 35 and moved abroad to live with him. Her mother did not approve of the match and Harjit's relationship with her mother broke down as a consequence.

After ten years Harjit moved back to the UK to escape domestic violence and she was housed in a refuge. She re-instigated her relationship with her mother a year after her return to the UK and is now reconciled. She divorced her husband. He has access to the children and they go and visit their father abroad. She is a single parent and lives with the children in the UK and works in the third sector.

3.13.2 Gurpreet

Gurpreet is a 54-year-old woman. She is of Indian heritage born into the Sikh religion. She was born in the UK and is the eldest sibling with four younger brothers. She has a professional job and works in the public sector. She met her husband, at school at the age of fourteen. He is of the same religion, ethnicity, and caste. They continued to see each other for three years and she would also visit his family. Her parents were unaware of her relationship with her future husband and his family. When Gurpreet was seventeen, her partner went to university in a different city. Her plan was to finish her A-levels and go to university too. Her partner's mother suggested that they should get married. Gurpreet informed her parents, who did not agree and did not support her. On her future mother-in-law's suggestion and without her parents' knowledge she and her husband got married in a civil ceremony. Gurpreet informed her own parents afterwards, and her parents agreed to arrange the Sikh wedding ceremony. After the ceremony, she went to live with her husband, whilst he was still a student at university.

Gurpreet did not attend university and took up employment. She and her husband had three children together, and she is still in the marriage after 36 years. She never went to university. She experienced emotional abuse from her family and her husband's family. She did not identify domestic violence from her husband.

3.13.3 Sara

Sara is a 36-year-old woman. She is of Pakistani heritage born into the Muslim religion. She now identifies as having no religion. She was born in the UK and is one of six siblings with two older brothers, one older sister and two younger sisters. She has an administrative job. She started a relationship with a man of Black Caribbean heritage and Christian religion. At the age of 21 she was taken to Pakistan and forced into a marriage. She broke off her relationship with her boyfriend before she left for Pakistan. She experienced emotional and financial abuse from her family. In order to meet the financial requirements to sponsor her husband to move into the country, the family had bought a house which she owned and for which she paid the mortgage. On her return to the UK after the forced marriage, she contacted the Home Office via a solicitor. She informed them that she had been forced into the marriage. This prevented a visa being issued to her husband and so he could not travel to the UK and thus Sara did not live with him as his wife. Subsequently when she tried to sell the house, after she had left her family home, she discovered that it had already been sold by her family. After leaving her family home she resumed her relationship with her Black Caribbean boyfriend in a

different part of the country. They had two children together. She experienced emotional and physical abuse from her partner, and they are now separated. Sara is a single parent living with two children. The children's father has access to the children.

Sara has no contact with her family. Her father passed away recently and she was not allowed to attend his funeral.

3.13.4 Nirvair

Nirvair is a 29-year-old woman. She is of Indian heritage born into the Sikh religion. She was born in the UK and is the eldest sibling with two brothers and two sisters. She has a professional job and works in the voluntary sector. She was engaged to a Sikh man from the Punjab but the engagement was broken off due to conflict within the extended family. Within 8 months of the end of her engagement Nirvair met and married a Sikh man whom she met via an online marriage agency. Although they had some reservations, her family supported her decision. She was in the marriage for three years and experienced emotional, financial, and physical abuse from her partner and her mother-in-law. She was prevented from seeing her family, from going to the gym, and from having a job. Despite her family's protestations she stayed in the relationship. At one point in the relationship Nirvair left her husband went to a domestic violence refuge but her husband discovered the location of the refuge and she returned to him. She self-harmed. When her husband became physically violent she decided to leave the relationship. She destroyed her husband's citizenship papers and informed the Home Office and the then Prime Minister, David Cameron, not to award citizenship to her husband. Nirvair is divorced and now lives with her parents, works in social care, and plans to study for a degree.

3.13.5 Anita

Anita is a 31-year-old woman. She is of Pakistani heritage born into the Muslim religion. She now describes herself as "anti-theist". She was born in the UK and is the eldest sibling with two brothers and two sisters. She has a professional job and works in the voluntary sector. Whilst still a young girl, Anita was betrothed to her uncle's son in Pakistan. At the age of fifteen her family discovered she was in a relationship with an eighteen-year-old white male and she was subsequently taken to Pakistan to be married. However, proposals were not forthcoming as she was considered to be "soiled goods", in that the community was aware that she had been in a previous relationship. She returned to the UK and continued with her education. She then became involved in an abusive relationship with a white British male, which lasted for five years. She has been

in her current relationship with a white British partner for two years and is very happy in it. She is in touch with her family but does not see them very often.

3.13.6 Samia

Samia is a 55-year-old woman. She is of Pakistani heritage born into the Muslim religion. She now identifies as of no religion. She came to the UK when she was two years old. She has two older sisters and two younger brothers. She has a professional job and works in the education sector. Her father passed away when she was fourteen. At the age of seventeen she started dating her mother's driving instructor, who was twenty-five and of the same ethnicity and religion. They were spotted together by someone from the community and given an ultimatum to marry, by both families. The domestic abuse started as soon as they were married. Her contact with her family was forbidden. She was physically assaulted, verbally abused, and raped repeatedly by her husband. She completed her A-levels but was not allowed to study further. After her A levels had been completed, she was locked in the home all day whilst her husband went out to work and she had no access to money.

When her son was four months old, her husband threatened to harm him if she did not have sex with him. She relented. The next day she escaped and went to stay with her sister for two days. To prevent her husband from finding her and her baby, she moved to a different part of the country. During the train journey she sat next to a university lecturer and a conversation with him influenced her to go to university. She was housed in a council house and completed her degree. She then became a teacher and raised her son. She divorced her husband but lived in fear that he would find them and abduct her son.

As well as her son from her first marriage, Samia has a daughter with her current partner, who is a white British male. She lives with him and their daughter.

3.13.7 Krishna

Krishna is 45 years of age. She is of Indian heritage and of the Hindu religion. She came to the UK when she was sixteen years old. Her father died when she was six years old and within three weeks after his death, Krishna was sexually abused by a male relative. The sexual abuse continued for eight years. Her mother was emotionally abused by Krishna's father's extended family. Krishna's first marriage took place as part of the arranged marriage process. He was of the same ethnicity and faith. The marriage took place in the UK when she was twenty-four years old and she experienced emotional,

financial, physical, and sexual abuse from her husband. Her mother-in-law and brother-in-law also emotionally abused her. After her husband tried to set fire to her duvet as she lay asleep, Krishna left him and filed for divorce, nearly three years after they were married. He continued to stalk, harass, and physically attack her in public.

Krishna's second marriage to a US citizen took place seven months after the divorce from her first husband. As with the first marriage, the emotional, sexual, physical, and financial abuse started on the wedding night. She moved to the US two months after the wedding and was in this marriage for eight years. She had two children with her second husband. Seven years into the marriage, her husband was convicted of sex offences with a minor and imprisoned for four months. During that time her mother-in-law returned to India. On his release, the children disclosed some sexually inappropriate behaviour of their father. After he tried to drug her and escalated the violence and abuse towards her, Krishna feared he may try to kill her so she decided to leave the marriage with the children and filed for a restraining order on him and a divorce. As with the first husband, he stalked and harassed her and the children. He fought her through all the courts, for custody of the children. She lost her domestic violence case against him. She enlisted the help of a politician to complete the divorce proceedings. She appealed to the Supreme Court and the divorce was finalised in 2010. Krishna now lives in the UK, a single parent with her children, and she is a full-time carer for one of her children. She now defines herself as Americanised.

3.13.8 Renaisha

Renaisha is a 38-year-old woman of Indian heritage; she was born in India and into the Hindu religion. She is now a Buddhist. She arrived in the UK two years after her Indian husband secured a job in the UK. She has one sister in India. She has a professional role and works in the education sector. She has two children aged 14 and 12. Renaisha married an Indian Hindu man whom she met at work when she was 23 and when she was 27 they were married. Her parents did not approve of the match but they supported her in her decision. On the day of the wedding her husband left her sitting at the altar after the ceremony had taken place. The marriage lasted 13 years and she experienced physical, emotional, psychological, and sexual abuse from her husband. She did not disclose any of her abuse to her family until after the final physical attack when she ended up in hospital with physical injuries. Renaisha is now divorced. Initially her partner had access to the children but she found that he was using the visits to continue to abuse and harass her. She now has sole custody of the children and he has no access to them.

He was convicted and given a sentence of eighteen months for his physical attack on Renaisha. She lives in the UK as a single parent with two children.

3.13.9 Taslin

Taslin is a 37-year-old woman born in the UK. She is of Pakistani heritage born into the Muslim religion. She is the eldest in the family and has four sisters and one brother (deceased). At the age of eight she discovered that she was betrothed to a boy in Pakistan. Her father abused drugs and alcohol and was addicted to gambling. For many years he did not live with the family and at times the family was homeless. At the age of sixteen, Taslin's uncle (her father's older brother) saw her out walking with friends, when she was meant to be at work. She was physically abused by her uncle. Within a week, she was in Pakistan with her mother and three weeks later was married to the person she had been betrothed to since she was a young girl. She stayed in Pakistan for a year and secured her return to the UK by agreeing to have sex with her husband to become pregnant. Four months pregnant, she returned to the UK and worked until her employer discovered she was pregnant. After the birth of her child, her husband arrived in the UK but she refused to live with him. Her father and uncle pleaded with her to change her mind and she refused. Her father gave her an ultimatum and he left the family home after she refused to acquiesce. She filed for divorce under Sharia council and argued that she was forced into the marriage. Her divorce was granted. Two years later, after discovering that her husband had residency in the UK with the use of her forged signature, she filed for a divorce through the law courts.

Taslin met her current partner, a Polish Christian man, after her divorce was granted. They have been in a relationship for thirteen years and have a child together. She experienced financial, physical, and emotional abuse from him for a number of years. The relationship is no longer abusive and they are still together after 15 years. She is currently unemployed and lives with her partner and two children.

3.13.10 Jazmin

Jazmin is a 24-year-old woman born in the UK. She is of Pakistani heritage born into the Muslim religion. She is the eldest in the family, with four siblings, two brothers and two sisters. She works in an administrative role. Her father died when she was eight years old. She experienced physical and emotional abuse from her mother and her mother's uncle, Jazmin's great-uncle. In one incident, her great-uncle broke her arm. On her return from the hospital, Jazmin's great-uncle, on the pretext of making it up to her for breaking her arm, suggested that he take her on a shopping trip. Instead the trip

was to the airport and they flew to Pakistan, where Jazmin was to be married. As a precaution, Jazmin had secretly taken a photocopy of her passport and left it with a friend. Whilst in Pakistan she managed to borrow a phone and contacted the British Embassy in Islamabad. Two days later she was on a flight back to England but on her return family relations were strained and she left home and went into a refuge.

On her return to the UK, Jazmin resumed relations with a man of Iranian heritage, although they did not live together. He was physically and emotionally abusive. He was controlling to the extent that whilst in the supermarket she would have to ring her partner and describe what she was doing as she picked and bought groceries. Jazmin's physical and mental health deteriorated. She discovered that her partner was married with a child. After a violent incident, she phoned the police and he was arrested. She decided to press charges and he was sentenced. She had been in a relationship with him for nine years.

Today Jazmin lives in a different part of the country from her family. She lives alone in a flat and has a white British boyfriend and is happy in the intimate relationship. She has contact with some of her siblings.

3.13.11 Pania

Pania is a 31-year-old woman of African and Indian heritage, born into the Muslim religion in Tanzania. She has four siblings, three brothers and a sister, and Pania is the eldest. At the age of fourteen, Pania's father spotted her outside her school with her friends without her hijab. He immediately stopped her from attending school. At the age of fifteen Pania's father betrothed her to his business partner, who was aged thirty-eight and married with three children. Pania believed her father would use the bride-price monies to support the family financially as he was experiencing financial difficulties. Her father chose to remarry and took on a second wife.

Pania's fiancé supported her schooling financially and she persuaded him to let her travel to the UK to study for a course in accountancy. After six months, Pania switched to a business administration course. She stopped communicating with her fiancé and her family because she was afraid of revealing that she had switched courses. Her fiancé stopped paying the fees and her rent. Pania took on employed work to pay for the fees and she moved to cheaper accommodation. That is where she met her second partner. He was of the same ethnicity, religion, and background as her. They formed a relationship, she became pregnant, and her partner suggested they move out of the

shared house. They rented a one-bedroom flat and soon afterwards her partner was abusive towards her. He insulted her, and abused her financially, emotionally, and physically. Fearing he would harm her and the baby she left him. On the advice of the Citizens Advice Bureau Pania applied for asylum as she was fleeing a forced marriage. But the authorities refused to support her application and she became homeless. Eight months pregnant with nowhere to go, she returned to her partner. The abuse continued and with the help of the police Pania eventually found support from a refugee centre.

Three months after her baby was born she got in touch with her partner because she wanted to live as a family with two parents raising the child. They resumed their relationship. Soon after she discovered she was pregnant for a second time. When she told her partner, he left. Pania has not seen him since.

Today she volunteers with a domestic-violence service and is a single parent bringing up two children. She is in contact with her mother and aunt who live overseas. She lives in fear of her fiancé and father finding her and fears for the safety of herself and the two children, who are four and three years old.

3.13.12 Shanaya

Shanaya is thirty-two years old. She was born in India and her religion is Hindu. She is the eldest with one sister and one brother. She worked as a fashion designer in India, where she married her husband, of the same religion and background. Her husband is British. As she was signing the wedding register she noticed that her husband was older than she had been led to believe. After she was married for a year she came to live in the UK. Her husband worked in the airline industry and so he would be working away from home for days at a time. Shanaya's in-laws lived with them. Shanaya's husband refused to have sex with her. After a number of months she decided to search his bag, where she discovered gay pornographic material. She confronted him and he denied he was gay. Together with his parents, he accused her violating his privacy by searching his bag. Shanaya did not feel she could talk to her in-laws, nor her own family back in India. She developed mental-health problems. The relationship deteriorated and her husband "kicked her out of the house". She now lives in a refuge. Her parents have told her she cannot return to India as she will bring shame on the family because she has left her husband and he is gay.

3.13.13 Preethi

Preethi is a thirty-six-year old woman of Indian descent, born in India and of Christian religion. She has two younger siblings; a brother and sister. Preethi was a teacher in India. She was married for nine and a half years and has three children. Her husband is of Indian descent and practices the Hindu religion. She married in India and came to the UK on a spousal visa. Her husband was mentally, emotionally, and physically abusive to her. On occasion, when he tried to strangle Preethi she decided to leave with the three children. She now lives in a refuge and is filing for divorce.

3.13.14 Zinaat

Zinaat is a twenty-three-year old woman of Pakistani heritage who is a practising Muslim. She is British born and is the eldest of the family with three siblings, two sisters and a brother. She stated she was forced into the marriage. It lasted for nine months. Zinaat's husband was of the same religion and the couple lived with her in-laws. Her in-laws prevented her from taking her medication. She was physically and emotionally abused and raped repeatedly by her husband. With the support of her mother, she left her husband. She now lives with her mother and is separated from her husband.

3.13.15 Kiran

Kiran is a thirty-one-year old woman of Indian heritage and Sikh religion. She was born in India and now lives in the UK. She has one older brother, who lives in India with her parents, and she has one child.

Kiran was in a relationship with a fellow student in India, which she kept hidden from her parents. When she told her boyfriend that she was pregnant he was violent towards her. She asked him to marry her but he left her whilst pregnant and went abroad. Kiran had an abortion as she had brought shame within the community. She had to leave her family village and live with her aunt in the city. Whilst there she "met" her husband online via a chatroom. He sponsored her visa and they married in the UK. He was physically and emotionally abusive towards her. They have one child together. After four and a half years she left the violent relationship and went to stay with her cousin. Her family in India told her cousin that she has to return to her husband. He put her luggage outdoors and Kiran left his home and went to the local gurdwara, where she obtained a leaflet, in English, about a local domestic violence service. She asked someone to translate the leaflet and give her directions to the service where she received support and lived in a

refuge for a while. She has been separated from her husband for two years. She remains estranged from her family in India.

3.14 Overview of Women Participants

This section provides an overview of this cohort of women participants in the form of tables. It gives an age, faith and ethnic group profile. The number of women who had inter-faith and inter-racial relationships are also provided. The types of relationships the women had and whether they experienced familial violence or not is summarised. The pie chart shows the number of children for this cohort of women.

3.14.1 Age, Ethnic Group and Faith of Participants

I begin with the age, ethnic group and faith of the participants, as shown in Table 3-1. Of the fifteen participants, eleven were born or brought up in the UK, where they had their schooling. The ages of the participants at the time the interviews were held ranged from twenty-three years of age to fifty-seven.

Participant	Age	British born or raised	Ethnic Group[2]	Faith
Harjit	57	Yes	Asian British - Indian	Sikh
Gurpreet	54	Yes	Asian British - Indian	Sikh
Sara	36	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	Muslim
Nirvair	29	Yes	Asian British - Indian	Sikh
Anita	31	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	Anti-theist
Samia	55	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	No faith
Krishna	45	Yes	Asian British - Indian	Hindu
Renaisha	38	Yes	Asian - Indian	Buddhist
Taslin	37	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	Muslim
Jazmin	24	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	Muslim
Pania	31	No	Mixed Black African and Asian	Muslim
Shanaya	32	No	Asian - Indian	Hindu
Preethi	36	No	Asian - Indian	Christian
Zinaat	23	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	Muslim
Kiran	31	No	Asian - Indian	Sikh

Table 3-1: Age, Ethnic Group and Faith of Women Participants

[2] Ethnic Group defined here uses categories recommended by Office for National Statistics on Ethnic group, national identity and religion.
https://www.ons.gov.uk/methodology/classificationsandstandards/measuringequality/ethnicgroupnationalidentityandreligion#ethnic-group

Eight of the women were of Indian heritage, six of Pakistani heritage, and one of mixed Asian and African heritage. Of the eight women of Indian heritage, four were of the Sikh faith, two were Hindu, one was Christian, and one was a Buddhist. Four of the women of Pakistani heritage were Muslim, one was of no faith, and one was an anti-theist. The participant of mixed Asian and African heritage was Muslim. Three participants have changed their religion; one participant of no faith was brought up as a Muslim, one brought up in the Muslim faith is now anti-theist, and one participant brought up in the Hindu faith is now a Buddhist. The cell colours for age show an increase in age; with dark green for the youngest participant and yellow for the eldest.

3.14.2 Ethnic Group and Faith of Participants and their Partners

Table 3-2 shows the ethnic group and faith of the women participants and the same data for the partners they were in violent relationships with.

Participant	British born or raised	Ethnic Group	Faith	Partner's Ethnic Group	Partner's Faith
Harjit	Yes	Asian British - Indian	Sikh	Indian	Sikh
Gurpreet	Yes	Asian British - Indian	Sikh	Asian British - Indian	Sikh
Sara	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	No faith	Black British - Caribbean	Christian
Nirvair	Yes	Asian British - Indian	Sikh	Asian - Indian	Sikh
Anita	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	Anti-theist	British White	Christian
Samia	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	No faith	Asian British - Pakistani	Muslim
Krishna	Yes	Asian British - Indian	Hindu	Asian British – Indian and Asian Indian	Hindu
Renaisha	Yes	Asian - Indian	Buddhist	Asian - Indian	Hindu
Taslin	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	Muslim	Other White background - Polish	Christian
Jazmin	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	Muslim	Other ethnic group (Iranian)	Muslim
Pania	No	Mixed Black African and Asian	Muslim	Mixed Black African and Asian	Muslim
Shanaya	No	Asian - Indian	Hindu	Asian British - Indian	Hindu
Preethi	No	Asian - Indian	Christian	Asian British - Indian	Hindu
Zinaat	Yes	Asian British - Pakistani	Muslim	Asian British - Pakistani	Muslim
Kiran	No	Asian - Indian	Sikh	Asian British - Indian	Hindu

Table 3-2: Ethnic Group and Faith of Participants and their Partners

Three of the participants of Indian and Sikh heritage formed relationships with partners of the same ethnic group and faith heritage, while the fourth had a partner of Indian and Hindu heritage. Two participants of Indian and Hindu heritage married partners of the same ethnic group and faith heritage, while the third, although later converted to Buddhism, was Hindu at the time of marriage and her partner was also Hindu. During the intimate relationship, five of the women participants had inter-faith relationships. Three of the six participants of Pakistani heritage were in mixed-faith relationships with Christian partners.

All the women were in heterosexual relationships. Five participants had inter-racial relationships; four were of Pakistani ethnic heritage and one was of mixed Asian and African heritage. All of this group were brought up in the Muslim faith although one no longer identifies her faith as Muslim. All of these relationships were long-term relationships; none were marriages.

3.14.3 Type of Intimate Relationship and Domestic Violence from Family

Table 3-3 summarises the types of relationships between the participants and violent partners and whether they experienced domestic violence from family.

Participant	Currently In relationship	Arranged Marriage	Choose their own partner	Domestic violence from family
Harjit	No	No	Yes	Yes
Gurpreet	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Sara	No	No	Yes	Yes
Nirvair	No	No	Yes	No
Anita	No	No	Yes	Yes
Samia	No	No	Yes	Yes
Krishna	No	Yes	Yes	No
Renaisha	No	No	Yes	No
Taslin	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Jazmin	No	No	Yes	Yes
Pania	No	No	Yes	Yes
Shanaya	No	Yes	Yes	No
Preethi	No	Yes	Yes	No
Zinaat	No	No - FM	No	No
Kiran	No	No	Yes	Yes

Table 3-3: Type of Relationship and Domestic Violence from Family

In total five participants were in long-term relationships and the remaining ten were married. Two remain in the relationships today. Eleven women did not have arranged marriages. Of the remaining women, three stated that, whilst they had arranged marriages, they believed they "chose" their partner. One of these three women experienced two violent marriages. Another woman who did not have an arranged marriage also experienced two violent intimate relationships. One woman said her marriage was forced.

One participant did not identify domestic violence in her intimate relationship; all of the other women interviewed had experienced domestic violence from their partners including psychological, emotional, financial, physical, and sexual abuse and coercive

control. Nine of the participants mentioned experiences of domestic violence from their immediate and extended family as a result of marriage including the one who did not identify domestic abuse in her intimate relationship. Out of the fifteen participants, eight experienced domestic violence from both their families and their intimate partners. One participant was sexually abused by an extended family member when she was a child.

It is interesting to note that eleven women (excluding the one who said she had a forced marriage) said they did not have an arranged marriage, ten women said they experienced domestic violence from their family.

3.14.4 Number of Children per Participant

The pie chart in Figure 3-4, shows how many women were mothers and the number of children they each had. In total there were 22 children. Two-thirds of the women had children; three women had three children, six women had two children, and one woman had one child.

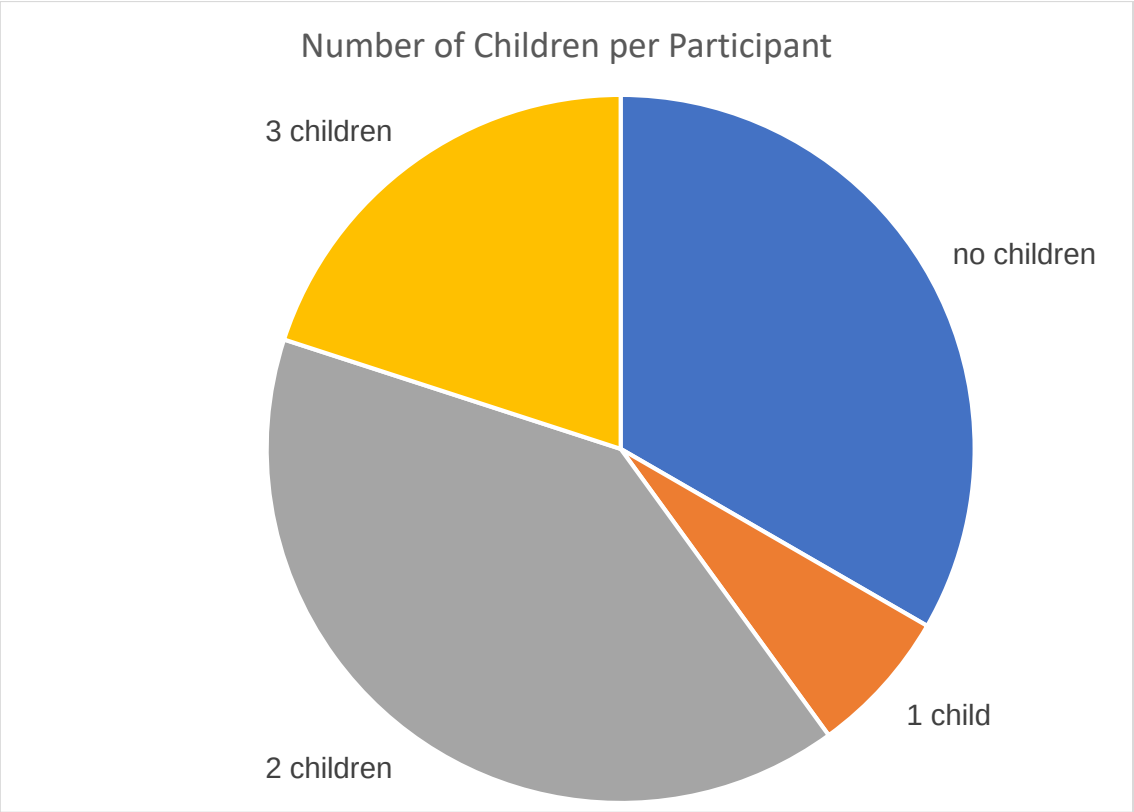

Figure 3-4: Number of Children per Woman Participant

3.15 Conclusions

Qualitative research design is a good fit with Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology as it facilitates insights into women's experiences through their own voices. The data collection methods offered up different ways to support women to voice their experiences of choosing a partner and in many cases, traumatic accounts of violence from the family as well as the intimate partner. Thematic Analysis offered the most appropriate method to determine the themes when analysing the transcripts ensuring women's voices came through. It also supported analysis of the complexity of the pressures they faced as well as the routine everyday experiences of violence they faced. Charmaz (2014: 14) points out "the researcher's involvement in the construction and interpretation of data" and so my positionality as a South Asian woman researching other South Asian women and reflexivity within the research process were laid to bare.

I certainly faced some challenges in conducting the research in the field. Despite being embedded within social relations in the domestic violence sector I found the lack of participants via this route very surprising. It is interesting to note that Facebook rescued the situation whereby I could recruit participants directly and so bypassed gatekeepers. On reflection it would have served me and the project well if I had made more use of Facebook and expended more energy in engaging participants via this medium rather than traditional networks. Nevertheless the use of Facebook has opened up the possibility of using social media not just in the fieldwork phase but also in other phases of the research process.

The theoretical basis for the determining the subject areas or gaps in current scholarship has been described. This has led to the conceptual framework most suited to the understanding of South Asian women's experiences of transgressing socially sanctioned norms of marriage and choosing an intimate partner and their responses to subsequent violence from multiple perpetrators at the same time. Qualitative research methodology fulfilled the approach that also put at centre stage women's narratives and research methods that enabled this to be done. The use of thematic analysis brought up themes of power, agency and choice and reflections of experiences. These are the subjects of the next three chapters.

Chapter 4 The See-saw of Power

"There are many kinds of power, used and unused, acknowledged or otherwise" (Lorde 1996: 106).

4.1 Introduction

This chapter traces women's experiences of power, through their exposure to gendered narratives in childhood about how to form intimate relationships and in significant events in their lives. I set out the context of how power and control play their part in women's lives and influence their relationships with their family, their community, and their intimate partner. I set out the conceptualisation in Chapter 2 where there is an overlap between forming an intimate relationship and the Continuum of Violence and where power sits in the midst of this overlay. Thus the "The See-saw of Power" explores the complexity of women's experiences of power in their relationships with significant others, across their experiences of choosing a partner and subsequent experiences of violence.

The themes I identified using thematic analysis captured significant elements that relate to and are of interest to this study; that is women's experiences of forming intimate relationships and their experiences of domestic violence from the partner and family. Also of interest are how these two arenas of experiences interact within women's lives. The prevalence of some themes was evident. For example, what came over so strongly from the women's own accounts was their childhood experiences, including hopes and dreams for marriage and expectations placed on them. Other themes captured an important element that related to both marriage and domestic violence. For example the absence of the father and its significance on the participant's life and her family. All of the themes that emerged from the thematic analysis relate to power and how it weaves through family dynamics amidst women's experiences of choice, coercion and consent.

Since, as hooks (2000: xii) espouses, we have all been socialised into "sexist thought and action" from birth, and the socialisation of girls takes the form of gendered subliminal and overt messages, which work with external forces of power (Fine 2011). Thus the starting point for this chapter is to explore the "Gendered Socialisation" of the participants; a prevalent theme occurring in all the women's narratives derived from the thematic analysis conducted. This section examines, through the women's own voices, how those dominant discourses shaped and reproduced gendered norms and stereotypes and how women challenged those norms and beliefs.

Black Feminists have detailed the ways in which patriarchy works by enabling men to possess power and privilege over women by virtue of being male biologically (hooks 1981). Gendered socialisation is carried out by agents of power who enforce patriarchy and so the chapter then continues by examining how the different agents, namely family members, utilised tools of power and patriarchy to subjugate women. It begins with the pyramidion of power in the family (the person who sits at the top of the family pyramid, the capstone of the family pyramid), the father; the section "Father as Agent of Power" examines women's experiences of how the father exercises power towards them. This chapter also explores how his power extends to awarding power to other actors of power, such as fiancés. There follows a significant theme that emerged from those participants whose fathers had died or were otherwise not around to retain his patriarchal role as head of the family shaped women's experiences. "Tipping Point – A Father's Absence" examines the patriarchal forces specifically where the father is unable to look after the family, which then opens the door for other family members to exploit this situation, and how this in turn affected the lives of the women participants who were in such a situation.

The next section continues with the theme of power and interactions with family members; an important element to understand women's resilience and diverse responses to different family members. I first consider the relationship between the participants and their siblings within the context of the relational workings of power within the family. The examination of power with family members continues by considering how the mother and daughter experience patriarchal power *at the same time*. The theme "Daughters and Mothers: Mirrored Experiences of Power" emerged as it provided a more nuanced examination of how the extended family was able to locate the power that subjugated both the participants and their mothers.

Power cannot be discussed without considering women's responses to the power relations they experience with their families. The theme, "Women's Responses to Power" emerged to show the depth and complexity of women's resistance and negotiation of power. It is an important area to explore as it sheds light on women's motivations and responses to the way they felt their lives were controlled by others within the context of their lived experiences. Part of understanding women's responses is to locate patriarchy within structural power to understand the additional burdens and constraints on South Asian women (Bhavnani and Coulson 2005, Brah 1996, Wilson 2006). Thus the use of power within the public sphere is linked to affect the private (family) sphere (Morgan 1996). It is therefore important to capture in a theme and

examine how the women made use of structural power, which is explored in the section "Participants' Use of Structural Power".

Scholars have argued how there is not always a dichotomy of experiences of total disempowerment or total hold of power (Morgan 1996: 75). In what I have termed "the see-saw of power" I argue how power is fluid and changes over time, as well as in space. I consider how actors of power may access power and how those oppressed by power respond to claim power for themselves. The control of power sits with the person at the bottom of the see-saw. The shift in force elevates the person at the bottom of the see-saw. Thus, the power moves up and down according to whether the women participants feel empowered (at the bottom of the see-saw) or experience the oppression of power from others within their families (at the elevated position of the see-saw). This concept is explained in "The See-saw Effect of Power".

4.2 The Power of Gendered Socialisation

In chapter 2, I discussed how gendered norms operate within power imbalances that can take effect both in the experiences of forming an intimate relationship and in domestic violence, in effect at the convergence of both. For women to adhere to gendered norms means that they first have to learn them. This section explores gendered socialisation through the narratives the women received in their childhoods about marriage and about intimate partners. The focus is on the beliefs and values about marriage that the women were exposed to as children and whether these shaped their expectations, hopes, and aspirations of marriage and lifelong partner. The ways in which such cultural discourses were conveyed to them, as well as the content, are also considered, to explore how this combination shaped the women's decisions and actions about forming an intimate relationship in adult life. Throughout their childhoods, the women internalised communications about the way they would form an intimate relationship.

> Yes, for me I thought my family will find for me; everywhere the family finds. This is what I thought, the family finds for me. I find him myself. (laughs) – Kiran

Anita recalled how she believed that she would be married:

> Before you're walking and talking you know you're gonna get married to somebody. … Like, you just know, don't you? … it's all around right you from day one … it's not a thought-out thing. It's so natural within erm certainly within Brown families … focusing on the day of a child's marriage from the day they're born to the day they do finally get married and they're not their responsibility any more, especially girls. – Anita

There is an inevitability to marriage within both accounts. Anita gave a more contextualised response, where the messages are evident from the moment of birth in "Brown families". Both women placed marriage central to everyday lives; a normalisation of marriage. Anita highlighted the gendered nature of marriage, with fragility and temporariness for parents of girls who only have responsibility for them until they are married. Other participants also referred to the inevitability of marriage:

> … it was something I knew would eventually happen at some time. I kind of mentally prepared myself for it over the years and I probably didn't meet my full potential because I thought "What's the point of education? I'm just gonna go and get married and have kids" … I didn't think for myself because I wasn't allowed to think for myself 'cos the decisions were made by somebody else. The majority of the time, I felt like a puppet on strings and somebody else pulling the strings. So how can I have these aspirations when it's not going to manifest into anything? Does that give you an understanding? – Sara

The practices the women encountered from an early age meant that they internalised social relations and gendered norms and expectations of them as women (Anthias 2013: 38).

Taslin also described her experiences:

> Oh, when I was eight and nine, err I just knew it, I dunno how I knew it … but I was hoping that it wouldn't happen but then when I was about that age, that's when their family started asking about me; I should be sent to Pakistan, even at that age… So I knew it and that's when I started to get hate inside of me that's because I didn't wanna go to Pakistan, didn't wanna get married. – Taslin

Taslin's "hate inside of me" reflects the emotional cost for her because of the inevitability of marriage to someone from Pakistan. Okin (2002: 219) highlights how the power of the socialisation of girls for marriage can undermine their self-esteem. These subliminal messages permeated the women's everyday experiences to the extent that the women did not recall being told directly. In contrast Pania described being told about marriage by her mother:

> … from the stories from my mother all the time that "Oh I didn't know your dad, just knew him on the day of my wedding day"… It's like she was portraying this scenario of being arranged to a marriage is the proper way of having, you know, a nice, erm relationship with your husband is like is, is pure … For her it was like a fairy tale story but for me it was, sorry to say, it was disgusting. It was like how, how can I not know whom I'm going to marry until the day of the wedding? - Pania

The participants recalled how messages, in subtle, direct, and indirect ways exposed them to socially sanctioned norms of forming a relationship with an intimate partner. "Something I knew would eventually happen at some time", "stories from my mother all

the time", and "everywhere the family finds" all indicate that the messages were ever present with an inevitability of marriage. The messages are embedded within social norms and contexts (Patel, P. 2003b) and so perceived as "natural", normalised, to the extent that it is treated as taken for granted knowledge and "not a thought-out thing", which reflects that it is not questioned by the society comprising "Brown" people. Hence social norms can function so pervasively even without social and material factors (Chakravarti 2005). The narratives reflected lack of personal power; for example in Taslin's and Sara's narratives members of their families had power and control over them, reflecting inequalities of power within in the family (Morgan 1996). Pania's abjection towards the "fairy tale story" which she found "disgusting" shows a rejection of the "purity" of forming a relationship as her mother told it. Kiran thought her family would always retain control but ultimately she took control, which reflects a fluidity of power within families (Morgan 1996). The women talked about marriage but what is also evident is the overlap with domestic violence. "Puppet on a string" and "didn't wanna get married" reflect this overlap of coercion and control that exists in forming an intimate relationship with that of domestic violence.

