An Investigation of the Barriers Experienced by Female Muslim ESOL Learners whilst being in Education

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Dedication

To my mother

Despite many efforts of completion to make her proud,

she passed away during the course of my study.

Acknowledgements

I dedicate this thesis to my husband, who has encouraged and supported me from the outset, also to my four children for their patience.

A special thanks goes to my dear friends and colleagues who have always listened to me, advised me, and with great enthusiasm wished me all the best.

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Abstract

This research investigates barriers experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners (of Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Arab and Somali heritage) in full-time education, linked to a Further Education (FE) institution situated in England (UK). The case study draws on perceptions of sixteen ESOL learners and ten ESOL teachers. Through a grounded theory approach, a feminist lens is employed to gather qualitative data around the barriers experienced and support available to the learners. In turn research diaries illustrate learner experiences, highlighting significant elements that impede education. ESOL teachers also provided illustrations of barriers to education encountered by the women.

The findings reveal that the gendered roles of learners are shaped through patriarchal family expectations. Learners adapt their lifestyles to manage time, and juggle responsibilities to attend ESOL classes in order to gain independence and control of their lives. The research concludes that the disparate but intersecting barriers experienced by the women reflect overlapping notions of coercion, control and relations of power that impact their identities. An intersectional framework is adopted to capture the emergent themes linked to relationships, expectations and forms of problematic communication inherent in those barriers.

The research presents a novel contribution through the mobilisation of an intersectional framework that empowers the voice of Muslim women navigating a path through life, home and education. Recommendations are provided so that learners can be better supported in managing the obstacles they encounter to achieve their educational aspirations.

Chapter 1: Thesis Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This thesis is about the barriers Muslim women experience in accessing education. My interest in this stems through observations and conversations with Muslim ESOL learners (see Section 1.2). As an ESOL teacher in a Further Education (FE) college, I observed that learners were experiencing a number of barriers to participation. Literature sought in relation to this confirms the multiplicity of barriers Muslim women experience in accessing education. For example, for some Muslim women, their husbands do not support their educational aspirations because they see education as allowing themselves extreme amounts of power and freedom, which they potentially see as a 'threat' to them (Aston *et al.*, 2007:83). Women who are employed enjoy the benefits that brings. These include having more control of their lives, being more financially independent (to spend money freely without feelings of guilt), participating in a social life and maintaining better health and self-confidence (Aston *et al.*, 2007).

The research objectives explore the learners' and teachers' perceptions of the barriers, and the extent to which female Muslim ESOL learners are supported whilst at college (see Section 1.6). The approach to gathering data for this qualitative study involved conducting semi-structured interviews with ESOL learners and ESOL teachers. Prior to the interviews, the learners produced research diaries to illustrate the perceived barriers. Through these illustrations, the thesis unveils a snapshot of the life of a group of ESOL learners by identifying the various barriers and how they are integrally linked, as previously noted by McLaughlin (2009). The data analysis revealed the main themes: 'relationships, expectations, and communication'. Beneath these themes are the barriers, which collectively coincide with the study's conceptual framework (see Figure 5.1).

This research focusses on Muslim women as a group of ESOL learners, not specifically on their religion, Islam. All the participants fall into the Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) category. The research acknowledges that some of the barriers affecting the Muslim women also affect other religious groups. In addition, the findings show how barriers are created for Muslim women who are married. The gendered divisions in the household, places them in inferior positions to other members of the family, such as the husband, father-in-law and mother-in-law. These members of the family have dominant positions amongst the family relationships, which stem through cultural attitudes of women living within a patriarchal society. Gender inequality is a form of discrimination and inflexibility, which needs to be recognised, in order for it to be addressed (Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos, 2014). In light of this, the thesis portrays the links between the concepts of coercive control, patriarchy, identity, and power. These concepts align with the relationship which the fairy tale character, Cinderella, has with her stepmother and stepsisters, where she

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experiences inferiority and is controlled by women in a more powerful position than her (see Section 4.4).

This study predominantly makes reference to three key studies by feminist authors (Basit, 1997a; Aston *et al.*, 2007 and Hunnicutt, 2009). Although a number of Basit's studies have been referenced in this study, one particular study (Basit, 1997a), is very pertinent and relevant. Basit's (1997a) work investigates the wider context within which Muslim girls live and the difficulties they experience to escape the stereotyped roles. However, her study focuses on adolescents, of an ethnic minority group, whose parents were once immigrants. Nevertheless, the issues presented by Basit (1997a) relate to those that emerged in this study, thus her study provides explanations of some of the ESOL learners' experiences. Although Basit's (1997a) work is seemingly dated now, literature indicates that cultural practices are shifting, though at a trickle pace (Mirza and Meetoo, 2018). Therefore, Basit's (1997a) work remains current and comparative. Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study also reflects upon the core of this study, as it focuses on the experiences of Muslim women in the UK who are either first, second, or third generation immigrants. Furthermore, the current study provides reasons as to why the female ESOL learners have certain experiences, which to some extent mirror those that are noted in both Basit's (1997a) and Aston *et al.*'s (2007) studies. For instance, both studies relate to a Muslim culture, with the female participants living within similar family structures that are controlled through power relations. In addition, both studies reflect on the concepts of identity, power, and patriarchy; these concepts are also underpinned in literature by Hunnicutt (2009). The thesis presents an understanding of gender inequality experienced by women through embracing Hunnicutt's (2009) work around patriarchy as a concept. Hunnicutt (2009) writes from a feminist perspective, therefore her work is ideal to use in understanding the barriers women face in accessing education. The thesis reveals that despite the diversity of barriers experienced, the women find many unique approaches to challenge and resist the control, oppression and domination through adapting their lifestyles in the attempt to manage studying ESOL (see Section 4.3). Moreover, the thesis unravels the complexities of the interconnecting barriers and argues that the nuances and intricacies involved cannot be understood in isolation.

1.2 Personal and Professional Background

I am a full-time ESOL lecturer and have been teaching ESOL for twelve years. During this time, I have taught ESOL learners of different age groups, religions and ethnicities. This experience includes teaching ESOL at different levels and at different campuses within a large organisation located in the England. The organisation is situated in under-privileged urban area, densely populated by ethnic minority groups. According to the 2011 Census, Muslims comprised of the largest population in this geographical location (more than 70%) (Therese, 2022). The institution offers a large ESOL provision which is predominately attended by Muslim women due to its demographic location, of which most are female.

As an ESOL lecturer, I have always aimed to inspire learners and provide them with the opportunity to experience the joy of learning. Cooke's (2006) research similarly highlights that learners enjoy and value learning English, to the extent that even if they gain better employment they would not be prepared to sacrifice their learning. However, I am aware of some of the challenges that learners may face in attending ESOL classes, for example high attendance and punctuality (Hashem and Aspinell, 2016), homework completion (Parr, 1996; Dyke and James, 2009; Watkins, Razee and Richters, 2012) and progressing to further courses or employment (Bhopal, Brown, and Jackson, 2016).

Over the years of teaching ESOL, the difficulties of being in education disclosed by the learners have fuelled my passion for researching these issues further and making the findings widely available, so that the learners can be supported adequately at college. My interest in the barriers experienced by female ESOL learners began when I first came across a learner who was physically and mentally abused by her husband and in-laws. The learner feared informing the police or seeking support, due to her limited English skills, unstable immigration status and threats of divorce. Gaining citizenship, independence and communication are some of the many benefits of learning English (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016) which could provide women with confidence in seeking support. I therefore wanted to explore the barriers affecting female Muslim ESOL learners and understand what it was like for them coming to college to learn English and continue with their additional prescribed roles. Hence, through this study I have built a rich, detailed picture of female Muslim ESOL learners in England who are engaged in education.

I am a British Pakistani Muslim, and a second-generation immigrant and my experiences have guided and shaped this study (see Sections 3.2 and 6.8). Looking, as a researcher, through a feminist lens (see Section 3.2) I challenge my perceptions of gender-related educational inequalities that come to my attention through informal classroom discussions with ESOL learners and formal data collection. Therefore, through this research, first-hand narratives are generated from the female Muslim ESOL learners, to uncover issues of discrimination and examine them through a feminist lens.

> Feminists are those who dare to break the conspiracy of silence about the oppressive, unequal man-woman relationship and who want to change it…'Feminists' were always the 'other women', the 'bad women', the 'women who go too far', women who hate men', something like modern witches with whom a respectable woman did not want to be associated (Mies, 2014:6-8).

In agreement with Mies' (2014) definition of feminist researchers, through this research, where necessary, I intend to break the silence aligned to the mistreatment of women, not just by men but also by other women, such as the mothers-in-law. Observing the mistreatment of women in both my professional and personal life has also stimulated an interest and is a driver to this research. In addition, my experience of studying includes and is not limited to

balancing work-life-study, due to my multiple intersecting identities of being a wife and mother. This aligns with the experiences of the women struggling between work and life in Green *et al.*'s study (2004). Literature (Cuban and Stromquist, 2009; Khurshid, 2017; Batool and Batool, 2018) confirms that education empowers women, and indeed it did for me; thus, my life has completely changed through education. In terms of reflexivity (Basit, 2010), my identity has been transformed (see Section 6.8) and the power structures I lived within have changed over time. I therefore believe in education leading to freedom and empowerment, which is similarly evident in the work of Parr (1996), Cooke (2006) and Khurshid (2017).

1.3   Rationale

This research is important for five reasons. Firstly, the research focuses on Muslim women and, being a Muslim myself, and through predominately teaching this group, I have an internalised interest in the barriers they experience. Furthermore, statistics show that Muslims comprise the second largest religion in the world, representing around 24% of the world's population (World Population Review, 2020), totalling 1.8 billion people (Bener *et al.*, 2018). Focusing particularly on Britain, Muslims are the largest religious minority, with most of them being immigrants from South Asian countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India (Basit, 1997a).

Secondly, the overall population of immigrants is increasing, with more female immigrants than men (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016). Focusing particularly on ESOL, statistics from 2013 indicate that seventy per cent of ESOL learners are women of an Asian ethnic background (Foster and Bolton, 2018). This includes migrants from low-income families and those who live in poverty that are classified as vulnerable. Furthermore, migrant women are often from countries in which there are defined gender roles and a dearth of gender equity (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016). In addition, participation in ESOL classes is an issue as the learners experience complicated barriers, in comparison to men from the same countries (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016).

Thirdly, whilst research highlights that learning English is essential for functional purposes and integration in British society (Afzal *et al.*, 2015; Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016), Foster and Bolton (2018) confirm a decrease in the participation in ESOL classes. The authors state that the rate of participation in ESOL classes has significantly fallen by more than half due to funding changes (Foster and Bolton, 2018). Participation in funded ESOL courses has fallen from 179,000 in 2009-10 to 114,000 in 2016-17 (Foster and Bolton, 2018:3). This is a concern as a quarter of the UK Muslim population have no qualifications, and six per cent of Muslims struggle to speak English (Ali, 2015).

Fourthly, according to Raynolds and Birdwell (2015) British Muslims are the ethnic group most likely to be either unemployed or economically inactive. This indicates that British Muslims can be split into several different groups. Nonetheless, statistics show that two thirds of Muslims in England and Wales

who are economically inactive are women (Raynolds and Birdwell, 2015), as Muslim women with limited or no qualifications and/or lack of English skills are generally either unemployed or economically inactive (Aston *et al.*, 2007). However, half of the Muslim women are economically inactive due to their roles of a homemaker, though in comparison six percent of British Muslim men are economically inactive for this reason (Raynolds and Birdwell, 2015). In a wider context, on a national level, '2 per cent of men and 16 per cent of women' of all ethnicities are economically inactive for homemaking reasons (Raynolds and Birdwell, 2015:37). Amongst Muslim women, caring for the family and looking after the home are the most common reasons for being economically inactive (Raynolds and Birdwell, 2015**).** Whilst 45% of Muslim men are economically inactive due to participation in education, in contrast 21% of Muslim women are economically inactive for this reason (Raynolds and Birdwell, 2015:35**).** This demonstrates differences in gendered inequality in educational opportunities (see Section 5.3.3). Such inequalities could exist due to language barriers and unfamiliarity with the UK; these reasons are more prevalent for Muslim women than they are for Muslim men (Aston *et al.*, 2007), due to the belief that men should be the breadwinners (Parr, 1996; Ahmad, 2001; Aston *et al.*, 2007; Hunnicutt, 2009).

Finally, it is important to identify the barriers women experience, so that actions can be taken to address these and increase women's participation in education (McLaughlin, 2009). Yet the barriers can only be identified if women's voices are heard (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016), as Ahmad (2001:138) argues that Muslim women's voices have been 'previously neglected'. Therefore, this research is significant as learning English is an important tool for the vulnerable migrant women to become empowered, allowing them to make invaluable choices, have high aspirations and integrate into British society (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016). Moreover, vulnerable women with low English proficiency are seen as 'hard to reach', and 'voiceless'. This has an impact on being able to fully understand and address the issues they experience in participating in ESOL classes (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016:8,16). The importance of individuals' voices being heard is demonstrated in previous research (Parr, 1996; Heenan, 2002; Ludhra and Jones, 2009; McLaughlin, 2009; Basit, 2013a; Hewett, 2015). Thus, the Muslim participants in the current research are given a voice.

> Our persistence and skills as researchers give a voice to groups whose viewpoints may otherwise remain hidden. (Basit, 2013a:516)

1.4   The Gap in Current Literature

Basit's (2013a) comment aligns with the purpose of this research about unheard voices being heard. There has been considerable interest in the subject of Muslim women accessing higher education (for example, Parr, 1996; Ahmad, 2001; Heenan, 2002; Lister, 2003; Rezai-Rashti and Moghadam, 2011; Oplatka and Lapidot, 2012; Hewett, 2015). Furthermore, there is a range of research focusing on British Muslim girls' career aspirations (for example, Siann and Knox, 1992; Basit, 1996; Basit, 1997a;

Archer, 2002; Shain, 2020), though, unlike the current study, these girls have not been married and therefore may not have experienced multiple responsibilities alongside accessing education. Additionally, Basit (1997a) focuses on adolescents progressing into employment, though not adult women. However, a critical review of the literature indicates possible gaps in various areas. Notably, Basit's (1997a) work does not draw on whether the Muslim girls experience any health issues due to their restricted lifestyles, whilst the data in the current study demonstrates that women experience health issues such as stress and depression due to their overburdened lifestyles. Moreover, the literature reviewed indicates that no study has been carried out on the education-life balance of Muslim ESOL learners, and specifically barriers to accessing ESOL education.

This research focuses specifically on Muslim women and not specifically South Asian women. This is because firstly, as aforementioned, I am a Muslim and have insider experience, and therefore have a specific interest in this group. Secondly, although there are many studies previously published that focus specifically on South Asian women (for example, Dyke and James, 2009), South Asian adolescent girls (for example, Ludhra and Jones, 2009) and studies comparing Bangladeshi and Pakistani women (for example, Aston *et al.*, 2007), there are fewer studies specifically on Muslim women. Therefore, a gap in the literature has been identified of studies amongst Muslim women; thus, this is a further contribution to knowledge.

In addition, this study is unique as, following an in-depth search of literature, female ESOL learners from mixed ethnic groups have not been subject to research of this type. This is evident as although the following groups have been researched in exploring their career aspirations, the research does not consider the barriers they experienced in accessing education: young Black women (Mirza, 1992); Muslim Pakistani adolescent girls (Basit, 1996), and Bangladeshi, Indian and Pakistani boys and girls aged 16-19 (Abbas, 2002). Furthermore, the findings of this study could be relevant to other ESOL provision in the UK, as although there are studies around ESOL participation, I have not come across any studies discussing the learners' aspirations to progress within education. Literature from the UK (for example, Green *et al.*, 2004; Afzal *et al.*, 2015; McLaughlin, 2009) and other countries such as Australia (Watkins, Razee, and Richters, 2012,) indicate that childcare and caring for others is the primary barrier to education, though Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study reports that women do have access to informal support for childcare from their extended families. Other barriers that are well documented include finance (for example, Heenan, 2002; Raynolds and Birdwell, 2015) and travel (for example, Parr, 1996; Heenan, 2002; McLaughlin, 2009). This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on women accessing education in other countries, since few studies have researched this topic and there is a gap in the literature.

1.5   Novelty and Originality

A significance of this study is that, to the best of the author's knowledge, this is the only research to date to include a cohort of these demographics. For example, of the research that has been published, there is no other research conducted amongst female Arab, Somali, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi adults studying ESOL in the UK. A further significance is the distinctive conceptual framework, and the interconnections of the overarching concept of coercive control, with the sub-concepts of patriarchy, power, and identity (see Figure 5.1). Additionally, the current research uses an alternative approach to many previous studies, that of creative research methods such as pre-interview activities in the form of research diaries and a roles tick list alongside interviews with ESOL learners. Although research using creative methods has previously been conducted, for example, by Basit (2013a) through using photographs, this was with second-generation adolescents. A further significance of this study is in its use of a feminist lens (see Section 3.2) to gain insights into the lives of the first generation Muslim ESOL learners. These perceptions are gained through addressing the research aim and objectives.

1.6   Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research is to investigate the perceived barriers to education experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners. This leads to the following research objectives and questions:

Research Objectives

- To explore the perceived barriers to education experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners at a further education college.

- To investigate the teachers' perceptions of the barriers that female Muslim ESOL learners encounter during their learning experience.

- To consider the extent of support available for the female Muslim ESOL learners at the FE institution.

Research Questions

1. What are the perceived barriers to education experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners whilst attending a further education college?

2. What are ESOL teachers' perceptions of the barriers experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners?

3. How are female Muslim ESOL learners supported to overcome the perceived barriers?

1.7 Key terms

This section defines key terms used in this thesis.

1.7.1 Barriers

The term 'barrier' is a key concept in this study and refers to circumstances that prevent and limit potential access to learning. Literature presents different understandings of barriers and divides the barriers into different components (for example, Flynn *et al.*, 2011). Darby, Farooqi and Lai (2016) divide the barriers experienced by the women in their study into personal and practical barriers. Personal barriers, such as mental health, managing time and responsibilities, are formed through the women's individual circumstances. It is stated that these types of barriers make learning almost impossible (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016). Conversely, practical barriers, such as finance and low literacy skills do not completely restrict access to their learning. Darby, Farooqi and Lai (2016) acknowledge that being illiterate could restrict the women from being aware of the existence of ESOL classes, having confidence in enrolling onto a course, travelling to the classes, and learning in the classes. However, in the current study, the term 'barrier' is not separated into different types of barriers. Rather it signifies factors that cause a gap in accessing and fully participating in education.

1.7.2 Patriarchy

Patriarchy refers to the male as the dominant breadwinner and the female as the homemaker (Basit, 1997a; Ahmad, 2001; Woodward, 2004; Aston *et al.*, 2007; Abdi, 2014). Hunnicutt (2009:553) highlights some disagreements that have emerged over the term 'patriarchy', replacing it with preferred terms such as 'male-dominated society' and 'feminist perspectives'. A society is patriarchal when it advocates male privileges through 'male-dominated, male-identified and male-centred' situations (Johnson, 2005:5). The term 'patriarchy' emphasises men as dominant in their relationship with women, placing men in a more privileged position within their relationship and leading to female oppression (Hunnicutt, 2009). A similar essence emerges from previous studies, for example, Walby (1990:20), who states that patriarchy is a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". Van Leeuwen (1993) developed this concept by adding that patriarchy is male-centred, and men are the holders of authority and power; therefore, they deprive women of any authority or power and place them in inferior positions. Lerner's (1993: 3-4) concepts of patriarchy also presents men as 'powerful', whilst women are projected as 'naturally weaker, deviant, incomplete, physically mutilated and emotionally dependent'. Lerner's earlier work (1986:5) suggests that there is no historical evidence of power of female over male, which according to Farrar (1997) is known as 'matriarchy'.

1.7.3 Gender vs. Sex

Both terms 'sex' and 'gender' have evolved, and been used interchangeably since the 1930s (Lerner, 1986). Whilst the term 'sex' has been used to refer to the biological differences between a baby girl and baby boy, and is connected to hormones and genitals, the term 'gender' was originated to determine the social and cultural differences between men and women (Mies, 2014). Therefore, gender is defined as 'socially constructed roles, learned behaviours, and expectations associated with males and females' (Firth, 2012:1). Relating this specifically to themes in this thesis, gender-specific routine household chores such as cleaning and caring are seen as 'feminine' and are therefore a barrier to equality (Firth, 2012:6).

1.7.4 Identity

Identity refers to the meanings that define who one is, based upon both self-perception as well as the perceptions of others. For the purpose of this research, according to Burke and Stets' (2009:3) definition, identity refers to the specific roles undertaken in different contexts. Thus, identities often emerge in situ, readily evolve and manifest through interaction (see section 2.7).

> An identity is the set of meanings that define who one is when one is an occupant of a particular role in society, a member of a particular group, or claims particular characteristics that identify him or her as a unique person. For example, individuals have meanings that they apply to themselves when they are a student, worker, spouse, or parent (these are the roles they occupy) …

However, for the purpose of this thesis Muslim identity embraces the customs and cultural practices of resettled ethnic minority communities.

1.7.5 Multiple Identities

Literature uses interchangeable terminologies to refer to multiple identities. For instance, whilst Green *et al.* (2004) uses the term 'multiple identities' to describe having several characteristics, roles, and images of ourselves and how others see us. Sultana (2015) uses the term 'blended identity' for a similar purpose. In addition, Abbas (2002) refers to 'mixed education identities' to refer to learners who juggle home and college life.

Multiple identities are not solely a 'female Muslim' concept since Abbas's (2002) participants were South Asian college learners who were not all Muslim; they were Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian. Yet women from other cultures could also experience multiple identities; for example, Green *et al.*'s study (2004) of predominantly White British women indicated that numerous

women reported having multiple identities. In this thesis, the term multiple identities will be used in relation to the multiple roles of the women.

1.7.6 Intersectionality

There are a range of definitions of intersectionality (Ojeda and Slaughter, 2019 and Mooney, 2018). However, drawing on Davis' (2008) work, intersectionality refers to the involvement of multiple identities and the intersecting layers of oppression that lead to discrimination (see section 2.4). Davis (2008:68) defines intersectionality as:

> The interaction between gender, race, and other categories of difference in individual lives, social practices, institutional arrangements, and cultural ideologies and the outcomes of these interactions in terms of power.

1.7.7 First-second generation

The participants in the current study are first generation immigrants as, although some have British citizenship, they were not born in the UK. Dyke and James (2009) define the first generation as individuals who were born in a different country but moved to the UK, whilst the second generation are those that were born in the UK.

1.7.8 Domestic Violence

In this thesis, the term 'domestic violence' is used to refer to a perceived element that creates a barrier for women to access in education. Whilst Potter (2014) divides the term Gendered Based Violence into two categories: sexual violence and domestic violence, the government (Home Office, 2012) defines domestic violence and abuse as:

> 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. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:
>
> - psychological
> - physical
> - sexual
> - financial
> - emotional

1.7.9 Coercive Control

Coercive control is controlling behaviour by a person with whom one is personally connected, such as one's partner or a member of the family

(Fontes, 2015). On 29th December 2015, Section 76 of the Serious Crime Act was enacted by the government for the crime of "controlling and coercive behaviour in intimate or familial relationships" (Home Office, 2015:2). Stripe (2020:14) provides the following definition of controlling behaviour:

> Controlling behaviour is a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape, and regulating their everyday behaviour. Coercive behaviour is a continuing act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim.

In this thesis, coercive control will refer to any of the above-mentioned behaviours.

1.8 Thesis Outline

The thesis is composed of six chapters. This introductory chapter provides the context of ESOL, and influential literature that underpins this research. Following this, Chapter 2 provides a critical review of relevant literature within the field of education. Then Chapter 3 discusses the research design and methodology of the study. This includes the research approach, ethical considerations, and the process for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 determines the findings and presents the analysis. Next, Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings and analysis. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the research, whilst highlighting its contribution to existing literature, stating the limitations of this research, and making recommendations for future research and practice. Furthermore, Chapter 6 provides a reflection of what has been learnt during the doctoral journey and draws attention to the implications of this study and professional practice.

1.9 Summary

This chapter has laid the foundations of this study. It introduced the background of this study and my area of interest. Then the chapter discussed the extent of the issues through the rationale of the research, followed by identifying the gaps in existing literature. The originality of the research is drawn upon, leading to the research aim and objectives. Furthermore, all key terms were defined in light of what they mean in accordance with this study. Finally, an overview of the thesis explained the content of each chapter. The next chapter will set the context of this study and critically review literature relevant to the barriers to education experienced by women. In doing so, it builds on the body of knowledge of existing literature around barriers to education.

Chapter 2: A Review of Relevant Literature

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins by discussing the current context of ESOL, which provides some key information on the different levels of ESOL qualifications and their equivalence to other national qualifications. The comparisons of the levels of ESOL are presented at the outset, so that the learner participants' levels, Entry Level 2 and Entry Level 3, can be determined in the context of the study. It then moves on to provide a demographic overview, illustrating the current Muslim population in the UK, based on statistics from the 2011 Census. This information is relevant as this is where this research is located, and it has the second largest number of Muslims in the UK (White, 2012). Moreover, this section indicates the population in terms of gender and women's English language acquisition. The remainder of the literature is selected based on the themes that have emerged in the findings of this study, including a section on intersectionality. The selection of the literature is presented under key headings which correlate with the barriers experienced by Muslim women, and women in general. Furthermore, the literature is viewed through a feminist lens (Khurshid, 2019), and therefore makes significant reference to some feminist authors such as Basit (1997a), Aston *et al.*, (2009) and Hunnicutt (2009). This chapter presents several underpinning perspectives of patriarchy in terms of its origin and terminology to form a more comprehensive understanding of it. Additionally, literature is reviewed to explore the impact of patriarchal practices upon women, to articulate how these may create barriers towards female Muslim ESOL learners in accessing education. In doing so, concepts of identity and power are drawn upon. Aston *et al.*'s (2007) work, which illustrates concepts of power and control, is discussed, with the emphasis of women living within a patriarchal society and being controlled by men as well as women. This leads to the next section, where the study further explores Cinderella's character, which contextualises the dominant role of women within family structures. The inequalities in marital relationships are sought in the following sections, which capture the experiences of women which act as barriers to or opportunities for their education, as well as employment. This is followed by literature which highlights mothering, caring and domestic responsibilities as barriers to education.

The chapter further draws on literature around identities, showing how these change through the influence of culture and social factors. This is important to discuss since some ESOL learners migrate to this country through marriage and develop new and multiple identities (see Section 4.2); marriage is a religious requirement and the permanent destination for Muslims (Basit, 1997a). The literature within this chapter opines that the power and control experienced by women is a form of coercive control and abuse and that this can impact on Muslim women's aspirations in light of their cultural expectations.

2.2 Current Context of ESOL

The term ESOL refers to an adult ESOL course for learners aged 19 and above. This language course is designed for migrants for whom English is an additional language and who need "English to communicate in daily life" (Foster and Bolton, 2018:3). ESOL provision is available from Pre-Entry Level to Level 2. ESOL courses comprise three modules, including a combined module of Speaking and Listening and two further individual modules of Reading and Writing (Foster and Bolton, 2018).