Using intersectionality as an analytical tool the women's gender and age highlights the power at work over them. For Sara and Taslin, the axes are interlaced with culture, citizenship, and education to give rise to their oppression. Sara and Taslin were very young (Taslin aged eight) when they learned about their impending marriages. Their citizenship gave rise to transnational marriages and to their experiences of coercion (Siddiqui 2013) where they were powerless because of their age and the gendered inequalities within the family (Morgan 1996). With the main goal being to marry, the women as well as their families placed little value on their education (Okin 2002: 217). The women's education was disrupted because they had to travel for a transnational marriage and live overseas temporarily. This reduced their opportunities for securing economic potential and fulfilment and the prospect of social mobility. The value of education was raised by Pania and her response in relation to marriage is telling.

> For me, I thought I could just get someone, you know, get out of here or maybe I could fall in love with a person that is not from this community … because even the education that I was getting, I knew it wasn't getting me anywhere … and I knew any time soon I'm gonna be stopped because I'm already prepared that one day I'm gonna get married. But so—even if I get married then I have to find a way of that person that marries me not these ones that they will arrange for me. – Pania

Pania accepted the inevitability of marriage but not via the gendered cultural norms available to her, “not these ones they will arrange for me”. Paradoxically, she found the prospect of marriage and the community she was living in oppressive but in order to leave the community she had to marry.

Preethi referred to her hopes and aspirations of her partner:

> Dream husband … My hero, my favourite hero. (laughter) … Cine actors, I like cine actors, and Asian actors. So, I thought my husband will also [be] like him. I had my own dreams but practically everything is different. (laughs) – Preethi

In her description Preethi has hopes and aspirations for a partner. Both Pania and Preethi reproduced gendered notions of masculinity to fulfil their hopes and dreams to escape the patriarchal forces. Preethi wished for a partner who would “protect” her and be heroic. Pania wanted to be released from the life that she knew via an actor of patriarchy who, by his very status as a male, could undertake this. Her resistance and resilience involved utilising the very tools of patriarchy that were engaged to constrain her life. Gendered socialisation in turn points to patriarchal forces at play where women and men are socialised differently and men’s position in society is privileged and women as well as men reproduce these stereotypes (Phoenix 1997).

Thus far I have explored how family narratives influenced women’s responses to forming intimate relationships. The behaviour of family members also affected them. Women’s experiences of childhood influences related to behaviours of their family members, as well as narratives, which informed their views about intimate partners and relationships. Krishna shared childhood experiences of sexual abuse and her expectations for intimate partner relationships:

> When you’re in childhood, when you’ve been abused and all that, you live in that hope that somebody will protect you one day (whispers) and it’s wrong way of thinking but … somebody will save me, somebody will protect me. – Krishna

Krishna experienced sexual abuse from the age of six to fourteen when she was living in India. She connected these childhood experiences with her perception of adult intimate relationships. She too drew on the hegemonic masculinity of a husband’s role to protect, but she was not protected and so her partners failed to live up to this stereotype. There are intersections of gender, age, and poverty at work together here. The family was plunged into poverty on her father’s death. She was six years old, powerless and unable to defend herself from an adult male. She was not in school, making her vulnerable as she was at home alone for long periods. Sexual violence is

gendered, where the majority of the victims of sexual abuse are women and girls. The intersection of her gender, age, and poverty created the conditions for her assault and her subsequent response to intimate relationships as an adult.

The women formed contradictory aspirations based on their experiences. I have shown how the power of gendered socialisation works in subtle and overt ways, where narratives of marriage and intimate partners serve to condition women to internalise and normalise messages and tropes. The women's responses varied from resistance, which included planning for their futures, as in Pania's case, to resignation, as Sara experienced, and internalisation, which affected Taslin's sense of self-esteem and value. Whether the women challenged or reproduced gendered norms and tropes about forming intimate relationships, their narratives demonstrated the cultural context of their experiences meshed with issues of gender, age, power, citizenship, education, and poverty (Patel, P. 2003a). These experiences were socially produced where the boundaries between forming an intimate relationship that is marriage and domestic violence are difficult to ascertain which means that, for these women the two areas overlapped with no clear boundaries. Paradoxically the ways to resist and leave the environments meant utilising the very tools of patriarchy that served to promote gendered stereotypes of marriage and expectations of them as girls and women. Marriage, as a tool of patriarchy, where women are expected to marry and where it can stunt social mobility and education as well as the woman's independence. Therefore in order to obtain independence and improve social mobility in the long-term means getting married. These are the social constraints that create the paradoxes that women have to live within. As well as tools of patriarchy there are the enactors and enablers of patriarchy and power. The next section explores who the actors of patriarchy were in the women's lives and how they utilised the tools of patriarchy to enforce control and power over the women participants. I begin with the father to ascertain what power he held over the women participants and the rest of the family.

4.3 Father as Agent of Power

The participants referred to the different ways in which their parents utilised power over them. They compared different experiences with their fathers and mothers. Pania referred to her contact with her mother facilitated by her aunt:

> So, I do speak to my mum and she's really humble, really. She's forgiven me. She's, she's okay and I'm quite relieved but my father, no, no, no, no for him. - Pania

The power dynamics can be seen at work here. Pania's father had not accepted her decisions (in effect, her transgressions of social norms), in contrast to her mother who remained in contact with Pania without her father's knowledge. Additionally, her mother's status and absence of power within the family did not allow her to be openly supportive to Pania but this form of secrecy conveys a resistance to her father's power. The ultimate power was with her father, the patriarch, which is why Pania's mother communicated with Pania without his knowledge. This example demonstrates the command of power within families across space (Morgan 2013). Pania's father exerted his power from his home country, to Pania in the UK. Power is intrinsic to patriarchy, as evident here where power is exerted by the father to control behaviour of women (mothers and daughters) who may defy that very power of fathers (and husbands). Power is relational, as parents and communities can have power via patriarchal forces over women (Anitha and Gill 2009). Pania's mother had little power in comparison to her husband and likewise Pania lacked power over her father.

> …still my father is, I think, is very angry… He (Pania's father) says to him[self] I'm a dead person. He doesn't wanna know anything about me … It's like I've killed everything in him, although I have that hope, the reason when he hates me the most is because he loves me so much and he's so, he's so heartbroken. - Pania

"I've killed everything in him", shows that Pania blamed herself for her father's abuse towards her. Women internalise the beliefs that they are responsible for men's violence because they provoked the situation (Kelly 1988: 211). Other women described their father's feelings towards them because of their decisions and actions:

> My daddy still hates me a lot. My daddy doesn't like me. He said "I've only one son. My daughter has died." She has no rights to anything…My husband knew I'm under pressure and he also started putting me under more pressure. - Kiran

Kiran lived in India. She became pregnant by her boyfriend, who was physically violent towards her and abandoned her after discovering she was pregnant. She was forced to have an abortion and had to leave her family and her village and move to the city to live with her aunt. Later, via online dating, she met her husband and came to the UK on a spousal visa. He was violent and abusive towards her. Kiran violated cultural norms, where to be pregnant and single, is considered to bring shame on the family (Sen 2005). She was poor and young and did not have the means to live independently and so relied on her family.

By considering them dead both Kiran's and Pania's fathers "erased" them physically and mentally. Through this act of erasure, they distanced themselves emotionally by cutting

family ties, and over space and time, demonstrating power over them. As shown in the earlier section “Gendered Socialisation”, women had been socialised in forming marriages according to cultural expectations of them from a young age. The parents expected conformity to gendered norms of marriage. The fathers as the patriarchs were conduits of those expectations which both women did not meet but defied. This control can withstand time and space and reflects the domination and coercion that can be brought to bear on women across traditions of marriage (Wilson 2006). This power and control have roots in the shame women can bring on families through such social transgressions as having boyfriends (Sen 2005). Women who defy and bring shame on their families by transgressing socially sanctioned codes of behaviour can be ostracised by their families (Bano 2010: 196). In effect the very act of choosing a partner becomes overlaid by violence meted out by the family, particularly the father. The fathers’ objectives were to redeem honour in the community and so ostracise and isolate their daughters as though they never existed and had no right to be part of the family because of shame they had brought on the family (Sen 2005). It suggests that the father, as the pyramidion of the family, has the power to decide who and who is not part of it (Morgan 1996). An example of patriarchy at work, where patriarchal control and power determine the status of women, privilege men’s status, and enforce the control over women’s lives (Wilson 2006, Anitha and Gill 2009) with the ultimate consequence for a daughter and the show of power by the father, is to cut the daughter off from the family.

Women’s isolation from their families and communities can increase their vulnerability to violence within intimate relationships (Thiara 2013). Sara recalled how her partner exploited her isolation from her parents and siblings by emotionally abusing her, exploiting the intersection of her gender and culture. Her partner reproduced the gendered norms in patriarchy where fathers’ (and husbands’) roles are to protect their daughters and wives. Women’s isolation from their paternal family meant that their fathers were not around to support them and “protect” them from the abuse of their partners. The section “Women’s Responses to Power” explores in further detail how women can experience domestic violence from their family and intimate partner at the same time. Sara’s resistive agency to exit her forced marriage to form a relationship with a man, she described as of Black Caribbean heritage, led to the breakdown of her relationship with her father, the patriarch. Her partner’s race, religion, and culture caused conflict with her parents and siblings, in addition to her rejection of a forced marriage, and so led to her isolation from them.

These experiences show how the see-saw of power is well and truly in the father's control. As well as their own strength of power, fathers can facilitate actors of patriarchy. Pania described how her father and fiancé agreed that she could travel to the UK to study to gain qualifications and then return to her home country to marry her fiancé and work in his business:

> …he (the fiancé) spoke to my dad and my dad said "I don't know it's up to you cos she's yours now. She's not under my, my arms"…and then yeah, everything was arranged. - Pania

Pania's voice is missing from the decision-making. A pre-requisite to having a voice is to have presence. She was not accorded presence or contribution to the decision. As an unmarried woman, she was her father's "responsibility", which in effect meant that she was under the control of her father and that power was then passed on to her fiancé (Chakravarti 2005). The negotiation of power between Pania's fiancé and her father about her travel abroad to study was ultimately about their control over her life, through access to education abroad. Pania was in the elevated position of the see-saw with her father in the lower position, representing his power over her. Power did not transfer to Pania but instead went to her fiancé, who then sat in the powerful lower position and Pania stayed where she was, in the elevated powerless position. Furthermore, the intersections of Pania's gender, age, marital status, and education worked together to enforce her lack of power. At the age of fourteen, Pania was betrothed to an older man. Her access to education and her potential life chances were at the behest of men in her family. Although not involved in the decision-making, Pania wanted to continue with her formal education. Her access to education had consequences for her life in the UK because she met her abusive partner there. The fiancé was accorded power over Pania via her father. The women had transgressed social norms of marriage and chosen their own partners for which there were consequences for them. Everyday experiences of domestic violence in the form of control and exclusion intersect with their actions to choose an intimate partner. The person who pushed forward the consequences of their actions was the father. A father can uphold another man's power within the family and in contrast have power over women in the extended family. As the patriarch, the father can wield power over the family. The next section explores what happens if the father is absent or cannot assume the patriarchal role.

4.4 Tipping Point – a Father's Absence

A significant theme to emerge from the research was the effect on women's lives when their father died or was not able to assume their role as head of the family. Table 4-1 shows that, although only three of the women experienced their father's death when they were children, patterns emerged with other women whose fathers were not able to support the family and so this significance warranted a separate theme.

Participant	Age	Parental relationships
Harjit	57	Father died when Harjit was in her early twenties
Gurpreet	54	Father died when Gurpreet was in her thirties
Sara	36	Father died in early 2017
Nirvair	29	Lives with father and mother and has a good relationship with them
Anita	31	Sees father only occasionally.
Samia	55	Father died when Samia was 14
Krishna	45	Father died when Krishna was 6
Renaisha	38	Parents live in India and has a close relationship with them
Taslin	37	Father abused drug and alcohol and addicted to gambling throughout Taslin's childhood and much of her adulthood
Jazmin	24	Father died when Jazmin was 8
Pania	31	Father's business was failing when he betrothed Pania at 14 yrs. to a man 25 years her senior
Shanaya	32	Father lives in India; in contact with Shanaya
Preethi	36	Parents live in India
Zinaat	23	Parents divorced due to DV. Father has minimal contact with Zinaat
Kiran	31	Parents live in India and have no contact with Kiran

Table 4-1 Participants and their Fathers

Harjit's father died when she was in her early twenties, before she married. Taslin's father had gambling, drug, and alcohol dependencies. Pania was betrothed to man twenty-five years her senior, when she was fourteen, to help her father out of a financial business situation. Zinaat's parents divorced and she lived with her mother prior to marriage.

Earlier descriptions revealed patriarchy's socialisation of women for marriage, their expectations of the role of intimate partners, and hence the privileging of men's status. This can also be extended to the women's expectations towards their fathers as the patriarchal head of the family. One of the striking features from the women's transcripts was the expected role of the father and the consequential cost to the family if he was unable to take up his patriarchal role as head of the family. The impact of absent fathers on the women and how the father's absence influenced subsequent experiences of choosing a partner are explored. Women cited a direct correlation between an absent father and ending up with an abusive partner they had chosen.

Women referred to their experiences of the loss of their fathers. Samia was fourteen when her father died.

> my father was very, very liberal … Sadly if he'd lived a bit longer we might have had a bit more of a chance but he kind of (clicks fingers) made us quite kind of questioning and allowed us to be like that and then died. Suddenly there was no protection … I lost my champion. We all three girls lost our protection and we had a mother who was never, never been very happy about the kind of ideas my dad was putting in our heads and then he died; left—all three of us were teenagers … I think within that culture to lose your male parent is devastating for the family. – Samia

Samia referred to her father who taught his daughters "liberal values"; he was the "champion" promoting independence of thought, which ended with his death. She linked the loss of her father to the consequences that she experienced in "that culture". Samia's reference to "that culture" is an example of internalised oppression (hooks 2015). How culture is perceived within the binary perspectives of modernised and progressive in opposition to traditional, deviant and backward is discussed in Chapter 6. There is a contradiction here: a patriarch has the power to espouse liberal values; liberal values represent independence of mind and movement, the opposite of patriarchy. The absence of the father, through his death, was the catalyst for the loss of protection for Samia, her siblings, and her mother. The comment "…might have had a bit more of a chance" reveals that they might have had a greater ability to resist more robustly the extended family's pressures towards them and so Samia's father's death did not mean that patriarchal effects were halted. They had to continue and so patriarchy was passed on in the actions of her extended family and her partner's family to preserve family honour (Chakravarti 2005, Sen 2005).

The loss of protection for a wife and children is not only confined to the death of the father. Taslin directly attributed the domestic violence she experienced from her

extended family to the fact that her father was not able to look after the family. Her father was a drug and alcohol abuser. She was twelve or thirteen when her father became addicted to gambling. In the same way Samia talked about her loss of protection, Taslin also referred to her exposure to the vulnerability of herself and her family because of her father's inability to look after them or indeed act out his patriarchal roles as father and husband. His absence was a gateway for others to exert power and control over the family.

> we were getting controlled from other people cos my father was erm, first he was a gambler … and then when he went into drugs, heroin (whispers) it was like very, very erm, severe …… So, he wasn't really—he couldn't be in charge. If he was going down the right route, then obviously he could say to my uncle something. – Taslin

The father's addiction opened the path for Taslin and her family "getting controlled" by her uncle, her father's brother. Taslin recognised the complexities of the patriarchal forces on her family. Her father's absence, in this case through substance misuse, opened a vulnerability for her mother, herself, and her siblings, which in turn had implications for her agency in her choice of partner; in effect choosing a partner and experience of violence starts to merge. Taslin pointed out that had her father been on "the right route", that is not addicted to substances, the interpersonal domain of control by her uncle may have been thwarted. The uncle ensured the continuance of patriarchal control over Taslin.

Other women had similar experiences. Jazmin's father also died when she was a young child, aged eight. Like Taslin, her great-uncle physically abused her. He tricked her into travelling to Pakistan when she was fifteen years old.

> I think if my dad was here I would not have suffered. Things with my mum started going bad like, cos my mum's family—they got involved and her uncle he started coming to our house regularly. He started hitting me … he kicked my back twice. He chucked me down the stairs. I had broken arms. I had fractured fingers. – Jazmin

A difference to note is that Jazmin's mother colluded with her uncle, Jazmin's great uncle. Black Feminists have charted how family and community members can perpetuate patriarchal forces to subjugate women (Meetoo and Mirza 2007). South Asian women can be "vehicles of power" (Foucault 1980: 98) as well as the casualties of power, and depending on the situation, they can be the oppressor as well as the oppressed (Alinia 2015: 2335). South Asian women acting as perpetrators of abuse and violence over other women in efforts to enforce conformity to patriarchal structures of marriage means

that they gain some power and status within the family and community (Balzani 2010: 84). Jazmin's mother, a widow, had little status and so her behaviour towards Jazmin redeemed some status and honour for her. Jazmin's mother was in the lower position with power over her daughter and a representation of some redemption of status as a widow.

Both Jazmin's and Taslin's British citizenship was a key factor in being forced to travel to Pakistan to be married. The intersections of their gender, age, culture, and citizenship combined to make them vulnerable to the patriarchal power of their great-uncle and uncle. Their experiences at these intersections influenced their 'agency' in choosing future partners, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. Their mothers' status as wives without their husbands present also rendered them exposed to the power of senior male members of the family such as Jazmin's great-uncle and Taslin's uncle. An interesting feature of the women's narratives is their certainty that their fathers would not have played a part in their subjugation had they been alive or not an abuser of substances. Their imaginations of their fathers portray a liberatory figure. The women found some solace in this thinking; it was too difficult to think otherwise. In section 4.7, "Women's Responses to Power", Taslin described a situation where her father, now reunited with the family, did not support her decision and gave her an ultimatum. This begs the question how the women's imaginations of their fathers could have been a true reflection of their behaviours had they survived.

Women reproduced notions of hegemonic masculinity, where fathers are held in esteem as the "protector" or responsible father (Hearn 2013), but were equally clear how their extended family members controlled their lives, that of their mothers and siblings too. In the same way that Pania, in the previous section, remained in the elevated position on the see-saw, regardless of whether it was her fiancé or father, the examples here show that the women and their mothers remained in the elevated position too, except when Jazmin's mother colluded with her uncle, Jazmin's great uncle. The only difference was that the great-uncle assumed the patriarchal role without seeking permission from anyone.

Patriarchy's adherence to cultural norms, where the roles of fathers were not fulfilled, did not protect women and rendered the women vulnerable to sexual and domestic abuse. Coercion and control over women's lives was fulfilled by another male member of the family, namely an uncle. The partner, another male, was also able to exploit this and exert dominance and abuse knowing the woman was isolated from her father's support.

In other words there were multiple perpetrators who inflicted oppression through the power of coercion and control, leaving the women with no choice. The experiences of intimate relationships forged into experiences of domestic violence, where women were forced into marriage and experienced violence on a continuum from multiple perpetrators. Power permeates through other members of the family who are peers. The next section explores siblings' responses to power within the family.

4.5 Siblings

Women's narratives reflected different responses from siblings within family power dynamics, reflecting the relational power within families and so warranted a separate theme. Some women found that their siblings wanted to support them but could not do so openly:

> … my younger brother and sisters did—didn't feel that they could challenge her (mother) or, err, persuade her … so I didn't get, didn't get an awful lot of support from my younger siblings erm, and then I just decided to go ahead and, and make all the arrangements for the marriage myself and do everything independently. – Harjit

Shanaya discovered her husband was gay, and on confronting him about it he was violent towards her. At the time of interview Shanaya lived in a refuge. Her family, including her sister, lived in India. "My sister supports me, but she can't say anything about what has happened." Shanaya felt supported by her sister, despite the geographical space between them.

Sara also shared her experiences with her siblings. Sara had been forced into a marriage in Pakistan and on her return to the UK, she sought support from her siblings to persuade her father to annul her forced marriage.

> They didn't want to get involved really cos they didn't want to look at—like they were standing up to my dad. They didn't wanna look like they were pushing me to do those things. It was up to me to speak up for myself. I didn't feel I could go to any of my siblings. - Sara

The power of gendered socialisation and the internalisation of gendered norms discussed in section 4.2 extends to siblings within the family. Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology examines power within the family. Anitha and Gill (2009: 171) highlight the subtle forms of coercion that affect South Asian women's experiences and how it "is constructed in the context of power imbalances and gendered norms". Children are exposed to and inhabit gendered socialisation through everyday life experiences in the family (Morgan 1996). Furthermore children of diasporic communities are socialised into

Western cultural practices as well as the cultural practices of their parents' upbringing (Gill and Brah 2014) and so may express support in different ways. The women participants transgressed gendered cultural norms. As well as the women participants, their siblings were also bound by notions of shame and honour (Patel, P. 2003a, Siddiqui 2011). Power relationships within the family can manifest as those who do not have power being unable to challenge and defy those who do possess power. Sara's and Harjit's siblings did not have the power to openly defy those within the family who did have power and so reproduced and perpetuated patriarchal forces to subjugate women (Meetoo and Mirza 2007). Referring to the analogy of a see-saw, the power see-saws down towards Harjit because she chose her partner to marry. However, in relation to her siblings, Harjit was not even on the see-saw but observing the power swinging down towards her mother with her siblings elevated. In Sara's case, the power did not swing down towards her at all to affect any change in her father's decision.

Despite the lack of support from their siblings, both Harjit and Sara exercised agency by organising a wedding and by "speaking up"; resistive agency in the face of their families' responses (Patel, P. 2003a). Thus, power is fluid in families and across time (Morgan 2013). Different family members hold power and that power can change and swing to other members of the family. There is a constant see-sawing of power which continues as women seek to effect change in their lives and thus modifying the notion of family. Morgan (1996: 83) refers to "gender modifies family", where he is specifically referring to the relationships between women and men in heterosexual families where issues such as sexuality and women's employment have impacted on family relationships. I argue that women's experiences of transgressing norms have also impacted on family relationships with different manifestations of sibling support.

Harjit and Sara reflected on the lack of solidarity with their siblings against a common struggle against the parents; the powers that be. There is a sense that the women felt betrayal when siblings, especially sisters, "condemn them". Some participants, for example Shanaya, talked about their sister relationships. The participants' sisters, like themselves, are also negotiating and responding to power in the family. The sisters' social locations as women, as young women with few financial resources, intersect and work together to oppress them too. The way intersectionality interrogates the multiple oppressions that women can face illustrates how in effect the women participants' options are closed down further (Patel, P. 2003a) through lack of sibling support. The

women did not explicitly mention brothers. An area of further research would be to explore relationships with brothers within the power relations within the family.

I have shown how the power relations within families work (Wilson 2006), for example, paralysing support from some siblings'. Other siblings could offer some support as long as their support was within the boundaries of power and social constraints that allowed them to support their sisters. Siblings, like the participants are not immune to the social constraints that affect their lives. Having explored how power relations affect the support from siblings, I now turn to examine how power can enforce experiences of domestic violence of the participants and their mothers simultaneously.

4.6 Daughters and Mothers: Mirrored Experiences of Power

As well as their father's roles, the women participants referred to their own mother's experiences, their position, and status within the extended family. What emerged as a theme was the pattern of experiences that showed there were links between the participants' experiences and that of their mothers and how they connected to each other. This reflected the complexity of the Continuum of Violence, that, not only participants faced but that their mothers faced too. Krishna described how her mother was treated by her father's family after he passed away:

> … all I have seen, how people can be, like, especially in the male side of environment, how they can be controlling, and I just watch my mom being verbally abused, emotionally abused by my dad's side of the family and erm, that's all I've seen from the childhood to till I was fifteen. – Krishna

Krishna recalled her childhood memories of witnessing her mother's experiences of domestic violence from Krishna's father's extended family. Krishna moved to the UK when she was sixteen and so her observations of the domestic violence were in her formative years of childhood when the family was living in India. Unsurprisingly, Krishna specifically identified the men in the family as the perpetrators. Domestic violence is gendered where women are more likely to experience domestic violence. Krishna's reference to "that's all I have seen from childhood" indicated that as a child she witnessed her extended family's emotional and verbal abuse towards her mother, which in turn influenced her decisions in later life. Krishna's mother's life experiences as a widow, living in poverty in India with three dependent children, encompasses the intersecting categories of gender, culture, poverty, and marital status. Black Feminists have argued the need to emphasise the experiences of women within their social world (Mirza

2009: 6), which is important in understanding the context of influences on Krishna's life including her adult relationship with her mother.

> I couldn't see sadness, couldn't see my mom keep crying, looking at me and my mom kept saying to me, "You know what, my life was ruined and … I don't wanna see your life has been ruined and it really hurts me because I didn't want you to go through all that". And I just couldn't open up with her much and I avoided my mom so much. That's why I stayed in (city); not because I didn't love her … life wasn't fair on her. She's gone through so much after my father passed away and she didn't deserve it. That's how I felt. – Krishna

This quote refers to the time after Krishna had left her first violent marriage, where her partner was sexually and physically violent towards her to the extent that he set fire to her duvet as she lay sleeping one night. Krishna believed her mother made sacrifices for Krishna and her siblings. The sacrifice was experiencing domestic violence and staying within the extended family so her children would not be ostracised, and Krishna would not suffer the same fate. But Krishna not only experienced sexual and domestic violence from her first husband, she also experienced similar violations from her second husband, and had experienced sexual abuse as a child. Krishna could not confide in her mother about her childhood experiences of sexual abuse. Both women's pain and hurt from their own experiences of domestic violence kept them apart, physically and emotionally. Krishna believed she was protecting her mother from further pain by not disclosing her sexual abuse to her mother even though she witnessed her mother's experiences of domestic violence. Krishna did not want to add to her mother's burden because "life wasn't fair on her". Both believed they were supporting each other in these actions but the support was limited as Krishna was not able to disclose the sexual abuse to her mother nor able to live near her.

Other women, whose mothers also experienced domestic violence from members of their wider families, felt differently.

> he (Taslin's uncle) said to my mother, if she doesn't take me to Pakistan within that week then "she's gonna be sorry as well". So, mother thought "what am I supposed to do now?" cos mother was very weak at that time. So, she packed me up and off we went to Pakistan. – Taslin

Taslin was sixteen when she was taken to Pakistan to be married. She described her mother as "weak" and unable to resist her uncle's power and control over them both to the extent that he coerced her mother to take Taslin to Pakistan. I draw on Kelly's (1988: 125) research, where women saw their mothers as weak, not able to stand up to the father's authority, and felt they had been betrayed by their mothers by not protecting them. The mothers in this research faced similar experiences of control from other male

members of the family who were not their husbands. Coercive control "is personalized, extends through social space as well as over time, and is gendered in that it relies for its impact on women's vulnerability as women due to sexual inequality" (Stark 2007: 24). Coercive control relies on women's vulnerability due to gender inequality and power relations within families (Wilson 2006, Anitha and Gill 2009). Taslin's uncle extended his power over both Taslin and her mother to the extent that he exerted control over Taslin's body (a sexual body) and his control over Taslin's mother denied her right to parent Taslin (Thiara 2006 cited in Thiara 2013: 116). Children, as victims of abuse, are at a higher risk of isolation from their mothers (Thiara and Gill 2012). Taslin's mother was denied her right, as a mother, to support her daughter to get married. The forming of the intimate relationship for Taslin and experiences of violence on a continuum were, for both women, completely blurred and clashed. Taslin's mother was forced to take her daughter to Pakistan to be married and Taslin was forced to travel to Pakistan to be married.

Using the analogy of the see-saw of power, the uncle (like the fiancé in section 4.3) had assumed the seat of power at the bottom of the see-saw and Taslin and her mother were both in the elevated position, seated together. The intersections of age, gender, and citizenship were at work here. Taslin was too young and so without the power to prevent her uncle from abusing his power over her, as well as her mother. Her uncle believed Taslin had violated gendered social expectations of behaviour, brought shame and hence dishonoured the family (Sen 2005, Chakravarti 2005) and so had to be sent to Pakistan. Furthermore one of the routes to enter the UK is via marriage, which can influence marital pressures on a girl (Anitha and Gill 2009: 174). The intersections of her mother as a woman in poverty with no supportive husband, effectively a widow, left her vulnerable to Taslin's uncle. Stark's (2007) definition of coercive control is specific to intimate partners and so this definition warrants further research and development to consider South Asian women's lived experiences of coercive control and power within extended families, over time and space.

Over time Taslin came to a different view about her mother:

> I used to feel sorry for my mum. I, I don't think it's anything of her fault because … I'm older now. I understand everything, how hard it is, and you know, she was on her own. She didn't speak English. She didn't have any money. My father used to take all of the money and go and you know, gambled on, erm, do drugs and so my mum literally brought us up on the basis of her sewing machine. - Taslin

Taslin acknowledged the difficulties her mother experienced, namely the mitigating factors for her mother's behaviour. She identified the multiple axes of gender, poverty, and culture that work together. Her mother was a wife but lived without the presence of her husband, who abused drugs and alcohol and gambled, and survived without his financial contribution to the family income. Section 4.4 explored how a father's absence enabled other male members of the family to assert patriarchal power over women participants. Here the patriarchal role asserts power over mothers. Taslin's mother's status as a wife, together with an absent husband, was lower than that of Taslin's uncle (Taslin's father's older brother). Her mother experienced a language barrier. She was the sole provider for the family, on low-paid, insecure work. Her ability to look after her family, including preventing Taslin from being sent to Pakistan to be married, was marred by these multiple barriers working together. Again, this shows a mirror image of the mother's and daughter's experiences of subjugation of power and control at the hands of the uncle who was attempting a forced marriage.

I have used intersectionality to understand and explain how multiple axes of oppression work together and build on each other for individual women. I develop this further and look at the **combined** effects of intersections working with each pair of mothers and daughters. I argue that the intersections of oppression are working together and combined effect on both mother and daughter. Mirza and Gunaratnam (2014) discuss Black British Feminism over the last thirty years. Mirza points out that it is not how the different axes, as "discrete 'pure' identities" work together at different times but "Rather, our multi-faceted and 'embodied' lives are lived out simultaneously within a matrix of power that is also relentlessly cross-cutting" (Mirza and Gunaratnam 2014: 128-129). Thiara and Gill (2010b: 17) also consider male violence against South Asian women with other axes of oppression "on individual and collective selves". I argue that the combination of the intersections permeated throughout women's lives to the extent that for example, Krishna to this day, cannot disclose her sexual abuse to her mother and could not bring herself to live closer to her mother, both of which could have been a support to her. Taslin returned home pregnant and took employment (hiding her pregnancy from her employers) and worked to support her mother and her siblings. Both mother and daughter were plunged deeper into poverty as the birth of Taslin's baby added to the family size.

Both Taslin and Krishna made no connection between their experiences of domestic violence and that of their mothers. Yet both women were experiencing domestic or

sexual violence at the same time as their mothers. This shows domestic violence affecting generations of mothers and daughters simultaneously but by different perpetrators; a generational dimension to the Continuum of Violence and see-saw of power. Taslin's mother experienced power from her brother-in-law (her husband's older brother), but there was also the '"indirect power" of Taslin's father; despite his absence and addictions, he could still access resources for himself. Furthermore, there is no mention in Taslin's narrative of her uncle's response to her father because of his addictions. It seems that Taslin's mother was navigating power between her husband and her brother-in-law, amongst other constraints she faced in her life as a single parent living in poverty; her options completely closed down. Taslin does not allude to this but does refer to her change in attitude towards her mother:

> We had nowhere to live … so I worked really hard to support my mum and … I was angry with my mum at that point, really badly, but then I dunno within a short time of period of time I just--I don't feel like anything like that anymore. I don't, I don't blame her. I understand what pressure she was under and she had no choice. – Taslin

Taslin initially blamed her mother and referred to her own financial support of her. She did not mention her father alluding to her belief that her mother was the sole person responsible for the upkeep of herself and her siblings. She did not refer to any anger towards her father. Instead she blamed her mother. On understanding her mother's situation, Taslin's attitude towards her mother changed – "she had no choice". Taslin came to understand how the workings of power over her mother were too severe for her to resist. Other women also held similar views. For example, Samia referred to how her mother "…couldn't support me any more than she (pause) well, she couldn't; she had no choice". Samia's and Taslin's mothers had no options and so no choice.

Discourse of domestic violence often refers to multiple perpetrators in relation to South Asian women's specific experiences (Anitha 2008, Gill and Brah 2014), but an underdeveloped area is that of multiple, simultaneous victims of one perpetrator. Taslin and her mother were experiencing coercion and intimidation from her uncle. I have focussed on the mother and daughter relationships, where each experienced domestic violence that mirrored the other's experiences. I argue that there is a place to explore beyond single axis dimension by using intersectionality, where the axes of gender, age, culture, and poverty work not only separately on each woman, but together across generations. This reflects the social conditions and how patriarchal power structures legitimise violence towards women, which provides further barriers to a mother's ability

to support her daughter. I also argue that the Continuum of Violence affects women of different generations and how the collision with the formation of an intimate relationship crosses generations of women too.

Thus far I have discussed the course of power, from gendered socialisation of cultural norms of marriage, through to the manifestations of power within the family amongst different family members, including parallel experiences of daughters and their mothers. The see-saw of power and the merging of domestic violence with forming intimate relationship not only affected the women but their mothers too. Power can produce dialectical relationships between the participant and their families, and so it is important to explore women's responses to the different manifestations of power that they experienced.

4.7 Women's Responses to Power

During the Thematic Analysis, patterns emerged from the women's voices in the one-to-one and group interview of their experiences of patriarchal power; specifically their responses. This is a significant theme because it reflects the context of the social constraints of women's lived experiences. This section explores women's descriptions of their responses to their fear and the power of family members.

I draw on Taslin's experiences. At the age of sixteen, Taslin was forced to travel to Pakistan to marry. After the wedding Taslin refused to have sex with her husband. She was not allowed to return to the UK until she became pregnant. Eventually Taslin relented and had sex with her husband, in order to become pregnant so she could return to the UK. South Asian women's experiences of violence are on a continuum (Siddiqui 2013), where, in Taslin's case her forced marriage merged into forced sex, as a result of pressure from her partner and his family. Taslin's experiences of forming an intimate relationship collided with her experiences of domestic violence. Legally Taslin was not an adult. She was in a country where she, although married with a husband, did not have any support networks. By becoming pregnant it would not be easy for her to divorce her husband and marry someone else. This facilitated her husband's residency in the UK. These intersections of Taslin's gender, age, citizenship, and culture all worked against her to submit her to this situation. Taslin's negotiation of her decision was within the context of her situation. It could be argued that she was subordinate to the power but as Mahmood (2005) argues it is not a straightforward act of submission. It is in the context of the constraints she faced that Taslin's decision has to be understood (Anitha and Gill

2009). Her ultimate goal was to return to the UK and she feared she would never be able to return home and she did return, pregnant. Other women also responded to fear and control of power.

Kiran referred to her parents' refusal to acknowledge her as part of the family:

> My parents may not have wanted to support me but to completely remove contact? ... my situation was so bad, it's because of that, that I left and thought they would come round. It wasn't that my husband was hitting me and they came and cried that their daughter is being treated so badly. Support is about "this is my daughter. She's our blood and we'll care for her and help. So, she made a mistake, never mind." But no "she made a mistake so leave her. She made a mistake, leave her." That's what they said to me. The whole blame is on me. – Kiran

Kiran explained how her family made no attempt to understand her situation and to support her. Her parents did not recognise the distress she was experiencing as a result of the domestic violence from her husband. I have already explored how her father retained his patriarchal role by ostracising her from the family. It demonstrates the extent of power women can experience from their families - to lose one's child and then lose one's country, one's home, one's family and partner. The paradox is that her isolation meant she was more vulnerable to domestic violence from her husband, in the same way that Sara's isolation was exploited by her partner. Kiran positioned her understanding within the gendered nature of power, its hierarchy, and its link to domestic violence (Siddiqui 2013), and specifically her experiences of familial and intimate partner violence. Again Kelly's concept of the "Continuum of Violence" (Kelly 1988), as described earlier in Chapter 2, is useful here. It shows Kiran experienced many different forms of violence, including coercion and abuse, the prevalence of violence, from the domestic violence from her partner, and the isolation and ostracism from her family, all at the same time. It is in the context of these parallel streams of violence that women lived their lives and thus responded, and not always in a way that illustrates a clear-cut version of resistive agency (Patel, P. 2003b, Anitha and Gill 2009, Mahmood 2005). This is explored further in Chapter 5.

Pania's father betrothed her at the age of fourteen to his business partner to become his second wife:

> He forgot that he had no right over my life. If he hadn't done that to me, maybe I would still be that brave girl that could make him proud. – Pania

Pania asserted her rights but at the same time defined bravery as framed by her father, not in her own actions. Despite their families' violence and abuse towards them many

women still loved and respected their families and wished to remain in contact with them (Siddiqui 2013: 177–178). Pania stood by her decision, even though she disagreed with her father's decision, but at the same time she still wished for her relationship with her father and her family to be restored but on her own terms.

Taslin was forced to marry a man in Pakistan. When her husband arrived in the UK, her family tried to persuade her to let him live with her in the house that she had bought. She described her response:

> He came, the guy to the house and I said, "You're not coming in here" and he said "Why" and I said "because it's my house. I bought it…you're not coming to my house" and that was it, I never let him in … I said "No. I don't want nothing to do with him. I'm sorry". Everybody begged me. Everybody tried 'cos it got to a stage where I was like my own boss now and everybody was coming, begging me. "Oh there's never been a divorce in our family, your gonna, like dis—erm, disgrace us and this and that and we're begging you". I said, "No. I don't care." - Taslin

The intersection of race, gender, and culture, are at work here. Race based solutions towards immigration means that Taslin experienced pressure from her family to live with her husband for fear of him being deported back to Pakistan. As a woman she would be bringing shame onto and dishonouring the family by divorcing her husband. Black Feminists have argued how women can experience coercion and pressure relating to marriage from families, reinforced through immigration practices (Siddiqui 2005, Anitha and Gill 2009). Taslin's experience of marrying this person was completely overlaid with the Continuum of Violence. However, Taslin's sense of power and resilience is striking from her narrative, "I was like my own boss now". She was running the show. There is a sense of desperation in her family to dissuade her. The see-saw has swung in Taslin's favour, with her in control. The power shifted with Taslin at the bottom of the see-saw. Taslin described how she was given an ultimatum by her father:

> …when the boy came and knocked on the door and wanted to come and stay with me and I said "No". That same night my father came and he said "Oh, you have to give him a chance" and I said "No, I'm not" and he was like "Okay then, I'm not gonna stay here as well". I goes "Don't then. Bye. I'm not bothered" and my father really did go off and he didn't come back for about seven, eight years. – Taslin

Her father's ultimate threat was his attempt to escalate his power and control over her but Taslin resisted the power. In section 4.4, I described how Taslin felt her father was controlled by her uncle and she suggested that had her father not been dependent on drugs and alcohol then her uncle would have had less influence and she would not have been forced to marry in Pakistan. It is important to draw out the contrast; her imagination

of her father's behaviour in the past contrasts with his behaviour in this situation. He slotted into the patriarchal role which had been occupied by her uncle.

Women resisted their families, thus challenging stereotypes of submissive South Asian women (Siddiqui 2013: 175), and in their resistance they are located at the bottom of the see-saw of power. Pania was vocal about her rights. Taslin's refusal to live with the man whom she had been forced to marry, provided the opportunity for her to meet with her future intimate partner. The women had undertaken a journey of power where, initially, their experiences were at the overlap of forming an intimate relationship with the Continuum of Violence. This changed over time and women became empowered and resistive. Women also talked about other ways in which they resisted, in particular where they made use of structural power.

4.8 Participants' Use of Structural Power

Thus far I have discussed women's responses to power in relation to their intimate partners and families. Another theme that emerged from the women's voices was that women not only felt personal power, but also realised their power through structural forces. Nirvair described her last evening with her violent partner before she left him:

> I said "I'm gonna show you something before I go" and he went "Oh, okay what?" and I just got all the paperwork and I just put it in the drum in the garden and … I set it on fire and I went "That's your stay in England dealt with." – Nirvair

The paperwork she referred to was her partner's documentation for his residency in the UK, which he kept in a briefcase. She described other actions she took to ensure that he was not successful in his residency application in the UK nor USA:

> I wrote a letter to David Cameron, to the Indian Embassy here, to the Indian Embassy, err to the UK Embassy in India, erm, the American … I got him blacklisted from everywhere I possibly could. – Nirvair

Due to domestic violence from her husband, Nirvair left her job, stopped attending the gym, had limited contact with her family, and experienced mental health issues to the extent that she self-harmed - all types of domestic violence that women can experience (Patel, P. 2003b). Burning the documents was a very symbolic act of her regaining power, exercised with the very visible destruction of burning documents, making it difficult for her husband to try and recover the documents. These were acts carried out both in the private sphere (the destruction of his documents) but also in the public sphere (letters to the authorities).

Sara also used Government agencies to thwart her husband's arrival to the UK. Sara recalled confiding in a colleague at work about her forced marriage:

> …she (the colleague) gave me a bit of advice. "If you don't want him coming here, go to a solicitors and get them to write to the Home Office and explain that you were forced into this marriage" which I went and did, and they did write to the embassy and I think that's what stopped his visa 'cos everything was prepared, erm, and it got refused. – Sara

Sara had been forced into a marriage in Pakistan. "Everything was prepared" refers to the house that had been bought and the savings that she was accumulating for his arrival as a requisite part of the spousal visa requirements. Both Nirvair and Sara used their British citizenship to put an end to abuse and to shift the power balance away from their husbands (and in the case of Sara from her parents too). Sara's power shifted over space as her husband resided in Pakistan. In the same way as the uncle in Taslin's case took over the role of her father, Sara's parents assumed patriarchal power as would have been exercised by her husband, had he been living with her, (as in Nirvair's case) and so a hierarchy of power was established. Sara's act of contacting the authorities to deny her husband citizenship was more in defiance of her parents' violence in forcing her to marry than in defiance of her husband. Again Sara's defiance, her resistive power, sits at the juncture of her forced marriage and her parents' violence towards her.

Both women contacted the Home Office to protect themselves from their husbands, and in Sara's case from her family too, without jeopardising her relationship with him (Anitha and Gill 2009) and without fear of retaliation from her family (Patel, P. 2003b). I believe what is more interesting, from a Black Feminist perspective, are Sara's and Nirvair's acts. As highlighted in Chapter 2, Black Feminists have argued that immigration controls are often positioned as protecting South Asian women from domestic abuse but are in fact racist and discriminatory, in their concern about South Asian women marrying men from South Asia (Balzani 2010: 84, Siddiqui 2016, Wilson 2010). Their experiences of domestic violence, regardless of whether from parents or husbands, do not shed any light on how immigration controls protected them whilst they were married. But they utilise the very regulations that are regarded as racist to fulfil the objective that feminists have argued are the true function of these policies, that is, to stop people from the developing world entering the UK. In other words, they both used racist policies of immigration to their own ends. They used structural racism via immigrations controls (Balzani 2010) towards their husbands and, in Sara's case, additionally towards her parents. The use of immigration controls came up several times in the women's

narratives. Whereas Sara and Nirvair prevented their husbands from obtaining visas to reside in the UK, Taslin's experience was different:

> … even to this day, one thing's that really made me angry is that they done it. I didn't even give him, give him the stay to this country. I dunno who done my signatures or what happened. All I know is he's still here in this country today I had nothing to do with his bloody stay. – Taslin

Taslin believed it was her right, her ultimate power, to determine whether her husband should have a right to obtain a visa for residency in the UK. She was angry that her power had been thwarted. The power swing, in this event, elevated her to the powerless position, due to a possible fraud by her parents, who allegedly forged her signature. At the same time, there are the combined effects of the intersection of the axes of gender, patriarchy, class, and citizenship. Forced marriage is a form of honour based violence and hence domestic violence, which is gendered. With her signature forged, Taslin's social class and education did not give her the cultural and social capital resources to influence his residency. Again this poses a dilemma for Black Feminism, which does not consider how South Asian women may use immigration policies, that are often perceived as racist, for their own response to the domestic violence they have experienced; such as to escape forced marriage and maintain relations with their families (Anitha and Gill 2009: 179). In these examples, none of the women used the immigration policies believing it would endanger their relationships with their families. Sara's and Taslin relationships with their families were already strained. Taslin made use of other types of structural powers. She decided to initiate a Sharia divorce and described her expectations and fears in getting a divorce:

> I chose my uncle to be one of my witnesses because it was his fault and I was really shocked that I thought "he's gonna go mad and not sign the papers and swear at me or whatever" and … what happens is, obviously the guy says "Talaq, talaq, talaq" but the girl gets a chance to say why this has happened ... and then they asked me. I told them, I said "It's him". I said "He made me go to Pakistan. He made me get married. If you've got anyone to blame, it's him. - Taslin

Even though Taslin expected her uncle to be angry, it did not stop her from facing the court and pursuing the Sharia divorce. She cited that the failure of her marriage lay with her uncle. She did not blame her husband because, she believed, it was her uncle who instigated the forced marriage by insisting that her mother took her to Pakistan. Indirectly, her uncle had power over Taslin's husband too. It is important to mention that coercion into marriage resulting in forced marriage is incompatible with Islamic law. Therefore victims should be able to seek redress under the law in the UK, but Taslin's marriage took place in Pakistan and her husband was a citizen of Pakistan. Although

The European Council for Fatwa and Research had ruled that, for marriages within European countries, Muslims should abide by the rules of the country, it had not at the time of writing, ruled on marriages outside Europe (Gill and Hamed 2016). Despite this, Taslin's experience shows that she sought redress through the Sharia council and secured it.

There was a transition in Taslin's power relative to her family. To explore and understand this transition, it is important to see how she described it. At the age of sixteen Taslin was sent to Pakistan and within three weeks was married. Here she described what happened on her wedding day:

> Taslin: I thought "Oh my god, this is what I've been scared of all, all my life, that they're wanna do to me and hang on, this is happening". It's like a, out of body experience for me, kind of like, it was such a weird place for me to be in... The day I got married is the day that I just literally changed from being scared to I didn't care.
>
> Interviewer: I'm really interested in that change cos it sounds like—
>
> Taslin: Oh, it was like—just overnight I changed. At sixteen years old, I just (went) from being a scared (pause) scared "dunno what's gonna happen"—very scared little girl; I just turned into like a courageous woman that day. I just thought "you know what you've done your worst to me now. You're done. I'm not gonna take it".

I referred earlier to the see-saw of power swinging in relation to discrete events but for Taslin it seems that the see-saw is permanently in the lowest position. I draw on Morgan's (1996) work in the family and specifically where gender modifies family, although his analysis refers to the relationships between partners in marriage, giving examples of women's presence in the job market changing the family relationships where the husband is no longer the main breadwinner (Morgan 1996: 84). This can be applied to South Asian women who change family dynamics and relationships by asserting their self-power, as in Taslin's case and that of all the women who have chosen their partners. Women's socialisation and past experiences played an influential part in their decision-making in choice of partner; here I see another example of that. Taslin's experience in differential power towards her family happened before she formed an intimate relationship with her current partner. Other women's experiences were situated when they were in a relationship and tried to exit it.

Krishna described a situation that occurred hours after she had told her husband of her plans to leave him. He forced Krishna to take a pill, called the doctor, and handed the

phone to her, for her to make an appointment for a blood test, to prove to the medical authorities that she was taking drugs and therefore an unfit mother.

> I put the phone down and he, he was beating me up, saying "I need you to go for a blood test" cos he thought I was the girl from village, but people don't understand. He thought I was really dumb because I never said a word to anybody or sticking up for myself. He underestimated me. - Krishna

Krishna described the extent of the verbal abuse from her husband on this occasion:

> Then he goes "If you ever, ever leave me I'm gonna ruin your life. I'll make your life hell that you'll end up killing yourself. Leave the children. Leave son (boy's name) with me and take daughter (girl's name) with you" and I said "I'm not gonna do that. I'm not gonna leave my children. If I die, I die fighting for my children." And he goes "Okay so you gotta mouth now right do I take it? You fucking whore. You fucking prostitute, bitch." And that's all I've heard from him anyway; those kinds of words all along since last, in the past eight years. - Krishna

Krishna's reference to being a "girl from the village" suggests that she felt her husband had the impression that she would not dare to stand up to him. "Village" denotes a distant land with backward practices (Thiara and Gill 2010a) and gendered because boys are privileged over girls. Krishna, in referring to herself in this way, reinforces these connotations and stereotypes of backward cultures and backward people. Chapter 6 discusses in more detail how the women participants reflect on what is westernised and what is not, and how their experiences and responses link to progressive versus traditional discourses.

Women who have experienced domestic violence over prolonged periods of time leave their abusive relationships when they feel their children's safety is at risk (Patel, M. 2003, Thiara 2013). Furthermore, leaving a violent relationship can put women and their children at higher risk of harm from the abusive partner (Burman and Chantler 2005). Krishna's partner escalated the violence towards her, for example, by trying to force her to take drugs. The balance of power shifted away from Krishna's husband towards her and as a result he increased his abuse, threats, and violence: "You fucking prostitute, bitch". Krishna contextualised his response: "that's all I've heard from him anyway". It is as though she had not heard anything new - business as usual. This suggests she resisted his power.

Women experienced the layers of power from gendered socialisation, through to acts of power over them, including forced marriages. The type of power women experienced changed over time where it became resistive but still sat at the overlap of their intimate relationship with the Continuum of Violence where both were experienced in the same

way. The women participants responded in multiple ways, and throughout these experiences power was fluid, where the holders of power experienced it for a period before it swung to another person - the see-saw effect of power.

4.9 The See-saw Effect of Power

The women's accounts have highlighted how power relations are complex and fluid and can exist and change over time and space. I discussed in Chapter 2 how power lies at the convergence of forming an intimate relationship and the Continuum of Violence where its effect can be realised in women's lives as having no distinction between the two. Black Feminist Standpoint theoretical base is the understanding of how power effects women's lives. How oppression works through power, in the different social locations that South Asian women occupy is the core of an intersectional understanding. The women's experiences together with their mother's experiences have shown the influences of power through gendered norms in both mothers and daughters. Black Feminism analyses the effects of power on women as individuals or as a collective (Thiara and Gill 2010b) in the form of a social group. Where familial ties bind women's relationships, the participants'' narratives have shown that mothers' and daughters' experiences of domestic violence demonstrate the influence of power in their own individual experiences but also in their relationship with each other. Singular and group analysis within Black Feminism has also permeated the analysis used within intersectionality. I argue that intersectionality (Collins and Bilge 2016) can also be used to understand the matrix of intersecting axes of oppression (Crenshaw 1991) on women who share ties, such as a mother and daughter relationship, where gender is not the only site of oppression in this familial relationship.

Mothers' and daughters' experiences of domestic violence show how women's experiences do not fit into binary notions of power, suggesting that people's experiences do not always fit into whether they have the power or not. Power works subtly and so the boundaries of whether a person has power or not can be blurred. The fluidity of power is exemplified through different family members holding power and the fact that power can shift to other members of the family over time. I have termed this fluidity of swings of power 'the see-saw of power", where power is not a fixed entity. I considered how power can be broken down into discrete events where women and their partners or family at different times seem to experience the elevated status representing lack of power and how this can change. Black Feminism critiques the notion of victimhood, particularly applied to South Asian women's agency (Amos and Parmar 1984, Dustin

and Phillips 2008, Siddiqui 2013). The women's narratives have shown how at times women held power in response to families and at other times the see-saw swung so that other members of the family held power. Power is complex and multi-layered, and any notion of fixedness does not show the nuances of lived experiences which is what Black Feminism has brought to the fore in feminist discourse (Lorde 1996, hooks 1981, Mirza 1997b, Bhavnani and Coulson 2005).

It was important to show the power differentials at work, with women both holding power and having power held over them. Black Feminist epistemology sits uncomfortably alongside women's agency in using structural powers such as immigration policies for their own individual ends. Finally, the power discussed was mainly within the private sphere, in relationships with partners and family members. Some women used structural powers, for example immigration powers, to gain advantage for themselves. This I believe poses a dilemma for Black Feminism. According to Siddiqui (2016), the state needs to support ethnic minority women's leadership within communities to tackle "cultural and religious attitudes and practices through BME women's leadership and self-empowerment". At times, the women through their own voices, showed leadership, resilience and self-empowerment. Women also contextualised their gendered experiences within patriarchy as articulated within Black Feminism (hooks 2000, Mirza and Gunaratnam 2014, Collins 2017).

4.10 Conclusions

Black Feminism's analysis of South Asian women's lived experiences of domestic violence and its relation to power and control serves well the understanding of power relations within families and how women's power can see-saw at different times and in relation to different family members. What the participants' accounts have highlighted is that power is not a binary concept, where it can be held or not. Their experiences show a fluidity which reflects, again, the argument that Black Feminism puts forward, is that Black women's experiences are not subject to one universal notion of womanhood. However, there are areas which show Black Feminism still has further scope for development. In some ways, Black Feminism still subscribes to binary notions, for example, the concept of the individual and the collective social or ethnic group of South Asian women. Black Feminism brings to the fore a nuanced epistemological contribution to the lived experiences of women; then it must move towards the notion of navigation that women traverse in their lives, as shown so well in their narratives of their own and their mothers' experiences of domestic violence.

Siddiqui (2016) argues that BME women, through leadership and self-empowerment, are part of the solution to tackling domestic violence, and this study illustrates this. It is the diversity of women's experiences that enables understanding of their lives in more detail through different manifestations of the threads of power between the participants and their families.

Intersectionality as an heuristic tool (Collins and Bilge 2016, Phoenix 2016) has been useful in understanding the complexity of women's subjective positions. By analysing experiences through multiple social categories I highlighted how the categories are co-constitutive. The use of intersectionality has been original in its use to understand the oppression women have faced and the resistance they have shown within the constraints of the social norms they experienced. For example, I explored how the intersecting categories of gender, age, culture, education, and citizenship worked together to give the context and understanding of the gendered socialisation of women's experiences of how they would be married.

The power of the socialisation of gendered norms through the subtle, direct, and indirect ways in which women were exposed to about forming intimate relationships, permeated their everyday experiences to the extent that such messages were normalised. Women choosing their intimate partners are a transgression of such socially sanctioned norms. Gendered socialisation is a tool of patriarchy where there are the enactors and enablers of patriarchy and power, such as family members, and in particular the father. The father held the power and control in the family. He decided on whether the daughter was a part of the family or not and the way in which to redeem honour and punish shame. The father's power is exemplified in the see-saw of power where he is in control. Having this control means he can pass power on to other male actors of power. The control of power passes onto others even when the father is not able to assert his own patriarchal role and so mothers and daughters can experience domestic violence from the same perpetrator at the same time. Both women can be positioned in the elevated place of the see-saw with another male relative in the lower powerful position. It holds that, in the context of forming intimate relationship, the mothers and daughters can experience a collision of the Continuum of Violence, where both are coerced and controlled, relative to their own positions in the family, that is, as mother and daughter. The women participants asserted resistive power and the see-saw of power swung in their control. Women's fluidity of responses included resistance to family pressures and use of structural power.

And so the see-saw of power adds to our understanding of Continuum of Violence merging with forming intimate relationships. Power runs through both and so lies at the overlap between both. Power can change from oppressing women to women able to resist power and empower themselves. Power can work simultaneously across generations where both mother and daughter, as women, experience the oppression of power. This means that the collission of forming an intimate relationship with that of the Continuum of Violence works across family generations in different ways and at the same time. The next chapter builds on women's experiences of power and explores women's agency in choice of intimate partner and their decisions thereafter about whether to remain in the violent relationship or to leave it.

Chapter 5 Making Connections – Choice and Agency in Forming Intimate Partner Relationships

"I think I thought, I think, I took it as well, I chose him" - Samia

5.1 Introduction

Samia, a 57-year-old woman, reflects on her agency in choosing her partner at 18 years old. Her quote echoes the central theme of this chapter - the complexity of choice and agency in forming intimate partner relationships.

The previous chapter focused on the way in which power lays the foundations for the different forces at work. I drew on Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology to interpret the power of gendered socialisation and, together with the tools and actors of patriarchy, demonstrated how socialisation influenced women's view of marriage and the type of intimate relationship to be formed. Using intersectionality, I explored how gender, age, culture, and citizenship intersected to socialise women into social norms of marriage, to reproduce gendered norms of feminine and masculine roles and how, in order to sustain patriarchal control, power transfers to men in the family. In what I have termed "the see-saw of power" the complexity of women's experiences of power in relation to their families and their intimate partners was explored. The fluidity is reflected in the elevation and lowering of the see-saw to show how women, across space and time, held power over members of the family or power was held over them.

I took an intersectional approach that analyses beyond single dimensions to understand the complexity of women's lives and how multiple social categories work co-constitutively to oppress women participants' lives and their mothers too. The analysis of the participants' mothers' oppression is based on the narratives of their daughters, the participants. It is through the "eyes" and perspectives of their daughters, who are the participants in this research. I drew on Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology to examine the cultural context of women's experiences of power including domestic violence experienced by mothers and daughters at the same time. Using the analogy of the see-saw of power I explored the fluidity of power within the Continuum of Violence in South Asian women's lives where they can experience both familial and intimate partner violence at the same time. I highlighted that women's experiences of forming an intimate relationship overlapped with their daily experiences of the Continuum of Violence because of the oppressive nature of power. The result was that women could not

distinguish between the two in their lives. This chapter continues these threads to examine women's choice and agency at the time of forming intimate relationships and thereafter and how they are underpinned by power.

A review of the literature in Chapter 2 drew attention to Black Feminism's contribution to knowledge production about South Asian women as agentic subjects exercising their rights in marriage (Pande 2014). Wilson's (2006) nuanced critique emphasises the subtle and complex nature of coercion to marry from families towards women, where women are unable to distinguish the blurred boundaries between arranged and forced marriage (Siddiqui 2003a). South Asian women embody a multiplicity of experiences in forming an intimate relationship with a partner. The experiences can be complex and contradictory, so to understand the multiple experiences of agency within a spectrum of consent to coercion, the "vectors of inequality" need to be recognised (Anitha and Gill 2009). In exploring choice and agency with respect to forming an intimate relationship which thereafter is violent, it is necessary to situate women's experiences at the intersection of multiple social axes of oppression (Collins 2000a). The intersectional analysis enhances the understanding of women's experiences of and their responses to domestic violence from the family as well as the intimate partner.

I have shown in Chapter 2 how, in the spectrum of forming an intimate relationship or marriage, South Asian women's experiences of choice, coercion and consent are varied and complex. I also discussed how the Continuum of Violence is an infringement of choice and consent, coercion being the overriding factor. Choice, coercion and consent sit where the two merges. The focus, therefore of this chapter is to understand women's experiences of choice and agency in forming an intimate relationship and their responses to domestic violence from family and intimate partners via the intersections of gender, age, income, culture, religion, and age.

This chapter is structured as a timeline of the life histories as narrated by the women in the one-to-one interviews and group interview, about their experiences of forming and leaving intimate partner relationships. The structure of this chapter follows the themes that emerged from the Thematic Analysis. A pattern concerning the complexity of and barriers to women exercising agency and choice when forming an intimate relationship materialised. It begins by exploring, through the women's narratives, their understanding and expression of choice, followed by an exploration of women's experiences of choice and agency at the time of forming an intimate relationship. After navigating through these two themes the focus shifts to women's experiences of leaving the violent relationship,

drawing attention to any negotiations the women may have made in leaving the partner. Women's relationships with their families will also be examined and the partner's mistreatment in response to the women's predicament is considered. Furthermore, women's negotiation in response to the abuse over time will be explored. The next section examines women's reflections of choice and agency over time and considers the consequences of their decisions. Finally the links between choice and agency are drawn together with the women's experiences of gendered norms and structures of power.

5.2 Opaqueness of Choice

Before proceeding to the women's narratives and their experiences of choice, it is important to consider what their understandings of choice may be. Choice is bound to notions of Western modernity, in which individual liberty to exercise choice and agency is imperative to a "sense of modern self" (Pande 2014: 178). Black Feminists argue that women negotiate choice with respect to marriage (Bhopal 2011, Pande 2014) and should be considered with a "new discourse of personal freedom" (Anitha and Gill 2009:179). By examining women's agency and pressures they may have experienced (both from the family and the community), I explore how the different axes work together to constrain women and thus explicate a more nuanced understanding of how they came to form an intimate relationship. For example Kiran's pregnancy and subsequent abandonment by her family: where her age, poverty, culture and gender intersected with patriarchal norms of honour and shame (Siddiqui 2013)? Were these the catalyst for a series of events that led to her marrying her violent husband?

Chapter 4 explored how gendered socialisation of marriage and partner choice can begin when girls are very young and then repeatedly be reinforced as the women grow into adulthood. Some women participants described their socialisation of marriage but not know how to exercise and therefore could not exercise agency to fulfil their marriage choice.

> I suppose although I knew about arranged marriages I think we also had this idea from my dad that … we would be allowed to choose our own partners, but it was never really explained how we would do this because we weren't allowed to go out with anyone, of course … I don't know how my parents thought we would do this. – Samia
>
> …it shocked me how on one hand he (father) was saying certain things; he behaved in a certain way but suddenly when it comes to me, it's different … I was really confused. I couldn't understand it. You know, you were giving me one message and all of a sudden you were saying "You can't go down that route" and

> he wasn't, you know, there was none of this about "oh, you can marry him". It was more about "we're gonna choose … I think he confused me. – Gurpreet

Both Samia and Gurpreet reflected on the mixed and contradictory messages they received from their fathers. Their fathers imbued them with an understanding that they would be able to exercise individual autonomy in "choice" of partner but the reality never materialised. Chapter 2 explored how the concepts of honour and shame give rise to control over women, their sexual bodies, and their rights to marriage choice (Welchman and Hossain 2005). By preventing Samia from possessing the means to fulfil her choice and by opposing Gurpreet's choice of partner, family honour was being protected, thus avoiding any possibility of shame the women may bring by exercising their agency and transgressing social norms. Okin (2002) explains that women's experiences of gendered socialisation through norms and practices cause barriers to making choices that effect change in their lives. Samia and Gurpreet experienced barriers by not knowing how to exercise their agency. Using the analogy of the see-saw, they were in the elevated position because the intersections of their age, gender, and patriarchal codes of honour and shame ensured that their choices were restricted and that they lacked the tools of self-power. This reflects the different ways in which male dominance and power are maintained through patriarchy.

There is opaqueness to the choices they felt they had, because they could not see a means to exercise agency; in effect agency eluded them. Other women were very clear they had autonomy of choice and did not experience any barriers.

> We were always told we can choose our own partners, as long as that person was a Sikh then that was fine …. you know there was no oppression of any sort … we were always given a choice. "If you want to do that it's fine; if you don't just say no." There was nothing to indicate I had to have an arranged marriage or anything. - Nirvair

Nirvair felt that she had agency to make and fulfil her choice. Yet there were constraints stipulating that the partner had to be of the same faith (Wilson 2006). Normative codes are still being conveyed to women which affect choice and preserve the family honour and lineage (Chakravarti 2005), which meant Nirvair had to marry a Sikh, the most important message conveyed to her. In contrast, the most important issue for her was that she would not have an arranged marriage; in effect this was choice within boundaries or constraints.

The women's experiences reflected some of the constraints or boundaries that could influence their choice to perform agency in marriage choice (Anitha and Gill 2009: 172).

Patriarchy gave the illusion that there was choice, but the power as analysed at the intersections of age, culture, gender, and religion showed that women did not have agency in marriage choice. Black Feminists have critiqued the problematic nature of the dichotomy of arranged/forced marriage, where the spectrum sheds light on women's experiences of the multiple ways in which consent and coercion can manifest themselves (Anitha and Gill 2009). The women's narratives show that their experiences do not necessarily conform to the spectrum of arranged/forced marriage because they did not believe they would be having an arranged marriage. However, pressures were brought to bear to mask the external power over women's agency in marriage. I argue that this is a form of control where, in effect, there is no choice. The women's experiences sit at the overlap of forming an intimate relationship and the Continuum of Violence because the illusion is that there is choice but the reality is that there is no autonomous choice. This offers insight into a nuanced view of the assumptions often made regarding arranged marriage and forced marriage, where women are passive victims of male power (Mirza 1997a). These constraints add to the social conditioning enforced by actors of power that Chapter 4 explored. Given the constraints that some women faced, the next section explores how the women exercised agency of choice at the time of forming an intimate relationship.

5.3 Influences on Forming the Intimate Relationship

Given the influences of gendered socialisation as well as the actors and the tools of patriarchy in preventing autonomous boundaries of exercising choice, this section explores how certain events in the women's life history and the circumstances they found themselves in influenced their decisions to consider a marriage or an intimate relationship. Following on from the previous analysis, it explores how women negotiated forming intimate relationships by examining intersections of social categories including age, gender, culture, and poverty.

Krishna described how she felt when she met prospective partners via the arranged marriage process:

> I seen a lot of boys and, erm, I was very picky but people looked at it, looked at me as picky but I had my own emotional stuff going inside me but I couldn't talk to them about it, erm, due to my, err, childhood experiences … I used to get very cranky with my mom and I used to take my anger out on peo— … I was very snappy … because deep down I didn't wanted to get married. I didn't want — I didn't want any, anybody in my life. – Krishna

Krishna was sexually abused at the age of six years by a male relative shortly after her father passed away. Krishna expressed her innermost feelings, “deep down I didn’t wanted to get married” because of “childhood experiences” of sexual abuse which she was unable to talk to anyone about, including her family. Women are silenced about disclosing sexual abuse because sex as a subject is not talked about (Cowburn, Gill and Harrison 2015). Black Feminism has critiqued internalised notions of family honour, shame, and modesty (Siddiqui 2013, Cowburn, Gill and Harrison 2015) and where sexual violence is considered to be a “taboo” subject (Siddiqui 2003b). So Krishna rejected many men, describing herself as “picky”, because she could not speak about her sexual abuse. Chapter 4 argued that Krishna’s childhood sexual oppression was at the intersections of gender, age, and poverty, together with cultural norms of honour and shame. It is these experiences that gave rise to her vulnerability which in turn influenced her decision to turn down men. Krishna could not separate out the experience of forming an intimate relationship to that of the Continuum of Violence. The oppression of power and coercion with no consent or agency that she experienced in the sexual abuse collided with her ability to form an intimate relationship, as a consenting adult and so she was “picky”.

Other women also rejected partners by ending previous intimate relationships.

> I did come across, erm, someone who was of a different caste but everything else, err, was, err, in theory and practice and everything, erm, just as I would have wanted it to be … but I was at that stage erm, so wanting to please my mum or was still very much at the stage where everything had to be exactly as my mum wanted it to be and I decided to end that relationship because even, even without checking with my mum, I knew she wouldn’t approve. – Harjit

What is notable in Harjit’s account is that she ended the relationship “without checking” with her mother. She understood the cultural codes her mother conformed to in addition to her own values and norms, namely to be a “good” daughter in order to “please my mum”. Women are beholders of honour (Chakravarti 2005) following codes of “obedient and dutiful wife, daughter, and daughter-in-law” (Siddiqui 2005: 263), and mothers also reproduce and uphold such notions (Gill and Brah 2014). Furthermore, Harjit framed the criteria for a partner that met her mother’s approval as “in theory and practice”. Chapter 4 explored how mothers can act as agents of patriarchy through socialising daughters. That power had influenced Harjit to end a relationship, illustrating the subtle coercive pressures at play (Siddiqui 2013), and the complexity of women’s responses in their negotiation of social norms when they make an assessment of the situation (Anitha and

Gill 2009). This illustrates how coercion overlaps and subsumes Harjit's ability to marry this person and so Harjit ended her relationship.

The way women's previous relationships ended and how these impacted on their decisions in forming a new relationship with an intimate partner who was then violent also featured in the data. Nirvair also ended a previous relationship because there was conflict within her extended family and within a few weeks she met the person who was to become her violent husband.

> There was just something about him, even on his photograph … he just knew all the right words to say and he was hitting the nail on the head … This guy wants to look after me. He [former partner] couldn't even stand up to his family and then slowly you know reality kicks in, at some point but yeah it kicked in a bit too late I think, so yeah (chuckles). – Nirvair

Chapter 4 explored how women reinforced notions of hegemonic masculinity which I now build on. Nirvair was influenced by and reproduced dominant discourses of gender and masculinity (Hearn 2013), as she describes her previous partner "couldn't even stand up to his family". Expectations are placed on women to marry someone of the same religion (Wilson 2006). Such expectations, combined with women's vulnerability, lead Anitha and Gill (2009: 172) to state "It is within a range of constraints, both articulated and unstated, that particular groups of South Asian women exercise their agency in determining, to varying degrees, whether or not to marry, their choice of marriage partner". The range of constraints including to marry a person of the same faith or caste, manifest at the intersections of a woman's gender, religion, caste, and culture together with patriarchy. This provides the backdrop to understanding Nirvair's agency in rejecting a previous relationship and forming an intimate relationship with her husband.

What is emerging is the different manifestations of gendered norms and influences on women's agency in forming intimate relationships. Some of the women made explicit connections between their past experiences of domestic violence from the family and later events, namely forming an intimate relationship. Both Taslin and Sara had forced marriages which they had exited. Here they refer to their subsequent relationships with partners they chose.

> Interviewer: So, what attracted you to the children's father?

> I think it was the escapism from all of the horrible stuff I was having to deal with. When I was with him I was escaping — I felt I was living two different lives; the life my family expected me to live and the life I would like to live. I think I saw it a way of getting away through him as well and the relationship was really good.

> It was brilliant when we first met. We were both young and he had the same aspirations as me. – Sara

> It was a very whirlwind type of thing, erm, nothing I just met him. We just started talking, going out … his English was shit at first … I just fell in love with him … I thought "Wow" and I was always like going out here and going out there and I thought "Wow. This is a lovely life." I really liked him and I really proper fell like head over heels in love with the guy. – Taslin

Although some studies explore women's lived experiences after intimate partner violence (Kelly 2016), very little attention has been given to South Asian women's lives after exiting familial violence and then forming relationships of choice. Their relationships with their partners suggest a form of resistance to familial violence and negotiation of a relationship not formed through familial pressure. Both Sara and Taslin had experienced forced marriage and now were in a relationship of choice. This again points to the problematic nature of the spectrum of arranged / forced marriage which conveys multiple realities along this spectrum, bounded by choice in the arranged marriage at one end and coercion / force at the other end (Enright 2009, Wilson 2010, Bhopal 2011). The women's experiences do not fit along the trajectory of this linear spectrum for every relationship. There was no blurring or merging of arranged marriage into forced marriage (Gill and Harvey 2017) in each relationship. In fact women had a number of intimate relationships. They had been forced into a marriage and were now in a relationship of choice. Women's agentic trajectory did not travel from one end of the spectrum to the other. It was not linear which is why the overlap between the spectrum of forming an intimate partner or marriage and the Continuum of Violence is suited to showing, in a nuanced way, the women's experiences of not only one intimate relationship but a number of intimate relationships. Certainly in the forced marriages there is a collision represented where the two areas merge. In her second relationship Sara experienced domestic violence within the Continuum of Violence where the boundaries of forming the second relationship blurred into the domestic violence not only from her partner but also from her family members. She was isolated from her family and her partner exploited her isolation.

Anitha and Gill (2009) are critical of feminist scholarship which solely links agency to women's emancipation, and they cite that South Asian women's agency can reflect exit from communities as well as remaining within communities. Saba Mahmood in her study of the piety movement in Egypt contends that women can both uphold social norms and challenge them (Mahmood 2005). Although Sara kept her relationship secret from her family she did eventually exit from her community. In contrast, Taslin openly defied her

mother and dated her partner but remained within the community, despite its opposition, reflecting how agency is multi-faceted and complex.