Table 2.1: A Comparison of ESOL Levels

ESOL Levels	CEFRL level names	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL)	International English Language Testing System (IELTS)	Old GCSEs Grading system	New GCSEs Grading system
Level 2	Advanced	C1	6	Grades A-C	Grades 4-9
Level 1	Upper-Intermediate	B2	5	Grades D-G	Grades 3-U
Entry 3	Intermediate	B1	4		
Entry 2	Pre-Intermediate	A2	2-3		
Entry 1	Elementary	A1	1		
Pre-Entry	Complete Beginner				

Figure 2 . 1 A Comparison

ESOL learners hold different characteristics to EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners because of their backgrounds and purpose of learning. For example, it is a requirement for immigrants to achieve ESOL Speaking and Listening at Entry Level 3 in order to gain British citizenship. Furthermore, ESOL learners have diverse levels of previous education (see Appendix 4). Some are highly educated, whilst others have few language skills or are illiterate in their first language as they have had no schooling (Foster and Bolton, 2018). Based on the 2011 Census, Ali (2015) reports that 6% of Muslims struggle to communicate in English. It should be noted that these statistics are from the Pakistani and Bangladeshi population only since the Census does not provide a breakdown by religious affiliation for English

language proficiencies (Ali, 2015). However, although Muslim women are the focus for this study, it is noteworthy that not all ESOL learners are Muslim.

The government recognises that Britain is a diverse and inclusive country and funds ESOL courses to achieve social integration (Gov.UK, 2020). In 2020/21, almost £6.5m was available to 25 local authorities by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) (through the Adult Education Budget). However, ESOL policy is considered everchanging and incoherent, impacting both students and teachers as a result of the reduced budget (Courtney, 2017). Funding cuts have limited immigrants' access to ESOL, therefore ESOL is not fully funded for all learners (Ellen, 2015; Parker, 2021). Rather, potential ESOL learners are selected according to an eligibility criterion, for example, benefits, immigration status and achievement (Courtney, 2017). The restricted access delays the opportunity for immigrants to enrol onto ESOL classes. While there are waiting lists, these are significantly long, and impact upon the mental health of immigrants, especially females living in isolation (Foster and Bolton, 2018). Such policy-driven changes make it challenging for ESOL teachers to adhere to (Simpson, 2015), for example deciding which learners to select (Courtney, 2017). Furthermore, funding cuts in childcare provision has demotivated women to attend ESOL classes (Slade and Dickson, 2021). Requiring some ESOL learners to self-fund ESOL courses and childcare demonstrates that government policy is overlooking the basic needs for immigrants to access classes (Hamilton and Hillier, 2006). Hamilton and Hillier (2006) argue that this places ESOL provision in a vulnerable position.

2.3 Demographic Overview and cultural context

According to the UK 2011 Census, Muslims comprise 4.8% of the total population in England and Wales (2,706,066 out of 56,075,912), and this number has increased since the last Census Figures. From these, 47% of the Muslims are UK born, also known as the second generation (Nadim, 2015). In England and Wales, Muslims form the largest group of population compared to all other non-Christian groups (Ali, 2015). The ethnic diversity of the Muslim population includes '68% Asian', and '32% non-Asian'. '1 in 12 is of White ethnicity (8% of the Muslim population)'. '1 in 3' of the Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) are Muslims (Ali, 2015:16). Muslim women in the UK looking after the home or family comprise 17.8% of all such women. In terms of education, 26% of Muslims have no qualifications (White, 2012) and '6%' of Muslims are struggling to speak in English (Ali, 2015:35). '1.3%' of the total UK population, '726,000', cannot speak English well, whilst '0.3%', '138,000' cannot speak English at all, of which '91,840' are women (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016:13). With reference to health, '40%' or more of female Muslims aged 65 years or above declared poor health (Ali, 2015:18). Data from the Individual Learner Record (ILR) in 2009/2010 shows that there are more than twice as many female ESOL learners than males (Winterbotham and Godwin, 2011). In addition, Darby, Farooqi and Lai (2016) note that there are more female migrants than men, and the overall number of migrants has increased. Vargas-Silva and Rienzo (2019) confirm that according to the Labour Force Survey (LSF) data, 53% of the migrant population were women. Yet, the

reason for the slight majority of women is not provided. Nonetheless, female migrants in general are identified as 'marginalised' (Li and Simpson, 2013).

ESOL learners often migrate from culturally diverse backgrounds (Simpson. 2011). Based on Werbner (1990) and Bhatti's (1999) work and in the context of the current research, culture is referred to customs, traditions and values engraved in society, which include for example elements of material objects such as clothing and accessories, the home environment, behaviour, and education, career and social choices. Following the Second World War, the re-formation of the UK's industry generated a demand for unskilled labour, which was mostly met by employing South Asian and West Indian migrants for the low-paid sectors such as 'transport and textiles' (Werbner, 1990:6). Their families accompanied them a few decades later, all for the propose of economic prosperity (Bhatti, 1999). They relocated to a new cultural context, and reconstructed their own culture and traditions (Werbner, 1990), as some of the cultural norms associate with migrants' home country differed from those in the UK (Bhatti, 1999). For example, it is the cultural norm for fathers to be the patriarch and therefore have the sole responsibility for financially supporting the family (Bhatti, 1999). Mothers are culturally to be responsible for childrearing, yet they are regretful in being unsuccessful in conveying cultural values to their children. Some mothers in Bhatti's (1999) study reported that the UK offered an excellent school-system, though the difference in culture between their country of birth and the UK caused them distress and loneliness due to tensions of maintaining their distinct cultural values and religious beliefs. Many parents believe that their cultural values are not well received in the UK. Their social activities are often culture specific, mostly with people of similar cultural backgrounds. However, their colour, religion, and culture places them at risk of racism, therefore they experience feelings of insecurity, particularly because they believe that one day they may be forced to return to their country of origin (Bhatti, 1999). Yet they resist such racism and continue to experience discrimination, some of which is due to their education and class (Werbner, 1990), as women's previous experiences of communication have largely differed in context (Bhatti, 1999). In their home country there is increased use of verbal communication as the majority of the population is illiterate, yet in the UK, people are mostly literate. Further differences are in the culture. Women find the western culture unfamiliar where ageing parents are not cared for by their offspring, the rising cases of divorce, and lone-parent families in the UK (Bhatti, 1999). Thus, migrant women are positioned at the intersections of class, gender, ethnicity, and race (Werbner, 1990).

2.4 Intersectionality and Feminism

Kimberle Crenshaw introduced the term 'intersectionality' in 1989, when discussing marginalised women in the United States of America (USA) (Mooney, 2018). The framework was created by Crenshaw to understand how the interactions of race and gender constrained black women's entry to the labour market in the USA, and ways in which the limited understanding of this connection steered the black women's experiences of oppression (Walby,

Armstrong, and Strid, 2012). Examining the influence of gender and race situates the independent experiences of black men compared to those of white men. For example, both black men and women are disadvantaged by one element of their identities. While the men are disadvantaged by race, the women are by gender. Yet the women are privileged by the other element of being White just as the men are also privileged by one aspect of being male. Nonetheless, black women are faced with a dual issue of their black race and female gender and are thus disadvantaged in both aspects. Black men's identity on the other hand, segregates them from how they experience their role in society in comparison to white men (Ojeda and Slaughter, 2019). Thus, intersectionality is used as a lens to ascertain that power dynamics of identities that are socially constructed cannot be studied in isolation (Ojeda and Slaughter, 2019). Similarly, Anitha, Pearson and McDowell (2012) assert that gender cannot be comprehended whilst being detached from other social constructs. Croce (2019:1023) confirms that intersectionality identifies multiple forms of both oppression and privileges through examining the intersections of "contexts, cultures, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, and power structures". Therefore, drawing on the lens of intersectionality allows researchers to consider different elements of heightened sensitivity (Severs, Celis and Erzeel, 2016), some of which may be inextricably linked to oppression (Crenshaw, 2018) and power relationships within social interactions (Severs, Celis and Erzeel, 2016). Furthermore, using intersectionality as a framework allows insights into how individuals experience life, how they view themselves and how they are treated by others (Dill and Kohlman, 2012).

Feminist research that also adopts an intersectional approach within the field of gender and education-related issues exists (for example, Brah and Shaw,1992; Brah,1996 and Shain, 2003). In addition, issues of race and education are studied by Bhopal and Preston (2012), whilst intersections of race, class and gender are researched by Basit (1997a) and Shain (2003). Ali *et al.*'s (2017:1165) research uses intersectionality by interweaving elements of 'gender equality, values, family and religious and cultural pressures'. Furthermore, intersectionality is used as an overarching framework to understand how both ethnicity and gender inequalities influence the division of domestic labour (Kan and Laurie, 2018), whereas Abdi (2019) uses intersectionality to examine the intersecting layers of the welfare state, religion, gender and migration, in relation to Somali men and women's migration to America.

Deem (1986) refers to feminist perspectives in her study of women and leisure and confirms that feminist research considers male-female power relations and not only explores women's oppression; if the research is about women, then men's roles will also be investigated. She stresses that that there is no single feminist approach, yet all feminists agree that women experience oppression and study different determiners of oppression. For example, although women may share common experiences, these could significantly differ according to their class, social and economic background, ethnicity and sexuality. Class could influence a woman's leisure activities, as working-class women have insufficient income to pay for their leisure and therefore may rely upon the men, which would not be the case for middle-

class women (Deem, 1986). In terms of education, this was accepted, providing this does not impact the household. Cultural diversities were indicated based on the women's age, where the older women in Deem's (1986) study (aged around 40 and 50) were more involved in outdoor leisure than the younger women, as the older women are more likely to be in employment and less likely to have childcare responsibilities. Such difference are also connected to cultural diversities.

Hooks (1984:34) states that while the main principle of modern feminist movement is that 'all women are oppressed'. This assumes that all women have uniformed experiences of, for example, race, class and religion, and that these factors do not form diverse experiences that establish the extent of oppression each factor creates (Hooks, 1984). While some authors define feminism as women's experiences of oppression (for example, Ramazanoglu, 2012), Hooks (1984:34) argues that word oppression refers to the 'absence of choices', which the women do have, though they may not have sufficient choices. Therefore, as also noted by Frye's (2019) more recent research, the term oppression is being misused. Frye (2019) highlights that men can also be oppressed, when they are frustrated and are unable to cry. Hooks (1984), however, contends that terms such as discrimination and exploitation better define women's experiences in society. Hooks' (1984) work is based in the United States (US). She acknowledges that feminist thinking hardly emerges from the most abused women by sexist abuse, women who physical and mentally hurt at a daily basis. This is because they accept their situation in silence, without questioning or protests against it, and with no signs of anger.

Phoenix (1994) notes that feminist research often discusses projects in which they had some control, rather than those which did not have control of the research process, such as securing funding, gaining access, data collection, analyses and disseminating the findings. Furthermore, Phoenix (1994) identifies a gap in existing literature which draws on feminist methodology and how the participants' and researchers' race, gender, and social class overlap. Fryer et al. (2016) reinforce the nuances in research examining participant/ researcher relationships and propose the use of intersectionality to explore the complexities of power relations between them. Demographics measures of gender, race and ethnicity attributes to a friendly researcher/ participant relationship, where trust and empathy can be demonstrated (Fryer et al., 2016). Phoenix (1994) asserts that historically, feminist research focused upon women's friendly relationships, yet it has overlooked the difference in power between the two parties during an interview. A sociable relationship with the participant is created on the outset, with conversations prior to, and following the interview, though the power balance fluctuates during the research process (Phoenix, 1994). For example, at the beginning of the recruitment stage, the participants have power to decline participation. In the interview, power could vary between the researcher and participant, however, during data analysis and reporting of the findings, the researcher is in the most powerful position.

Feminist research around women's experiences of migration processes has gained interest (Phizacklea, 1996). Phizacklea (1996) draws on migration for

upward mobility, including migration due to poverty or war. Whether women have migrated as workers, spouses of workers, or due to war, their reasons remain complex and different to those of men (Phizacklea, 1996). The implication of migration is that the women continue to experience racial discrimination which shapes their employment opportunities. While some migrant women may not have access to public funds and cannot seek employment, others are offered low-income home-based jobs, and they are more likely to live in overcrowded houses. Yuval-Davis (1992) focusses on ultra-Orthodox women and highlights the high cases of postnatal depression and physical and mental tiredness amongst women with many children who live in overcrowded houses. Applying intersectionality therefore allows us to better understand how varying factors, for example gender and migration status, shape women's experiences of privilege and oppression in terms of their employment and living conditions (Stasiulis and Rutherford, 2020).

2.5 Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is a key issue affecting women's participation in education (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016. However, Ali (2015) confirms that this not only affects British Muslim women but all women. Since this is a global issue, in 1979 the United Nations implemented the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) policy to eliminate all types of discrimination against women such as in education, employment, caregiving and social activities, and give them equal rights as men. With reference to gendered inequalities, Basit (1997a) points out that the man's role of the breadwinner supports the family financially. The essence of Basit's (1997a) perceptions around the dominant constructions of Muslim men aligns with Ijaz and Abbas (2010:315), who state that 'Muslim women are subservient to the Muslim men'. However, this is a view not accepted by all women, as for example Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos' (2014) research on White Finnish female managers draws on women who have an equal gender relation with their husbands and challenge historically traditional masculine gender orders. Unlike the findings of Basit's (1997a) study, Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos' (2014) study states that the husbands provide psychological support to their wives, in terms of listening to them, making decisions together and encouraging the wife to achieve success in her career. Yet, although Basit's (1997a) study mentions that the man provides financial support, there is no mention of psychological support. Furthermore, the husbands in Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos' (2014) study are very understanding about the women's ambitions and treat them with respect. They also believe in their wives and provide them with sufficient freedom to progress in their careers. The women value this, to the extent that they find it more beneficial to have a partner rather than being single. This is because being in a relationship allows them to work and support each other as a team, for example with domestic chores and childcare (Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos', 2014), which demonstrates equality in their relationship. Thus, Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos' (2014) research is key to this study as it promotes gender equality. The study makes an important point that ignoring gender inequality will make it unnoticeable

and therefore it would be difficult to make any changes in society to address such issues.