Other women also referred to the attraction of an intimate partner who gave them attention in contrast to the domestic violence experienced at home. Samia was seventeen when she met her partner, her mother's driving instructor.

> …he was twenty-five, I was seventeen and he had a car (laughs) … it was exciting to go out with an older man. Remember I'd just lost my father, though, you know partly looking back that was the attraction … of course I fancied that I was in love because I was young and bereaved, and he gave me attention that I craved, and it was either that or not and, you know, I had another year of being at home with a mother I wasn't getting on with. So, it seemed like a good thing to do. – Samia

> … and I think for me how I got involved with the wrong person is because … where you would talk to your uncle or aunty or dad, "I'm going through this" … that didn't happen to me at home and it was like getting that attention from elsewhere, if you know what I mean? So, somebody that would ring me up every day, every hour, or every week "What you doing?" and then you start talking and then it doesn't help when you kind of say "Well this is what's going on at home" and that person is like "oh yeah" and thinks "there's a lot going on for her, it's easy to like, play with her mind and stuff". – Jazmin

Both Samia and Jazmin lost their fathers when they were children; they were still grieving and hence vulnerable. Samia was keen to leave the family home because she was often in conflict with her mother. She romanticised her relationship with her partner: "I fancied that I was in love", and her vulnerability through her grief and desire for the gap created by the loss of her father to be fulfilled by her partner: "he gave me the attention that I craved". The attention was what attracted Jazmin to her partner.

The women's narratives are about loss of communication with parents and about feeling they had no voice. They experienced a climate of oppression and so they wanted to avoid a situation where they were partnered with abusers chosen by their families, only to end up in that very situation. All of the women had experienced forms of coercion and domination from families (Wilson 2006). They stepped outside expected cultural codes of behaviour in that they had formed relationships independently. In her analysis of practices of honour in North India, Chakravarti states that marriages of choice "present a clear threat to this intricate web of social, material, and cultural factors requiring specific marriage structures" (Chakravarti 2005: 310). Honour and shame are culturally specific tools of power that enforce gender inequality. The women were young and vulnerable and had transgressed culturally expected norms, leading to the very isolation from

families that women feared (Siddiqui 2005: 266). Women's agency and choice occur within the context of their situation (Mahmood 2005).

The context surrounding the decision for Samia to marry was because the relationship became known in the community and hence the transgression became public and pressures were brought to bear. "We'd been seen somewhere. He and I, I think if we carried on going out with each other would have just stopped after a while". She reflected on this pressure to marry and questioned the sustainability of the relationship in the absence of the pressure. This was also affirmed by another participant, Gurpreet:

> but I almost I think I got trapped in a sense because I'd fallen with this guy which I was happy to be friends with him forever if need be but did I really wanna get married, maybe not? ... my mother-in-law said, "You've got to get married before you go to university" and so that was the pressure on me to tell my parents. And I think that was probably the worst time of my life really (laughs) in many respects. – Gurpreet

This reflects the complexities of choice and agency highlighting women's vulnerability and how choice can be used for exploitative purposes by extended family members who hold power over women. Interestingly, Samia and Gurpreet both revealed that their relationships whilst dating may not have lasted had pressure not been enforced for them to marry. All the women were young. Samia and Gurpreet were in full-time education with aspirations to go to university. They had no independent financial means. As young women they were beholden to family honour (Gill and Brah 2014), which they had tainted, and so the damage needed to be minimised and so they were vulnerable to pressure. Despite their agency in choice of partner, the multiple axes of social relations of gender, age, income, and culture placed the women in the interpersonal domain of power (Collins and Bilge 2016) where their families and their partners' families ensured their marriages to their partners occurred; in effect they were "forced" into marriage. The formation of an intimate relationship shifts into the Continuum of Violence wherein women are coerced, with pressure applied in both subtle and openly forceful ways to assert control over their decisions. The women's interactions with family members were not on an equal footing. Their age and gender in patriarchal familial structures did not provide an avenue for equal status and consideration for them to exercise agency in the interests of their own long-term future (Okin 2002).

Again women's experiences of forced marriage do not follow the spectrum of arranged/forced marriage, which implicitly assumes that parents are involved (Enright 2009, Bhopal 2011, Wilson 2010). Both women had dated their partners and so initially

there was no involvement of parents. The women's partner's families forced the marriages. Much scholarship focusses on the women's families as enforcers of forced marriages. Pande's (2016) spectrum of arranged marriage practices is also not applicable in these cases; the women did not have a "traditional arranged marriage", nor a "semi-arranged marriage; they felt they were in love, but they did not experience "love-cum-arranged marriage" nor did their parents undertake "arranged weddings" because the marriages were forced, and forced by the partners' families. This is an important point that adds to the debate and discourses about the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage.

The multiplicity of women's experiences illustrates the complexities of choice and location of women's agency within the constraints they experienced (Anitha and Gill 2009). Women's agency was exercised in the context of dominant discourses they had been socialised into, hegemonic notions of masculinity, and the power they experienced. The complexity of women's agency was analysed using the intersection of women's gender, age, culture, income, and religion to highlight how pressures were brought to bear on their agency. Their negotiation of marriage in response to family pressure, their own lives, and their aspirations for a life with their partner demonstrates the fluid, contradictory nature of agency and how the women renegotiated partner choice in forming a relationship. The arranged and forced marriage spectrum was critiqued to show how women's experiences do not always fit into this linear spectrum when, for example, women have more than one relationship. Women's experiences when forming an intimate relationship merges with that of the Continuum of Violence. Women negotiated through the prism of these past experiences to form the intimate relationships. The next section focuses on how women negotiated leaving or remaining within the violent intimate relationship.

5.4 "Should I stay, or should I go?" – Ending the Relationship of Choice

Women's experiences of power, choice, and agency at the intersection of multiple social axes of oppression constrained them to the extent where they felt they had little or no agency. Furthermore, women lacked tools to affect their agency. Actors of power exploited those structures of power to affect women's choice and agency. Women's agency was influenced by past experiences. The power they experienced was within cultural constraints which in turn affected their decisions about forming intimate relationships. Women challenged the power or escaped the constraints of the patriarchal

power they were experiencing to form intimate relationships and thus transgressed cultural norms. They then experienced domestic violence within those relationships and for some, their experiences of forming the intimate relationship collided with their experiences within the Continuum of Violence where families as well as intimate partners were violent and oppressive towards them at the same time. I now turn to explore women's decisions to leave the violent relationship.

On experiencing domestic violence from the intimate partner, the consequences of women's decisions became even more apparent to them, especially when their families had not been supportive of their choices of intimate partner.

> I certainly was erm, almost afraid of a second rejection if that makes sense in that was I going to be told "Well, you know, you're the one who made that decision? You're the one who erm, decided it" or whatever and I certainly missed being able to share what was going on, but I didn't feel that I could for fear of being told "well, no it was your decision" or whatever … so, part of me thought "No I've got to stick it out and prove that I was right" or I won't be able to deal with erm, almost that, that personal shame of I went through all of that, did that, put my family through that and now I end up with this. – Harjit

> Oh, it's like my fault because I chose him and I wanted to be with him and cos of him I've been disowned and I thought I can't, I have to make it work so it's like that saying that they say, "you make your own bed, you lie in it" (laughs). So that's what I tried to do but it — the situation got way out of hand. – Jazmin

Both Harjit and Jazmin were afraid to leave because they themselves had made the decision and also feared the consequences of their decisions, which led them to remain in the abusive relationship longer due to fear of ostracism, shame, and stigma within the community (Thiara 2013: 116). In contrast to Harjit's and Jazmin's families, Nirvair's and Renaisha's parents and siblings, although with some reservation, had supported their decision to marry their partners. In Renaisha's case, her husband left her at the altar, just after the marriage ceremony had taken place on their wedding day.

> … my parents didn't know for seventeen years but when they realised they were extremely supportive. "No, you don't deserve a life like this. You need to leave … This is not a marriage. This is not what marriage is." …. Amazingly, (starts crying) I think that was the first thing I was I expecting to hear from my mum and dad that "we had told you" and I was shocked and to this day they have never mentioned it. – Renaisha

> I think choosing my own partner … made me feel like I had a responsibility to make that marriage work … I think if he didn't physically abuse me, I think I would have stuck it out … I tolerated it cos I just thought "You know you made the decision to be here" … and I think that influenced a lot of my poorly judged decisions at the time (laughs) … It was me who went to them and said "I want to

> marry him". It wasn't them saying "You have to marry him" and I think for me personally it did. It was quite a big influence on everything. – Nirvair

Women linked their exit from the violent relationship to the social constraints they experienced when the relationship was formed.

> I think it was actually one of the hardest things was to tell my mother what had been happening because I had, I'd chosen him in that I've been with him hadn't I? So, it felt like, you know, it was a terrible mistake that I had made. So, I think I didn't — at the time I don't think I thought I'd been coerced in any way. I think, I thought I think, I took it as well I chose him. Well you know I did and I didn't but I did. Erm, though, yes, it made it much, much worse, I think because you know it had been my decision and I and I realised that I had made a terrible mistake … And then your relationship has to be that good [holds out her arms]. That big a price. – Samia

Honour permeates not only women's actions but also their beliefs, which act like chains. All the women stayed in their relationships longer to try and convince themselves and show their families that their transgressions of the social norms of marriage to form the intimate relationship were correct. Experiences of fearing a second rejection, staying in the relationship longer, mother's experience of verbal abuse from family and fearing judgement by the community and service providers, all point to honour. In Chapter 2 I explored how marriage choice can be considered a transgression of cultural norms which brings dishonour and shame on the family (Sen 2005). The women not only defied these patriarchal codes of behaviour, but the breakdown of the relationships seem to prove that their transgressions were flawed, and so the domestic violence appeared justified because of their violation of social constraints. These notions are tools of patriarchal power which legitimises domestic violence against women (Siddiqui 2013). The belief systems are so entrenched that the women, despite being victims, punish and blame themselves (Kelly 1988). These powerful notions are also at play at the point of leaving a relationship, whether abusive or not, to ensure respectability in the community (Siddiqui 2013) which can lead to being ostracised from the family (Bano 2010).

Regardless of whether the parents were supportive of the relationship or not, women endured the violent relationships to try and make them work because they had defied social norms at the point of forming the intimate relationship and now would be again transgressing norms by leaving the relationship. They are women "who stand outside the circle of this society's definition of acceptable women" (Lorde 1996: 159). Feminists have documented how South Asian women who have had arranged marriages or have been forced into marriage tend to stay in abusive relationships longer due to racism and cultural barriers (Thiara 2005). The women in this study had made choices in forming

intimate relationships but not necessarily as “free” agents, as their choices were very much constrained. The intersections of oppressive axes are gender, age and culture where tools of patriarchy, honour, and shame pressurise women to remain in the relationships. These factors demonstrate the context of women’s decision-making in leaving their abusive relationships.

Chapter 4 explored how Black Feminist scholars have highlighted how the power relations within the family, including parents, siblings, and extended family members, and community pressure can leave women vulnerable to the point where they, in effect, have no power as agentic subjects (Wilson 2006, Anitha and Gill 2009). Thus Samia’s phrase “I did and I didn’t but I did” reflected the multiple, complex ,and contradictory layers of her agency and her negotiation of cultural norms (Anitha and Gill 2009). The contradiction was to be in a relationship with him but at the same time she recognised that she had no choice and was “coerced in anyway” by her extended family members and his parents (Anitha and Gill 2009). There is no equal relationship between “I did“ and “I didn’t” because “I did” denotes individual autonomous decision and “I didn’t” denotes decision-making through pressure and control from family members. “I did” can represent the forming of the intimate relationship and “I didn’t” represents how forming the intimate relationship collided with the Continuum of Violence. Samia’s agency had put her both inside and outside culturally expected norms; marrying him was residing within the culture and at the same time, by dating him and being seen publicly, she was transgressing the cultural norms. Samia’s experiences illustrate the problematic nature of how choice is positioned within the spectrum of arranged/forced marriage because the situation where women have dated men and then been coerced into marrying them does not sit easily within the spectrum.

As in Chapter 4, which explored mothers’ and daughters’ experiences of power relations and domestic abuse within the family, mothers are responsible for their daughters’ transgressions in the eyes of the community (Bhopal 2011). This extension into the public sphere was reflected in whether the women felt they could access services or not; as Sara openly referred to a feeling of being judged.

> Sara: I know of the Southall Black Sisters, I know of other organisations I could probably go to. Even now the thought of doing it -- I don’t, I would recommend it to other women. I don’t know if I would do it myself.
>
> Interviewer: Why’s that?
>
> Sara: I think I’m afraid I’m gonna be judged. (pause) and I know I need to do it; I know I need to.

Women's transgressions of social norms meant that they feared shame from the family and the community. This fear extended into the public sphere, where they feared negative judgements by service providers. The control and power extends into the public sphere and so the Continuum of Violence also extends into the public sphere. Women feared shame both within the family and external to it. The women may have agency and may have broken social norms but they were still shackled in the beliefs of codes of honour and were punished (Chakravarti 2005, Coomaraswamy 2005, Siddiqui 2005) and punished themselves. Their punishment was to stay in the relationship longer. They felt they did not deserve the support of their families nor support services. Women were resisting social norms and were beholden to them at the same time (Mahmood 2005).

The women were resilient in surviving the everyday realities of domestic violence from their intimate partner together with self-pressure to remain within the relationship. They resisted intimate partner domestic violence by leaving the relationship, which led to further isolation and abuse from their parents, siblings, and extended family as well as the intimate partner. This illustrates how agency can relate to different relationships and at different times, which can seem contradictory in nature. Leaving one oppressive relationship can lead to further subjugation from another oppressive relationship. It also highlights the context of women's survival and negotiation of their agency within and in relation to violent relationships (Patel, P. 2003b).

As explored in Chapter 4, where intimate partners exploited their partner's isolation from their families, the same situation with regards to women's agency is considered. Sara recognised the exploitation:

> I think he realised that he could get away with a lot more because I had no family, I had no support network. I had no no-one around. I would do everything to make that relationship work because I left everything for my family … I probably put up with a lot more than I would have if I had that support … he thought that I'd never, no matter what he did, I wouldn't move away from that relationship cos he could see how hard I was working to hold onto something that I had. That's all I had. That's all I knew. - Sara

She went on to describe her partner's emotional abuse:

> … saying that "Your family didn't care about you. They didn't support you." Basically, I had to put up with whatever was thrown at me …It was my choice, I did this. I chose to be with him and now I'm in this situation. I have to put up with it. I have to try and make it work. – Sara

South Asian women can experience both familial violence and intimate partner violence at the same time. This builds on Kelly's (1988) work on the Continuum of Violence, in

which women can experience many different forms of violence, including coercion and abuse. The prevalence of violence can be seen in the domestic violence perpetrated by Sara's intimate partner and the isolation and ostracism from her family. Sara was experiencing these parallel streams of violence concurrently. Again, agency does not comprise singular, discrete, time-bounded actions. There are parallel acts which can be opposing and contradictory. Sara's agency of being with her partner in an intimate relationship against her parents' wishes put her in the powerful see-saw position at the bottom. Her subordination to her partner's emotional abuse occurring at the same time as her resistance to her parents put her in the elevated position, with her partner in the powerful position at the bottom of the see-saw. Her agency was underpinned by the manifestations of patriarchal power, because the act of having a boyfriend can bring dishonour to the family (Sen 2005). He was powerful because of the axes of oppression working together: a young Muslim woman, defying cultural codes of honour and shame by living with a Black Caribbean man, and with few financial resources. These were the weights that keep him at the bottom of the see-saw. Furthermore, his exploitation of her was a consequence of her resistive agency to her parents and her desire to make the relationship work. Her agency in the resilience to stay in the relationship as well as her resistance to her family, both at the same time must be acknowledged. Furthermore, the see-saw of power was working in parallel to her agency. The coercive forces that Sara experienced reflected the complexity of her agency (Anitha and Gill 2009).

The women's responses suggest that, because they had chosen their partner, this was a huge factor in influencing them to decide to continue with the violent relationship. Women referred to having to "prove" to their families they had made the right decision and were capable of making the right decision and thus enduring the abusive relationship for longer. This demonstrates that their agency in choosing the partner becomes the constraining factor that made it difficult for them to leave the abusive relationship. This is a paradox, their agency in forming the intimate relationship became the very barrier to exercising agency to leave the violent relationship. This barrier would not have been there if the if women had had an arranged marriage which would have been seen as a collaborative decision and so responsibilities would have been shared between the woman and her family if the relationship faltered. Gill and Harvey (2017: 85) support this view. They refer to a respondent who stressed the importance of familial support if an arranged marriage runs into difficulties. Furthermore, in her study of South Asian Muslim women negotiating marriage and their identities, Mohee (2011) found that some women did not choose their own partners because they could not then blame their parents if

those marriages did not work out. In contrast, the women in this study did not have this safety net because their intimate relationships were not a collaborative enterprise. The connection between family support and arranged marriage shows how the barrier to leaving the violent relationship comes about.

Women stayed in relationships longer because of this barrier, regardless of whether their families were supportive or not. Cultural notions of honour and shame together with gender, age, and income influenced women's agency and experiences of power. Women's agency can be complex and multi-layered in that they can resist and be subordinate to social norms at the same time, by resisting family violence and being subordinate to intimate partner violence. Furthermore, it emerged that partners exploited women's vulnerability and isolation from their immediate family. Their agency in forming the relationship can result in isolation from the family and so they become more susceptible to vulnerability to the partner. Some women also reflected on whether their original decision was an autonomous decision or whether they were coerced. This is further explored in the following section, which explores how women reflected on their choices.

5.5 Women's Reflections on Choice and Agency

Section 5.4 explored the complex layers of choice, agency, and negotiation of cultural norms of marriage within the experiences of South Asian women. The intersections of multiple axes show how women's agency is influenced by power in forming and leaving abusive intimate relationships. This section examines women's responses to the choices they made and their reflections over time. It explores how they made sense of "choice" and how they situated "choice" when forming intimate relationships and leaving them.

The women had different experiences of forming intimate relationships.

> the networking or suggesting of partners whatever (slight chuckle) erm, it didn't work; nobody suitable, appropriate materialised and then I decided … that maybe I need to take a more proactive role in managing my own destiny … But I also knew as well that I had to take things into my own hands to a certain extent because of my age group. I knew that err there was not erm, an abundance (chuckles) of err erm, appropriate men in my age group. So, I almost reached the stage where I honestly felt that erm, we'd exhausted that pool of, of men who were err eligible. – Harjit

Harjit was pragmatic. She believed that her age was a barrier to finding a partner through the arranged marriage process and so she decided to be "proactive". Hegemonic notions of marriage dictate that wives should have been unmarried before, and be younger than

the men. As she gets older there are fewer men available as partners through the arranged marriage process. All these show the intersections of age, gender, and culture at work. She negotiated the arranged marriage process by transitioning from working within her cultural norm, which she believed had come to the end of its purposeful life, to a situation in which she herself managed her own "destiny" (Pande 2014, Bhopal 2011). This represents a demarcation in both her decision-making and also in adopting a different approach to finding a partner. For others, the process was more fluid.

Preethi grew up in India. She described her response to seeing her partner for the first time in an arranged marriage situation:

> … I'm not happy with him but my parents told (me) "He's new person for you, that's why you're feeling like that. Slowly, slowly you'll get used to him. He'll get used to you. It's err, new person, that's why you're feeling uncom— uncomfortable" this and that, they convinced me and they married me. – Preethi

Preethi felt she had a choice and her narrative indicates that she was persuaded by her parents. Choice can be contextual in relation to the culture one lives in (Chantler 2014). I argue that Preethi's view arises from her experiences of growing up and living in India, which does not necessarily conform to Western notions of choice. The following exchange in the group interview between Zinaat (who was born and brought up in the UK) and Preethi further explores my argument.

> Preethi: My mum gave me freedom. She asked me "Do you have anybody in your heart?" "No." Then she told "Okay, then do this marriage; settle in life." My mum is so friendly towards us.
>
> Zinaat: But not every mum would do that; to ask if you've got anyone in your mind that you wanna get married to cos not — certain parents won't do that. It's quite different.

Zinaat pointed out that it was a good thing that Preethi's mother asked her. The important point is Preethi's view and sense of choice. She did not date her partner, as this is not within prescribed cultural norms (Sen 2005). It can be argued that it is not up to her mother to "give" her freedom; Preethi's freedom is encapsulated in the question posed by her mother asking if she had a boyfriend. The ultimate power base lies with her mother (Wilson 2006) but Preethi's own sense of choice, freedom, and agency lie within the cultural and social context of her experiences of forming an intimate relationship, and may not conform to Western notions of agency associated with autonomous freedom (Mahmood 2005). Preethi negotiated and reasoned to gain her mother's support (Anitha and Gill 2009). The constraints she faced were expressed as "my mum gave me freedom".

Women's socialisation denies them having autonomy over these choices. As Preethi was not in a relationship then her choice was to marry this man. Other women also described their experiences of choice and forming an intimate relationship:

> It was all mixed because you know what, you had a choice because you know what, this arranged marriage and forced marriage, okay? With force you got no choice. With arranged marriage you get the choice but still there's family pressure. You see there's a difference there but it leads to one thing … if you see what I mean, if I'm explaining it properly? - Krishna

Krishna described a process that is more fluid. She acknowledged the influence of her extended family, at the same time as she was making her own choice of partner. What is interesting to note is how Krishna presents choice within the arranged marriage process she was going through and at the same time acknowledging the pressure from family members. This represents a blurring of boundaries between forming an intimate relationship within the arranged marriage process, and pressure and coercion from her family. Harjit was involved in the arranged marriage process and then stepped outside of it to form a relationship of choice. This shows blurring of boundaries within the arranged marriage process and movement along the spectrum. Harjit moved along and then stepped outside of it whilst Krishna moved along the spectrum from arranged marriage as choice to pressure from her family (Siddiqui 2003a). This demonstrates not all women follow this linear flow from autonomous choice to arranged marriage to forced marriage. There are many variations which represent the different manifestations of women's experiences and varying degrees of agency (Anitha and Gill 2011).

As well as pressure from parents and other members of the extended family, some respondents described pressure from their siblings, who themselves had given in to the pressure from their parents to marry.

> It was your (the siblings) choice. It's not my choice. I, I want to have a choice. You were happy to go along with that, you know, but that's not for me. Not all of us are the same … I accept my culture side of things but I want the freedom to be myself as well and a part of that is growing up here as well and a part of that is the Western culture; that's part of me as well because that's what I'm around. Why should I have my decisions made for me and such an important decision of who you get married is big, big decision in life. – Sara

Sara identified as belonging to her culture but she felt "freedom" was not part of it. She saw culture, freedom, and growing up in a Western culture as fluid and "part of me". Black Feminists have pointed out how children can be influenced by the Western culture they live in and also the culture of their parents' upbringing (Gill and Brah 2014). This is a theme that is addressed in more detail in Chapter 6. Samia also reflected on choice:

> … the choice was “you stop seeing each other right now” but actually they were horrified with that choice because we’d been seen and it would have been a terrible scandal for us not to get married. There really wasn’t a choice. It was “get married” and I could have said no at that point but my mother didn’t want me to say no … so it was like I could have said no but actually I couldn’t have said no. – Samia

Samia and her partner were dating and their families were unaware of this. They were seen by a member of the community and both sets of families met to discuss what should be done. Samia identified the option to end the relationship was framed as a choice. However, they had been dating and this breached cultural norms. The narrative of choice is framed as an option, but this hides the complexities of the influences that affect choice. There was pressure from Samia’s mother to marry her partner. There was similar pressure from his family and the community. There were pressures to conform to cultural norms by marrying the person she had been dating so there was no “scandal”; in other words, to prevent bringing shame on the family (Siddiqui 2013, Sen 2005). Both Sara and Samia recognised the pressures from various members of family and community. Women’s agency is complex because the pressures women feel they are under influence their actions and decisions (Wilson 2006, Anitha and Gill 2009).

> I don’t think mine was forced. I don’t think it was arranged but it was, it was absolutely coerced … as I say, if I had carried on, if we’d just been left to ourselves, after about a couple of weeks I think I would have realised he was completely, like, not suitable for me. - Samia

Samia recognised that coercion played a part in how her marriage was formed (Anitha and Gill 2009). Earlier she had said she “fancied” she was in love with him at that time and on reflection she believes that coercive control was at the heart of her “choosing” to marry her partner. Coercive control works in unison with power (Stark 2007), reducing a woman’s ability to exercise agency in her choice of partner. Coercive control builds on the socialisation of girls and women and their lack of tools to exercise autonomous behaviour prior to forming a relationship. There was an expectation, seen through the intersection of gender, age, income, and culture that enforced the coercion of Samia to marry. This narrative shows that the spectrum of arranged marriage and forced marriage does not necessarily apply. In the current understanding of forced marriage, the parents identify the partner, hence the use of the term “arranged/forced marriage”. In this case Samia had identified this person to date, and so her experiences of coercion did not follow the understanding of the arranged / forced marriage spectrum, even though it is still an example of domestic violence. Domestic violence is gendered by cultural and religious practices (Siddiqui 2013) which expose women to the subtleties of pressure

and coercion. It is these elements of power that take the women on the trajectory of choosing their own partners. For example, Sara was coerced into a forced marriage by her parents, with additional pressure from her siblings to conform and agree to the marriage. However, she ended the forced marriage, left home, and lived with her chosen intimate partner. Coercive control amongst siblings is an area for further research because there is little attention paid to how power relations work in families in the context of forced marriage and honour based violence, especially situations where some siblings may have been coerced whilst others may not have submitted to such pressure.

The women expressed multiple attitudes and responses to forming intimate relationships, including arranged marriages. They adopted multiple strategies to get married. For example choosing arranged marriage was seen as the first option to exhaust. When that did not work out another route was adopted, a move to a more autonomous decision. Discrete steps or options to get married are identifiable. However in other cases there is a lack of demarcation and such distinctions are not easily made. Marriage and family pressure are conflated. This illustrates how the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage is not a linear process within the experiences of this cohort of women. It demonstrates how women take different routes into forming an intimate relationship. It also demonstrates that their experiences of forming an intimate relationship can fuse into events of violence and their experiences exist along a Continuum of Violence where they are pressured into marriage, in effect having no choice. In addition, women highlighted their own autonomous choices and the choices and pressures brought to bear by family members, including siblings who have made a choice which differs from that of the participant. Furthermore, women reflected on their understanding of choice in later years when they experienced coercion, and so in effect their marriage consisted of experiences of resilience in staying in the relationship. I argue that choice in this context was a resistance to family pressure. By staying with their chosen partner despite breaking social norms, shows the consequences they faced.

5.6 Choice and Agency – Making Connections

The women's experiences demonstrate the complex and contradictory nature of choice and agency. Often this complexity revealed how women were both subordinate and resistant at the same time, reinforcing Black Feminism's criticism, as discussed earlier, of South Asian women being seen wholly as victims (Mirza 1997b). Intersectionality is grounded in multiple axes of oppression that women can experience (Collins and Bilge 2016), and I have shown how South Asian women's choice in forming intimate

relationships is situated in the context of their lived realities and within the social categories of gender, religion, income, culture, and age. For example, women reproduced notions of hegemonic masculinity when forming intimate relationships with men of the same religion and culture. It follows that to give a voice to the women and understand their experiences of agency it is important to analyse their experiences at the intersection of these sites of oppression (Anitha and Gill 2009). The complex and subtle forces at work hindered women's ability to distinguish if their choice was truly autonomous (Wilson 2006), and also to see how the very structures of power and their gendered socialisation acted as barriers to their agency in leaving their cultural domains and their intimate relationships (Okin 2002). Analysis of intersecting sites provides a deeper understanding of women's experiences of power and builds on the understanding of how a woman can hold and sustain power.

This builds on Black Feminism's critique of the complexity of marriage situated within social norms (hooks 2000). Women spoke about the contrast between their lives at home with siblings and parents and their experiences with their partners. Women who were grieving found solace and attention in their partners. Women who experienced domestic violence from their parents also felt their partners gave them loving attention and shared similar aspirational goals. Experiences of sexual abuse played a huge part in the decision-making for the intimate relationship. Pressures brought to bear by family and the community to marry the partner showed how the women's decisions were not wholly of their own making. Pressures from parents and extended family influenced some women's reasons for rejecting previous partners due to caste and conflict within the extended family, and paved the way for their comparisons with the current partner who was more "suitable" than the previous partner. These behavioural traits are rooted in beliefs of honour and shame, which punish women who deviate from customs and traditions that represent tropes of patriarchy, in effect to control women's sexuality as "policed bodies" (Sen 2005).

Such rooted beliefs were present when women wished to leave violent relationships. Women feared a "second rejection" from their families and so endured the abusive relationships for longer. They had transgressed and resisted social norms by forming the intimate relationship, staying within the relationship and then transgressed and resisted them on a further occasion when leaving the violent relationship. The women's concerns shifted from their families' responses, to safety for themselves and their children. This shows how women's agency is fluid and complex and at times

contradictory. Whilst enduring the violent relationship, and at times where the partner exploited the fact that Sara was isolated from her parents and siblings, she continued to resist her immediate family whilst staying within the relationship. The see-saw of power shows her resisting her family and at the same time subordinate in the intimate relationship: an expression of resilience. An interesting finding is that women's decisions to stay in the abusive intimate relationship longer did not hinge on whether their families had been supportive or not of their decisions to marry the partner. The criticality of the decision hinged on the fact that the women felt that they alone were responsible because the decision had been their choice - a sense of self blame (Kelly 1988). Furthermore, women recognised the complexity around their decision-making where contradictions existed at the same time, reflected in "I did, and I didn't, but I did". I argue that the complex and contradictory nature of choice reflects the dominant discourse of gender and honour. The socialisation of codes of conduct on marriage, on being dutiful daughters, and on being dutiful wives are manifestations of honour and a violation of the women's human rights (Welchman and Hossain 2005). These are the codes that women live their lives by and are expected to uphold. Their life experiences are through the intersections of being women, of being young, of having no financial resources, and within cultural constraints. Women's agency of choice is very much situated within the context of their lives, reflected in the social and cultural constraints they face.

Women's reflections on their decisions point to a multiplicity of experiences of choice and agency with respect to marriage. Women saw the arranged marriage as a separate discrete step from other forms of marriage or relationship formation. Other women found the process to be more fluid and recounted their own choice as well as family pressure, illustrating how the spectrum of arranged/forced marriage is problematic as it does not reflect the realities of women's lived experiences. Family pressure, including that of siblings, was resisted and there was an acknowledgement that siblings' choices and reasons for their choice differed greatly from that of the participant, but her choices were not respected.

Women also questioned whether they had had a choice at all, and in other ways choice and agency could not materialise because women were not equipped with the tools to exercise choice in forming an intimate relationship despite their father's responses to the contrary. Okin's (2002) argument that socialisation and structural power act as barriers to women making choices on how they wish to lead their lives, demonstrates the complexity of choice and agency. Patriarchal structures facilitated the employment of

fear-inducing and intense strategies such as giving the women conflicting messages, subtle coercive family pressures, committing acts of family violence, leading women to escape the family home. Such acts of oppression are intended to prevent women from having “real” autonomous choices to influence their agency in choosing an intimate partner.

5.7 Conclusions

Power restricts women’s autonomous decisions of choice. In Chapter 4, I described how the power relations affect women’s lives and relationships. I have demonstrated how power limits or removes choice for the preservation of patriarchal norms. Such norms work through honour, that is the honour of the family which is carried out by “policing female behaviour and sexuality” (Coomaraswamy 2005: xi).

Black Feminist Standpoint argues that women’s knowledge is rooted in their experiences within the environmental and historical context of their lives (hooks 2000). Furthermore, their lived realities reveal how their gender, religion, income, culture, and age intersect to work together, building on each other to oppress the women, but also to lay the foundation for oppression to affect their decision-making when forming an intimate relationship. Intersectionality has proved useful to understand not only the women’s experiences but also the *context* of those experiences in relation to choice and agency amidst multiple axes of oppression (Collins and Bilge 2016). This chapter builds on intersectional scholarship by analysing South Asian women’s specific experiences of intimate relationships as not just gendered but also intersecting at other axes of oppression. Analysis of Krishna’s oppression by gender, age, poverty and culture via patriarchal codes of honour and shame showed the roots of her vulnerability and hence her rejection of prospective partners. Kiran’s experiences of power at the same intersections show how she was ostracised by her family, which led to the series of events towards forming a relationship with a violent partner. Women’s experiences show that decisions made in adulthood were not made in isolation from the gendered socialisation and subjugation experienced in earlier life. Early life experiences of oppression within social constraints produces a vulnerability in women which influences their decisions in later life.

South Asian women’s specific experiences of types of domestic abuse, including forced marriage and honour based violence, have been well documented within Black Feminism (Gill 2004, Thiara and Gill 2010a, Patel and Siddiqui 2010, Siddiqui 2003a, 2013). This

thesis builds on the Continuum of Violence (Kelly 1988) and Black Feminism's critique in relation to the different forms of domestic violence that South Asian women experience (Siddiqui 2013). South Asian women's daily, routine experiences of abuse and violence highlight the routine of experiences of abuse from family and from the intimate partner, and how the Continuum of Violence can act in parallels in which women can experience violence from the family and the partner at the same time. This reflects the experiences of forming an intimate relationship colliding with that of the Continuum of Violence: the two become blurred. So it became difficult for the women to distinguish between their experiences of an intimate relationship and their experiences of violence both within the intimate relationship and from family members, where the two become one and the same thing.

The complexities of choice and agency are highlighted within the multi-layered experiences and responses from the participants as agentic subjects. What is seen here is a paradox; the women's agency in forming the relationship becomes the very barrier to them exercising agency to leave the relationship. Choosing a partner becomes the "wrong method" for forming an intimate relationship. Women changed their decision from originally believing that they had to remain in the relationship to putting their own and their children's safety first. Their resistive agency to their families in forming the relationship is repeated as resistive agency against the abuse from the partner. Black British Feminism has challenged "normative discourse" (Mirza 1997b: 5) and so uncovered South Asian women's specific experiences of marriage and intimate relationships. Some women felt that choice and arranged marriage were fluid, while for others the contrast was more marked. There is a fluidity to women's choice when forming a relationship. Furthermore, agency was not a dichotomous subordination versus subversion but often women's actions were both, and opposing when experiencing domestic abuse from both the parents and the intimate partner.

This fluidity of experiences leads to the argument that the arranged / forced marriage spectrum as critiqued within Black Feminism is problematic as it does not fit women's lived experiences. For some women there was no concept of choice within the arranged marriage. For others who dated their partners, they were coerced into forced marriages with them. Others still experienced forced marriages and their subsequent relationships were relationships of choice. These examples demonstrate how South Asian women's experiences did not follow the spectrum of choice and consent, in conjunction with parents, at one end and forced marriage at the other end. I argue for the decoupling of

arranged marriage from forced marriage to reflect the multiplicity of women's experiences. This would also give visibility to South Asian women's experiences of not only a single intimate relationship but also their experiences of having more than one relationship. This leads to a further contribution to knowledge of women's experiences after family violence. This thesis builds on scholarship which examines women's experiences after exiting a violent intimate relationship. Women's experiences give visibility to their lives after leaving family violence and intimate partner violence.

The women's experiences of forming relationships laid bare the intersections of their age, gender, culture, citizenship, and caste. These social relations work together to influence power and control over women's lives and agency. Consideration of the intersections has shown how women's agency can be complex, multi-layered, and contradictory. Having established a "timeline" of experiences expressed in the women's narratives from childhood to adulthood, ranging from socialisation into socially-sanctioned gendered norms of behaviour to choice and agency in forming and leaving intimate partner relationships. Chapter 6 continues with this timeline to explore, via three case studies, how women reflected on their experiences of forming intimate relationships, domestic violence and their aspirations for their futures.

Chapter 6 Through the Looking Glass: Resistance, Resilience and Identity

"we are here because you are there" (Sivanandan 2005: 3)

6.1 Introduction

Sivanandan's (2005: 3) quote refers to how racism is bounded and locked to globalisation and imperialism and to how people's lives are affected by the interlocking of forces of oppression. This analogy applies to the women in this study; their reflections and their situation today, because of the violence they experienced from intimate partners and sometimes from their families too. The Black Feminist epistemological stance is to give voice to reflect the authenticity of South Asian women's experiences (Gill 2004, Collins 1990). A central tenet of Black Feminism is to place women's experiences within the social and historical contexts of their lives and to give voice to and evaluate South Asian women's own narratives (Mirza and Gunaratnam 2014, Mirza 1997b, Collins 1990, hooks 2000). Intersectionality, as an analytical tool, explores and aids the understanding of how multiple social axes intersect in women's lives, shedding light on how women make sense of their past experiences.

Chapters 4 and 5 demonstrated how the linear specificity of the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage is problematic for women whose experiences do not follow the linear trajectory. The see-saw of power has been an effective way of demonstrating how women experienced power in different ways from their families and intimate partners simultaneously and how this could change over time. Women resisted and were subordinate to the power of different perpetrators at the same time. The power extended to women and their mothers, who both experienced domestic violence at the same time, often from the same perpetrator, and from someone who had assumed the patriarchal role in the family in the absence of the participant's father. Women's experiences of forming an intimate relationship were overshadowed by their simultaneous experiences of domestic violence. Thus the experiences of forming an intimate relationship merged with the Continuum of Violence, in which women experienced violence on a daily basis, from multiple perpetrators, which overshadowed their experiences of forming an intimate relationship. Women were socialised both overtly and in subtle ways into the social norms of marriage. Women's agency in transgressing these norms has been shown to be complex and fluid. Women's experiences are affected by the social constraints of their

lives and the intersections of the multiple social locations they occupy that work together to oppress them to such an extent that agency in forming an intimate relationship can be the very barrier that prevents the women from leaving their violent relationship.

The sum of these findings are best captured through the case studies of three women participants. Chapter 3 described how case studies can provide a deeper exploration of the social and cultural context that is relevant to this research, namely of South Asian women's transgressions of social norms of marriage and choosing their partners and their experiences of subsequent domestic violence (Yin 2018). To this end, three participants were chosen as case studies: Anita, Sara, and Krishna. They were chosen as case studies because their individual histories were rich with personal experiences which provided a unique perspective on the themes raised so far. All three women had had multiple relationships that were violent. This captured an important theme when considering the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage. Furthermore, their responses to their faith at the intersection of their gender were significant and warranted further exploration. That said, their accounts are representative of many women participants' responses and there are many similarities across all three of the case studies in response to religion, culture, and community from their disparate lived experiences. Their differing responses to the domestic violence they experienced from family and from their partners are highlighted, with discussion on similar responses and in-depth understanding of the similarities and differences.

The chapter is structured through the case studies of each of the women and detailed separately in the following order, Anita, Sara and Krishna. Their background is described first. This is followed by a diagram of their timeline, which shows key events in their lives within the scope of this research. This will provide the context for their narratives and the themes emerging from those narratives.

Other women participants' narratives are reserved for commentary and reflection in the final section, Echoes of Experiences. By weaving in other participants' accounts from their narratives, with the three case studies, a deeper insight is gained into the themes derived from the case studies which reflect on what agency and power mean in their specific life experiences.

6.2 Anita

Anita is a 31-year-old woman. She is of Pakistani heritage and born into the Muslim religion. She now describes herself as "Anti-theist". She was born in the UK. She is the

eldest sibling, with two brothers and one sister. She has a professional job and works in the voluntary sector. As a child, she was betrothed to her cousin (her uncle's son on her father's side) in Pakistan. At the age of fifteen her family discovered she was in a relationship with an 18-year-old white male and she was subsequently taken to Pakistan to be married. However, proposals were not forthcoming because the community became aware that she had been in a relationship. At the age of nineteen her grandparents arranged for her to be engaged to a man in Pakistan. She broke off the engagement after six months. She continued with her education. She then became involved in an abusive relationship with a white British male, which lasted for five years. He abused her emotionally and financially. She made many attempts to break off the relationship, but he kept on returning. She did eventually end the relationship. She is currently in a relationship with a white British male. She is in touch with her family but does not see them very often. Figure 6-1 shows the timeline of significant events in Anita's life within the scope of this research.

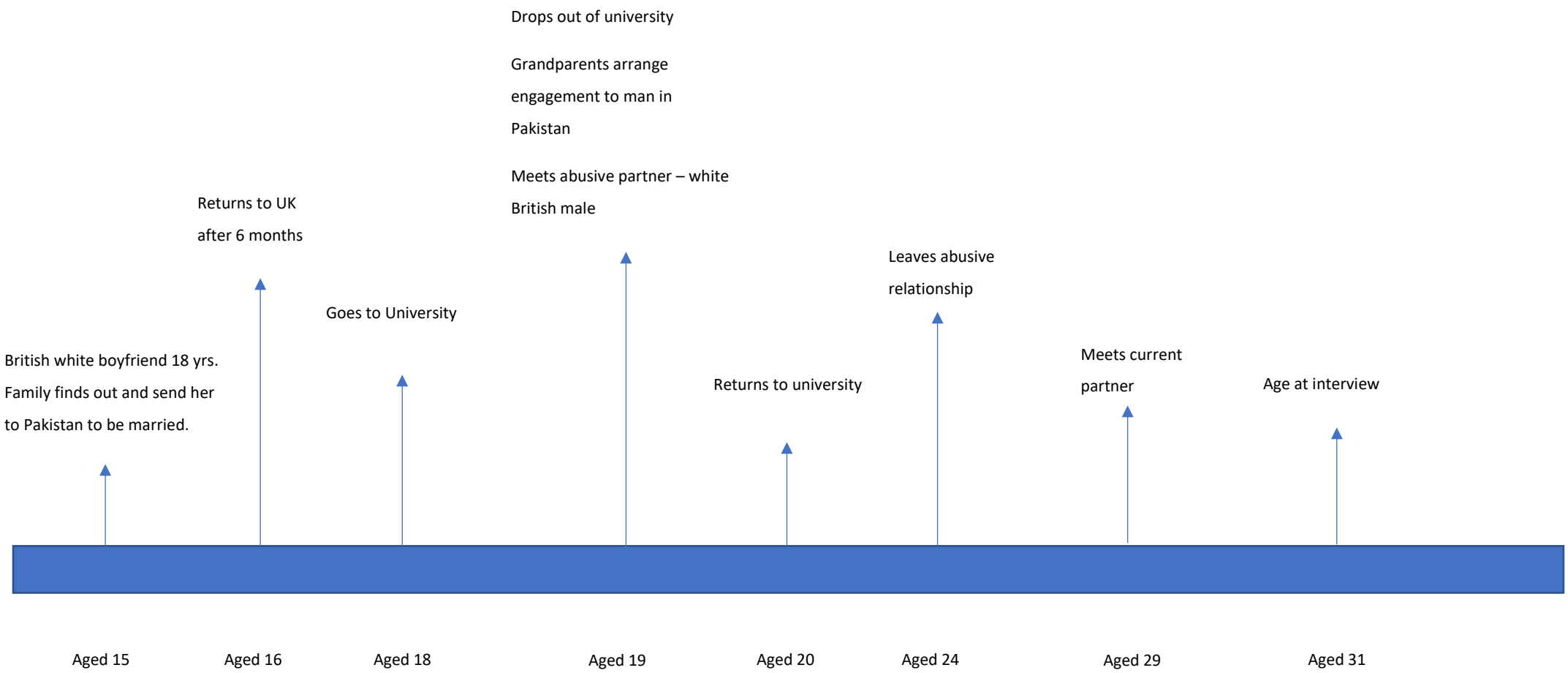

Figure 6-1: Anita's Timeline

Anita's responses to her experiences, her reflections on her life and its key events, and how it shaped her considerations and decisions for the future are explored. It is therefore important to examine a key event in Anita's earlier life to understand the context of her later decisions and her life today. Anita described an incident during her forced trip to Pakistan at the age of fifteen. One day her uncle approached her holding a double-barrelled gun:

> … he was like "Well, you know, if I wasn't already married to two women I could've married you, couldn't I?" … what the fuck do you do as a fifteen-year-old? ... by then my entire family hated my guts. I wasn't gonna be able to go and tell my dad, "This thug has just approached me with a fucking shotgun to tell me "I could marry you, couldn't I?""; pissing paedophile. Do you know what I mean? My family left me in a really, really vulnerable position. - Anita

Anita felt betrayed by her parents because she felt they did not protect her from such abuse. She was left in a vulnerable position in a land foreign to her. Anita went on to explain the irony of the situation:

> When I look on it few years later, had everybody not found out and thought I was disgusting and used goods and all of the things that were said. - Anita

She experienced verbal abuse from her extended family, threats of physical violence and underage marriage. These intersections of her age, gender, and culture shed light on Anita's isolation and vulnerability. Anita was a minor at fifteen years of age and did not possess the resources nor means of power to defend herself from her uncle's violence. She was living in a foreign land where her inability to access support and resources to get out of such a situation increased her powerlessness. It is the combination of these sites of oppression that her uncle was able to exploit and express his violence towards her. She was, after all, a girl who had defied cultural codes of honour.

The community and the family knew she had been sent to Pakistan to be married because her family had discovered her relationship with a white adult male. All these axes of oppression aided her uncle's patriarchal power over her and placed her in the elevated position on the see-saw of power, with her uncle, parents and community in Pakistan at the bottom of the see-saw. Such violence towards women (and girls) in the form of codes of honour is justified and inflicted by multiple perpetrators from extended families and the community (Siddiqui 2016). Violence is perpetrated on women "within a framework of patriarchal family and social structures" (Gill and Brah 2014: 73). The community saw her as "bad" because she had transgressed social norms of marriage by forming an intimate relationship outside of marriage with a man who was not from the same ethnic group. This provided the motivation and justification for the community,

specifically her uncle, for their violence (in the form of verbal abuse and rejection) towards Anita. Men uphold honour (Gill and Brah 2014) and women pay the consequences (Meetoo and Mirza 2007). Anita had dishonoured them by defying socially sanctioned norms of gendered behaviour. Anita's experiences of forming an intimate relationship, in the form of being forcibly sent to Pakistan to be married, completely merged with her experiences of everyday violence, the Continuum of Violence, from her uncle, her parents and the local community. Such experiences are fear inducing and intense.

Anita set the social context for her experiences of gender inequality both past and present. A few years later, when she was nineteen, Anita's grandparents arranged her engagement to a man in Pakistan. On her return to the UK from Pakistan, she decided to follow her religion devoutly:

> I'm gonna try and sort myself out for the family and it wasn't very me, like I'm very — I'm not very religious, I'm not very cultural really. So, I, I gave it a good old go. I got very seriously into the religion erm and I read a lot of books about expectations of Muslim women and how to be a good Muslim mum and actually all these things, time and again kept coming up that err, you know, you have to listen to your husband, obey your husband, and have sex with your husband. If he wants to have sex with you. He's allowed to beat you … I wouldn't have been able to argue with him, err, stop having sex with him or beat him if he was being unIslamic but he had all of those rights over me. - Anita

Anita had already faced abuse from her family because of having a relationship at the age of fifteen and so had not observed the cultural norms expected of her. Her reason for immersing herself in her religion was a form of redemption: to be a "good" dutiful daughter. Chapter 5 explored how women subscribe to socially sanctioned codes of "dutiful daughter" (Siddiqui 2005: 263) by observing codes of honour (Chakravarti 2005). This is a form of gendered oppression, in which women believe they must redeem themselves to their families precisely because of the actions they had previously taken which went against gendered expectations. Anita concluded that her understanding of the religious text reflected gender inequality, which she found problematic. Black Feminists have discussed how religion can be used as an axis of oppression against women that compounds their experiences of subjugation through their gender, culture, and ethnicity (Yuval-Davis 2011) especially where culture and religion have been used to defend gender inequality (Patel 1997, 2013, Siddiqui 2013). Instead of following the religion devoutly, the opposite effect occurred for Anita.

Anita broke off the engagement brokered by her grandparents after six months and began what she described as her exit from religion:

> Anita: my, kind of, exit from religion was very violent in a way.
>
> Interviewer: Violent?
>
> Anita: … I don't want anything to do with Muslims, I don't want anything to do with Pakistanis. I definitely don't want anything to do with Brown people which are, all across the board, bastards and … it was very, yeah, I guess violent in that sense. I guess I just, kind of, didn't want anything to do with any -- anyone from the religion, the culture, the same background as me. I just wanted to be able to live my life independently for a while and think myself out. So essentially that was the point where I started from scratch; to learn everything again. Erm and even then, it took a very, very long time until erm I could became stable … I think when you leave something so violently it causes a lot of chaos. — Anita

Anita felt a sense of abjection regarding anything to do with her culture, religion, and community, represented as "Brown people", in effect rejecting how her identity was defined by her experiences (Cowburn, Gill, and Harrison 2015). She found the separation from her religion turbulent and confusing. Feminists have argued that the UK state consults minority communities on faith lines (Wilson 2006) to the extent that the state prioritises religious identity over the rights of women (Patel and Siddiqui 2010, Patel 2013). Anita rejected her religion because she believed, through her interpretation of the texts and her personal gendered experiences, that it subjugated women.

Anita also rejected "Brown people" because of her experiences. The man engaged to Anita was Asian. All her other partners of choice were white; the 18-year-old boyfriend, the partner who was abusive, and her current partner. Domestic abuse experienced at the hands of her family and extended family is the main site of Anita's anger and rejection rather than the abuse from her intimate partner. Given Anita's response to her culture, religion, and community, a critical question emerges: whether there was a link between the shared ethnicity, culture and religion of her Pakistani ex-fiancé, and that of her partners of choice, who did not share the same race, culture, or religion.

During the interview Anita described her process of disagreeing with elements of her religion at the age of fifteen, when her boyfriend at that time was white British and a non-Muslim. This shows a link between her rejection of her culture and religion and the choice of partners of a certain ethnic group. She rejected her ex-fiancé. She rejected her culture and religion. She also rejected her abusive partner, who was white. However, the link between her rejection of her culture and her rejection of her ex-fiancé is striking. Black Feminists have highlighted the internalisation of the hegemony of White supremacy and how culture and Black men can be viewed as inferior amongst ethnic minorities as well as among White people (hooks 2015), a form of internalised oppression (Collins 1990, Collins and Bilge 2016). Phoenix (1997) argues that Black

men can be sexist and Black women can internalise racial oppression towards Black men. Anita viewed the world and her relationships through notions of hegemony purporting to endorse White privilege. Her focus of criticism was aimed at Asian culture, religion, and "brown people", although two of her abusers were white. This suggests that part of her reason for transgressing social norms of marriage was due to Anita's desire to have intimate relationships with white men and not Asian men.

Having explored Anita's relationship to religion and how over time her response to her religion changed, the impetus for her rejection of religion is considered by examining how she contextualised her reflections within social contexts. The following exchange illustrates Anita's view of religion within a social context:

> Interviewer: Have you picked parts of the religion that you —
>
> Anita: Absolutely fucking not. No way … I'm an atheist but also a militant anti-theist. I despise religion.
>
> Interviewer: That's all religions?
>
> Anita: Yeah (laughs). Absolutely
>
> Interviewer: … so there must be something common to all religions that makes you be anti-theist …
>
> Anita: it's the inequality towards women most of the time.

Anita placed the gender inequality that women face in society at the heart of her rejection; in effect the intersection of gender and religion. Black Feminists have critiqued the use of religion to enforce gender inequality (Patel 1997, 2013, Siddiqui 2013). She had rejected not just her religion but all religions due to oppression of women because her experiences of her gender and her religion and her interpretation of the Quran caused her to believe that all religions oppress women. One outcome of Anita's response to her experiences of her religion and culture was to reappraise her response to the religion of her partner.

> Erm, it was only when I got into this relationship with my current partner that I was just like right "So he's not gonna convert because I wouldn't -- I don't practice the religion, erm, and I don't expect him to do something that I don't do. That would be hypocritical. - Anita

Anita did not mention religion and her response to it when she was in the abusive relationship. Neither did she mention her own nor her partner's religion. It is interesting that she brings up religion and the conversion to it in this relationship, which she believes is an equal partnership and not abusive. I have discussed socialisation through gendered messages about forming intimate relationships. I explored knowledge as a

tenet of the power relations that support gender inequality. Anita's agency and interpersonal domain of power, which is how she relates to her partners, (Collins and Bilge 2016) are apparent in her consideration that her partner's conversion to a religion that she does not practice herself is not representative of an equal relationship. Anita's actions do not conform to her socialisation and she is able to transcend the power over knowledge. As well as a reappraisal of her religion, Anita also reappraised her response to culture:

> … cos even if you stop talking to your family, for instance, because you don't agree with them actually you still gonna miss them. So the comfort that I needed, erm around stuff that I grew up with, like, kind of that, that nostalgic sort of nice feeling that you get when you listen to something that you listened to when you grew up with … and it helped kind of staying in touch with my roots as well … I associate more with Indian culture than I do with Pakistani culture because that was what was going on around the house so yeah, I kind of found, the areas that I really do associate with so and my kind of — in terms of culture that I like is Indian culture and Iranian culture which has nothing to do with the stuff -- like the person that I am in terms of my background but it was just stuff that was around when I was younger … - Anita

Anita recognised the reminders of her life growing up, such as music, and how that enabled her to keep in touch with her roots. She had a need to belong, to have some connection with the culture that she grew up with. This contradicts her earlier comments about rejecting all parts of her culture, religion, and anything to do with "Brown people" and starting afresh. Anita described what she valued and what she wanted to retain in her life from her upbringing and culture. In her paper on identity politics and feminist solidarity, Weir contends that there is a need to move away from identity as category with emphasis on recognition of sameness to a "transformative identification" (Weir 2008: 125). Transformative identification is the active participation of making our own identities. It focuses on what is important to us, such as, our values, and our commitments. Collins and Bilge (2016) use the concept of transformative individual identity to reference that which encompasses change and "the transformative possibilities of an individual identity that becomes formed within, and itself shapes, broader social phenomena" (Collins and Bilge 2016: 135). Anita's reappraisal of her culture, music, and taking in "Indian culture and Iranian culture" is a representation of her transformative identity.

Anita's experiences of domestic violence at the hands of her family led her to reject her culture, religion, and all 'Brown' people. Her site of anger was greater towards her family than her intimate partner. I argue she has internalised the hegemony of White

supremacy seen through her sense of abjection of everything to do with her culture, religion, and ‘Brown’ people.

6.3 Sara

Sara is a 36-year-old woman. She is of Pakistani heritage and born into the Muslim religion. She now identifies as having no religion. She was born in the UK. She is one of six siblings with two older brothers, one older sister and two younger sisters. She has an administrative job. She has two children. She started a relationship with a man of Black Caribbean heritage and Christian religion when she was nineteen. At the age of twenty-one, she was taken to Pakistan and forced into a marriage. She broke off her relationship with her Black Caribbean partner before she left for Pakistan, telling him that she thought that she would be married in Pakistan. She returned home three months after the marriage in Pakistan. She took up employment again and her family prepared for her husband's arrival. To meet the financial requirements to sponsor her husband to move into the country, the family arranged for Sara to buy a house, which she owned and paid the mortgage for. Her family wanted her to return to Pakistan so that she would become pregnant and hence cement the marriage. It was then that she left home and contacted the Home Office, via a solicitor, to inform them that she had been forced into the marriage and to prevent a visa being issued to her husband. She experienced emotional and financial abuse from her family. Sara wanted to buy a property in the town she was now living in and needed a deposit. She tried to take equity out of the house she owned but discovered that it had already been sold by her family. She resumed her relationship with her previous partner after leaving her parents' home and he too moved to join her in a different part of the country. They had two children together. She experienced emotional and physical abuse from her partner. They are separated and no longer live together. She is a single parent living with their two children. The children's father has access to the children. She has no contact with her family. Her father passed away recently. Before his death, Sara asked to meet her father but he refused to reconcile. She was not allowed to attend his funeral by her siblings and she did not go as a result.

Figure 6-2 shows the timeline of significant events in Sara's life within the scope of this research.

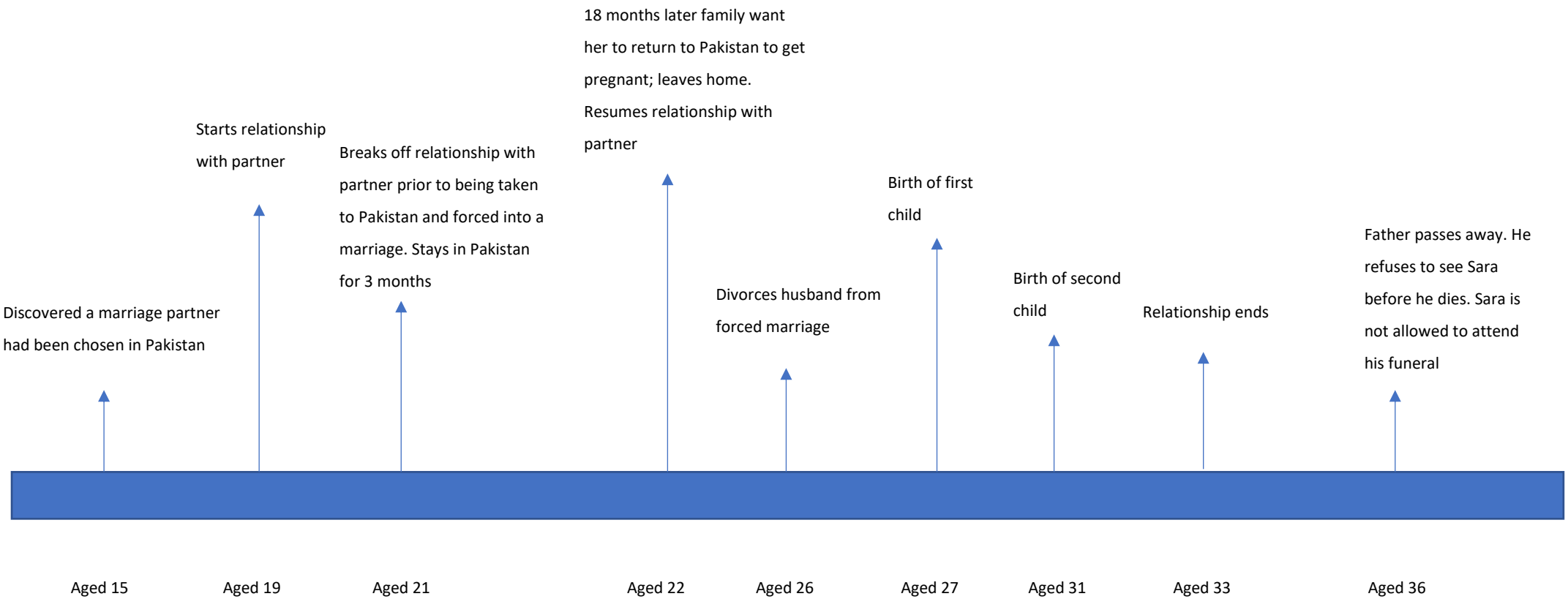

Figure 6-2: Sara's Timeline

Sara reflected on how she felt about her religion and culture after leaving her parents' home due to domestic violence from the family.

> I was originally Muslim and I questioned it because faith was used so many times to oppress me. I found it very hard. When I first left home I would read the Quran and I would try and hold onto those things. I would go into the shops and find things that look similar to Asian stuff. I would go to the Asian shops and buy the halal meat and try and stick — hold on to some of that. - Sara

Sara's experiences of domestic violence from her family, at the intersection of her religion, culture, age and gender caused her to question her faith because she felt it had been used to oppress her. On leaving home, with no support or contact with her family or community, she engaged with the religion by reading the Quran and immersed herself in the culture to retain cultural customs. She wanted to be true to her religion, which she said had been used to oppress her. Sara sought to retain a connection with the life that she knew, despite the gender oppression she experienced. It was important to Sara, in the immediate aftermath of leaving home, to retain a sense of belonging to the culture and to practice the religion that she knew. Sara's statements are contradictory; she identified her religion as Muslim but did not wholly agree with all she knew about it. Her actions - reading the Quran, visiting "Asian" shops, and eating halal meat, suggest that Sara did not reject her culture and religion; in fact she sought solace in it. She was resisting gender oppression of her forced marriage and her parents' violence. Black Feminists argue that gender inequality is the cause and context of South Asian women's experiences of domestic violence and not the result of manifestations of culture or religion (Patel 2013, Siddiqui 2016).

Sara tried to "hold onto those things" of everyday experiences of her culture and religion. Morgan (2013) discusses how everyday routine family practices are unquestioned. These everyday practices became more important to Sara during her isolation from her family. However, this also suggests that she believed there was a risk that she would lose her religion and culture after she left her parents' home, in effect, her exit from the community (Okin 2002). In Chapter 5, I referred to research on women's lived experiences after they leave a violent intimate relationship with an intimate partner (Kelly 2016). Sara's experiences show that South Asian women can also leave their families due to domestic violence. They can then find themselves in a situation where they subsequently exit a violent relationship with their intimate partner. Further research is required to explore South Asian women's experiences of such multiple exits of violent family situations.

Sometime after leaving her family home, Sara assessed her unquestioning acceptance of daily family practices and her position changed:

> … I started letting go of it because it was too much, the emotions. Erm, I'm moving away from it and I stopped reading the Quran. I stopped doing anything cultural. Erm I stopped believing in God I think, at one stage. - Sara

Sara's use of the phrase "letting go" shows she put distance between herself and her culture and religion; this was further entrenched through actual space, as she no longer lived with her family and had moved to a different part of the country. She was isolated from her family and now isolated from her religion. "Letting go" manifested in other ways:

> We got engaged but never got married and it was all down cos I couldn't do it … I couldn't, couldn't put myself in that state of mind again of having to marry someone. It brought back all those horrible emotions and I think I switched off. I didn't used to go to Asian shops. I don't think I've ever worn Asian clothes since I've left home. Erm, I would stay away from Asian food. I would stay away from Asian smells. It's really sad. Just to avoid those feelings coming back and it's a part of me that I've lost that … It's really weird how I've completely switched off; that I'm struggling to even speak erm, Punjabi now … This is what you've done to yourself. - Sara

Sara's rejected her culture and religion to avoid re-stimulating traumatic emotions. The effect of the domestic violence she experienced from her family dehumanised her to the extent that she could not face anything that reminded her of her childhood background and her family. She could not connect with her food, her language, nor her religion. She did not feel she could get married. She believed she had lost everything and questioned where her position was in society. Sara experienced the oppressive power through "subtle psychological processes" (Takhar 2007: 130) to the extent that, to survive emotionally, she had to exit both physically and emotionally. These were the consequences or "social costs" (Sen 2005: 51) she faced, having transgressed socially sanctioned codes, not just once but a number of times by ending her forced marriage, leaving her family home, living with an intimate partner, and then leaving him.

Although Black Feminism refers to the struggle women face with their families in respect of marriage (Wilson 2010), it refers to the time when the intimate relationship is being formed. The struggle continues even after women, like Sara, have exited the physical space of domestic violence by leaving the family home and leading their lives afterwards. The effect for Sara, is her experiences of a forced marriage and then her emotional responses to marriage with her intimate partner are at the juncture of the Continuum of Violence and the formation of an intimate relationship, to the extent that her overriding

experiences are her daily experiences of her isolation from her family and her resistance to domestic violence.

Sara, as well as Anita, found the domestic violence from her family more traumatic than her experiences of violence from her partner. I have referred to the fluidity of power, in which women can both resist social norms and be subordinate to them at the same time. Sara was still "at the mercy" of dominant patriarchal forces playing through the intersection of gender, culture, religion, and age, as well as resisting such social norms (Mahmood 2005). Her experiences show the context of her survival from familial violent relationships (Patel, P. 2003b) and the complex range of experiences (Anitha and Gill 2011). She was surviving by disconnecting herself from triggers that related to and reminded her of her identity, which in turn reminded her of the violence and trauma.

This disconnect from emotional triggers of the life that she grew up with - religion, food, and clothes - created a sense of loss of community, family, and belonging for Sara:

> ... most people I looked around me had families — birthdays would come and they would celebrate with someone. Christmas would come, they would celebrate with someone. Eid would come, they would celebrate it with someone. I didn't have any of that. So where did I belong in this culture? Where did I belong within society? I think, I still ask myself those kinds of questions. - Sara

Sara felt isolated. She could not celebrate Christmas with her partner as they were separated. She could not celebrate Eid with her family as she was ostracised from them. There is an implicit comparison here between her loss of an intimate partner, her loss of family, and her sense of belonging, which she expressed more explicitly:

> … obviously I don't belong in the Asian community anymore. I've been disowned from my family and my culture and environment. - Sara

She mentioned the inevitability of being disowned by her family, her culture, and her environment, not the other way around. In her research into members of diasporic communities exiting their communities, Reitman argues that women:

> … are born of belief and psychological make-up; of fear of ostracism by family, friends, associates and community. One may fear the loss of moral support and the sense of belonging and rootedness derived from community. Or one may simply fear change and the unknown. The idea of rupture with one's family and the people with whom one is closest is pretty hard to conceive in any situation. On top of these difficulties, one can add obstacles which stem from the fact that cultural membership can be pervasively defining of one's sense of self (Reitman 2009: 195).

"… born of belief" shows the power of gendered socialisation. Earlier, I explored how Sara stated that she was actively letting go of her religion and culture. Here her response

positioned her family holding the power of her culture and environment. They disowned her, not the other way around. The see-saw effect can be seen here. Her family still holds power over her even though it is not physical. Her sense of belonging rested primarily in response to family relations and not to relations with her intimate partner. She positioned her experience within the social context of her South Asian identity within a western world. Feminists have recognised the cultural obstacles that women may face when choosing partners. They argue that women need support outside of their culture so that they can respond to barriers they may face that sit outside culture and intersect with it (Enright 2009). Thus, Sara's isolation is compounded by lack of support.

Her transgression of patriarchal traditions of marriage by choosing her partner resulted in her experiencing this isolation from her culture, family, and religion (Anitha and Gill 2009). Sara's sense of isolation and not belonging is compounded by what she felt was her position and how she was perceived in a western society.

> How do you explain to people? I'm a single mum with two kids; left my family … The western world doesn't understand that side of me … I think people get frightened. I don't think people will understand. Erm some people would just walk away thinking "What is she mad or what?" - Sara

Black Feminist scholars have articulated how a racist patriarchal society can prevent people from voicing the realities of their lives (hooks 2015) and how they are "expected to bridge the gap between the actualities of our lives and the consciousness of our oppressor" (Lorde 1996: 162). Sara found it impossible to be in a situation where she was not judged. Her experiences were outside the experiences of "the people" she referred to and so led her to conclude that she would be viewed as "mad or what". Her fear was that she was judged because her experiences were viewed within the context of her culture that is pathologised (Enright 2009). This gives an extreme sense of her isolation. Exit from one's group denotes western notions of freedom of choice. Enright (2009) contends that South Asian women exercising freedom of choice can be viewed as adhering to British belonging and so have British values. Clearly, as pointed out, this is problematic for South Asian women. Sara had exited from her family and community, but this had not confirmed her sense of British belonging. If anything, it added to the complexity and fragmentation of it.

The complexity is further enmeshed within the different locations of domestic violence. Sara's isolation from her family was the biggest site of her distress, her sense of loss, and her grief due to that loss. She did not refer to the loss of the intimate relationship in the same way. Furthermore, her position as a South Asian woman, who chose her

intimate partner, had left her family, had left her partner, all within a western society, provide the gendered context in which she positioned her experiences and current situation. It is this position within the western society that she reflects on further:

> I think because I'm not within that culture and environment. I'm considered as more westernised but I'm not completely accepted because I haven't found that – it's a bit of both, it's finding that middle ground where you fit in. People choose to be this or that. I'm not any of those. So, where am I? I don't know the answer myself. (chuckles) - Sara

Sara placed her gender, ethnicity, religion, and culture in a social and political context within mainstream western society. She placed her background at one end and mainstream society at the other end along a spectrum where she occupied the "middle ground". Again, she questioned where she fitted in because she had chosen her own partner and the relationship had ended due to domestic violence, in addition to the loss of contact with her family, again due to domestic violence. It is these combinations that led her to ask this question because by opposing cultural norms it meant that she did not fit in "within that culture and environment". But Sara also did not fit in because she felt the westernised world did "not understand" her isolation from her family and her sense of loss of her family. She saw her position as a mixture of both but had yet to define where exactly and what her position was within the two ends of this spectrum she referred to. Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology has analysed how the family can be both a site of inequality and also respite from racism and other oppressions (Amos and Parmar 1984, Bhavnani and Coulson 2005, hooks 2000). Sara faced oppression and inequality in the family, (the private sphere) but it was a respite from the judgement and lack of understanding she felt from people outside of her family, (the public sphere).

Sara's account above illustrates that familial and intimate partner relationships and the external environment provided no respite for her because of her experiences of inequality and abuse. Earlier, I described how there was a fluidity of choice and how Sara questioned the choices she felt were presented to her by her parents. Furthermore, Sara's experiences of being forced into a marriage and her lack of knowledge of the world outside her family and community reflect the gendered nature of power she experienced. Thus, her understanding of the social context of her situation brings together her agency and her responses to power (both resistive and subordinate). It is her reflection on the combination of these that led her to continue to question where she "fits in". Yuval-Davis (2011) contends that "social categories" of socio-economic position, values, and sense of identity should also be considered in addition to gender, race, and

sexuality. I argue this only answers one part of Sara's sense of being in the "middle ground".

Women at the margins of society are not considered to belong wholly to society but the very fact that they do not belong "emphasize(s) the significance of belonging" (Collins 2000: 70). Thus, Sara's position at the margins signifies that there are margins for her to be situated in. Collins' point is made in reference to the margins of wider society. Sara was at the margins of mainstream society but at the same time she was at the margins of her own community too, a situation forced on her because she had transgressed patriarchal notions of marriage and chosen her own partner. Yuval-Davis (2006: 199) points out that the categories have different positions of power and this positionality is situated historically and is fluid. The "middle ground" represented a fluidity of power. Sara felt she did not belong and her sense of not belonging is seamless across her community and wider society. Sara's appraisal of her religion and her sense of belonging as fractured, had implications for her as a parent.

Sara's sense of oppression that she faced because of her experiences caused her to reflect on her parenting. Sara talked openly about her responsibilities as a parent regarding bringing her children up in a religion:

> I can't teach them a religion that oppresses them. I remember oppression from that religion and nothing else … There is a good side; I know that and these are my prejudices because of my experiences. If they, as they get older, want to learn about the religion, I'll give them freedom to do that. I don't think I can do it. - Sara

Sara had difficulty with Islam, the religion of her own upbringing, not with Christianity, her ex-partner's religion. Sara described how she and her partner agreed that the children could be brought up in the Christian religion and attend a Christian faith-based school. Although Sara experienced violence from both her family and her partner, she did not associate her partner's religion, Christianity, with oppression. Again, there is an indication here that the experiences of violence and oppression from her family are given greater prominence than her experiences of abuse from her partner. Sara's experiences of "oppression from that religion" lie at the intersections of her gender, age and her religion. She was a child when she first learned that she would be married to someone from Pakistan, which she did not want. I have described the gendered norms at play around the notion of marriage and forming intimate relationships and how women themselves felt that their mothers did or did not support them around their experiences

of domestic violence. Now as a mother herself, Sara, because of those experiences with her religion, would not be introducing her daughters to Islam.

Chapter 4 discussed the relational nature of power within families and how different members of the family can hold and retain power. Regarding her daughters, Sara, said she would "give them freedom" to choose their religion, which suggests that she considered this to be supportive and her right. However, the phrase implies that freedom was for her to give to her daughters. Sara clearly did not want her daughters to experience gendered oppression from religion, but at the same time, as their mother, she had power and control over whether her daughters are able to practice the religion of their choice. Her power was born out of protection for her daughters.