It appears that the extent of women's involvement in domestic chores can vary according to their religious background and immigration status. For example, Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos' (2014) study provides examples of husbands taking a large responsibility for the family in terms of the chores, they do all that is required and therefore know how to manage the home. Yet it is understood that Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos' (2014) research was conducted in Finland, and not the UK, which arguably indicates that the married couples are of a different culture, and not Muslim. Nevertheless, Firth (2012) also shows recognition of gender equality by presenting statistics that indicate an improvement in men's contribution to house chores. Again, Firth's (2012) work does not focus specifically on Muslim women. She points out that the gender gap in who does chores is declining, whilst men's contribution to housework and childcare is increasing. This data was retrieved from the analysis of 348,000 diaries from participants aged between 20-59 in sixteen different countries, although the participants' demographics are not clearly specified. However, literature (for example, Glass and Fujimoto,1994; Voicu, Voicu, and Strapcova, 2009; and Cerrato and Cifre, 2018) confirms that men's participation in household chores remains far less than women's, whilst Cerrato and Cifre (2018) highlight that women's contribution to housework is almost double. This is similar to Kan and Laurie's (2018) study in the UK across different ethnic groups which shows that on average men spent less than half the number of hours on housework (6 hours) that women did (14 hours). The study notes that Pakistani, Indian, and Bangladeshi women were involved in the higher share of housework in comparison to White British women. Furthermore, the research notes a generational difference between the number of hours of housework expected to complete; for instance, female immigrants complete more hours of housework than women who were either born in England or immigrated before twelve years of age. The difference lies in the culture within which they were brought up, where the British born were expected to take part in education, whilst the immigrants may have had a different cultural expectation (Kan and Laurie, 2018).

2.6 Gender-Power imbalance

Gender-power relations refer to men and women having more or less power than each other (Marchbank and Letherby, 2014), where the men are the breadwinners, in a more authoritative position than women, and have the power to control the household through making the family decisions (Shefer *et al.*, 2008). These unequal positions illustrate power dynamics (Hartmann, 1981; Parr, 1996; McKie *et al.*, 1999), which refers to women with different 'types and amounts of power', under patriarchal systems (Hunnicutt, 2009: 565). The impact of power dynamics is not being in an equilibrium in the relationship, where one gender, the man, is more powerful than the other, the woman (Abdi, 2014). Yet the literature illustrates that the women are being resistant, as they are still attending ESOL classes despite the multiplicity of barriers they experience through being in unequal positions (for example,

Potter, 2014). Nonetheless, Hashem and Aspinall (2010) assert that such barriers experienced by women attending ESOL classes, for example being forbidden to learn English by their husband, has an impact on their attendance.

Raynolds and Birdwell's (2015) UK based study confirms a generational difference in opinions about the role of the woman is staying at home. They state that fewer (24%) Muslim women from the younger generation (aged 16-24) agree with the wives' position being in the house, in comparison with the older generation (aged 40-55) where 50% of the participants agreed to this. A similar concept emerges from the work of Aston *et al.*, (2007) where some of the younger women expect more egalitarian division in household responsibilities. Furthermore, Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study confirms that women with higher levels of education are more likely to share these responsibilities with the husband, than those with no or a lower level of education. Additionally, some women in paid employment enjoyed more equality than women who were either studying or volunteering, demonstrating that paid work has a significant influence in the sharing of domestic duties (Aston *et al.*, 2009). However, at the same time, a few employed Muslim women were unhappy about the home and family being solely the women's responsibility, and therefore hired domestic cleaners to enable them to balance work and domestic responsibilities, as they felt it was culturally unacceptable to ask the men to contribute to housework (Aston *et al.*, 2009). In addition, some participants in Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study note that the class the family belong to also has an influence; the higher the class, the more expectations of equality in house chores. Conversely, Marchbank and Letherby (2014) highlight examples of the man experiencing less power than his wife in a situation where he has a working-class status, while the wife is from a rich background. This could lead to the man feeling economic insecurity (Hunnicutt, 2009). A further example of men who were oppressed by women is in educational settings where the teachers and supervisors are female (Marchbank and Letherby, 2014). Furthermore, Hunnicutt (2009) highlights that within many cultures older women could dominate other family members, men, and women, as within some family patriarchal systems the older women hold an influential status of respect. This ideology could frame the reasons behind the mother-in-law or stepmother having a high and controlling status, just as it appears in the story of Cinderella (see Section 2.6). This coincides with literature that reflects on power of females who are in a dominant position in the family hierarchy; for example, Lin and Breslerman (1996) draw on the mothers-in-law in a more dominating position in the household than the daughter-in-law (see Section 5.5.1).

The term Cinderella refers to a classical fairy tale of a beautiful girl who is solely responsible for completing the domestic chores, following the death of her father. Her stepmother and stepsisters are in a more powerful position than her. They are described as 'wicked and evil' mature women (Sue and Xui, 2010:746). Cinderella is mistreated by them and is therefore portrayed as oppressed and neglected. She is helpless to escape from her situation and become independent as she has no income; thus, she continues to obey the

stepmother and stepsisters, until one day she falls in love with a prince who rescues her (Sue and Xui, 2010).

2.7 Gender and Identity

Literature around identity mostly relates to religious sub-groups and not Muslims as a whole. For example, there is some literature around the identity of South Asian Muslims (Basit, 1997a; Basit, 1997b; Shain, 2003; Dyke and James, 2009). However, some significant research has documented how South Asian Muslim women negotiate their gendered identities within educational spheres (for example, Basit, 1997b) and how they negotiate their responsibilities to balance family life with their career aspirations (for example Dale *et al*., 2002). These women's only strategy to continue with employment, whilst being a parent, was to shift from full-time to part-time work (Dale *et al*., 2002). Whilst this demonstrates that the women in the study encountered similar roles, for example that of a mother, there was a shift in time spent on their tasks, from working full-time to part-time. Both Basit (1997a) and Shain's (2003) research on South Asian girls focuses on gendered identity, and notes that identities continue to be constructed to match stereotypical images to those of other girls in the school.

Women's identities change in time, based on their additional roles and responsibilities (Hashem and Aspinall, 2010). This argument is supported by a number of authors (for example, Woodward, 2004; Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop, 2004; Afshar, 2007, and Li and Simpson, 2013) who acknowledge that identity is not fixed, and thus develops and changes over time, in response to different life experiences, as it is fluid. Furthermore, with reference to South Asian girls in the UK, Ludhra and Jones (2009), suggest that identities are inherently unstable and can change in accordance with varying cultural practices; therefore, different identities can be formed at different moments in time. In line with this, Pattar (2009) and Hashem and Aspinall's (2010) study stated that women documented losing their identity as a result of their change of roles since they immigrated. Mies (2014) notes that this could be problematic, by asserting that at some point in life individuals are forced to take sides and, in the process, disintegrate their identities and form new identities, and suggests that this could be an unpleasant process. Another example is provided by Bearden-White (2017:38) who states that the creation and negotiation of identity is usually 'an uncomfortable process'. Sultana's (2015) work, which is from a Muslim perspective, argues that to some extent shifting identities are associated with the identity of being Muslim. Though the sample consisted of only five university learners, her findings highlighted how identities are negotiated, conflicting, and problematic. Jones and McEwen (2000) argue that although multiple identities have been used as theoretical frameworks for a small number of studies, some have not been empirically tested and therefore no models have been developed which specifically relate to them. Thus, more research is useful.

The identity of a wife appears as a barrier for women accessing education in

both Pattar's (2009) and Hashem and Aspinall's (2010) studies, with the husbands and in-laws restricting their access to education. Butler's (1990) concept of gender identity suggests that gender is culturally constructed, and her later work identifies that identity links with patriarchy and male dominance (Butler, 1999). This resonates with Ahmad's (2001) and Higton *et al.*'s (2019) study which states that the expected gender specific norm for women is to be a homemaker. Such inferior and unequal positions of women within the family unit and home sphere have been well documented, demonstrating seemingly little change in cultural habits (for example, Mirza, 1992; Parr, 1996; Hartmann, 1987; McKie *et al.*, 1999; Aston *et al.*, 2007). These studies have investigated how the concepts of gender, power, and patriarchy have constructed women's gendered roles and identities. Yet, McKie *et al.* (1999) distinguish between public and private divisions. The private sphere refers to the home, whilst the public sphere is employment. They argue that the private sphere, the family and home, has generated divisions in household labour and encouraged men's dominance through patriarchal power (McKie *et al.*, 1999).

2.8 Relationships

A further barrier to women accessing education is mothering responsibilities (Parr, 1996; Lister, 2003; Heenan, 2002; Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016; Foster and Bolton, 2018; Higton *et al.*, 2019). McLaughlin (2009) makes an important point that without childcare being arranged, other barriers such as tuition fees and transport are not important issues, since participation will not be achievable at the outset. For some, the cost of childcare is the main barrier to women's education (Heenan, 2002; Higton *et al.*, 2019). This is similarly expressed in Afzal *et al.*'s (2015) study, which identified a lack of free childcare as the main barrier to accessing English language learning provision amongst BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) women. In contrast, although Aston et al., (2007) also state that childcare is a barrier to Pakistani and Bangladeshi women entering education and employment, the majority of the Muslim participants confirmed that that they would rather not be in education or employment whilst their children are young, and instead prefer to spend their time with their very young children and the family. Therefore, although childcare is not a barrier for these women, according to Higton *et al.* (2019), cultural influences could also create barriers, which differs from earlier comments (for example Lister, 2003; McLaughlin, 2009 and Afzal *et al.*, 2015) about childcare being a significant barrier to accessing education. Aston *et al.* (2007) explain that it is uncommon to use formal childcare amongst Pakistani and Bangladeshi families. Instead, it is common to have informal childcare through the help of extended family members. The women prefer informal childcare as they feel their child will be safer with someone whom they were familiar with rather than a stranger (Aston *et al.*, 2007). They also prefer the children to be in a similar cultural environment with other children of the same culture, where they can practise their home language skills and follow religious customs, such as eating halal food (Aston et al., 2007). Some parents were concerned that the child may not eat halal food being in a mixed cultural environment and preferred the staff at the nursery to be female.

Nevertheless, some women, especially from the younger generation, had opposing opinions and believed that formal childcare would provide their children with more learning opportunities, social skills and independence (Aston *et al.*, 2007). Yet the cost and availability of childcare remained a barrier, and some women were not aware of the availability of local childcare provision (Aston et al., 2007). Similarly, the participants in Darby, Farooqi and Lai's (2016) study could not afford childcare and did not have family or any social networks to support them with childcare; therefore, attending ESOL classes was impossible. However, it can be noted that the participants in Darby, Farooqi and Lai's (2016) study were not all Muslim, though they were first-generation immigrants, with little language proficiency.

Literature confirms that mothering responsibilities coincide with caring responsibilities. For example, McLaughlin (2009) notes that women are more likely to manage the school run. This indicates an uneven balance in childcare responsibilities since it appears to be the women's responsibility to arrange this. McLaughlin (2009) also highlights that women are burdened with caring responsibilities, yet it is not clear whether these are caring for children or for the elderly. A similar uncertainty in terminology appears in the work of Raynolds and Birdwell (2015), who conclude that the family suffers as a result of mothers being employed, and that the main barrier is being a 'carer'. It is unclear whether this refers to the care of children in general, the care of disabled children, or caring for older relatives. Raynolds and Birdwell's (2015) study is more recent and focuses specifically on Muslim women. However, they note that these barriers apply not only to all British Muslims, but also to other groups. McLaughlin (2009) explains that caring issues are profoundly connected with social and cultural attitudes, as it is hardly cited that men cannot participate in education and employment due to childcare responsibilities. Furthermore, caring for disabled children or relatives is primarily the women's responsibility (Parr, 1996; McKie *et al.*, 1999), that is often resulted from marrying cousins, for social and cultural reasons and not religious beliefs (Akrami and Osati, 2007). Correspondingly, Aston *et al.* (2009) assert that caring for older family members (either the woman's parents or the in-laws) is predominantly the women's responsibility, and that this trend appears to continue. More recent literature (Higton *et al.*, 2019) demonstrates that this trend is continuing as caring for the parents-in-law, who had health issues, appeared as a barrier to Bangladeshi women wishing to attend ESOL classes.

Childcare has also been documented as the main barrier to education for female refugees in Australia who migrated from Burma (Watkins, Razee, and Richters, 2012). Pre-immigration, the barriers were due to cultural gender-roles which created expectations of women's roles as the homemaker (Watkins, Razee, and Richters, 2012). Post-immigration barriers to education included childcare and full-time caring responsibilities for the elderly, either their parents or in-laws (Watkins, Razee, and Richters, 2012). An important point here is that there are limited studies referring to the parents-in-law as a barrier, other than Higton *et al.*'s (2019) study, as aforementioned. Whilst in Ward and Spacey's (2008) research on Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali women, domestic and caring responsibilities were identified as the most

significant aspects that contribute to their exclusion from education. Ward and Spacey's (2008) findings corroborate with Heenan's (2002) study of white women in Ireland, which identifies caring responsibilities as the main barriers to accessing higher education. The caring responsibilities include caring for their own children, and older dependent relatives. Furthermore, the findings of Dyke and James' (2009) of 634 female British South Asian unemployed immigrants confirmed that their main reason for not seeking employment was childcare, as well as domestic responsibilities.