> I wouldn't expect them to put up with that kind of thing. Why did I put up with it? Because of the way I was brought up and the values that were put in me. I don't think they'll ever completely understand it as well because they haven't been brought up in that environment. They haven't had those pressures put on them that were put on me. So, I think they will, to a certain extent, find it hard to understand it as well. - Sara

Sara did not want her daughters to experience domestic violence and other forms of gender oppression that she had faced. She believed her daughters' experiences were also outside of the realm of her own experiences. In the same way she felt that western society did not understand her, she believed her daughters would not either. Sara felt she did not belong to her own community nor to wider society and she felt a disconnect between her experience and view of the world and that of her daughters.

Sara exited a number of relationships due to domestic violence; firstly her family and secondly her intimate partner. She placed the violence she experienced at the hands of her parents, to be the biggest site of trauma. The trauma had a dehumanising effect on her where she could not cope with the idea of marrying her partner and found connecting with her culture and religion too traumatic. She questioned her religion and believed her religion oppressed her. Her resistance to power can be seen in her leaving her parents' home, but she was still experiencing the Continuum of Violence because of her isolation from her family. For Sara the formation of an intimate relationship was completely blurred with the Continuum of Violence experienced by her family and her partner. Due to transgressions of social norms Sara was not only at the margins of society but at the margins of her community too. Sara faced isolation from her family but she also felt that she did not entirely fit into mainstream society.

6.4 Krishna

Krishna is 45 years of age. She is of Indian heritage and of Hindu religion. She was born in India and came to the UK when she was sixteen years of age. Her father died when she was six and she was sexually abused by a male relative very soon after her father passed away. Her mother was emotionally abused by her husband's extended family. Krishna's first marriage took place in the UK and she experienced emotional, financial, physical, and sexual abuse from her husband. Her mother-in-law and brother-in-law also emotionally abused her. After her husband tried to set fire to her duvet as she lay asleep, Krishna left him and filed for divorce, three years after they were married. He continued to stalk, harass, and physically beat her.

Krishna then married a US citizen, 18 months after the divorce from her first husband. As with the first marriage, the emotional, sexual, physical, and financial abuse started on the wedding night. She moved to the US and was in this marriage for eight years. She had two children with her second husband. In 2006 he was convicted of attempting to have sex with a minor. On his release, the violence escalated and he attempted to drug Krishna in an effort to demonstrate to medical professionals that Krishna was an unfit mother. Krishna was forced to take the drugs and physically assaulted. A few days later, the husband repeated this. This time Krishna refused to take the drugs and he violently assaulted her. He then left the home with the children and his mother, and threatened further violence on his return. While he was out, Krishna went to the police station and filed for a restraining order. The police arrested him on his return home. Krishna decided to file for divorce. As with the first husband, her second husband also stalked and harassed her and their children. On return from an access visit to their father, the children disclosed to Krishna some sexually inappropriate behaviour by their dad. This was not given any credence in the court process. She lost her domestic-violence case against him. The husband challenged her through all the courts, fighting for custody of the children. Finally, she enlisted the help of a politician to complete the divorce proceedings and she was successful in obtaining a divorce and keeping custody of the children. She now lives in the UK, a single parent with her children and is a full-time carer for one of their children.

Figure 6-3 shows the timeline of significant events in Krishna's life within the scope of this research.

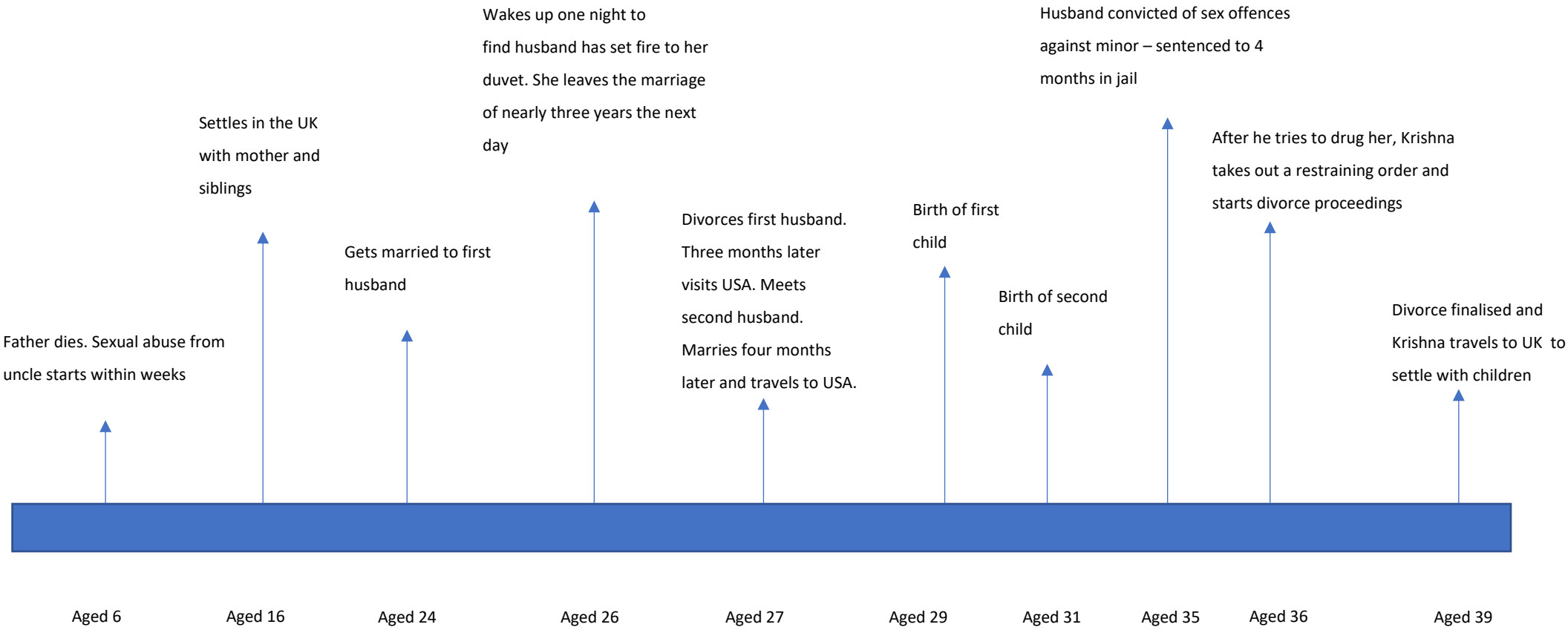

Figure 6-3: Krishna's Timeline

Krishna exited a violent relationship with her first husband and then exited a further violent relationship with her second husband.

She described her first marriage as arranged and her second marriage was one of choice. In both relationships there were elements of coercion and family pressure, especially from her second husband's family. Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology predominantly focuses on South Asian women's experiences of domestic violence in one relationship, not several relationships (Gill and Harvey 2017, Gill 2013, Siddiqui 2013, Wilson 2007). Krishna's experiences demonstrate that South Asian women can experience domestic violence in more than one intimate relationship and experience domestic violence from the family. In Krishna's case she experienced violence in both marriages from her in-laws as well as her husbands. Her everyday experiences of violence spanned both relationships and so twice she experienced the forming of an intimate relationship colliding with the Continuum of Violence.

Krishna did not make any connection with the way each relationship was formed. For example she did not believe that she should have a relationship of choice the second time because the first was an arranged marriage. She traversed the spectrum at different points. This shows how the route to forming each intimate relationship did not follow the arranged marriage forced marriage spectrum.

In Chapter 5 I discussed how women's agency in forming the relationship becomes the very barrier to leaving it. For Krishna it was the frequency of that act that became the barrier.

> I felt ashamed of myself and especially when it happened second time, that's even worse you feel because then that's the reason I put up with it for eight years because I thought people won't believe me, again. "The story repeats again" that's what I said and now I joke around and I said "You know what "One time wasn't enough so I had to dive into a big sea again to feel the water" but you know what, I'm glad I can joke about it. - Krishna

Power imbalances exist between Krishna, in her second marriage, and the community (Patel, P. 2003a). Krishna's sense of shame was an expression of the power of the community, due to the socialisation of "honour" and this kept her silent (Patel, P. 2003a). This was compounded with Krishna's believing that she would not be believed because she was in a violent intimate relationship (Kelly 2015a) but more specifically a second time in a relationship that she chose. Furthermore divorce is perceived as a transgression of social codes (Siddiqui 2011, Wilson 2006). All these factors together

conspired to keep Krishna in, not only her first violent relationship, but her second too. Krishna explicitly linked her experiences of domestic violence to her culture and her Indian identity.

> I don't believe in a lot of Indian way of thinking any more. I've become Americanised … because it's my experiences because where was that Indian belief when I needed them? … why couldn't somebody step up and say, "You know what, I'm gonna, I'm gonna stand by you." Nobody did that in Indian community to me and erm especially with my second marriage, everybody knew he become sex offender. Everybody took his side … They treated my children as a criminal; me as a criminal but that's how the society is and I don't believe in that so I do what I feel. - Krishna

Krishna felt betrayed by her community due to their "Indian way of thinking". Clearly, they did not support her. Her partner's status and relationships within the community were favoured over Krishna and her children, which illustrates the cultural context of Krishna's experiences and the constraints she was facing (Patel, P. 2003b). Krishna rejected her culture and background completely. She described herself as "Americanised", indicating that she placed her own background and culture on a lower status and moral plane than that of the country she lived in during her second marriage, which according to Black Feminism is a form of internalised oppression (hooks 2015, Collins 1990, Collins and Bilge 2016). Krishna also reflected on her experiences of her community and culture and their influence on her parenting.

Krishna's experiences and her reflections on culture, are brought together in the following example. She reflected on her daughter's possible choice of partner in adulthood. Krishna referred to an occasion when a fellow guest at a function asked Krishna the following question ""Will you let your daughter marry Indian guy?" Krishna's response was "I said 'No.'". She then went on to explain:

> But it's up to her. I won't decide who she wants to marry. If she finds an Indian man that's nice, caring, I'll be happy … but she knows, my daughter knows what I went through … They don't have much trust left in Indian thing and err and I do tell them, I say "they're not, everybody's not same' … but I would hesitate little bit. - Krishna

Clearly this was not a straightforward situation for Krishna and there is tension here. Her response was contradictory. She wanted to be able to support her daughter but acknowledged her own reservations. Krishna's daughter had witnessed Krishna's experiences of domestic violence (in the same way that Krishna had experienced her own mother's abuse). Krishna's initial response was to reject the notion of her daughter marrying an Indian man. Furthermore, Krishna was in a dilemma whether what she

wished for her daughter (a “nice” and “caring” husband) could be brought about by her “allowing” her to marry an Indian guy. Her instinctive response was negative. She then went on to clarify her response and ended that she did have doubts and concerns.

Krishna had rejected her culture and community as she felt that she and the children were not supported when she was experiencing domestic abuse. Her doubts were rooted in her own experiences and through those experiences she rejected the culture. It is therefore not surprising that her initial reaction was “no”. Krishna believed that she was protecting her daughter from experiencing domestic violence (in the same way her own mother was protecting her daughter). To explore these arguments, the artwork produced by Krishna, as shown in Figure 6-4, provides an opportunity to examine further Krishna’s responses to her culture, and community.

Figure 6-4: Artwork produced by Krishna

In the drawing Krishna is leaving the dark cloud behind her and moving forwards towards the light, shielding and protecting herself and the children. The dark cloud represents the violence Krishna had experienced, including, the sexual and domestic violence at the hands of both her husbands, the domestic violence from both sets of in-laws and the betrayal from her community. In the picture Krishna is putting those experiences of violence behind her and moving forward in her life; free from the violence. She draws

herself holding an umbrella, protecting and shielding herself and the children from the storm of domestic violence. She is helping and supporting the children to leave the violent past they experienced too. Together as a family, Krishna and the children are moving forwards towards sunshine. The children are carrying balloons which portray happy, fun activities that children like to do. They are experiencing life as children growing up in a nurturing and caring environment as opposed to experiencing domestic violence. There are birds, flying in the storm free sky, adding to a scene of serenity, in safe and happier times.

The umbrella that Krishna is holding is also shielding the children from the sun. This symbolises Krishna's protection of the children in the past and she will protect them in the future as they move forward together. Part of that protection is Krishna's desire for her daughter not to marry an Indian man and so Krishna's drawing which depicts her protection of her daughter is a visual representation of her rejection of any Indian man as a prospective husband for her daughter. This rejection is part of the rejection of her culture which is also represented in her artwork.

The clothes Krishna is wearing in the picture, reflect her sense of her identity. Dress can be a marker of "becoming 'western'" (Toor 2009: 243) where wearing "Asian" clothes can signify tradition. By illustrating herself in clothes that are associated with being "western" Krishna is reinforcing her identity as "Americanised". In her examination of dominant discourses that embody Muslim women, Mirza (2013: 6) states "Muslim women's dress has become interchangeable with essentialist notions of ethnicity, traditionalism and religion". This argument can be applied to Krishna, who although not Muslim, is South Asian and the dress of South Asian women are also interchangeable with such tropes and notions. She is not immune to the essentialist notions that mark South Asian women's dress. To wear "western clothes" represents modernity and to wear "Asian" clothes such as the hijab or sari, represents the binary opposite that is "traditional", which denotes lack of progressiveness and confidence. Krishna's style of dress in her artwork informs her sense of identity; that is to be "Americanised" and does not include her Indian heritage.

Krishna's rejection of her Indian identity can also be seen in the colour she used to represent her skin tone in the artwork. The image that she has portrayed of herself and that of the children, is of persons with a very light skin tone; a very pale pink colour. There is very little likeness between Krishna's image in her artwork and that of her actual physical characteristics. Skin colour is a marker of difference portrayed on South Asian

women's gendered and racialized bodies (Mirza 2013). A woman valuing light skin tone affirms "internalized white supremacist values and aesthetics, a way of looking and seeing the world that negates her value (hooks 2015: 3). I take this argument further. Krishna's negation of her value in her physical looks as a South Asian woman is a rejection of identity as a South Asian woman and her rejection of culture, as a result of internalised notions of White supremacy which are intertwined with her experiences of domestic violence. Her experiences of violence were not a one-off occasion; Krishna experiences lay within the Continuum of Violence. Her experiences of marriage were overshadowed by her experiences of violence on a continuum. Her sense of betrayal by both of her husbands and her community led her to reject her culture which was in effect rejecting her identity. Lorde (1996:166) writes about Black women's experiences at the intersection of patriarchy and white privilege, which pitches black women against black men. "… it is easy for Black women to be used by the power structure against Black men, not because they are men, but because they are Black. Therefore, for Black women, it is necessary at all times to separate the needs of the oppressor from our own legitimate conflicts within our communities". Krishna's experiences of domestic violence from two husbands; experiences at the intersection of gender, race, and culture meant that she was unable to separate out the two mentioned conflicts, White supremacy and domestic violence from South Asian men. To this end, her new representation of her identity and rejection of her old identity is a form of internalised oppression.

Krishna internalised the hegemony of White supremacy where all South Asian men and the culture are inferior (Collins 1990, Collins and Bilge 2016) which is one outcome of living in a racist society (Mirza 2009). I argue that Krishna's internalised oppression also intersects with her gender. Her lived experiences of domestic violence lie within the social and cultural contexts where power imbalances caused by patriarchal forces privilege men and subjugate women (Patel, P. 2003b). The intersectionality of her experiences cross over family generations and can be seen in Krishna's position on the choice of whom her daughter should marry.

6.5 Echoes of Experiences

6.5.1 The Cloak of Identity - Identity Responses to Religion and Culture

This section draws together the common themes from the case studies. The women's reflections showed their complex and fragmented responses to culture and religion. Both Anita and Sara made concerted efforts to keep a connection to their religion and immersed themselves in their religion in order to prove to their families that, despite transgressing social norms on sex and marriage, they were not "bad" daughters. Ultimately they felt that their religion was the source of their own and all women's inequality (Patel 1997, 2013, Siddiqui 2013) as manifested in their experiences of domestic violence at the hands of their families. As explored in Chapter 4, the workings of power relations produce gender inequality. Women in the group interview endorsed these views when they shared their experiences of religion and their partner's domestic violence towards them:

> People can be real believers, go the Mandir (temple), go the gurdwaras and say their prayers but still they hit and physically beat their wives. … All I know is that my boyfriend was Sikh and my husband was Hindu; it was a different culture but I've seen, its men are the same, there is no difference in whatever culture. Everyone thinks the woman is lower (inferior). - Kiran

There followed a discussion sparked by Shanaya, who mentioned how she was fasting for her (separated) husband to have a happier life. This prompted Kiran to joke about the ritual Karva Chauth[3] whilst circling her arms.

> Kiran: I did Karva Chauth three times and three times my husband beat me (laughing).
>
> Manager: What was the benefit?
>
> Kiran: The benefit was that I got a beating (laughing) … My husband would say you are staying hungry but why are you keeping me hungry? You've taken so much time, I want my dinner.
>
> (Everyone laughs)
>
> Zinaat: We're laughing about it now -- it's shocking.

[3] Karva Chauth is a custom observed by married women in Northern India. They fast for one day to ensure the safety and longevity of their husbands. Part of the ritual is move the thali (tray) in circular motions in front of the husband hence Kiran waving her arms in a circular motion.

…

Shanaya: Everyone is laughing at their own stupidity. This is what happened to me and they're realising it now what exactly happened.

…

Zinaat: I thought to myself how stupid am I?

What was interesting about this exchange was how the mood lifted from seriousness to humour, despite conversing about a serious issue. The women were reflecting on the seriousness of their experiences. Shanaya and Kiran referred to rituals they did for the benefit of their husbands. Everyone laughed at the irony of Kiran's situation. She was undertaking a ritual for the benefit of her husband. His concern was not for the ritual being performed in his honour, but for his dinner and as a result increased his violence towards her, so neither benefited. She experienced domestic violence because she was performing the very ritual that was supposed to benefit him. Such traditions can oppress women and at the same time privilege men (Patel, P. 2003a).

Women are socialised to perform rituals to privilege their male partners, who themselves do not hold the very rituals to the same level of importance that the women hold them because one of the expressions of honouring the family is to be a dutiful wife (Siddiqui 2013, Sen 2005). Here are multiple layers of oppression: a woman performs the ritual for her partner who is not obliged to do the same for her. He is not socialised to perform rituals to honour her. His privileged status as a male is status quo (Anitha and Gill 2009) and so not bound to performing such rituals. Culture and religion have been used to defend and maintain gender inequality (Patel 1997, 2013, Siddiqui 2013).

Part of defending and maintaining gender inequality is in women's duty to service the collective. A study conducted by Gill and Harvey (2017: 96) found that women are pressurised to conform to socially constructed traits of femininity including putting the family's interests above their own. Women's experience of violence occur "in a cultural context and that differences of culture should not lead to a denial of civil rights" (Patel, P. 2003a: 176). The only human rights treaty specific to women, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, defines discrimination as the loss of equal enjoyment of human rights (Chinkin and Freeman 2012: 2). The context of women's lives is at the juxtaposition of individual rights versus the collective, where human rights language is enshrined in the individual but where the value system of the families the women come from may be about the collective.

Sara, Anita and Krishna, all wanted to exercise their human rights as individuals but I argue this did not mean that they rejected the collective in its entirety. For example, they may have rejected religion but they continued to value the morals of religion. They may have chosen not to live near other South Asian people but did identify with the collective identity of being South Asian. I argue that the women's voices reflected a sadness about the loss of connection with their families and culture but at the same time they resisted the notion that their sole role, above all else, was for the family, culture and religion, in effect to service the machinery of patriarchy.

Families justify the use of forced marriage to preserve strong religious and cultural heritage and a sense of strong identity (Siddiqui 2003b). These case studies have shown that, for these women, the opposite effect had occurred. All three women questioned their identity because of the domestic violence they experienced from their families and community. They showed how, for them, identity was fluid. Sara and Anita initially immersed themselves in religion. Their sense of identity was initially strongly connected to their desire to belong to their community and their religion. This changed because they felt that the community and their religion did not support them and in fact oppressed them when they needed support. Both Anita and Sara rejected the notion that their identity had to be strongly linked to their religion. Krishna also rejected any association of her identity to her culture.

All three women conflated their experiences of betrayal from their community and families, with that of her identity. Women's sense of identity is defined by their experiences (Cowburn, Gill, and Harrison 2015). For these women it was because of their experiences of domestic violence that informed their decision to reject an identity that had strong associations to their religion and culture. Or in other words, one of the consequences of transgressing social norms of marriage by choosing their partner, and subsequent experiences of domestic violence, both from their families and their intimate partners, was to reject their identity; who they felt they were. The influences that informed their identity were their experiences of domestic violence, religion, community and culture. The women removed these influences from their lives and went on to produce "new" identities; for Anita, it was to include more "Indian culture and Iranian culture"; Sara was "finding that middle ground" between a western mainstream society and her cultural heritage that she was born into and brought up in, and for Krishna, it was to be "Americanised".

The women's experiences were at the intersections of their gender, their culture, and their religion. These are markers of identity, and sources of the oppression the women faced. It is the intersection of these sites of oppression that in combination enforced the oppression and affected the women's identity (Gill 2004). "Asian women may be hindered by the strong patriarchal nature of South Asian culture and the influence of religion, which may limit a woman's role to the traditional one of wife and mother. Having her identity constrained to that defined by her patriarchal community, an Asian woman who considers leaving her abusive partner and/or family not only creates an affront to the abuser, but also challenges the core of her identity" (Gill 2004: 479). I argue that the women challenged the "core of their identity" when they transgressed social norms of marriage and choose their own partners. They challenged not once but a number of times, for example by leaving their abusive intimate partners and then again, by leaving their abusive families.

Reitman (2009) points out that it is the strength of socialisation that gives rise to women's fear of isolation and loss of connection with family and community. The burden of isolation impacts on women's identity. "Being exiled from social networks can involve more than the emotional loss of significant others: it may mean the loss of one's own identity" (Anitha and Gill 2009: 176). Women employed differing responses to culture and identity in their survival against familial violence. Anita initially rejected all parts of her culture and religion, but later in the interview she referred to her appraisal of culture and music where she had transformed her identity (Collins and Bilge 2016). Sara's survival strategy was also to reject her culture and identity to a dehumanising effect where she could not go near Asian shops or Asian "smells". Sara was ostracised by her family. Krishna's sense of identity was linked to internalised oppression manifested in her rejection of culture and her sense of being "Americanised".

I argue that all three women, changed their identities, evident in their responses about the rejection of clothing and food and the smells. They had worn the cloak of an identity that was linked to marriage or a certain way of forming an intimate relationship and shed that cloak when they experienced domestic violence and resisted the oppression. As the women experienced patriarchy and power and the see-saw swung where they were in the elevated position, the construction of their identity was tied to the social norms of marriage. As they resisted the power and oppression, they rejected their identities and part of their resilience was to consider new identities and so the see-saw swung to the more powerful lower position.

6.5.2 Internalised Oppression

All three women put themselves outside of their culture and their community, rejecting both in different ways. It is important to highlight how strongly this view was held amongst many participants, by describing a response from another participant. Samia discovered that not all South Asian women are aware of specialist services: "I thought "Really? Still, now, people don't know about these organisations (domestic violence refuges)?" within that culture where they really need to know". South Asian cultures can be portrayed as deviant and backward, particularly in reference to marriage practices (Enright 2009, Pande 2014, Gill and Brah 2014). Specific cultural differences of domestic violence, such as forced marriage, are linked to the problem of foreign cultures being imported (Thiara and Gill 2010b). Ahmed, Reavey and Majumdar (2009) refer to the 'othering' of cultures that are not western, where women moving away from traditional identity is viewed as a positive move towards western culture. I argue that the women participants' comments reflect this socialisation of stereotypes of deviant and backward cultures that lead them to reject their own culture and religion.

Black Feminism has critiqued how discourses on violence against South Asian women, including media representations, portray minority cultures and practices as backward and overly patriarchal in a way that is not predominant for "mainstream Western women" (Anitha and Gill 2009: 166). Wilson (2007) argues how the media can demonise South Asian women, and portray those cultures and religions which practise forced marriage and honour based violence as wholly uncivilised (Anitha and Gill 2015). Black Feminists point out that women's experiences may reveal differences in domestic violence within certain cultures, but rather than framing such practices of domestic violence within the context of gender inequality and hence a result of power and patriarchy, it is framed in a way that demonises culture (Siddiqui 2016). I argue that the participants have been socialised into accepting and therefore reproducing certain tropes about how South Asian cultures can be viewed in western societies and have internalised those stereotypes, in effect pathologising their own cultures (Enright 2009). It follows as no surprise that the women in these case studies, who through their experiences of domestic violence, both at the hands of family and intimate partner, internalised tropes of backwardness and traditional behaviours and rejected their culture, people and religion.

I claim the intersections of race, culture, religion, and gender are at work here. Women 'other' their culture, their religion, and their people entirely, because their culture is

viewed as inferior and regressive. Whether women refer to themselves as "Americanised" or state that all "Brown people" are "bastards", I argue, that this demonstrates the women's internalisation of the hegemony of White supremacy (hooks 2015, Lorde 1996), whereby devaluing their own culture, religion and people from their community is a form of internalised oppression (Collins 1990, Collins and Bilge 2016),

In the previous section I detailed how Anita, Sara and Krishna rejected their South Asian identity. I argue that this is also a form of internalised oppression but not one that stems from the hegemony of White supremacy. It is an internalisation of patriarchy because of the women's experiences of familial and intimate partner violence. The women cited that the violence experienced at the hands of their family, was the biggest site of trauma. Therefore their rejection of culture and religion was more a rejection of and resistance to the violence they experienced at the hands of their families, rather than that of their partners. Krishna felt betrayed by her community and explained how she was not into the "Indian way of thinking". Women's identity is very much linked to family relationships because these are the relationships they form before their intimate partner relationships.

Part of internalisation of oppression is that women blamed themselves for their oppression at the hands of men's violence because they "provoked" the situation (Kelly 1988: 211). Women can be blamed for not living up to the social norms expected of them in marriage within cultural and religious expectations (Siddiqui 2014) and the women in this cohort blamed themselves; they felt they were to blame for their oppression because they provoked the situation by transgressing social norms and choosing their own partners. For example Sara's statement "This is what you've done to yourself" signifies" how she felt she was to blame for the circumstances that she has ended up in; isolated from her family and separated from her intimate partner. Krishna blamed herself because she experienced two intimate relationships; both she had chosen and both were violent. Other women participants too expressed the blame they felt. In Chapter 4, Pania blamed herself for her father's abuse towards her; he isolated her from the family but she felt she was to blame. Kiran recognised how her parents blamed her, "The whole blame is on me". Mohee (2011) found that some women do not choose their own partners because they could not, then blame their parents if those marriages of choice did not work out. This option was not available to this cohort of women. They had made the decision and had transgressed social norms to choose their own partners but self-blame is a consequence of their lived realities of the oppression they faced.

The women blamed themselves, but also wanted to protect their children from further domestic violence, and so left their abusive intimate relationships. For example, Krishna decided to leave her second husband when she felt the children were in danger of sexual abuse from their father. Harjit felt she was a "rubbish role" model for her children and decided to leave. Kiran also feared the domestic violence her son was experiencing would lead him to become a perpetrator in later life. Renaisha also tried to stop her husband seeing their daughters because she believed he was exploiting them to continue to abuse her. Women took steps to protect their children. Some women's sense of betrayal extended beyond their community, to the judiciary. For example Krishna was not believed and she lost her domestic violence case against her second husband in the U.S. However this did not negatively affect Krishna's sense of being "Americanised". The women talked about breaking the cycle of violence where their children would not go through the same experiences they did and their mothers' did. They wanted the intergenerational cycle of violence to be halted.

Women resisted on multiple fronts; their families, their intimate partners, their culture and religion; all of which were working together to enforce patriarchy and hence gender inequality. It is interesting to note that, despite blaming themselves, none of the women returned to their parents' home "admitting" they were "in the wrong" for having transgressed social norms of marriage. Instead the women carried on with their lives and looked to the future, raising their children, and continuing to resist oppression in their daily lives.

6.6 Conclusions

Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology has been useful in critiquing South Asian women's different and specific experiences of domestic violence (Gill 2003, Meetoo and Mirza 2007, Phillips and Dustin 2004, Wilson 2007), such as forced marriage (Siddiqui 2011, 2013). Violence can be meted out to women by multiple perpetrators such as family and community as well as intimate partner (Siddiqui 2016). The women's case studies reveal how they made comparisons of their experiences of domestic violence from their family to that of from their violent intimate partners. Sara rejected her culture, her inability to cook Asian food, and not able to go near "Asian smells" was not because of her intimate relationship but due to her experiences of forced marriage and sense of betrayal, trauma and loss from her family. Anita mentioned very little of the violence from her partners, in comparison to her experiences of domestic violence, in all its forms, from her family, extended family and community.

This is not to underplay their experiences of violence from their partners, but merely to point out that women who experience domestic violence from multiple perpetrators may find the experiences harder to bear from one set of perpetrators as opposed to the other. I argue there are many reasons for this. Women experience power relations within families (Meetoo and Safia 2007). Women have been socialised into a gendered upbringing from a very young age (Fine 2011, Patel, M. 2003). The women experienced the strength of patriarchal power across time and space. They experienced domestic violence from their families over time beginning in their formative years and over distant lands. Women's experiences of the violence was at the intersections of gender, age, poverty, education, religion, citizenship and culture. These social locations work together to oppress through patriarchal tools of honour and shame which in turn enforce such strong undercurrents of expected behaviour and where transgressions are punished severely (Collins and Bilge 2016, Chakravarti 2005, Siddiqui 2003a). With power relations that have existed over years within the family, it is therefore of little surprise that the women situated oppression more starkly with their families where they remembered their childhood trauma and felt a sense of betrayal by their families.

Women's lived experiences after exiting domestic violence has received limited attention (Kelly 2016). Black Feminist scholarship on women's experiences of honour based violence, including forced marriage (Siddiqui 2013, Gill and Brah 2014) undertakes limited examination into South Asian women's lived experiences after they have escaped such violence from their families. There is an implicit assumption that on exiting domestic violence from their families, women do not experience further types of violence from additional perpetrators. This research builds on this work together with the Continuum of Violence (Kelly 1988) by examining women's experiences of domestic violence from their intimate partner after they have escaped honour based violence. Anita and Sara escaped violence from their families and then endured violence from their intimate partners. Krishna experienced domestic violence from two marriages.

All three women had more than one intimate relationship where they experienced domestic violence. The focus within Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology is predominantly on women's experiences of domestic violence in a single relationship (Gill and Harvey 2017, Gill 2013, Siddiqui 2013, Wilson 2007). This implies that South Asian women, in particular, do not have more than one intimate relationship and in some ways adds to the honour codes of South Asian women as dutiful daughters and wives (Siddiqui 2013, Chakravarti 2005). Furthermore the women's experiences of forming intimate

relationships more than once, highlights again how their experiences do not follow the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage.

Women's experiences of having more than one intimate relationship, where both were violent, means they exited one violent relationship only then to experience another. They may have, in addition, left a violent family relationship too. These experiences exist on a Continuum of Violence where not only have there been multiple violent intimate relationships but multiple perpetrators perpetrating violence on a daily basis. The combination of these show that women forming intimate relationships can collide with experiences within the Continuum of Violence across more than one relationship.

Their initialised oppression of race, of gender, and of religion are at the intersections of these social locations where women through White supremacy, through patriarchy through religious codes of conduct blamed themselves, rejected their identities because but at the same time continued to resist and move on in their lives, protecting their children. The women are looking to the future where they can live violence free and care and nurture their children and break the cycle of violence. Part of moving on in their lives is to forge "new" identities.

The case study approach has brought out these different perspectives on the women's lived realities of oppression which would not have been discerned from an analysis from the interviews and group interview. The case studies have enabled a comparison of women's responses to the violence they experienced and thus provided a deeper understanding of why they rejected their cultural heritage. Krishna's artwork adds further depth, by providing a visual representation to reinforce her words from the one-to-one interview. I now turn to the synthesis of all the findings and analysis that have emerged from this research.

Chapter 7 Final Reflections

7.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the key areas of discussion pertaining to the aim of this research. It provides the synthesis of the findings and main discussion points and conclusions, culminating in a revised conceptual framework. The purpose of the journey

of this thesis was to critically examine, through a Black Feminist lens, South Asian[4] women's lived experiences of transgressing social norms of marriage, with a view to understanding their negotiation in responding to the consequences they faced, as a result of such transgressions, and to inform service delivery practice in the field of domestic violence.

The key findings provide the focus for the main discussion points and conclusions in this chapter. These input into a revised conceptual framework which incorporates the theoretical underpinning and the contributions pertaining to South Asian women's own voices of their experiences of transgressing social norms by choosing an intimate partner and experiencing familial and intimate partner violence.

There follows a summary of contributions to knowledge stemming from this research; that is methodological contribution, empirical contribution and theoretical contribution. Recommendations to service providers and practitioners are also provided and suggestions for areas of future research are given.

The thesis ends with the key tenet of this research: to move South Asian women's lived experiences from the margins to the centre, by giving prominence and presence to their own voices.

7.2 The Winds of Power across Generations and Gender

The use of qualitative research for this empirical study on this cohort of women has been of benefit in exploring South Asian women's lived experiences of power when transgressing social norms of marriage, choosing their own intimate partners and then experiencing familial and intimate partner violence. Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology has enabled this cohort of women's voices to have prominence within this study. Such prominence has identified how the workings of patriarchal power spans across family generations and gender for women participants, determined through an intersectional analysis.

Intersectionality has become a core concept within social sciences (Collins and Bilge 2016) with analytical application to lived experiences (Phoenix 2016). Women's experiences in this study were shaped by a combination of multiple axes of oppression

[4] The term South Asian as used in this research refers to people whose ethnic heritage is borne from countries within the Indian subcontinent: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan. The women in this research all lived in the UK at the time of the fieldwork and not all were British.

that they occupied, such as age, religion, culture, poverty as well as their gender. At various points in the thesis, I have explored, through an intersectional lens, how these complexities have shed light on women's agency in choosing their partner and how they came to those decisions. Single axis analysis, specifically gender alone, limits the depth of understanding of women's agency and responses to patriarchal power. The theoretical base of intersectionality is power (Collins and Bilge 2016, Cho, Crenshaw and McCall 2013). Indeed Phoenix (2016) points out how intersectionality provides in-depth analysis into the complexities of lived experiences. By analysing empirical findings through multiple axes of oppression, I add to the understanding of how power relations shape South Asian women's experiences of transgressing social norms of marriage forming intimate partner relationships and then experiencing familial and intimate partner violence. This research thus contributes to an under-developed field within Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology. For example Pania was fifteen when she was betrothed to her father's business partner. She was not old enough to have the power to influence her own life path. Gender inequality, through cultural norms, dictated that she had to be married, especially as she had transgressed social norms by not wearing her hijab on one occasion. She was forced to leave school and so her education was curtailed. It is the intersectional analysis of the social categories of gender, age, culture that Pania occupied that has proved useful in aiding the understanding of the context of oppression that Pania faced in her life.

Lindisfarne (1998) has highlighted the importance of understanding the context of women's lives and the manifestations of power and control they experience. Analysis of the intersections of gender, age, culture and poverty, shows how the context of dominant hegemonic masculine narratives reproduce misogynistic attitudes, abuse and violence and so shapes a girl's experience. For example, analysis of the interlocking axes of oppression that work together, to not only create the conditions for Krishna's rape by her uncle only three weeks after her father's death and the continuation of the sexual abuse for eight years, but also to provide the context in which her experiences and behaviour were shaped in adulthood. Krishna was not able to confide in her family about the sexual abuse, even to this day, and this truly compromised her ability, as an adult, to make autonomous decisions in her own interests. Intersectionality allows these connections between experiences as a young girl that went on to shape her decisions as an adult, to be made. A single axis analysis, in this case the predominant axis of gender, would fail to provide an in-depth understanding of her poverty, of why she was not at school, how, aged six she was vulnerable and disempowered, and the effects of cultural inhibitors

which prevented her from disclosing her sexual abuse by her uncle. The premise of this thesis has been to give voice to the women participants and so the analysis would not be true to their lived experiences if there was no understanding of the multiple vectors of inequality they experience and how they work together to subjugate them in childhood as well as in adulthood and even into their role as wives, mothers, daughters and sisters.

Mothers' and daughters' experiences of domestic violence, across family generations is an example of how an intersectional analysis has aided a more in-depth understanding of domestic violence across generations within families. Family members, including grandfathers, mothers and uncles can be perpetrators, which means the extent of domestic violence is inter-generational as well as gender based, where the majority of perpetrators are older than the victims, and are more likely to be men who occupy a privileged status within the family, including the extended family. The extent of the power perpetrated across family generations is also across space. For example in Shanaya's case, her family, although living in India, refused to allow Shanaya to reveal to anyone that her husband was gay. They wanted her to remain in the marriage, despite the violence she was experiencing from her husband and in-laws. The intersectional analysis has shed further light on power within family relationships where the dynamics span across space, family generations as well as gender and sexuality.

An example of where intersectional analysis has provided a deeper understanding of intergenerational and gender based power and abuse is where the empirical findings have shown how mothers and daughters can be victims of domestic violence at the same time and from the same perpetrator within their family, and which can lead to different consequences for each woman. Black Feminist research has undertaken limited exploration of mothers' and daughters' concurrent experiences of power from a male relative. Scholarly focus has been on individual women's experiences of domestic violence (Gill 2004); mothers as perpetrators of abuse as well as fathers (Gill and Brah 2014) and cases where sisters have experienced familial violence at different times (Siddiqui 2013). Although Gill and Brah (2014) refer to the collective notion of violence from perpetrators who uphold the community's honour, mothers and daughters, as joint upholders of honour, are not considered. Mothers and daughters, together, can be coerced to conform to patriarchal norms at the same time, sharing gender but spanning family generations.

The use of the analogy of the see-saw of power, referred to earlier, illustrates how a mother and daughter can both be in the elevated position and the beholder of the power,

held by those such as husband, uncle or brother-in-law situated in the lower, more powerful position. Intersectional analysis can be used to demonstrate how the multiple axes work to keep both women in the elevated position, building on the key concepts of intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991). Firstly by analysing the intersections of the social categories that each woman occupies, separately and then jointly, with the mother and daughter as a pair. The pairing denotes an intergenerational familial relationship; that of mother and daughter. The intersections of social axes pertaining to the individual women may differ. To illustrate this, I use the example of Taslin and her mother. The intersecting axes of oppression for Taslin's mother were gender, being a lone parent and living in poverty and for Taslin, age (young), gender, poverty and citizenship (British citizen who can sponsor a spouse to enter the UK). The axes of oppression common to both women were gender and poverty. This shows that both Taslin and her mother, although of different generations, were victims of power and oppression at the same time. The complete intersectional analysis is shown in Figure 7-1.

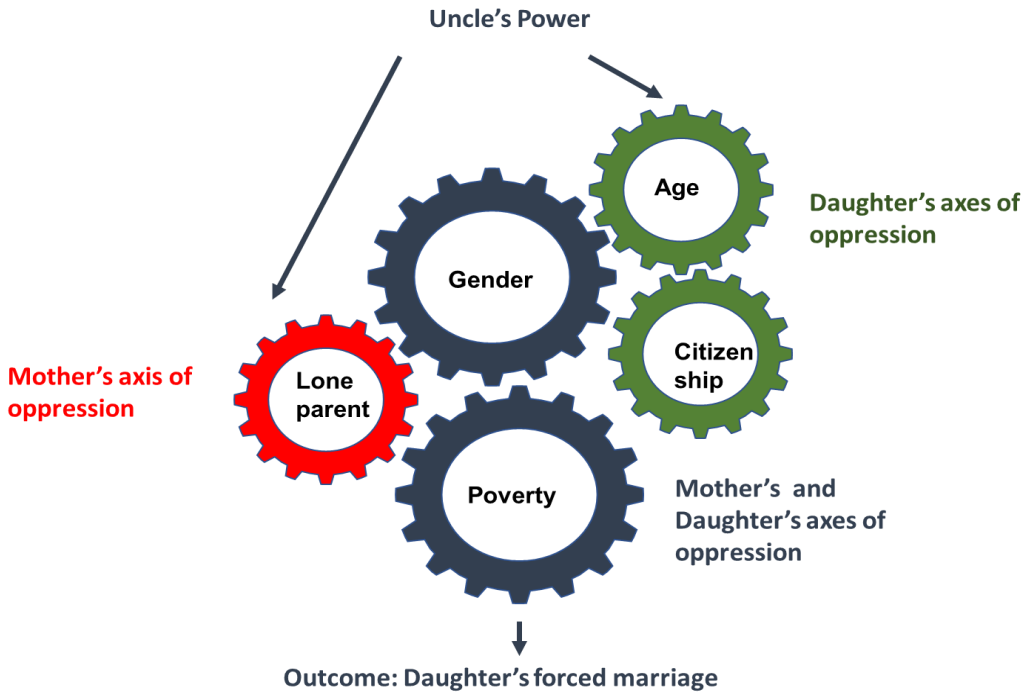

Figure 7-1: The Interlocking Axes of Oppression Affecting Taslin and her Mother

I have used gears in Figure 7-1, to show the power of interlocking axes affecting each of the women separately. I then illustrate the combined effects for both women to highlight the outcome. Each gear represents a single axis of oppression. The cogs on each gear

(or axis of oppression) mesh with another gear and show how the combined effects of multiple axes of oppression operate. For example, the cogs on the gear of age mesh with cogs on the gears of citizenship, poverty and gender causing all four gears to rotate. The cogs of lone parent gear mesh with poverty and gender gears and also rotate. The whole process of gears working with other gears transmit the direction of power where the victims of power who are women, and across family generations. A force is required to work the gears and produce the outcome. In this case it was Taslin's uncle who was the force. His power turned those gears and the cogs meshed.

There are axes of oppression that affected Taslin specifically, there are social categories that affected her mum specifically and some that affected both women. It is the combination of all three scenarios that produce the outcome, Taslin's forced marriage. In other words, Taslin's uncle's power resulted in Taslin's forced marriage. By analysing Taslin's gender alone, or just the intersection of the categories affecting her would not have provided the deeper insight into the workings of power across the family generations of women. By using intersectionality to analyse the combination of axes of oppression across gender and family generations, a nuanced interpretation and deeper understanding is provided into how power affected the women, as mother and daughter, and led to Taslin's forced marriage.

Taslin's uncle, exploited his privileged status as an adult male member of the extended family, to enforce power over and coerce Taslin's mother, a lone parent. The extent of his abuse of his power spanned generations within the family, specifically against Taslin. This shows power is perpetrated usually across the male line, across generations of women. The outcome that resulted from the expanse of the abuse of power by Taslin's uncle, was Taslin's forced transnational marriage in Pakistan and the forced separation of mother and daughter.

The use of gears to represent the interlocking axes of oppression not only show clearly how they interact with each other but also, that the interactions of axes of oppression are not static, which reflects the complexity of the workings of power. Crenshaw (1991) adopted the image of intersections at a junction with many roads (axes) reaching the intersection, a static end point with lack of clarity on the outcome. The use of gears illustrates how the different axes interlock. Some axes may not directly interlock with other axes, as the case of lone parent and citizenship in Figure 7-1 but that is less important. It is how the gears illustrate the fluid and dynamic nature of the effect of power to produce an outcome that is most significant. The outcome was a forced marriage,

which is another important area within Black Feminist scholarship which critiques forced marriage as part of the Continuum of Violence and shows how power does not just work through gender oppression but also that it is intergenerational. The use of intersectionality has enabled an approach to understand the gradations of power that are distinct across gender and across family generations and how analysing both gives a much deeper and more contextual understanding of women's lives.

7.3 Sites and Sources of Violence

South Asian women's experiences of patterns of violence from multiple perpetrators over time and space has received limited attention in research, policy and practice. When referring to the type of violence called the threat of violence, Kelly (1988) identifies possible perpetrators as husbands or brothers. Domestic violence perpetrators are confined to lovers and husbands and so the primary reference point is intimate partner violence. This study has provided new insights into who the perpetrators can be in the Continuum of Violence, as South Asian women can experience (father, mother, uncle, husband, partner, brother, and members of the birth family of the partner) as well as the types of violence perpetrated by them. This adds to Kelly's (1988) study, where South Asian women's experiences can additionally relate to familial violence consisting of multiple perpetrators such as mothers-in-law, as well as extended family members, such as uncles in addition to intimate partners.

I build on Siddiqui's (2013) critique of the Continuum of Violence by expanding on the perpetrators who are involved in the parallel experiences of violence that women can experience. I argue that it is not enough to merely state there are multiple perpetrators because it does not provide an in-depth understanding of who is doing the perpetrating, when they are doing it, and what their association or relationship with the victim is. This knowledge is important because I propose that there is a distinction between the sites of violence and the sources of violence. The sites of violence refer to the locations of the violence within a woman's network of relationships, and can include immediate family, extended family, community, partner's birth family, intimate relationship. The sources of violence refer to the specific identity of the perpetrators (or node or nodes on the network of relationships). They are ultimately the person or persons who are the source of power. They could be intimate partners, grandparents, parents, siblings, uncles, aunts, in-laws, or partner's parents, who held power over the woman.

Identifying sites and sources of violence show exactly who is perpetrating the violence, how they are related or what their relationship is with the victim, when the violence is

happening and how the violence from the different perpetrators can overlap in time. Thus, Table 7-1: shows, in Kiran's case she had three sites of violence; her immediate family, extended family and her intimate relationships. She had four sources of violence; her boyfriend, her parents, her cousin and her husband.

Site of Violence	Source of Violence
Intimate Relationship	Boyfriend
Intimate Relationship	Husband
Immediate Family	Parents
Extended Family	Cousin

Table 7-1: Sites and Sources of Violence for Kiran

Kelly's (1988) research covers the type of violence e.g. sexual assault, domestic violence, incest and when those acts of violence occurred, for example, in adulthood or childhood. What is missing is consideration of situations where the violence occurred at the same time and who was perpetrating the violence when it occurred simultaneously. By defining the sites and sources of violence the parallel experiences of violence South Asian women can experience can be identified. This is illustrated using Kiran's experiences in Figure 7-2.

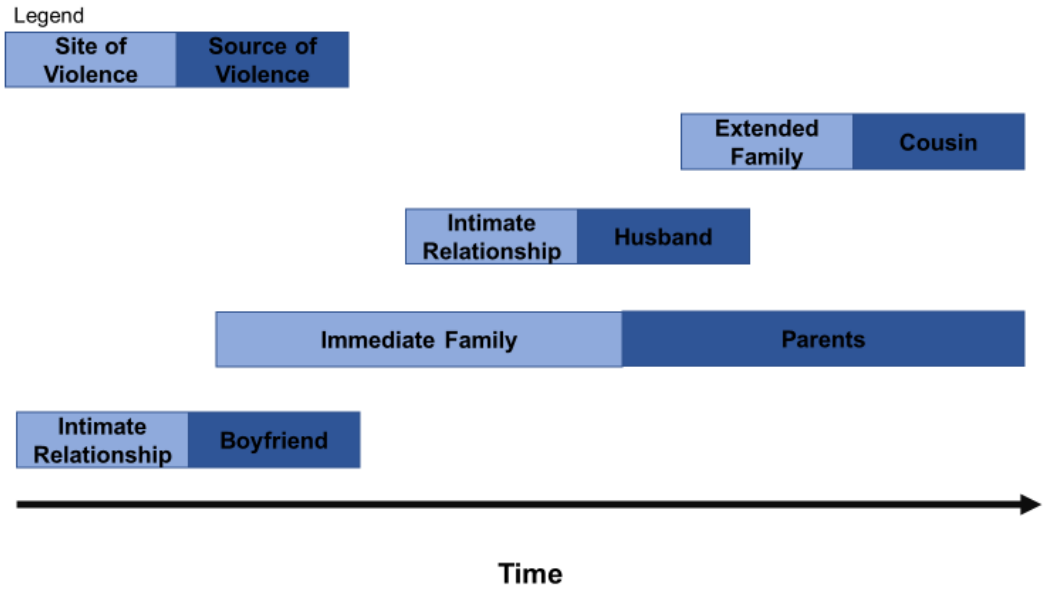

Figure 7-2: Kiran's Experiences of Sites and Sources of Violence Over Time

Figure 7-2 shows, how over time, Kiran was experiencing violence from her boyfriend and then for a period of time from both her boyfriend and her parents. She continued to experience violence from her parents even whilst married. At the behest of her parents she also experienced violence from her cousin. Experiencing violence from multiple perpetrators at the same time can show how the experiences can merge into each other.

By identifying the sources and sites of violence and how the violence can occur in parallel over time, it facilitates further understanding of how violence merges into each other. In the theory of the Continuum of Violence (Kelly 1988) identifies how acts of violence can shade into each other. Kelly gives the example of women's experiences of psychological abuse and the threat of violence as part of the incest they experienced. Likewise, the women in this research experienced physical violence, the threat of violence, psychological abuse as part of violence of forced marriage. Furthermore, as women experienced multiple sites of violence, this research takes further the Continuum of Violence by locating the sites of these events as well as the events themselves. Kiran experienced physical violence from her first boyfriend; and psychological abuse (she was abandoned by him) all part of domestic violence. She experienced the threat of violence, forced abortion (physical violence), ostracism from her family (psychological abuse) again, forms of domestic violence. She also experienced physical violence and financial abuse and psychological violence from her husband. These manifestations of violence are shown in Table 7-2. Thus, the events shade into each other in parallel. Again, South Asian women's experiences of familial and intimate partner violence contribute to the theory of the Continuum of Violence.

Site of Violence	Source of Violence	Types of Violence
Intimate Relationship	Boyfriend	Physical violence
Intimate Relationship	Husband	Physical Violence Threat of violence Psychological abuse
Immediate Family	Parents	Forced abortion Threat of violence Ostracised from Family Psychological abuse
Extended Family	Cousin	Threat of violence Psychological Abuse

Table 7-2: Violence Shading into Each Other Along with the Sites and Sources of Violence

By identifying where in the network of a woman's relationships the violence is located, together with who is perpetrating the violence and holding the power over a woman, South Asian women's experiences of concurrent familial and intimate partner violence can be recognised. This adds to a deeper understanding of the complexity and fluidity of power in women's lived experiences of domestic violence within the Continuum of Violence and facilitating women's subordination to power over time.

7.4 Power to the Pivot

Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology has been useful in identifying and stressing the importance of analysing power and control in South Asian women's lives (Anitha and Gill 2009, Wilson 2007, Thiara and Gill 2010a). This thesis contributes to Black Feminist scholarship on South Asian women's experiences of domestic violence by introducing the concept of the see-saw of power. The notion of the see-saw shows the control of power is held by the person at the bottom of the see-saw. A shift in force can elevate the person from the bottom of the see-saw to the top. Thus, a person on the see-saw rises and descends representing power lost and gained respectively. Women participants who felt empowered were at the bottom of the see-saw and when they were unable to resist the oppression of power, they were in the elevated position of the see-saw. For example Nirvair was subordinate to the brutalising power of domestic violence form her husband. She regained power by burning his documents for obtaining residency in the UK. Nirvair see-sawed from the elevated, subordinate position to the more powerful, lower position.

Some women had, in addition to domestic violence from their intimate partner, also experienced domestic violence from their families. Women gained and lost power in different relationships and at different times. Having escaped violence from their families, women were in the powerful, resisting position, in relation to their families, that is at the bottom of the see-saw. Whilst, at the same time, they could also be experiencing domestic violence from their intimate partner which would place them in the subordinate, that is, in the elevated position on the see-saw. Jazmin escaped violence from her mother and her great-uncle which placed her in the lower more powerful position on the see-saw. At the same time, she was experiencing intimate partner violence and was in the raised position. The Continuum of Violence looks at the prevalence of violence in

women's lives. It reflects a static image of the violence, not a dynamic or fluid one. I build on the scholarly work of the Continuum of Violence by demonstrating that South Asian women can experience parallels of violence; from their families and their partners, reflecting another example of the prevalence of violence in women's lives such that it was normalised.

The force of power shows the extent to which it hinders women's abilities to leave a violent relationship, especially if they have chosen their partners against accepted social convention. A major finding was that a number of women said they stayed in the violent intimate relationship longer than they wanted or felt unable to leave because they had strayed out of socially sanctioned honour codes of sexual morality and behaviour and chosen their own intimate partners. For example, Renaisha stayed in her marriage for seventeen years before she left it and told her parents about the violence, even though they had respected and supported her decision to marry her husband. Power was working in very subtle ways but the effect was huge. The very act of choosing a partner became the barrier to leaving the relationship. The effect is that the very act of doing agency, of exercising freedom, becomes the barricade that locks them in the violent relationship. This demonstrates the complexity and fluid motion of power where the rising or descending of a see-saw represents the fluid nature of power and control, where, over time and space women gain or lose power as they seek to effect change in their lives. It also shows the complexity and contradictory nature of women's experiences where they may be resistant to power in one relationship, whilst at the same time acquiesce to the power in another relationship.

The see-saw shows the pervasiveness of patriarchy where fathers can bequeath the power to other male actors of patriarchy such as the fiancé, as Pania experienced. Where fathers are unable to assert their patriarchal role as head of the family, for example due to death, other male relatives assume the role and enforce power over the women. For example Taslin's uncle took over patriarchal power when her father was addicted to drugs, alcohol and gambling. That power could be exerted over the women participants and their mothers at the same time, where both sat in the elevated position. Exploiting the intersection of multiple social categories enables the power holder to assert and maintain power over the person they are oppressing. In addition to understanding the multiple axes of oppression from the victim's perspective the see-saw of power furthers the understanding of how the oppression is secured and maintained

by the perpetrators. Perpetrators exploit the forces of pervasive patriarchal notions such as honour and shame together with axes of oppression.

The fluidity of power was evident in the women's responses to power which included both resistance and resilience, as well as subordination. Whilst experiencing violence on a continuum both from their intimate partners and their families, the women regained some self-power. Men were able to coerce women, enforcing social norms and looking after the honour of their families. For example Taslin was forced to marry, forced in live in Pakistan, forced to have sex with her husband. On her return to the UK, she refused to allow her husband to live with her, despite protestations from her family, including her abusive uncle. She initiated a sharia divorce and held her uncle as the perpetrator behind her forced marriage. Not only did the see-saw swing in Taslin's favour, placing her in the powerful lower position, but she remained there. She was able to sustain her self-power. She did not go back to her husband. She stayed in the community and kept in touch with her family, as did Renaisha. Some women became isolated from their families and never returned to their parents' home to concede that they were "wrong" to have transgressed social norms. Sustaining self-power is key to women's autonomy of choice and agency. Women used power to control their own lives. The sustainability of power resides in the pivot; it holds the gendered power. If the pivot is moved closer to choice and consent, resistance and resilience, then the subjugating nature of oppression loses its power and so remains in the elevated position as shown in Figure 7-3.

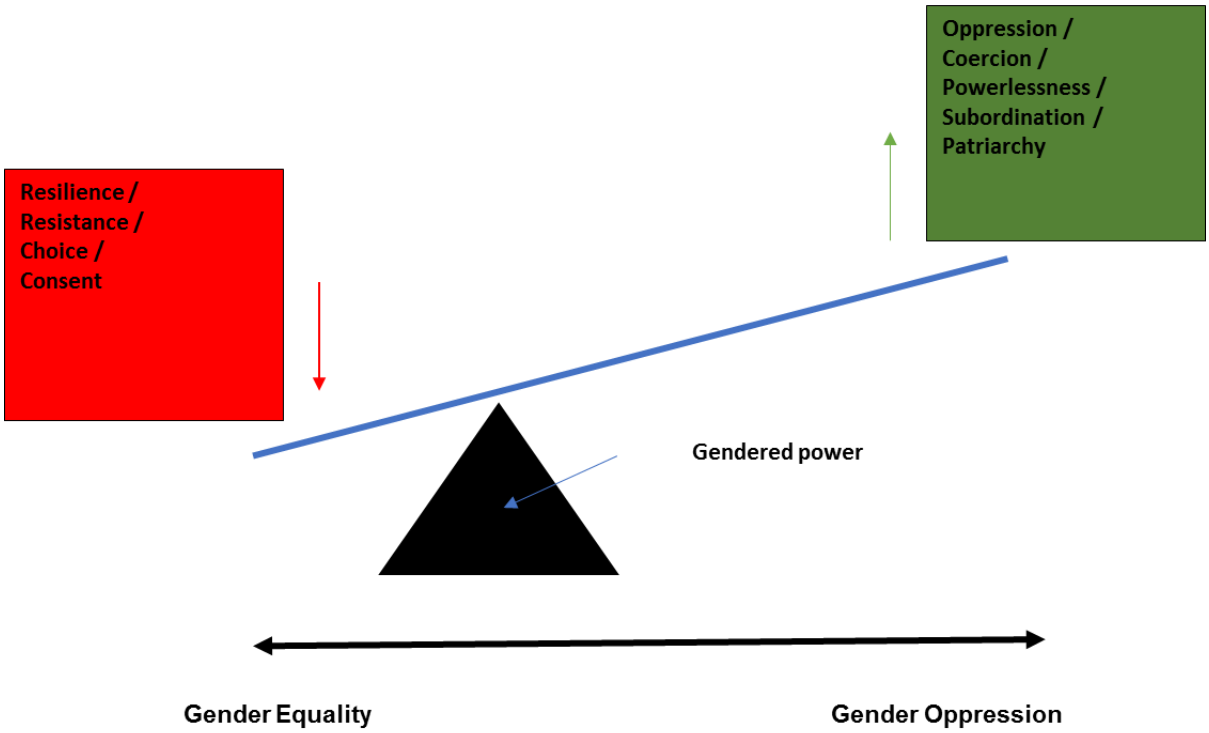

Figure 7-3: The Power of the Pivot

The reason the pivot moved closer to Taslin is because she was able to remove some of the intersecting axes of oppression. She could refuse her husband because she was older and had financial means. She had her own home in the UK. She also realised that her worst fears had been realised and there no further situations or people to fear so she was less susceptible to coercion. The pivot represents a move closer gender equality but that move closer is only possible by removing the intersecting nature of axes of oppression such as age, and poverty. This is about women's use of power. By moving the pivot closer to the actions of choice, resilience and resistance an equilibrium of power is achieved, an equality of autonomous power as opposed to power over. Coercion works through the exploitation of intersecting multiple axes of oppression. By removing the vulnerability to the axes, women can regain and sustain power and have free choice and autonomy in their lives. Women negotiated power and hence pushed the pivot towards them to sustain their empowered state.

It is important to highlight that there is fluidity in women's responses to power as Mahmood (2005) points out, that women's actions have to be seen in the context of their lives and the social and patriarchal constraints they live in which may mean that in order to survive they are subordinate, resistive or resilient to power. For example Taslin's

experiences of forced marriage and forced pregnancy in Pakistan placed her in the less powerful elevated position in relation to her and her husband's family, in particular her uncle, her husband and her in-laws. In order to return to the UK she relented and had sex with her husband. In the UK, she initiated divorce proceedings and refused to live with her husband showing her transition to a position of resistance, a more powerful position where she was in control and hence at the bottom of the see-saw and able to resist the Continuum of Violence she had experienced from her family members.

7.5 The Spiral of Survival

This research has contributed to debates within Black Feminism surrounding the spectrum of arranged and forced marriage. Black Feminists have argued how the dichotomous nature of arranged and forced marriage does not give visibility to the multiplicity of South Asian women's experiences of marriage (Anitha and Gill 2009, Wilson 2006). The boundaries between what constitutes an arranged marriage and what constitutes a forced marriage involve subtle gradations of choice, consent, coercion, power and pressure brought to bear on women (Siddiqui 2003a, Phillips and Dustin 2004, Anitha and Gill 2009).

The aim of this research was to examine and explore South Asian women's experiences of choosing their intimate partner. In Chapter 2, I presented a spectrum that encapsulated these experiences within varying degrees of coercion, choice and consent with autonomy of choice at one end and forced marriage at the other end, shown in Figure 7-4.

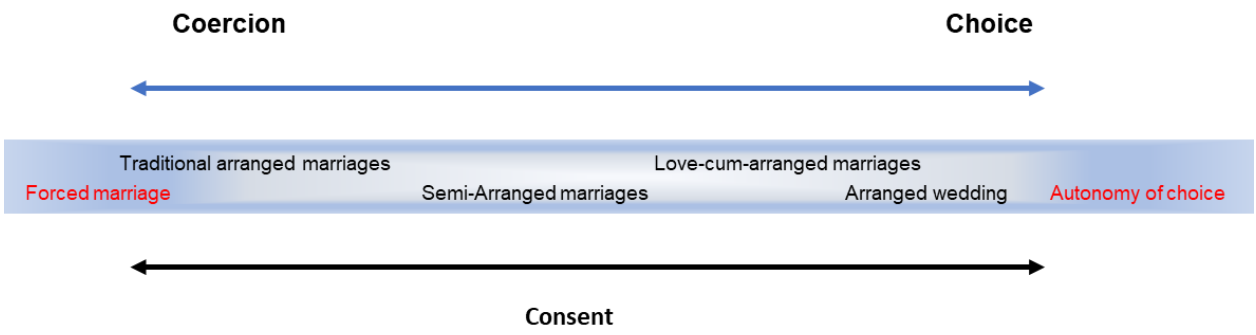

Figure 7-4: The Spectrum of Forming Intimate Relationships

Rather than focus on the types of practices in forming intimate relationships such as dating a partner, or an arranged marriage, this spectrum captures the range of experiences between the two opposite endpoints, choice and coercion. In addition consent sits across this spectrum because consent can be given anywhere along it. Women can enter the spectrum at any point and their final "position" on the spectrum reflects the extent of pressure and force they experience. Women in relationships of choice were not immune to patriarchal forces of power and control. I argue these pressures apply to women whose experiences are not situated consecutively along the spectrum, and so the emphasis on the spectrum as a linear, gradational single experience with arranged marriage at one end and forced marriage at the other end also hides the multiplicity of women's experiences. For example Gurpreet was dating her partner and so would be at the choice end of the spectrum to begin with. She recalled feeling "trapped" both by her parents and her boyfriend's parents and was forced into the marriage, by her boyfriend's parents. So eventually her experiences are situated at the coercion end of the spectrum.

The empirical findings have shown that South Asian women's experiences of marriage do not fit precisely into the binary notion of choice or coercion. Nor can they be placed on a supposed spectrum of arranged and forced marriage. Women experienced gradations of choice, consent, coercion, power and pressure, but those experiences did not lie along a spectrum representing a linear trajectory with choice at one end and coercion at the other. Women's experiences showed that it was possible to traverse these categories but then could circle back. Women could experience choice and then coercion and later consent. Experiences of relationships and personal responses to the choices available are complex, messy and contradictory.

For example Samia's experiences showed that initially she believed she was choosing her partner and consenting to their marriage but later she concluded that she was coerced into it. Women's experiences can spiral between choice, consent, and coercion. I argue for the centring of women's responses of resistance and resilience to domestic violence as opposed to choice, coercion and consent within discourses and scholarship of domestic violence. For example Samia's initial sense of choice and consent was a form of resistance. By dating her partner she was resisting social norms of forming an intimate relationship. She ended up consenting to marrying her partner under coercion and so confirming social norms which, for her, was a form of resilience. This demonstrates that women's experiences are not on a linear trajectory. They spiral up

and down depending on the oppression women are facing and their responses to it in the form of resistance, resilience and survival. The women's responses, whether resistance or resilience, were about surviving. For example Taslin's decision to have sex with her husband in Pakistan was a way of surviving so that she could return to the UK. Krishna's responses to her first husband's violence was to survive, especially after he set fire to her bed. In her second marriage it was the survival of her children, as well as herself, that made her decide to leave. I therefore suggest that the focus of women's responses to familial and intimate partner violence centres on their survival of the oppression through their voices. I have encapsulated women's resistance and resilience as a form of surviving oppression in Figure 7-5.

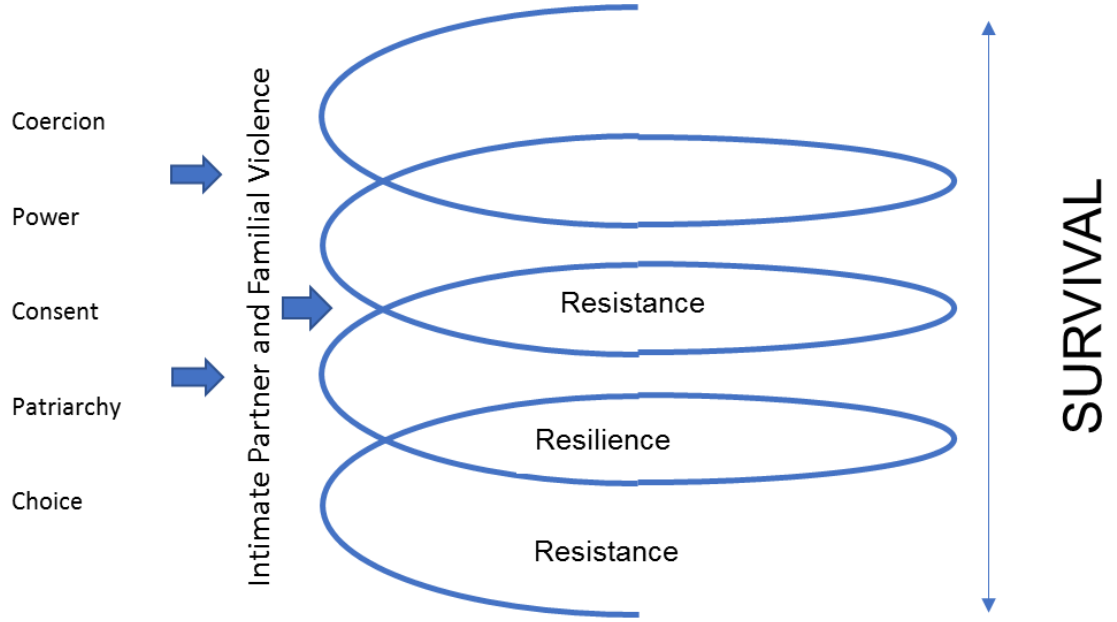

Figure 7-5: The Spiral of Survival

The forces of power, coercion, patriarchy, choice and consent are the cause of women's experiences of familial and intimate partner violence. Women respond in different ways to such forces. Their responses are captured in the spiral to represent the dynamic and fluid nature of those responses. Women can spiral up and down in their responses to power, alternating from resistance to resilience and back again. This shows the dynamic nature of women's responses to power. Sara was in a relationship of choice with her intimate partner, a form of resistance to social norms. She was then coerced into a forced marriage, a form of subordination to the power and pressure but she was also resilient through it. Her resistance was evident in her initiation of divorce proceedings with her husband and her resumption of her relationship with her former intimate partner. At the

same time, she was also resisting her parents' domestic violence. Sara's experience of intimate partner violence was a form of resilience. All of these behaviours and responses to oppression are encapsulated in Sara's survival. Sara's experiences of resistance and resilience spiralled up and down according to the oppression she was facing. The responses that spiralled up and down were all responses to survival. Sara survived her forced marriage. She survived her parents' domestic violence towards her. She survived intimate partner violence and today she is surviving as a single parent raising her children, isolated from her family. She has withstood multiple forms of oppression from multiple perpetrators, all as a consequence of transgressing social norms, by forming an intimate partner relationship.

Sara experienced both a forced marriage and an intimate relationship of choice. Current scholarship links arranged marriage and forced marriage (Gill and Harvey 2017, Anitha and Gill 2011, Siddiqui 2013) which I argue is problematic because it reinforces the assumption that South Asian women's experiences of marriage are always situated along an arranged and forced marriage spectrum. To say there is choice in arranged marriage and not in a forced marriage is too simplistic. By dating a partner, a woman is consenting to an intimate relationship but not necessarily choosing to marry the person. The notion of choice is therefore fluid encapsulating pressure and power within an intimate relationship and with their families.

The empirical findings demonstrate women who were dating their partners and hence in a relationship of choice, could still be forced into a marriage with them. For example both Gurpreet and Samia were dating their intimate partners and both were forced into marriage. Both women started by being resistant and ended confirming social norms because they were coerced. In chapter 2 I suggested that in order to capture the diversity of relationships that include marriages and other long-term relationships, the focus has to centre on women's experiences of forming intimate relationships rather than specific marriage practices. Varying degrees of choice and coercion and consent run through South Asian women's experiences within the multiple ways of forming intimate relationships.

Centring women's resistive and resilient responses as a consequence of transgressing social norms of marriage and by decoupling forced marriage from arranged marriage opens up the opportunity for a discourse that centres on the women's survival of familial and intimate partner violence. It also provides a deeper insight into women's

experiences where the different manifestations of forming an intimate relationship can be identified and analysis is not restricted to arranged marriage or forced marriage.

7.6 Review of the Conceptual Framework

Kelly (1988) emphasises the prevalence of sexual violence in women's lives, describes the types of male violence and contextualises the violence as manifestations of men's power over women within the concept of the Continuum of Violence. The Continuum of Violence is not a linear representation because women's responses to domestic violence are complex (Kelly 1988). Black Feminism has shown how South Asian women's specific experiences including honour based violence, forced marriage and domestic violence are all part of the Continuum of Violence (Siddiqui 2013). In this chapter I have presented the analysis of the concurrent nature of violence that South Asian women can experience. I have demonstrated how women sustained self-power and control throughout their experiences of domestic violence from their family and their intimate partner. I argued that the range of women's experiences capture resistance and resilience, which are components of survival. I emphasised that this supports a focus on experiences of forming intimate relationships as opposed to marriage practices.

The findings in this research were analysed through the oriignal conceptual framework, introduced in chapter 2, which brought together the spectrum of forming a marriage/intimate relationship with the Continuum of Violence to show where the two could overlap and collide in women's lives. Through the lens of Black Feminism and intersectionality women's lives were interpreted. Figure 7-6 shows the original conceptual framework described in chapter 2.

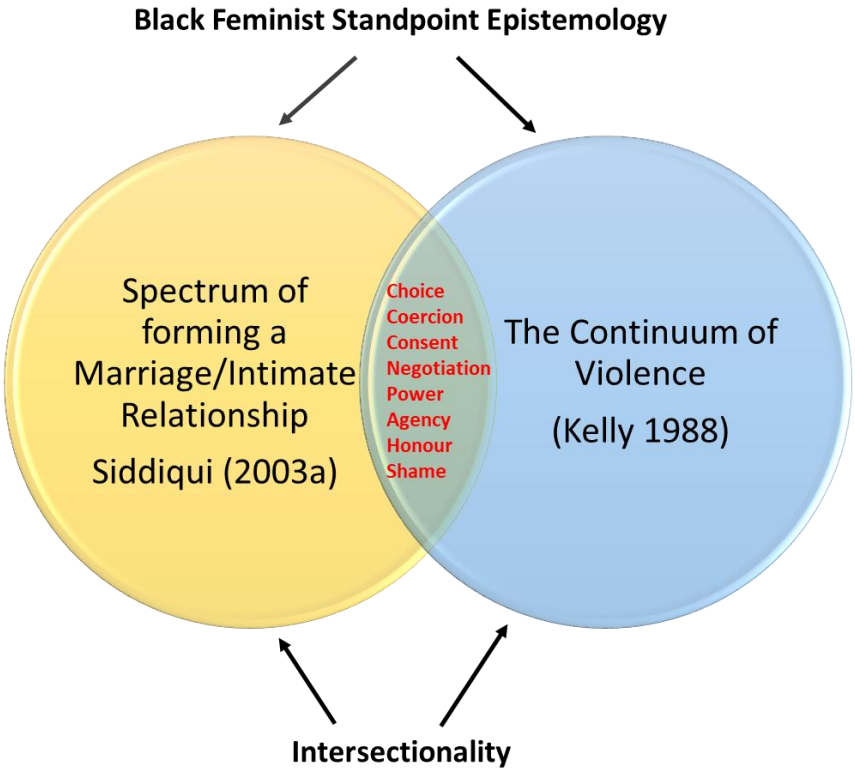

Figure 7-6: Original Conceptual Framework

This section reviews and develops the conceptual framework, in light of its use in interpreting South Asian women's experiences of transgressing social norms, choosing an intimate partner and their experiences of familial and intimate partner violence and the key discussion areas covered in the earlier sections in this chapter.

Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology was beneficial because its scholarship is pertinent to understanding South Asian women's specific experiences of domestic violence and specific to this study, familial and intimate partner violence. The empirical analysis revealed the ways in which South Asian women's experiences of forming intimate relationships collided or clashed with their experiences of the Continuum of Violence. Their experiences of both merged into each other because their everyday lives consisted of violence including emotional violence, isolation from their families, as well as physical violence. These occurred due to gender inequality maintained via patriarchal forces and social constraints.

The empirical findings also revealed that boundaries were blurred between women's experiences of intimate partner violence and familial violence. For example Pania experienced coercion and abuse of power within her intimate partner relationship and,

also from her father. To show the different manifestations of women's experiences of familial violence and of intimate partner violence, sites and sources of violence locate who is perpetrating the violence and how they are related to the woman. This provides a nuanced view of the women's experiences reflecting the concurrent nature of violence that South Asian women can experience. This has been identified because Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology has highlighted how choice, coercion, consent, negotiation, agency, honour, shame and power impact on South Asian women's experiences of familial violence and intimate partner violence. Furthermore by using intersectionality to understand how the multiple sites of oppression manifest in women's experiences of domestic violence, women's see-sawing of responses to the power of familial violence and intimate partner violence can also be determined.

Another reason for providing a distinction between familial violence and intimate partner violence within the Continuum of Violence, seen through the lens of Black Feminist Standpoint, is that the women participants cited, that for them, the biggest area of trauma was the domestic violence they experienced at the hands of their families. Kelly (1988: 76) raises the important issue that there is no hierarchy of forms of violence, where some are considered more serious than others, but I question whether this would be the view of this cohort of women affected by violence. Kelly's emphasis is based on the prevalence of violence that women encounter on a daily basis. By examining women's experiences of both familial violence and intimate partner violence together in their lives, after escaping not only family violence but also intimate partner violence, this research has further demonstrated a key finding that women compared the violence. What emerged from the empirical findings was that women referred to familial violence with more frequency and they felt the personal impact of familial violence was more significant than the intimate partner violence.

This was evident in the amount of time, during the one-to-one interviews, that the women spent voicing their experiences of violence from their families in comparison to that of their intimate partners. For example during the interview, Anita spent less time talking about the violence she experienced from her intimate partner, in comparison to the extent of her comments about the violence meted out by her family towards her. It shows that, for this cohort of women, they did not consider the types of violence perpetrated by their families, to that perpetrated by their intimate partners, on an equal footing. However this is not to minimise the domestic violence committed by their intimate partners.

I suggest that the reason the women felt a greater sense of trauma due to familial violence was not just solely to do with the actual domestic violence they experienced, it was because they felt rejected and betrayed by their families. For example Kiran's father had stated, according to Kiran, that "My daughter has died". This represents complete rejection of Kiran, by her family. They had forced her to have an abortion. She was isolated from them. The women's families were the ones who were supposed to protect them, love them, support them and nurture them. Again, in Kiran's example she talked about her sense of rejection when her family cut off contact with her, even when they knew about the domestic violence she was experiencing from her intimate partner. It shows how applying a Black Feminist framework and using intersectionality conveyed the nuances of power through honour and shame and how it manifested in the multiple sites of oppression that women can occupy.

There was a consequence to women's sense of greater betrayal and rejection by their families than of their intimate partners. It was how the women viewed themselves, their religion and their culture. The sense of rejection and betrayal from their families influenced the women's identity. For example, Anita's statements about hating all Brown people was in the context of such experiences of being sent to Pakistan to be married when she was fifteen by her family and the abuse she received from her family in Pakistan, as well as the UK. Again Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology has enabled this insight because of its scholarship on internalised oppression.

Women internalised the acceptance of, and reproduced tropes, portraying South Asian cultures as 'backward' and in effect pathologised and demonised their own cultural heritage. This was seen in the way Sara rejected "Asian" smells and food, for example. The cloak of identity the women wore was linked to their experiences, not of culture, but of gender inequality through domestic violence at the hands of their families. One way of surviving such oppression was to shed that cloak and obtain a new one; in effect the women rejected their culture and heritage and created a new identity for themselves. I argue these are acts of survival responses to the oppression they faced.

Thus, the challenge for a revised conceptual framework is to provide a nuanced understanding of the effects of familial violence on women and its distinction to the effects of intimate partner violence, by highlighting the manifestations of violence that women can experience. For instance Sara's first intimate relationship was a forced marriage, which she rejected. As a consequence she experienced a prevalence of violence from her family including forced isolation and financial abuse. In Sara's second

relationship, her intimate relationship of choice, she could not bring herself to marry him because of her historical experiences of domestic violence from her family. She then experienced domestic violence from her partner; some of which was his exploitation of her experiences of isolation from her family; layers of violence. At the same time the domestic violence from her family continued. She experienced power and coercion from her family and partner. These experiences show the merging and blurring of familial violence and intimate partner violence to the extent that the effect of such oppression meant that familial violence can eclipse intimate partner violence. Sara's experiences of domestic violence from her family overshadowed her experiences of violence from her intimate partner. Women cannot distinguish between those experiences of domestic violence that are part of an intimate relationship to those that are from the family. For example, the "blurring" of boundaries that women experienced of isolation and abuse from their families (forced marriage, domestic violence from the family) essentially eclipsed the experiences of intimate partner violence.

Familial violence eclipses intimate partner violence because of the strength of power at play. Women have been socialised, coerced and controlled by patriarchal forces at play to the extent that such dominance of power, even in subtle ways influences their agency. This was evident in Sara's case where she could not bring herself to marry her intimate partner because of her experiences of familial violence dominated by the forces of power.

The intergenerational effect of familial and intimate partner violence is evident here also. The women responded to intimate partner violence by exiting the relationship when they believed it affected their own children. For example, Krishna left her second husband when she felt her children were in danger of sexual abuse from their father. One of the reasons Kiran left her violent partner was because of the violence her son was experiencing and its impact on him. Both Krishna and Sara wanted to break the cycle of violence, both familial and intimate partner.

Women's experiences of such power has shown that, although the prevalence of violence existed and manifested in different ways, from multiple perpetrators, and familial violence eclipsed intimate partner violence, within the eclipse, the women did at different times respond in varied ways, to some elements of power. For example, Sara experienced domestic violence from her partner, at the same time she was resisting her parents power and hence in the lower powerful position of the see-saw. This shows the complexity of the manifestations of power in women's lives which creates the conditions for the different responses from women.

Women resisted power in its different and often subtle manifestations. Women experienced violence from families and their intimate partners at the same time but what has come through, in their voices, is their resilience. The women found ways to resist; to push that see-saw down. They were resilient and brought the pivot closer to their position on the see-saw thereby reducing the gender inequality they were facing. As well as removing the effects of the axes of oppression, women sustained their self-power, moving towards gender equality. All the women participants are living their lives, bringing up their children, holding down jobs and surviving the consequences they faced because they transgressed social norms by choosing their own intimate partners. For example, Renaisha survived intimate partner violence; both during the relationship and afterwards, when she was separated from him, and he continued to harass her and the children. Today she is also living as a single parent, with her extended family in India and she undertakes voluntary work in the education sector. I suggest the analysis of women's narratives of their experiences reveal a jigsaw of resilience, resistance and survival. The jigsaw pieces may be different shapes and sizes but in some way are inter-related in their lives. The pieces in the jigsaw may fit differently for different women but show how women's lives and responses to violence are complex, contradictory and messy. The revised conceptual framework incorporates epistemological position, family and intimate partner violence and women's responses in survival, shown in Figure 7-7.

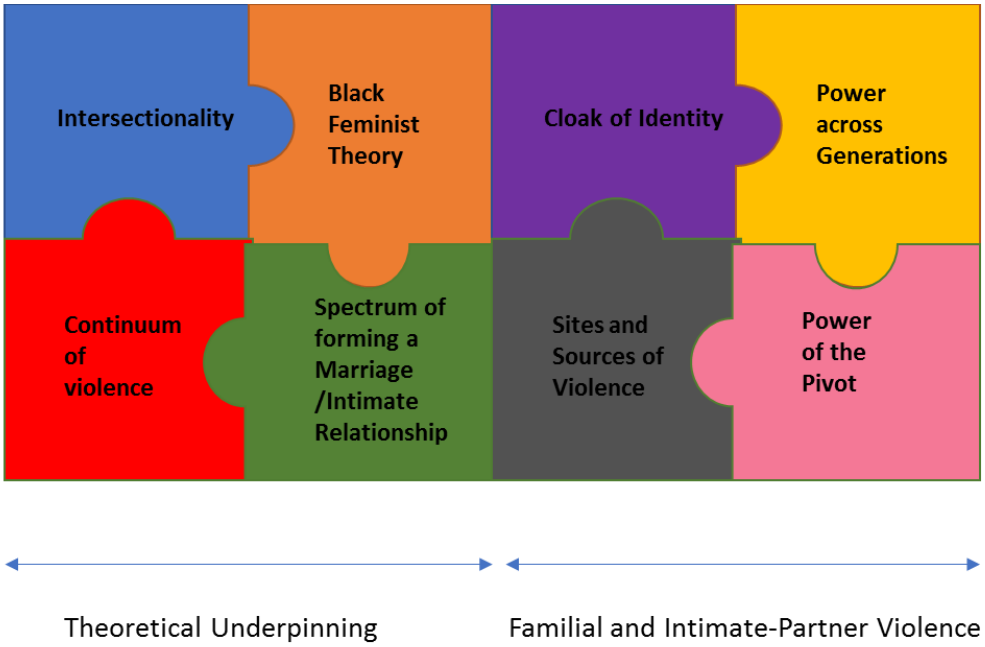

Figure 7-7: Jigsaw of Transgressing Social Norms of Marriage

The conceptual framework of transgressing social norms of marriage is represented as a jigsaw. It consists of two large jigsaws representing component parts to the framework: theoretical underpinning, and familial and intimate partner violence (both made up of smaller jigsaw pieces). The first large jigsaw represents the theories that underpin the conceptual framework; that of intersectionality, the Continuum of Violence, the Spectrum of forming a Marriage / Intimate Relationship and Black Feminist Standpoint epistemology. This research has shown how these theories work together in understanding the complexity of women's lives and their responses to familial and intimate partner violence within patriarchal structures of power. For this research therefore, these theories, or jigsaw pieces, provide an epistemological framework for interpreting South Asian women's experiences of transgressing social norms by choosing their own intimate partners and experiencing familial and intimate partner violence.

The second large jigsaw consists of key areas of analysis that relate to women's experiences of familial and intimate partner violence that have emanated from their voices. The key areas of analysis of women's experiences are shown in the smaller jigsaw pieces: cloak of identity, power across generations, sites and sources of violence and the power of the pivot. The pieces may fit together differently depending on what sustained the women through their experiences of familial and intimate partner violence and what undermined their capacity to survive. The interpretation provided by the theoretical underpinning in the first large jigsaw piece, influence the size of the pieces, to represent the significance of impact on the women's lives, and thus the way in which these pieces fit together. Although represented in figure 7-7 in equal sizes, the difference in size of these smaller pieces is an expression of the fluidity and movement that the forces of power, coercion, consent, patriarchy that impinge on the women and how the women respond, that is in a dynamic and fluid way.

The jigsaw provides a framework to represent how women survive violence they have experienced due to their transgressions of social norms of marriage by choosing their own intimate partner and experiencing familial and intimate partner violence. The framework interprets women's responses, within the context of the social constraints of the situation they found themselves in and where women's choices of agency are acts of survival which can be messy and complicated. For example women may have transgressed social norms, chosen their own partners and stayed in the violent intimate partner relationship longer because of their very act of choosing their intimate partner.

Their agency in staying in the relationship longer was a means for survival. Thus a woman's response may look conformist but is actually a chosen response to ensure the ultimate outcome; her survival and the children's survival. The culmination of these pieces of jigsaw, is that this framework provides a means for interpreting a nuanced understanding of South Asian women's survival when transgressing social norms by choosing an intimate partner and their survival of familial and intimate partner violence.

7.7 Summary of Contributions to Knowledge

The contributions to knowledge are summarised here and divided into three areas: methodological, empirical and theoretical contributions.

7.7.1 Methodological

A methodological contribution to knowledge has been to centre the voices of this cohort of women participants by focusing on their lived experiences, by undertaking qualitative research, using a Black Feminist Standpoint epistemological lens. In addition, an intersectional analysis has identified the extent of patriarchal power across gender and across family generations by analysing women's lived experiences.

The impact of my subjectivity as a cultural insider, who has experienced familial violence and chosen to marry outside of social norms, has been the stirring of my emotions from the sense of injustice the women participants experienced. My own activism has always been fuelled through my own experiences of the effects of patriarchal norms on South Asian women together with the injustices of racism. I felt grief, loss and anger at the dehumanising effect on the women but also joy and delight when women found inner strength to empower themselves and survive in face of familial and intimate partner violence. Whether a cultural insider/outsider working with marginalised groups within sensitive subject areas can have a high emotional impact on the researcher as well as the researched.

7.7.2 Empirical

This research has added to the examination of the influence of the gendered nature and fluidity of power across family generations and women's responses to it. For example, this study has added to our understanding of the workings of power, by demonstrating that the forming of an intimate relationship of choice can become the very barrier to leaving that violent relationship. Due to the oppression they faced from their families, the women participants rejected their identities and formed new identities. The study has also demonstrated that women negotiated the erasure of the multiple axes of oppression

in their lives, to enable them to regain self-power and control in order to make autonomous choices and use their resilience and resistance to survive oppressive power.

This study has added to scholarship on South Asian women's specific experiences of domestic violence, namely that of experiencing familial violence and intimate partner violence concurrently by building on the theory of the Continuum of Violence. The result has been a more nuanced understanding of South Asian women's experiences within the continuum by identifying and distinguishing between the sites of violence (which could include immediate family or the community) and the sources of violence who are the actual perpetrators (such as intimate partners, parents, uncles).

South Asian women's experiences of forming an intimate relationship do not lie along a spectrum representing a linear trajectory with choice at one end and coercion at the other. Rather, women could be resistant and then resilient and later spiral back to resistant behaviour, which were all manifestations of their survival and the support and protection of their children, which was paramount. This research has highlighted South Asian women's own narratives about how they compared their experiences of familial and intimate partner violence and how they situated familial violence as having a greater impact on their lives. The study also demonstrated how mothers' and their daughters' experiences of domestic violence occurred concurrently although their individual experiences differed.

7.7.3 Theoretical

This thesis has added to Black Feminist Standpoint Epistemology by developing a conceptual framework for interpreting the complexity of the perspectives or standpoint of this cohort of South Asian women's experiences of transgressing social norms of marriage and choosing an intimate partner. Employing intersectionality by analysing the multiple sites of oppression that women occupy when experiencing familial and intimate partner violence has provided a deeper insight into the context of oppression in women's lives where the abuse of power worked towards their subjugation. The revised conceptual framework has enabled an understanding of the theoretical underpinnings that work together with the key areas of cloak of identity, power across generations, sites and sources of violence and the power of the pivot. Black Feminist Standpoint Epistemology has been useful in analysing, through their own words, South Asian women's lived experiences and their responses to their transgressions of social norms of marriage, choosing their own partner and of domestic violence. The women's actions

are interpreted as acts of survival against concurrent familial and intimate partner violence.

7.7.4 Future Areas of Research

This research has shown there is a lack of research on this cohort of women, which is South Asian women who have transgressed social norms and chosen their own partners and experienced familial and intimate partner violence. Specific areas for further research are now suggested.

Chapter 4 explored the experiences of violence of mothers and daughters at intersecting of sites of oppression. An area that warrants further examination is the inter-generational effects of mothers and daughters concurrent experiences of domestic violence within the Continuum of Violence.

Chapter 4, explored how different family members were actors of power. An area for further development is the exploration of the dynamics of power which effect how the cycle of violence is broken or not with specific family members, for example how mothers break or do not break the cycle of violence towards their daughters.

This research has focussed on South Asian women who live in the UK. This study may be extended to South Asian women who live in the Asian subcontinent or other western countries and who have transgressed social norms of marriage and chosen their own partners.

Chapter 5 explored women's reflections of choice, coercion and agency when choosing an intimate partner. Therefore an area of further work is to develop Stark's (2007) definition of coercive control to include women's lived experiences of control and power within families and communities within the context of forced marriage and honour based violence.

To provide a deeper examination of the reflexivity, positionality and subjectivity of the researcher, both as a researcher and as activist researching women's experiences of domestic violence. Specific focus would be on the emotional labour and cost as insider and outsider status of the researcher.

7.8 Recommendations for Service Providers

This study has added to the knowledge of the diversity of ways in which South Asian women can experience domestic violence. The following recommendations are made for service providers and practitioners.

1. To reinforce that South Asian women are not a homogenous group. There is diversity of age, nationality, religion and culture.
2. To recognise that women can experience familial and intimate partner violence concurrently.
3. To tailor service provision to meet the needs of those South Asian women who have transgressed social norms of marriage in choosing their own partners and who then experience domestic violence within that relationship.
4. To collate and analyse data on the service users who do not have arranged or forced marriages. This is especially important as diasporic communities become more embedded within mainstream society.
5. To consider the provision of services for mothers and daughters experiencing domestic violence simultaneously and to be aware of how gendered violence spans across family generations, across international space as well as gender.
6. To incorporate the awareness of the sites and sources of violence against women, into their service provision, so that a deeper understanding results of women's experiences of the Continuum of Violence. That is to be fully aware of and who and when is perpetrating violence and their relationship to the service user.
7. To sensitively enquire into women's experiences of family and intimate partner violence within service provision, especially when women have left the family home.
8. To acknowledge issues of personal identity and potential risks of isolation and to respond in nuanced ways to support women.

7.9 Final Words

The aim of this thesis was to critically examine, through a Black Feminist lens, South Asian women's lived experiences of transgressing social norms of marriage with a view to understanding their negotiation in responding to the consequences they faced as a result of such transgressions and hence to inform service delivery practice in the field of domestic violence. This research has been underpinned by the voices of the women participants whose narratives and contributions have provided the means to determine a deeper understanding of their experiences and added to the scholarship of the field of domestic violence by being the root to the new conceptual framework. I would therefore like to finish with the words of a sample of the South Asian women participants who were brave enough to talk about their painful histories to me.

> "So it's almost like I think about it and, and I visualise it erm, but I've never articulated it. Never been verbal about it. So erm, it, it's almost hard err putting it into words. I feel it here (points to her heart)" – Harjit

> … there's a group of women that I work with. That was the same group that I used to go to…I'm giving my lectures and presentations and I'm like "wow, to think I was sitting there, you know, like two and half years ago. What is happening?"… I don't think I would have seen this about three years ago. (laughs) Yeah, I got there in the end. – Nirvair

> I'm kind of honouring the woman that I was, and the girl that I was by kind of continuing to do this work and stick it out and speaking to people like you cos you know I think "yeah, do it" (louder). This needs more research. People need to have a rigorous understanding of what the issues are for women in the situation that I was in, cos I know it's still going on. - Samia

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Appendices

Appendix A Interview Schedule for Group interview and 1 to 1 semi-structured interview

Introduction/Opening

Establish Rapport

Thank them for coming. Introduce self, university, part of PhD research

Explain Purpose

Explain criteria of participants of research, objectives of research, and explain answers may be quoted, but that neither those in group interview, nor their organisation will be named and that I will do my best to ensure they are not identifiable. Explain that the research is about their experiences of choosing their own partner and so it will incorporate any history of domestic violence they have received from their families and or their partner. Explain they can change their mind up to three months from today.

Motivation

Explain benefits and go through participant information sheet with them.

Safety and Confidentiality

Emphasise confidentiality and that anyone can leave or do not have to say anything. Emphasise that we all have a responsibility to ensure each other's confidentiality and ask that what is said in the group interview is not repeated outside.

Talk about disclosure. If anyone discloses a matter which could be regarded as illegal activity such as child abuse, drug abuse, criminal offence then I have a legal obligation (and to adhere to CU's disclosure protocol) to pass on the information to the appropriate professionals including the agency who referred them so that they can help. I will work with the agency to make sure they are kept informed of the process. If they disclose a matter during a session then I will be obliged to stop the session. Check they understand and are happy to

carry on. If anyone leaves without having said anything then reemphasise confidentiality of session to everyone else.

Explain complaint procedure

Ask for consent to record interviews; explain reason for recording interviews. Give participant information sheet which contains written details of purpose of research and consent form, ask them to read. State they are free to ask as many questions and when they are ready to sign if they are happy with it.

Check everyone is ok with audio recording. If yes great if not ask about their concerns. Maybe do a one to one interview with them?

Can review transcript. Transcript with be password protected.

Explain want to keep transcript for ten years. Explain how consent forms are stored

<u>Timeline</u>

Explain length of session – one and a half hours plus I'll be around for an extra half an hour at the end to 'come down' from the discussions. (Note to me: Ensure I follow agency's policies and procedures).

Ask them to complete consent form.

Thank them again and can't do it without them

Do they have any questions?

I'd like to begin by asking you some questions about your background, about yourself, for example where you were born, where you live now, how long were you in relationship, children, siblings (get some view about age, parents, siblings, partner, children, their current job)

WAIT TO SEE IF ANYONE SPEAKS – 1 minute

If no-one speaks – talk about myself – where I was born, my immigrant parents

If someone speaks – great.

Try and get everyone to speak – 5 minutes each (8 participants 40 minutes)

Main Body of Session

As you know this research is about South Asian women who have chosen their own partners. So I wanted to start with a general discussion about you and your family background.

What were you told about how you would get married when you were growing up? (Possible supplementary questions - did you always think "my family will find my partner or did you think I will find my own partner?" Try and find out how they first found out, "Can you remember the first time?" "How did you think it was going to happen, marrying your partner?"

Note to self - rephrase back, ask open questions

What happened in the relationship?

What happened when you decided to leave the relationship?

What did your family say and do?

What were your siblings' responses

With all that's happened to you, what is your feeling about your culture and your faith?

What have they told you children about your experiences?

If you decide to have a relationship in the future what do you think you will do?

Closing of Session

Summarise the main issues discussed. Thank them wholeheartedly for taking the time to come to all of the sessions and being so courageous in talking about their experiences.

Remain in room for a further 30 minutes to just chat with anyone who wants to, as a way of 'coming down' from the session.

Post session work Complete my own reflective diary of the session.

Appendix B Project Briefing Sheet

Study title: British South Asian women's lived experiences and consequences of choosing their own intimate partner

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of British South Asian women who have lived with the notion of 'arranged marriage' through their family and friends and who, as adults, have chosen to form a relationship with a person of their own choice.

Why have I been approached?

You have been approached because you manage an agency that provides specialist domestic violence services for Black and Minority Ethnic women. For the purposes of this study I need to interview British South Asian women who have or are in a relationship with someone they have chosen themselves and have experienced intimate partner violence within that relationship. The partner can be any race, ethnicity, religion, gender and must be over 18 years old and disabled or able bodied. The person can currently be within the relationship or not and the relationship can be for any length of time. I would like to interview you to get an organisational perspective of any change in the nature of clients' experiences of domestic violence and current service provision.

I would also like to ask for your permission and support in recruiting suitable participants for the research and following your advice on how to contact possible participants, organise appointments and ensure their safety.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary. If you or the participants change your minds about taking part in the study you can withdraw at any point during the sessions and at any time in the next three months following that session. If you decide to withdraw, you can contact me using the contact details below, providing me with your participant reference code. Following withdrawal from the study, your data will be destroyed and not used in the study. There are no consequences to deciding that you no longer wish to participate in the study.

You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form to confirm you understand the purpose of the research and agree to help the recruitment of participants and your participation in this study.

What will happen to me if I take part?

There will be a face-to-face semi structured interview with you. The interview will be no more than two hours long.

The questions will centre around experiences of British South Asian women who come from a family background of 'arranged marriage' and have decided to form a relationship with a person of their own choice and then who go on to experience violence within that intimate relationship. The women may also have experienced violence from family and the community as a result of their decision

The interview will cover broad themes of your agency's view of British South Asian women's experiences of familial and intimate partner violence when forming a relationship of choice. Questions will be asked to determine whether you see any differences in the experiences from experiences of women who have experienced arranged/forced marriage.

With your permission, the interview will be recorded using audio recording equipment. This is so I can create a transcript for data analysis purposes and to ensure what was said during the sessions will be complete and accurate. You will be sent the transcript and asked to review your contribution and check you agree with what has been captured is accurate. Please return with any changes marked and with a statement to say you agree to contents of transcript.

If you disclose a matter which could be regarded as illegal activity such as child abuse, drug abuse, criminal offence then I have a legal obligation (and to adhere to Coventry University's disclosure protocol) to pass on the information to the appropriate professionals so that they can help. I will work with the appropriate professionals to make sure you are kept informed of the process. If you disclose a matter during a session then I will be obliged to stop the session.

Where will the research take place?

The interview **will take place either at your agency's offices or in a public place which is safe for both you and me and where the conversation cannot be overheard.** A specific time and place will be agreed with you in advance of the interview.

What if something goes wrong?

If we have to cancel an interview or I cannot attend a group session I will attempt to contact you as soon as possible using the method indicated by you on the consent form. If you change your mind about taking part in the study you can withdraw at any point during the **sessions** and at any time in the three months following that session by contacting me using the email address stated below. If you decide to withdraw all your data be destroyed. This will be done and will not be used in the study.

What is the duration of the research?

The research project is scheduled for three years and is due to be completed at the end of 2017. I will be conducting interviews from January to July 2016.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The benefits of taking part in this research are that it will increase understanding and knowledge to ensure there are appropriate practices and policies concerning British South Asian women and support they may need. There will be benefits to other research institutions that will learn about the findings and conclusions from this research may inform their own studies. The findings will also be shared with other voluntary agencies that provide support to South Asian women.

What if something goes wrong?

You may withdraw from the interview at any time. If things go wrong, or you wish to complain you can contact me, **Professor Hazel Barrett (my Director of Studies)** or the Faculty Ethics Leader. Contact details are given below.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. The data from the study will be kept strictly confidentially and your identity will be kept anonymous. Only I will have access to the data. You will be identified in the data only by your participant reference code. All the consent forms will be stored in a separate, secure (locked) location from the raw data. Your interview responses will be stored in a computer file on the university systems, anonymously and access to the file will be password protected and only I will have access..

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of the study will be used for my PhD thesis. At a later point, parts of the thesis may be published in peer reviewed academic journals. The results of the study

may also be presented at academic conferences and presented and disseminated to agencies.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being organised by Kalwinder Sandhu, a PhD student in the Centre for Communities and Social Justice at Coventry University. The Coventry University is funding the research.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed by the Faculty Ethics Governance Leader, as part of the University Applied Research Committee (UARC).

Contacts for Further Information

Name: Kalwinder Sandhu **Email:** sandhuk9@uni.coventry.ac.uk

Supervisor: Professor Hazel Barrett (h.barrett@coventry.ac.uk)

Faculty Ethics Leader: Dr Phil Dunham, Faculty of Business and Law, Coventry University.

Appendix C Participant Information Sheet

Study title: British South Asian women's lived experiences and consequences of choosing their own intimate partner

What is the purpose of the study?

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of British South Asian women who have grown up with the notion of arranged marriage within their family. As adults they have chosen not to have an arranged marriage and instead to have a relationship with a person of their own choice and then experience domestic abuse within that relationship.

Why have I been approached?

For the purposes of this study I need to interview British South Asian women who have chosen to have a relationship with someone they have chosen themselves and experienced domestic abuse within the relationship. The partner can be any race, ethnicity, religion, age, or gender and disabled or able bodied. The person can currently be in the relationship or not and the relationship can be for any length of time.

Do I have to take part?

No. Participation is entirely voluntary. You do not need to answer any question you do not wish to. If you change your mind about taking part in the study you can withdraw at any point during the interview and at any time in the next three months following it. If you decide to withdraw, you can contact me using the contact details below, providing me with your participant reference code. After withdrawal from the study, your data will be destroyed and not used in the study. There are no consequences if you no longer wish to participate in the study.

You will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form to confirm you understand the purpose of the research and agree to participate in this study.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to come along to an interview to talk about your experiences of forming a relationship with a person you chose yourself. The session will be no more than two hours long. I will cover questions on your views on how we form relationships including arranged marriage within South Asian communities within Britain. You will be asked about how you came to form a relationship with your partner and about your relationship with your partner and your family and any difficulties you experienced in the relationship including domestic abuse.

With your permission the interview will be recorded using audio recording equipment. This is so I can create a transcript for data analysis purposes and to ensure what you said during the interview will be complete and accurate. If later on I would like to explore in some detail a certain part of your original interview I may come back to you with a request for a further, shorter interview and again you do not have to take part.

Before the interview, you will be asked to write down any thoughts, feelings, memories you have about your experiences of forming a relationship with someone you chose and not somebody arranged by your family. Please bring this account to the interview so that you can refer to it during the session if you wish to do so. At the end of the interview, with your permission, I will collect it so that I can use it as part of the study. You do not have to do the writing nor give the writing to me. If you do then again its contents will be transcribed and kept confidential in the same manner as the session/interview data.

Sometime after the interview has been completed, you will also be sent a participant profile. This will be a summary of your situation. It will contain no identifying information. This is so I can refer to you in the context of your relationship and family situation. You will be sent a copy of this profile and asked to review the content and check you agree with the content. Please return with any changes marked and with a statement to say you agree to contents of profile. Or alternatively if you chose you can write the profile yourself.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

You may feel upset or emotional during or after the session as a result of talking about any past experiences that you found emotionally painful. If you feel uncomfortable during the interview or it raises any painful emotions you are free to take a break or end the interview. I will give you a sheet with agencies that you can approach if you feel you need support.

If you disclose a matter which could be regarded as illegal activity such as child abuse, drug abuse, criminal offence then I have a legal obligation (and to adhere to Coventry University's disclosure protocol) to pass on the information to the appropriate professionals including the agency who referred you so that they can help. I will work with the agency to make sure you are kept informed of the process. If you disclose a matter during a session then I will be obliged to stop the session.

Where will the research take place?

The Group interview will take place at a venue that is most suitable for all attendees to get to. All attendees will be informed of the place and time in advance of the session. **Any 1 to 1 interviews will take place in a public place which is safe for both you and me and where the conversation cannot be overheard.** A more specific time and place will be agreed with you in advance of the interview.

What if something goes wrong?

If we have to cancel an interview or you cannot attend a group session I will attempt to contact you as soon as possible using the method indicated by you on the consent form. If you change your mind about taking part in the study you can withdraw at any point and at any time in the three months following the interview by contacting me using the email address stated below. If you decide to withdraw, all your data will be destroyed and will not be used in the study.

What is the duration of the research?

The research project is scheduled for three years and is due to be completed at the end of 2017. I am conducting interviews from January to July 2016.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The benefits of taking part in this research are that it will increase understanding and knowledge to make sure there are appropriate practices and policies concerning British South Asian women and the support they may need. There will be benefit to other research institutions that will learn about the findings and conclusions from this research that will inform their own studies. The findings will also be shared with other voluntary agencies that provide support to South Asian women.

What if something goes wrong?

If you do not wish to be involved in the research anymore, you may withdraw at any time. If things go wrong, or you wish to complain you can contact me, **Professor Hazel Barrett (my Director of Studies)** or the Faculty Ethics Leader. Contact details are given below.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. The data from the study will be kept strictly confidential and your identity will be kept anonymous. Only the researcher will have access to the data. You will be identified in the data only by your participant reference code. All the consent forms will be stored in a separate, secure (locked) location from the raw data. Your interview responses will be stored in a computer file on the university systems, anonymously and access to the file will be password protected and limited to myself, supervisors and external examiners. Interview transcripts and records will be kept securely for a period of ten years. They will be destroyed after this time by shredding or deletion.

What will happen to the results of the research project?

The results of the study will be used for the researcher's PhD thesis. At a later point, parts of the thesis may be published in peer reviewed academic journals. The results of the study may also be presented at academic conferences and presented and disseminated to agencies.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research is being organised by Kalwinder Sandhu, a PhD student in the Centre for Communities and Social Justice at Coventry University which is funding the research.

Who has reviewed the study?

This study has been reviewed by the Faculty Ethics Governance Leader, as part of the University Applied Research Committee (UARC).

Contact for Further Information

Name: Kalwinder Sandhu **Email:** sandhuk9@uni.coventry.ac.uk

Supervisor: Professor Hazel Barrett (h.barrett@coventry.ac.uk)

Faculty Ethics Leaders: Dr Phil Dunham, Faculty of Business and Law, Coventry University.

Appendix D Participant Consent Form

Participant Reference Code:

Project title: Study title: British South Asian women's lived experiences and consequences of choosing their own intimate partner

Name of researcher: Kalwinder Sandhu

I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary ☐

I understand that I have the right to withdraw participation at any point up to three months after the final session/interview; by contacting the researcher using the details on the participant information sheet and quoting the participant reference code written at the top of this form. ☐

I understand that data will be kept strictly confidential and my identity kept anonymous ☐

I agree to the audio recording of the interviews. ☐

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in the thesis, reports and publications. ☐

I have made a note of my participant reference code ☐

Name of participant:

Date: Signature:

Kalwinder Sandhu (researcher)

Date: Signature:

Appendix E Leaflet Used to Engage Participants

Participants Needed for

PHD RESEARCH INTO BRITISH SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN'S

EXPERIENCES OF

CHOOSING THEIR OWN PARTNERS

Did you grow up being told your parents would arrange your marriage?

YES

Did you form a relationship with someone you chose yourself?

YES

Did you experience domestic violence from your partner?

YES

To find out more about the research go to

Facebook.com/Asianwomenchoosingtheirpartners

Your identity will be kept confidential

Appendix F Contact Details for Relevant Agencies

Should you require further support or information please see below list of possible agencies with contact numbers and websites.

Women's Aid

Women's Aid is the national charity working to end domestic abuse against women and children.

http://www.womensaid.org.uk/

Freephone 24 hr National domestic violence helpline

Run in partnership between Women's Aid and Refuge

PHONE: 0808 2000 247

Email: helpline@womensaid.org.uk*

Refuge

Refuge is a national charity supporting women and children to escape domestic violence

http://www.refuge.org.uk/who-we-are/

Southall Black Sisters

Southall Black Sisters is a not-for-profit organisation set up in 1979 to meet the needs of black (Asian and African-Caribbean) and minority ethnic women.

http://www.southallblacksisters.org.uk/

Helpline 0208 571 0800

General Enquiries 0208 571 9595

Apna Haq

http://www.apna-haq.co.uk/

Apna Haq provides confidential, one to one support for Asian women and their children who are experiencing violence in the home.

Contact Details

Phone: 01709 519212/01709 519211

E-mail: apnahaq@tiscali.co.uk

Rotherham - Apna Haq Hardship Fund 01709 519212

Sheffield - Sheffield Domestic Abuse Forum 0114 275 0101

Doncaster - Women's Aid 01302 326411

Barnsley - Domestic Violence Group 01226 249800

National - Saheli Centre 01619454187

Panahghar Safehouse

http://www.safehouse.org.uk/

Panahghar works to relieve poverty, physical and mental distress, domestic violence and abuse on a local, regional and national level.

http://www.safehouse.org.uk/

Phone: 024 7622 8952

Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre

CRASAC offer a telephone counselling service to Coventry women who had been sexually abused.

http://www.crasac.org.uk/about-us.html

Phone: 024 76 77777