Hashem and Aspinall's (2010) study of Bangladeshi men and women in London highlighted that female learners prefer to learn at local institutions due to childcare, family commitments and domestic duties. Conversely, the men reported family commitments and employment as their reasons for not having enough time to learn English (Hashem and Aspinall, 2010). It should be noted that Hashem and Aspinall (2010) point out that childcare and family responsibilities are barriers that affect all women despite their ethnicity. They also argue that many of the Bangladeshi community are unemployed and rely heavily upon free childcare, whether that is government-funded childcare provision or through extended family members (Hashem and Aspinall, 2010). In line with this, according to the latest 2011 Census statistics on economic inactivity, the data suggests a 2% difference between women within the Bangladeshi community in comparison with the Pakistani community. The 2011 Census indicates that Bangladeshi (54%) and Pakistani (52%) women have the greatest economic inactivity due to family home commitments. The male and female participants in Hashem and Aspinall's (2010) study had different motivations to learn English. The women wanted to support their children's education and be able to access welfare services, whilst the men sought career progression. Nevertheless, Potter (2014:20) expresses his concerns of childcare being 'gendered' by arguing that there needs to be a shift in people's attitudes from expecting mothers to be carers, to enabling women into employment. It can be noted that although the report is seven years old now, it is based in Northern Ireland, and the author is from a white ethnicity; his work is relevant to this study as it presents the barriers experienced to access education and employment.

Muslim women and girls (Siann and Knox,1992; Basit, 1996; Basit, 1997a; Archer, 2002) and some women in general (Derby *et al.*, 2016) aspire to a better life. Literature confirms that parents support their daughters to become educated (Bhopal, 1998; Basit, 1997a; Ahmad, 2001; Dale *et al.*, 2002; Shah and Khurshid, 2019). However, the situation of Cinderella mirrors the women who are expected to complete the chores (Green *et al.* 2004; McLaughlin, 2009; Khurshid, 2017; Higton *et al.,* 2019), as she is also responsible for all the domestic chores (Su and Xue, 2010). Aston *et al.*'s (2007) work demonstrates that women's educational and employment aspirations are controlled through their caring responsibilities. The authors confirm that caring for the elderly or ill family members is a significant barrier to women's education, to the extent that it significantly influences women's lives and choices in terms of their education and employment. However, with reference to domestic responsibilities, Aston *et al.* (2007) contend that women with high qualifications experienced equally shared domestic chores with their

husbands, whilst women who preferred not to work, held traditional patriarchal views of women being the homemakers with the men being the breadwinners. Nevertheless, Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study confirms that husbands are now beginning to contribute to childcare responsibilities, and equally take part in domestic chores. They note that the increasing equality in domestic chores is due to technological advances in the production of household equipment that make tasks less time-consuming, as opposed to how the women's mothers hand-washed the clothes, which was labour-intensive. Equal responsibility in childcare and domestic chores is similarly evident in Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos' (2014:31) study, demonstrating that the husbands happily comply with childcare responsibilities, and take them where they need to go, do the cleaning, prepare meals and more. Kan and Laurie (2018) argue that factors such as higher educational attainment, employment status and whether the women are first- or second-generation immigrants, have an impact on gender equality in housework. The amount of contribution in housework is influenced by the level of traditional attitudes to gender-roles that the men and women acquire. Men who have more traditional gender-role attitudes contribute less to housework, while the more the women follow traditional gender-role attitudes, the more they contribute to housework (Kan and Laurie, 2018).

Glass and Fujomito (1994) and Mencarini and Sironi (2012) confirm that gendered inequality in household chores impacts on women's psychological well-being, thus causing depression. They further explain that in countries where there is little gender inequality, for example Sweden, there is more bargaining power, allowing them to negotiate a more equal share of the chores within the marriage. Yet, Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes' (2008) study takes a different viewpoint and refers to the life course transitions with time spent on domestic chores. They identify a significant gap in time spent on domestic chores, when the women move from being in a single or cohabiting relation to a marital relationship. The gap narrows for women if they transit from being married to divorced. Additionally, men's contribution to housework is higher in the absence of a woman. Furthermore, they note that transiting to motherhood increases housework for women, which further increases with more children, whilst men's contribution to housework decreases when additional children are born and therefore the gender gap widens. Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes (2008) also affirm that the partner who spends the least amount of time on household chores has less power bargaining than the other partner, whereas Abdi's (2014) research conducted amongst Somali men and women who have migrated from Somalia to the United States demonstrates a power shift once the women have become familiar with the system and understand their rights in the country. The study identifies gender bargaining and patriarchal bargaining in situations where the female Somali immigrants in his study disregard the patriarchal ideologies of men controlling their finances and not taking equal responsibility in childcare. Thus, women who immigrate before their husband expect the man to look after the children and change their nappies, while they socialise (Abdi, 2014).

2.9 Domestic Abuse

Muslim women are exposed to many challenges, including not being allowed to access education, and experiences of domestic violence (David's, 2015). This section offers an understanding of violence through applying power and control as central concepts. Basit (1997a) explains that the female gender is more vulnerable than the male gender, as men's violent acts are often committed by men against women. This is reinforced by Hunnicutt (2009:557), who confirms that women are vulnerable to serious forms of domestic violence, such as rape, whilst men are more at risk of 'violent death, robbery, and aggravated assault'. Therefore, domestic violence is an extensive, yet almost 'invisible' nationwide dilemma (Muro and Mein, 2010:140), which affects women through the controlling behaviour of men (Walmsley-Johnson, 2018). McLaughlin (2009) highlights that women who experience violence also experience a range of barriers to both education and employment. Yet, historically, there is little documented work on violence against women (Hunnicutt, 2009). Muro and Mein (2010:140) acknowledge the lack of research on domestic violence and trauma within the field of education, in comparison to other disciplines such as 'justice, health and care and social service.' They argue that this limitation is problematic since a key function of adult education classes is to accommodate the needs of those hoping to improve their lives and circumstances. Although Muro and Mein's (2010) study has a North American context, this is relevant as it explores the experiences of women on an adult education programme, English as a second Language (ESL). Though the women's religion is unknown, they are known to be immigrants. Their study acknowledges the significant distinctions between domestic violence and domestic trauma and point out that in addressing domestic violence, it often refers to the criminal, whereas when addressing domestic trauma, the victim's reactions to violence is the focus. Considering this, Muro and Mein's (2010:149) research distinctly suggests a demand for 'awareness and action' regarding domestic violence within the education system. At the same time, Muro and Mein (2010) recognise the limitations of their study by confirming the difficulty in data collection, since this topic is sensitive and the high level of trust that is required from both the researchers and the participants. In addition, they point out that since this study was carried out amongst one population, repeating it within different institutions with varying demographics could provide invaluable conclusions and therefore encourage implementations of a suitable policy to solve this issue. Furthermore, Muro and Mein (2010) highlight that domestic violence is a serious issue which could lead to women discontinuing adult education programmes.

From the literature consulted and reviewed above, there is some UK-based literature referring to domestic violence relating specifically to employment (Potter, 2014) and some referring to both employment and education (McLaughlin, 2009). Devlin and McKenna (2009) suggest that although victims of domestic violence within the UK originate from all 'geographical, social, economic, class and cultural' categories, domestic violence is a specific vulnerability experienced by women. Furthermore, in situations where women are dependent on their spouses for their settlement status, they are

cautious to depart from a harmful relationship in fear of deportation, due to their immigration status (Devlin and McKenna, 2009:103).

> Women with no, or limited, access to public funds include those who came to Northern Ireland on spousal visas, students, visitors, 'over-stayers', refused asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.

In addition, South Asian immigrant wives are more susceptible to domestic abuse, when the probationary period to apply for settlement leave has been extended (Charsley *et al.*, 2012). Conversely, Abdi (2014) writes extensively about the husband fearing deportation or imprisonment if the woman informs the police of his violent behaviour. Whilst some Somali women believe that the 911 system protects them from abuse, others believe that it breaks up families and stigmatises the women within the Somali community (Abdi, 2014).

Fontes (2015) argues that immigrant women often experience isolation, as they are vulnerable since they lack English language skills and come from cultures where men are superior to women. These men disapprove of divorce and do not allow their wives to socialise with other women who are in inferior positions and refuse to obey their husbands (Fontes, 2015). Fontes (2015) adds that controlling men confiscate their wives' documents. This shows a connection with the female Bangladeshi and Somali ESOL learners in Pattar's (2009) study, who appear to be afraid of their husbands and wish to access education. However, a significant point here is that the consequences of disobeying their husbands are either not identified or perhaps undocumented.

However, the Office of National Statistics is aware that some crimes may be unreported (Stripe, 2020):

> Domestic abuse is often a hidden crime that is not reported to the police. Therefore, data held by the police can only provide a partial picture of the actual level of domestic abuse experienced. Many cases will not enter the criminal justice process as they are not reported to the police.

Women in domestic abuse conditions experience additional barriers to education, especially since many are living with partners or spouses that control their whereabouts (McLaughlin, 2009). Consequently, they lack confidence and self-esteem which makes it more difficult for them to participate in education (McLaughlin, 2009). Moreover, the issue of unreported abuse is especially significant amongst ethnic minority groups (McLaughlin, 2009). A similar assertion is evident in Ward and Spacey's (2008) study, identifying that one in four women experienced domestic abuse and this was affecting their access to education. Yet Kern's (2017) study of non-Muslim military wives relates to concepts of power used to control women through financial dependence on men to fund childcare, housing, healthcare, education and social life. The women, especially those that were mothers, felt 'trapped' in their relationships due to the financial control (Kern, 2017:358). Kern (2017) confirms that the women feel culturally obliged to remain in the

relationship and continue to be loyal to their husband. She adds that the women believe that they would be in a worse situation if they leave; thus this gives them no other choice but to accept their situation (Kern, 2017). Furthermore, if they do leave the husband, the women will be seen as 'unsupportive wives' (Kern, 2017:361). For the abuse to stop, they must change their own behaviour. It is therefore seen as 'high risk' to report abuse and leave the husband, as although safe places are advertised for women experiencing abuse, in reality they are unsafe (Kern, 2017:361); it can be noted that Kern (2017) does not explain what she means by unsafe.

Having high economic power does not prevent women from experiencing violence, though there is a connection between income and leaving an abusive relationship (Hunnicutt, 2009). Hunnicutt (2009:562) notes that there could be an ideology 'that both encourages violent behaviour toward women and discourages women from escaping'. However, even though Hunnicutt (2009) refers to the importance of income equality, she does not elaborate on this point, nor challenges it. Nevertheless, MacKinnon (1983) stresses that equality amongst marital relationships would reduce wife abuse. Yet, since the patriarchal system places men in dominant positions, portraying men as 'better than, and different from women', even when the woman is employed, it places the man in an economically insecure position and encourages violence towards women (Hunnicutt, 2009:560). Nevertheless, the study fails to explain how men are better than or different to women. Similarly, Yount and Carrera's (2006) research with married Cambodian women confirms that women who are 8-13 school years less educated than their husbands are most likely to be exposed to physical and psychological domestic abuse. They also state that the more children they have, the more likely they are to experience abuse. Since their study is of Cambodian women, this has come into existence that this is not just an issue amongst Muslim women.

The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 has come in existence following the data collection. The Act promotes awareness of domestic abuse, by highlighting that this does not simply refer to violence of a physical nature, but also violence that is emotional, coercive, including financial abuse. The Domestic Abuse Act 2021 emphasises the severity of the issue by confirming that two-thirds of domestic abuse victims are women, with more than 10% of all offences documented by the police force relating to domestic abuse (GOV.UK, 2021).

2.10 Coercive Control

According to the literature, there appears to be a significant amount of control and reliance upon husbands. For example, there is a concept of control emerging in the lives of some participants in Aston *et al.*'s (2009) study, which states that women with childcare responsibilities were not permitted by their husbands and the in-laws to enter employment. Furthermore, ill health is a further factor as women rely upon their husband, children, or other family members to take them to doctor's appointments due to their lack of English skills; therefore they feel they are a burden on them (Aston *et al.*, 2009). The

women compare the level of freedom in their own lives with those of their children and feel stressed due to the restricted freedom they have due to their ill health (Aston *et al.*, 2009). In addition, the authors confirm that ill health of family members is a significant barrier to employment, since some Muslim women spend a copious amount of their life at home, looking after other family members (see Section 2.8). In addition, some Muslim women are reliant upon their young children, especially the older siblings, to speak at the doctors for them, which meant that the children's education was disrupted, and they learnt less in comparison to the other siblings (Pattar, 2009).

This thesis illustrates that coercive control is the overarching concept of the conceptual framework, interrelating with further concepts of patriarchy, identity, and power (see section 3.19). These concepts are illustrated in the work of Hunnicutt (2009), who explains that the amount of power of an individual is not static, since it changes as a result of different life experiences, as individuals could have more or less power as they age or based upon their education and marital status. Another key point Hunnicutt (2009) makes is that within patriarchal systems, the power does not only come from men, as older people could also dominate younger people, and men could control other men, just as white people could dominate people of colour. Aston *et al.* (2007) similarly demonstrate power and control of family members, both from parents before the girl gets married, and then once married, the power and control arise from the husband and the in-laws. However, a further example of control is the influence of the community through the traditional views of women completing the domestic chores, hence not allowing women to socialise with their friends (Aston *et al.*, 2007). The control is to the extent that in the event of a family gathering, the women must cancel their own social plans in order to attend the family gathering (Aston *et al.*, 2007). Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study also highlights some cases where the husband is suspicious when the woman goes out to do shopping for the family, or to socialise with friends, and thus questions her. These controlling practices are examples of coercive control, as defined in Section 1.7. A further example of coercive control is illustrated in Hashem and Aspinall's (2010) study amongst ESOL teachers and Bangladeshi ESOL learners in East London. One female participant in their study stated that other Bangladeshi women are unable to access ESOL classes due to their husbands not permitting them to leave the house. However, it can be noted that the authors fail to fully unpack this comment. Instead, they briefly state that this is no longer the case and providing local provision has seemingly resolved this issue. Yet, the husband 'permitting' her to leave the house arguably demonstrates an example of him being in a more powerful position than her, through coercive control (see Section 4.11). Nevertheless, Aston *et al.* (2007) explain that such controlling behaviour has arisen through traditional values and expectations that the first generation have brought with them from their home country. However, coercion experienced by adult female learners presents safeguarding issues. Isserlis (2000) highlights that an increasing number of female immigrants are trapped in abusive relationships. The language and cultural differences make it more difficult for them to seek help to escape their controlling husbands. Isserlis (2000) urges practitioners to gain awareness of the policies around domestic violence to support the women, as the trauma of being coerced

could have a profound impact on their learning. For example, women in violent relationships may experiences isolation, emotional distress and memory loss (Isserlis, 2000). Women experiencing abuse need to be safeguarded as coercion of any form can make it more challenging to succeed in their studies (Horsman, 2006). Safeguarding concerns increased during the pandemic (El-Metoui and Graham-Brown, 2021), when domestic violence against women surged (Usta et al., 2021). However, the Care Act (2014) safeguards individuals from any risks of abuse and neglect, by supporting them to make their own choices and have control of their choices. Concerns around abuse could distress all individuals involved, therefore the act aims to raise public awareness of how to respond to it (Care Act, 2014).

2.11 Expectations

Muslim women who have migrated from their own countries to settle in the UK for a better standard of living (Aston et al., 2007) experience many barriers to accessing education. These barriers have been discussed in the earlier sections. Despite the barriers, previous research confirms that Muslim families value education (for example, Siann and Knox, 1992; Basit, 1997a; Ahmad, 2001; Aston et al., 2007). However, Abbas's (2002) study states that parents of Muslim college girls restricted their educational opportunities. In addition, Ward and Spacey's (2008) research amongst Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Somali women asserts that Muslim women's lives are shaped by their husbands. Correspondingly, Raynolds and Birdwell (2015:34) highlighted that Muslims were the only religious group, with a high majority agreeing to the statement, 'husbands should work, wives should stay at home'. The authors argue that a gender divide is more common amongst Muslim communities (not specifically British Muslim communities) in comparison with any other community, and this is led by cultural attitudes. Parallel to this notion is the work of earlier scholarship (Brah and Shaw, 1992; Aston et al., 2007), which establishes that Muslim women are culturally influenced by the community, whilst Basit's (1997a) study posits that there are culturally embedded attitudes specifically amongst British Muslim families. Her work amongst British Muslim adolescents, who are highly ambitious and inspired to enter careers such as medicine, demonstrates that the fear of negative influence from society acts as a possible barrier to the girls aiming high.

Basit (1997a) asserts that the family fear gossip in the community, and there is surveillance by the parents, who want to keep an eye on the girls, as they are afraid of what the largely extended interfering family would think or say. Basit (1997a) further reports that despite the fears of the family and community, the parents supported their children, as they wanted their children to be in a better position than themselves. Consistent with comments made by Basit (1997a), one female non-Muslim participant in Abbas's (2002) study confirmed that parents often pressured their children to become educated and achieve what they could not achieve themselves. However, in Ahmad's (2001) study, although the women with very little education themselves did not restrict their daughters' choices in education, at the same time, they did not encourage them. However, mothers that had more educational experiences

supported their daughters wishes to become educated to enable them to have an independent life, where they are not dependent and inferior to their prospective spouses and in-laws (Ahmad, 2001). Furthermore, some of the Muslim women in Darby, Farooqi and Lai (2016) noted that the husband was a barrier to them learning English, as either the husbands did not want their wives to become independent, or since they did not have the opportunity to educate themselves; they were afraid of their wives becoming more educated than them.

Both Basit (1997a) and Aston *et al.*'s (2007) work illustrates that the Muslim girls' parents have the authority to shape the girls' choices whilst they are unmarried, though their husbands have the authority to shape them once they are married (Aston *et al.*, 2007). However, Basit (2013a) notes that parents and educated older siblings helped with these choices. Girls who had no qualifications were influenced by parents with very traditional views of education (Aston *et al.*, 2007). These influences were by the fathers of the girls, whilst the mothers had little influence over their daughter's choices (Aston *et al.*, 2007:78). This shows that the fathers had control over the mother's opinion, therefore arguably the mothers did not have a voice. Such practices demonstrate a patriarchal culture, within which gendered attitudes are embedded:

> …their father thought that a woman's place was in the home and did not believe in girls having education. Aston *et al.* (2007:78)

Muslim girls who left education early did so due to parents' attitudes towards education that controlled the decisions and choices the girls made, and in some instances the parents made decisions for them (Aston *et al.*, 2007). However, Aston *et al.* (2007) note that this largely affected the eldest daughter in the family. Furthermore, Aston *et al.* (2007) states that the choices made by the parents were not the right choices and as they restricted the girls from gaining any formal qualifications, creating a barrier for them to engage in any educational and career opportunities. Moreover, some girls in Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study confirmed that they had negative experiences at school as well as no guidance from parents on education, and that both factors had an impact on their choices; thus, they were not able to continue to study.

Despite the barriers mentioned above, women appear to be reflective about their current identity and aspire to another identity, for example, the identity of being a learner (Afzal *et al.*, 2015), being employed, becoming a doctor (Basit, 1999; Dale *et al.*, 2002; Aston *et al.*, 2007), taking part-time jobs or pursuing careers for which they are over-qualified to enable flexibility to balance work and family responsibilities (Aston *et al.*, 2007). The Muslim parents in Basit's (1997a:141) research allowed their daughters to become a doctor to ensure financial stability, and as an 'insurance' for any difficult times. This is reinforced in Sianne and Knox's (1992) study where although the girls were genuinely interested in having a career in medicine, the parents believed that it is a reputable profession. Conversely, the parents in Basit's study (1997a:143) perceive being a nurse as a 'low status' job as it requires working amongst males, yet it could be argued that other careers could also involve

associating with males. Basit (1997a) further explains that it is preferable to have the availability of female doctors and female nurses for female patients. Nevertheless, the parents select professions that are respected and safe, whilst the girls are prepared to alter their choices based on their parents' preferences (Basit, 1997a).

Gendered careers, such as the childcare profession, predominantly comprise female workers (van Polanen *et al*, 2017), with just 3% of workers in early years in England being male. (Zahawi, 2019). Basit (1997a) notes that this is stereotypically a female occupation that is culturally accepted amongst ethnic minority groups, which often underachieving girls are encouraged to join. However, more recent literature explains that caregiving careers are dominated by females as these jobs reflect women's primary role of motherhood (Dunlap and Barth, 2019). Dunlap and Barth (2019) further explain that the gendered careers mirror the gender imbalance in domestic divisions and the gender stereotypes in careers, which hinder talented women from entering male-dominated careers. Whilst focusing on Muslim women, Aston *et al*., (2007:83) assert that vocational careers are best suited for women who have had a gap in education, and educated following marriage, as this gives them confidence in controlling their lives (Aston *et al*., 2007).

Some parents see their daughter's education as a 'safety net' and an 'insurance policy' (Ahmad, 2001:145). This supports the assertions of Aston *et al*. (2007) who contend that girls preferred to enrol onto vocational qualifications, such as childcare, as they believed this was a quick route to guaranteed paid employment. This was ideal for the parents, considering their poor financial background, and therefore some parents supported their children's education to enable them to financially contribute once they were employed. It can be noted that Aston *et al*.'s study (2007) has mixed findings since the participants are from three different generations, with some parents who want their daughters to receive an education, though a vocational one, whilst other parents who do not want their children (particularly their daughters) to receive any qualifications. A similar essence emerges in the work of Abbas (2002) in which the South Asian college learners choose GCSE subjects based on ones in which they performed well. However, student services discourage ethnic minorities from studying academic subjects. Instead, they guide them towards vocational subjects; the advice provided to the ethnic minority differs to that given to the majority ethnic groups (Basit, 1997a). Student services view their aspirations as unrealistic and assume that they will get married off; therefore, they perceive long-term study as meaningless (Basit, 1997a). The girls believe that they are disadvantaged in terms of the advice they receive due to their 'gender' and 'religion' (Basit, 1997a). Negative experiences of careers advice were also documented in Heenan's (2002) study of white mature women. Similarly, Kazi and Akhlaq (2017) reported that the school counsellors had little influence on the children's career choice. Instead, their parents, friends and teachers were found to have more influence, particularly where teachers were highly inspirational.

Aston *et al.* (2007) and Khurshid (2017) note that women highly valued education for the financial independence it provided following being in paid employment, while Aston *et al.* (2007) adds that this reflects situations where their husbands cannot or are not willing to financially provide for the woman. Therefore, education is important, as financially dependent women take pride in not relying on the husband or in-laws for money (Khurshid, 2017). However, there is now a shift in culturally embedded attitudes towards education, and consequently both daughters and sons are encouraged to be educated to high levels (Aston *et al.*, 2007). Some of the highly educated mothers in Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study strongly believed that educated mothers could influence their children into a better future, whilst for women with low English skills, learning English provided them with more knowledge about their children's homework. Bhatti (1999) similarly notes that south Asian parents hoped that their children led a better life than them, where they do not experience the same poverty and consequent challenges.

> These parents [the highly educated parents] felt strongly that their children should be as educated as possible so that their daughters could have a better future and a higher standard of living than they had had themselves… migration to the UK was for a better future for them…they did not want them to have to go through what they went through themselves by being stuck in low paid jobs with no future. (Aston *et al.*, 2007: 82)

Nonetheless, some adult female immigrants are employed in low paid jobs, such as cleaning, as they do not need to be able to speak in English in this role, yet since the shifts are either early morning or late night, these act as a barrier to their participation in ESOL classes (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016).

2.12 Summary

The focus of the study concerns barriers to learning for Muslim women attending an ESOL course. The review of the literature began by setting the context of ESOL. Then it reflected on a range of sources, some of which have used intersectionality as a framework (for example, Abdi 2014; Kan and Laurie, 2018), to explore the barriers to women's education. The chapter has discussed the core concepts that underpin the barriers that women experience in relation to their education. This includes their multiple identities and the patriarchal society in which women are expected to be homemakers, due to gendered expectations. The literature highlights that childcare is gendered and some women are controlled through childcare, domestic and caring responsibilities, thus creating barriers to participation in education, whilst others have childcare facilities through extended family. It is noted that since the barriers women experience are integrally linked, addressing one barrier will not enable full participation in education. However, the literature shows that little support is provided to girls in education.

The chapter draws on power imbalances which are influenced through cultural practices in the community. However, literature (Hunnicutt, 2009) sheds light

on a shift of power from when a woman is unmarried, the power being that of her parents, and then when she is married, the power of her husband and in-laws. Furthermore, it has been identified that some individuals could have more or less power depending on their age, education and marital status. For example, power could be that of older men over younger men, and older women over younger women. The story of Cinderella also demonstrates a woman dominated by women. The power and control make women financially dependent upon men. For some, this places women as victims of abuse. Nevertheless, Muslim women aspire to be educated, though often their voices are unheard. The Muslim women's careers are driven by their parents' gendered and cultural attitudes. However, the literature highlights that education allows women to have more control over their lives, more confidence, financial independence, and the ability to support their children with their education to have a better future. Nevertheless, from the literature sought, there appears to be a gap in the literature specifically on the barriers that female Muslim ESOL learners' experience whilst being in education. The research questions in the next chapter (Chapter 3) are aimed at addressing this gap.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The chapter begins by revisiting the focus of the study. The research journey commenced by formulating the research questions. The type of questions asked, and the type of data intended to gather, informed the methodological approaches discussed in this chapter (Bryman, 2016).

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the perceived barriers to education experienced by female Muslim adult ESOL learners. It sets out to explore three research questions, as stated in the thesis introduction and reiterated below, which guide the study:

Research questions:

1. What are the perceived barriers to education experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners whilst attending a further education college?

2. What are ESOL teachers' perceptions of the barriers experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners?

3. How can Muslim ESOL learners be best supported in their studies?

This chapter begins by discussing my ontological and epistemological position, based on the philosophical stance, which informs my observations and understandings. It also provides a critical insight into the journey of generating data. Furthermore, the chapter provides an analysis of the chosen research design, and a justification for the chosen methods and approaches to gather data. It also explains the limitations of those that were not included. The data were collected in two sets: Dataset One refers to data collected from ESOL learners, whilst Dataset Two is data collected from ESOL teachers. An overview of the participants' demographics is provided for both Datasets. The research utilises both traditional and non-traditional research methods, in the attempt to elicit 'rich' data (Kara, 2012: 131). The 'traditional' research method (Kara, 2015; Wiles *et al.*, 2012; Rainford, 2020) includes using semi-structured interviews with both teachers and learners. While the non-traditional (Kara, 2015) element of creativity is produced by the ESOL learners, in the form of a research diary, and a pre-interview activity prepared by the teacher participants. The chapter also discusses the decisions made in the attempt to gain data with depth and richness. In addition, it reviews ethical considerations. Furthermore, the chapter describes how the data were manually prepared for analysis, and the process of analysing the data, which was obtained through a grounded theory (GT) approach, from a feminist perspective (see Section 3.2). The final section presents three phases of the reproduced intersectional conceptual framework. These combine the core interrelating concepts that have emerged from the literature and the findings.

3.2 Reflexivity

Along the process of completing this thesis, I have engaged with the literature sought, the data and the whole research process by reflecting on my 'background, prior knowledge and experiences' (see Section 1.2) (Basit, 2010: 220). My experiences with ESOL learners have guided and shaped this study. For example, conducting such an extensive review of literature (Chapter 2) has shaped my thinking in the process of producing this thesis, as I began this research as an insider, Muslim researcher. Gradually through conversations and reading literature, I developed an awareness and appreciation of feminist research literature and perspectives. It is now my position that I would challenge anything I perceive as an inequality. However, this is the position I have always had, though I did not recognise it in this way. Furthermore, during the course of the Doctorate in Education (EdD), I have evolved through the influence of other feminist research (for example, Shain, 2020; Basit, 1997b; Bhopal, 1998). Through reading feminist literature, I began to view other literature as well as feminist literature via a different lens, that of a feminist researcher. Moreover, being a researcher with an insider position, through a feminist perspective, and a similar background to that experienced by many of my learners, I have managed to encourage learners to openly speak about their daily lives and experiences. Therefore, I have been prepared to translate the interview questions for a female ESOL learner and visit her home to allow her to feel more comfortable (see Section 3.10). I reflected upon the decisions made during the research and learnt from them (Basit, 2013a). In addition, embracing feminist methodologies for this research has provided invaluable insights around gender inequality, and unequal relationships with functions of domination and oppression.

3.2 Philosophical Positionality

For this study, my positionality is that of a South Asian Muslim woman, teaching full time, juggling childcare and other commitments. An awareness of one's positionality and ontological position is important in a research project as it allows to determine the chosen methodology (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Ontology relates to what constitutes reality, the being and how we can understand the existence (Basit, 2010). It also associates with the researcher's views of what forms social reality (Basit, 2010). Furthermore, ontology allows greater insights into people's views, experiences, understandings, interactions, and behaviours (Basit, 2010). My ontological stance is that I have experienced some of the barriers mentioned in this study, whilst being in education as a mature student. I have an understanding of the Muslim culture, and as a parent I have awareness of some of the difficulties of childcare, yet I make no assumption that my experiences of these are exactly the same as those mentioned by the participants in this study. Nevertheless, these experiences enable me to have an insider position with regards to some of the possible barriers to education.

I have encountered an insider position of the researched topic (Voloder and Kirpitchenko, 2016). An insider is a researcher who has a lived experience with the type of participants being researched (Griffith, 1998), and is familiar with them (Kelly, 2014). However, Kelly (2014) posits that researchers are actors in social research, working with co-participants such as colleagues, teachers, and learners, and should not be identified as insiders or outsiders. Nonetheless, Kelly's (2014) concepts are relational to the field of education and more importantly the general public. In addition, I am looking through a lens of an educationalist, a parent, Muslim, female, and as a learner. Furthermore, shifts in my educational trajectory have provided me with a variety of learning experiences (for example, my teacher training, Master's and during the course of the EdD), which have particularly enhanced my ability to reflect. Therefore, through personal reflections I have engaged in reflexivity to understand my own self and guide future actions (Boodhoo, 2017).

Epistemology associates with my thoughts on how knowledge is gained and how it is transmitted to its audience (Basit, 2010). Dawson (2009:18) defines epistemology as 'the study of the nature of knowledge and justification. It looks at where the knowledge has come from and how we know what we know'. For the purpose of this study, my epistemic position is knowledge gained from participants about their lives, experiences, thoughts and feelings, which are expressed through discussions in the interviews. My observations about what constitutes knowledge influence the methods and approaches selected to gather data. Furthermore, epistemology informs our paradigms used to develop the research; the paradigms inform our methods of data collection. Epistemology and Ontology can have an impact on this research by shaping my thinking with regards to my conscious and unconscious bias and assumptions, as noted by Hammersley and Gomm (1997). In addition, I have minimalised any pre-held assumptions (for example, childcare being an issue amongst Muslims) through reflections from reviewing the data in relation to the research questions and have therefore challenged my thoughts through the broader reading of literature as foundation stones. Being the same gender and religion as the learner participants has an implication through my own identity for the research. In addition, through the notion of reflexivity and as an insider, I have knowledge and awareness of some cultural issues the Muslim learners may encounter, as I am also Muslim. Therefore, bias and subjectivity are kept to the minimum by not taking issues personally, and not reflecting on my own situation in terms of theirs.

3.3 Paradigms

A paradigm is an overarching umbrella of an educational research project (Basit, 2010). In particular, a paradigm is the researcher's view of how they see the world, and this informs, along with the purposes/questions of the research, the methodology and approaches used. The paradigm portrays two distinctive, 'contrasting' approaches: positivist and interpretivist (Basit, 2010:14). The interpretivist paradigm includes smaller samples to achieve in-depth contextual data around human behaviour and perceptions (Basit, 2010). Working within the interpretivist paradigm produces non-statistical data that is non-

generalisable. The terms 'qualitative paradigm' and 'quantitative paradigm' allow a simplified understanding of the two paradigms and the methodology which they steer towards. In agreement with Basit (2010), Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) confirm that paradigms are the lens through which the researcher views and interprets the world. Furthermore, paradigms influence the study conducted, how it is studied and the method of interpreting the results (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Whilst the third paradigm, that of mixed-methods research, is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, it does not restrict the researcher's choice of methods, techniques, and approaches in a single study (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This research is rooted towards an interpretivist paradigm to explore the learners' perceptions, and it takes a feminist lens through its grounded theory approach. Kushner and Morrow (2003) confirm that grounded theory and feminism complement each other, and that grounded theory originates from an interpretivist paradigm. Strauss and Corbin (1990) similarly relate grounded theory with qualitative research, while Charmaz (2006) adds that this method of collecting qualitative data has an emphasis on building a conceptual framework by forming an inductive analysis of the data gathered. Viewing the data from a feminist lens is associated with adopting a qualitative approach to uncover the needs of women, allowing their voices to be heard, whereas quantitative research tends to overlook voices of women; rather it changes them into 'objects' (Flick, 2018:39).

3.4 Research Methodology

The research methodology guided the general principles for this research (Dawson, 2009). In order to understand the perceived barriers experienced by female ESOL learners, this research adopts a qualitative methodology, using semi-structured interviews with preliminary questionnaires, pre-interview activities and a roles tick list, to draw out rich narrative data. Had a quantitative methodology been selected, this would have specifically generated statistical data; rather, meaningful insights are drawn out through using a qualitative methodology (Kara, 2012). Mason (2017:6) describes qualitative research as 'challenging', perhaps due to the time taken in analysing and interpreting the data. Adding 'richness' and 'depth' to this research was key to the decisions made along this journey, especially when selecting the research approach and methods that would be most valuable in obtaining data that answer the research questions (Mason, 2017:1).

3.4.1 Case studies

The research is presented in the form of a case study at an FE institution in England, to elicit a rich and in-depth understanding of the issues investigated and to create new knowledge (Yin, 2009). Case studies are widely used in different subjects including education, sociology, economics, nursing, and many more (Yin, 2009). They are also widely used in qualitative research (for example Cooke, 2006; Pattar, 2009; Mirza and Meetoo, 2018). Kumar (2011:26) describes a case study as 'a particular individual, a group, a community, an instance, an episode, an event, a sub-group of a population, a

town or city'. With reference to Kumar's (2011) definition, this study focuses on a sub-group of female Muslim ESOL learners and ESOL teachers from one further education institution. Denscombe (2010) highlights the characteristics of a case study as having one or a few instances. Similarly, Yin (2009) argues that case studies can be formed of both single and multiple cases. According to Denscombe (2010:54), the main advantage of a case study is that it allows the researcher to use multiple 'sources, types of data and research methods', which has been achieved in this research. Yet there are many common misconceptions of case studies, based on critiques from other researchers (Yin, 2009). For example, the research could be very time-consuming, less generalisable, and produce a large amount of data that is unreadable (Yin, 2009). However, although the current research is a case study, it is time bound; the data collected is sufficiently robust and therefore readable (see Section 3.12). Furthermore, I have evaluated this research by following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) Evaluative Criteria, which consists of the following four elements: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The credibility of this research is ensured in how trustworthy it is. This is evident through triangulation and the diversity of data generated, which establishes that the research is valid (see Section 3.12).

3.5 Methods of data collection

In the attempt to select methods that generate data to answer the research questions, a wide range of creative methods were sought. The most appropriate approaches were selected to answer the research questions, as this informed my ontological and epistemological positions (see Section 3.2). Interviews were the most applicable method to address the research questions (Denscombe, 2010). Furthermore, the most common types of interviews in social research are structured interviews, unstructured interviews, and semi-structured interviews (Denscombe, 2010). Basit (2010) contends that semi-structured interviews are perceived more favorably in educational research. These allow the interviewer to be well prepared and pre-formulate the interview questions (Basit, 2010). It also prepares the interviewer to ask supplementary questions to gain a more in-depth response (Basit, 2010). Semi-structured interviews are flexible as the sequence of the questions asked can be adjusted; for example, questions can be omitted if the answer has been provided in a previous question (Basit, 2010). Conversely, conducting the semi-structured interviews can be time-consuming for both the researcher and the participant (Flick, 2018), and transcribing the data could be costly (Kara, 2012) and time-consuming (Bryman, 2001). Moreover, some participants may find it threatening to be recorded (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018).

Following Basit's (2010) train of thought, semi-structured interviews were selected (see Sections 3.11.1 and 3.11.2) for the process of the interviews. Basit's (1997a) research employed a qualitative methodology, with in-depth semi-structured interviews to examine the aspirations of adolescent Muslim girls. She argued that interviewing is the most suitable method for collecting data for a study of such nature, as during the interview the researcher can

clarify points, repeat, or reword questions and provide prompts. Oplatka and Lapidot (2012) also used semi-structured interviews for investigating female Muslim learners' life stories concerning their access to higher education. Likewise, Potter (2014) utilised interviews, though the type of interview was not indicated. However, McLaughlin (2009) carried out a document analysis, and gathered data from policy documents and reports, while Dyke and James (2009) conducted telephone interviews with South Asian women. Dyke and James (2009) note several limitations of the process. For example, hiring female dual language researchers, challenges to speak to the specific person in the household, husband or children answering the phone, assumptions of the call being a hoax, fear of the telephone call being from a government agency calling to enquire about their benefits or to cease their benefits, and being cautious of sharing any personal details, or too busy to take the telephone call (Dyke and James, 2009).

Structured interviews were not considered as they restrict the interviewer, since they have a strong control over the wording of the questions and the order in which they are asked (Denscombe, 2010). Therefore, there is no flexibility in how the interview schedule is administered (Denscombe, 2010). In contrast, unstructured interviews have no structure and are led with just a topic. Questions are open-ended and could be based on participants' responses (Kumar, 2005). Structured interviews are like questionnaires but administered face-to-face with the participant. They could be seen as more effective than questionnaires as you do not have to wait for them to be returned nor consider the cost of postage (Kumar, 2005). Although Abbas (2002) used questionnaires, Oliver-Hoyo and Allen (2006) warn us that using questionnaires to gather data on perceptions is complicated as it is not possible to identify misinterpretations of questions, which are easier to identify during face-to-face interviews. Muro and Mein (2010) also used questionnaires with the female adult ESL participants. However, these were distributed to the participants whilst they were at the educational institution, and the participants were provided with the opportunity to ask for clarification or translation for any question. More importantly, the males were instructed to leave the classroom during this process as the questions were of a sensitive nature (Muro and Mein, 2010).

3.6 Research Instruments Applied

In this study, research instruments refer to the device used for gathering, collecting and analysing data (Dawson, 2009). In the attempt to generate 'rich' and 'illuminating data' (Basit, 2013a), as part of the interview process, Dataset One included an option to produce a creative research diary prior to the interview. In addition, a preliminary questionnaire was used to gain demographic information (see Appendix 1), as well as a roles tick list (see Appendix 2) and an interview schedule (see Appendix 3). Dataset Two utilised an optional pre-interview activity, a preliminary questionnaire and an interview schedule. However, from Dataset Two, following the interview, one teacher provided further data, although she was not specifically asked to, as she felt it was relevant to the study (see Section 4.4 for the Cinderella passage).

A similar approach to using digital ethnography, an innovative approach using some type of digitalisation, was utilised in Basit's (2013a:717) study, where, prior to the interviews, participants were provided with disposable cameras to take photographs of 'significant people, places and things that had an impact' on their education. The photographs were used to encourage reflection upon life experiences during the in-depth interviews (Basit, 2013b). In the current study, the use of a creative concept proved effective as it generated 'richer and more insightful data' as it was detailed (see Section 3.9), and therefore resulted in an in-depth analysis (Kara, 2015:8). Flick (2014) refers to this as a photographic diary, whereas Kara (2015) refers to using visual methods alongside interviews as 'enhanced interviews'. A photographic diary and enhanced interviews appear to be like the research diary method used in the current study, as they both enable reflection during interviews. Photos stimulate reflection and are a good method to 'overcome awkward silences' during the interview. However, there are some points to consider when the photos are taken from the participants themselves, for example, ethical considerations, and establishing who holds the copyright of the photos (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018:632).

3.6.1 Diaries

Women's diaries produce a rich source of data for researchers as they contain details of daily life in different times and places that may otherwise be unrecorded (Beattie, 2009). Krishnan and Lee (2002) describe diaries as establishing first-person reflections of experiences, which are recorded over a period of time. Although some researchers refer to such records as diaries (for example, Jarvis, 1992; Carroll, 1994), other researchers prefer to use the term 'journals' (Yi, 2008; Glass 2014), 'reflective memoire' (Yoon, 2002) or 'life grids' (Berney and Blane, 2003; Green *et al.*, 2004). This study uses the term 'diaries', which according to Yi (2008:2) is a commonly used term. Glass (2014) uses the terms 'research diary' and 'research journal' interchangeably. He administered a diary study to encourage learner reflexivity during an international fieldwork project. His research revealed that the insights formulated enabled domestic learners to practise reflexive techniques in their daily life. Furthermore, Green *et al.* (2004) used life grids with twelve female participants alongside semi-structured interviews to explore barriers to women's employment and progression. Life grids are designed in the form of a table used similar to a timeline. Green *et al.*'s (2004) participants were instructed to write their experiences in chronological order including key dates. The advantage of this is that they can be completed at home, just as the process for completing the research diaries in the current study. However, the limitation of the life grid is that it is limited to text and does not include images (Green *et al.*, 2004).

Krishnan and Lee (2002:227) point out that for learners who are 'unfamiliar' with producing a diary, and for whom English is not their first language, this could be a challenging task. Hence, the participants in the current research were provided with clear instructions in completing the diary. A sample diary was not provided to the learners in the current study, as they were encouraged to create something original. Diaries have been used extensively in research though in a

different context to mine (see Section 3.11.1), as the current research combines written, drawing, and photographic elements in the research diary. The use of creative research methods is foregrounded by Rainford (2020), who also used creative research methods to stimulate discussions in semi-structured interviews with adults. He argues that creative research methods provide the participants with an opportunity to reflect on issues that are being researched. Furthermore, these allow the participants to more deeply consider their answers, unlike a question-answer format during traditional semi-structured interview settings, and supplement additional questions to generate a more general conversation. Furthermore, the participants found the creative tasks enjoyable, amusing, and they built a greater rapport between the researcher and the participant (Rainford, 2020). Nonetheless, Rainford (2020) has identified barriers to participating in the tasks involved, such as participants feeling concerned about their drawing abilities, and fear of their drawing skills being judged. Yet the key strength of this method is that it opens a space for reflection, which the adults would have insufficient time to do otherwise in their daily lives; thus they valued this opportunity (Rainford, 2020).

3.7 Triangulation

Methodological triangulation is formed by using more than one method of data collection and can be beneficial to overcome bias and ensure validity, by cross checking the findings (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Oliver-Hoyo and Allen (2006) propose that using methodological triangulation allows the development of a full picture of the situation, a view similarly documented by Walsh (2013:866):

> Triangulation involves obtaining different perspectives on the same issue and thus should both increase researchers' confidence in their findings and allow a fuller understanding of the richness and depth…

There are various approaches to triangulation. For example, as used within this research, sample triangulation involves interviewing different groups of participants such as learners and teachers. This can be beneficial for the researcher to support validity in the findings as the same issue will be investigated amongst the different groups (Basit, 2010) which can be cross-checked (Payne and Payne, 2004). Sample triangulation has been used for a range of studies relevant to the current study. For example, Basit's (2013a) study of a three-generational analysis included interviewing learners, parents and grandparents. Additionally, Hasham and Aspinall's (2010) study used in-depth interviews with both learners and teachers. The current research also meets sample triangulation as interviews have been conducted with two sources: ESOL learners and ESOL teachers. Additionally, triangulation is met in this research through methods of data collection as three or more approaches have been used in each Dataset (see Section 3.6). For example, triangulation of data collection is evident in Dataset Two, as data is gathered through pre-interview activities, preliminary questionnaires and interviews.

3.8 Choice of Participants

For this study, it was necessary to select participants opportunistically, asking ESOL learners to volunteer from the population of interest (Bryman, 2012). However, this was achieved in the knowledge that sampling can become challenging the more sensitive the topic (Lee, 1993). The selection process commenced as soon as ethical approval was gained (see Section 3.11). This began with a brief meeting with other Entry Level 2 and 3 tutors within the ESOL team. During this meeting, the aim of the study, ethical regulations and other pertinent issues such as time and location were discussed. The tutors recommended conducting a short presentation during the lesson, explaining the interview process and then speaking to individual learners who presented an interest in participating. All the learner participants from Dataset One were female immigrants learning ESOL. The table below has been considered to provide further information of their demographics and support my interpretations based on the background information gathered. With reference to the learners' nationality, the term 'British' does not mean that they were born here; instead, it means that these learners have received their British citizenship.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 display the ethnic and geographical backgrounds of the learner participants, demonstrating that the majority of participants are Pakistani Muslims, which skews the sample towards the views of Pakistani Muslims:

Table 3.1: Dataset One Learner Participants' Ethnic Backgrounds

Ethnicity	Number	Percentage
Pakistani	12	75%
Arab	2	12.5%
Somali	1	6.25%
Bangladeshi	1	6.25%

Table 3.2 Dataset One Learner Participant Demographics

Participant number	Age range	Marital Status	Ethnicity	No of children
1	41-55	Married	Pakistani	0
2	26-40	Married	British Pakistani	4
3	26-40	Married	British Pakistani	4
4	41-55	Married	British Pakistani	0
5	26-40	Married	Pakistani	4 or more
6	26-40	Separated	Pakistani	2
7	41-55	Married	British Pakistani	4 or more
8	25 or under	Married	Arab	1
9	56 or older	Married	British Pakistani	4 or more
10	25 or under	Married	Arab/ Yemini	2
11	25 or under	Separated	Pakistani	0
12	26-40	Married	Somali	0
13	26-40	Married	British Pakistani	4 or more
14	26-40	Married	Bangladeshi	4 or more
15	26-40	Married	Pakistani	2
16	26-40	Married	Pakistani	4

The information in Table 3.3 was gathered in case there was a need to refer to the teachers' views to supplement the learner participants' views. However, the data was of some use and had the purpose of making reference to the teachers' background. In addition, a further table was created with learners' information, including for example the days that they most like in the week (see Appendix 4).

Table 3.3 Dataset Two Teacher Participant Demographics

Teacher number	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Employment status (MGL stands for Main Grade Lecturer VL stand for Visiting)	Teaching experience	ESOL Teaching experience	Time teaching ESOL at this institution
1	F	26-40	Mixed Other	MGL	16 years	14 years	13 years
2	F	26-40	Asian Indian	VL	3 years	1 year	1 year
3	M	26-40	Asian Pakistani	MGL	7 years	3 years	3 years
4	M	26-40	White British	VL	3 years	3 years	2 years
5	F	56 or older	White British	MGL	I did small amounts of paid EfL & English teaching between 1978 and 1987 39 years	30 years	22 years, which includes management & supervisory
6	M	41-55	White British	MGL	22 years	22 years	15 years
7	M	26-40	Black Other	VL	3 years	3 years	3 years
8	F	26-40	White British	MGL	14 years	14 years	14 years
9	F	56 or older	Asian Pakistani	MGL	30 years	10 years	2 years
10	M	41-55	White British	MGL	22 years	11 years	11 years

3.9 Pilot

A pilot was carried out to measure the feasibility of the research instruments and processes for this study (Kumar, 2005). The pilot for Dataset One took place during the summer break, 2015. Learners were asked to volunteer for the pilot before the college closed for the summer holidays. Since I predominantly teach Entry Level 2, the initial research design included only Entry Level 2 learners, as it was easier to recruit learners whom I taught. Whilst being the course tutor for these groups enabled a better understanding of the participants' personal profile, Entry Level 2 participants were also selected because of their ability to communicate in English and their level of confidence. However, only two Entry Level 2 offered to participate. Consequently, during the recruitment of participants for the main study, the sampling was revised due to the lack of learners willing to participate; therefore learners at Entry Level 3 were also invited to participate. Yet I was aware that although the participants were volunteers, there could have been a perception of power imbalance as the learners still saw me as their teacher.

The pilot informed the steps taken to develop the research instruments and processes that were employed in the main study, as advised by Kumar (2005). Mainly, the pilot trialled the effectiveness of the research diary. To test the difference in data produced through the research diary, the pilot participants selected were of similar demographic backgrounds. One participant was interviewed using the research diary, whilst the other was interviewed without it. The outcome of this trial was that the interview using the research diary provided richer data than the other one. Providing the learners with the opportunity to complete the pre-interview activity at home was something different, compared to their usual homework. This gave them time to reflect on the topic prior to the interview, and possibly allowed them to be at ease.

In the pilot study the participants were given two weeks to complete the research dairies to offer them sufficient time, yet they had forgotten and were reminded. Thus, for the main study, the time allocated to compete the research diary was reduced to two weeks. Furthermore, in the pilot, one participant was provided with a general notebook; the participant drew sketches and wrote in pencil on only one page of the book. Therefore, during the main study, the participants were provided with brightly coloured blank journals and a set of felt tip pens to use for the completion of their research diaries (see Figure 3.1). This was to encourage creativity so that the participants were motivated and enjoyed the task of completing the diary.

Figure 3.1 Resources for completion of research diary

Following the pilot, a further amendment was made with the timing of the interviews. Both pilot interviews took up to 40 minutes. However, at this point, the time taken to administer the interviews was not taken into consideration. The completion of the paperwork took on average 90 minutes. This was to ensure the conditions of the interview; for example, for participants to ask questions about the study and to provide explanations. This was crucial to ensure that the participants were relaxed and comfortable enough to answer the interview questions. The time involved in explaining the outline of the study over the phone to the participants and their husbands was also miscalculated. It was decided that too much time during the interview could affect the recruitment level of the interviews; therefore, the interviews for the main study were also aimed to last no longer than 40 minutes. The administration of these was staggered over one-two days. Due to the participants' personal commitments and my teaching commitments, interviews during term time were administered and conducted during lunch breaks, or before and after lessons; it was not feasible to provide the participants with any financial or other types of incentives.

The pilot also highlighted that it would be more beneficial to translate words, phrases or sentences which the participants showed having difficulty in either understanding or expressing in English. Therefore, although the initial design included conducting the interviews in English, to avoid a language barrier, since I can speak and understand Urdu, in the main study the Urdu speaking participants were given the opportunity to speak in their home language where necessary. The research design for Dataset Two was piloted with one participant to test the overall effectiveness of the tools as well as the timing. Following the pilot participant's verbal feedback of including 'health' as a barrier into the preliminary questionnaire, improvements were made.

3.10 Access

The research participants for Dataset One were female ESOL learners at the institution where the researcher worked. This limited any issues regarding

access, such as accessing the participants and gaining permission for the research to be conducted, as gaining access often includes approaching key individuals or gatekeepers who exhibit the 'power' in the research setting (Yates, 2004:160). For this research, the head of faculty was approached and formal approval to carry out the research with ten ESOL learners at Entry Level 2 and 3 was granted in July 2016 (see Appendix 5). This was a straightforward process; however, Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001) warn that gaining access can be an extremely challenging process. They also highlight that not all researchers are able to follow their research design precisely, due to access negotiation. Although, in this research, the research design was followed precisely, it was thought that data would be more robust if the sample size were greater. Therefore, on 19th September 2016 the Head of Faculty was contacted to request permission to interview ten more learners at both Entry Level two and Entry Level 3. Consequently, on 22nd September 2016, permission was obtained to conduct research with an additional 10 learners. From then, as noted by Glaser and Strauss (1967), learners continued to be recruited until the data reached theoretical saturation, which was achieved once sixteen interviews were carried out and collecting additional data may not have led to any new codes and emergent themes. If a study reaches saturation, it can be replicable (Fusch and Ness, 2015).

A further access issue was the timing of the interviews (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). During term time, some participants were unable to attend college before the lesson started or leave late after their lesson. This was due to childcare or caring responsibilities, and for some having to explain to their husbands why they were late. In addition, some interviews took place during the summer holidays; however, one participant was unable to attend college for the interview due to childcare reasons. This learner invited me to her house for the interview. Abdi (2014) also visited the female participants' home in her study, and states that having the status of an insider eased her access to the participants. Nonetheless, visiting the house placed the participants and myself in a vulnerable position; therefore, certain steps were taken to ensure our safety (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). The permission invitation to their house was secured verbally via telephone, since the participant was unable to send emails as she lacked sufficient literacy and IT skills. In addition, permission to visit the house was obtained from the male member of the household, the husband, as well as the female participant. To avoid any disruption by her children or other family members, the participant agreed a convenient time. Despite that agreement, in one instance the participant's daughter wanted to translate her mother's responses. I refused the presence of the daughter as her interpretations may have influenced the participant's responses.

The learner participants that were able to attend college for the interview either did not have children or had older children. This indicates that some of the barriers discussed in this study were also the barriers for participants to attend the interview. For example, childcare was a barrier for some learners to attend their lessons (see Section 4.6) and was a barrier to attend the interview out of term time. The access issue for Dataset One and Two was the time available to take part in the interviews, which Kara (2012) describes as a

limitation of this method of collecting data. The teachers were interviewed on campus after their final teaching session of the day. Those that had childcare commitments participated in the interview for a shorter time. This demonstrates that childcare is a barrier to both the learners and the teachers to take part in the interview. Although this sits outside of the research purpose, it illustrates the challenges and constraints experienced by the participants.

3.11 Data Collection

Ethical approval for Dataset One was received on 29th July 2016. From this point, ESOL learners were invited to participate in the research. Ethical approval for Dataset Two was received on 28th February 2017. Soon after this, ESOL teachers were invited to participate in the research.

3.11.1 Dataset One Interviews

Individual, semi-structured interviews were conducted with sixteen ESOL learners studying at Entry Level two and three. The learners were formally invited into the college a week before the interview date for explanation of the interview process, the paperwork and the research diary. The interviews were carried out over a space of three months, between July and October 2016. They were conducted in person and, where participants agreed, the interviews were audio recorded (Bhopal, Brown and Jackson, 2016; Flick, 2018). The length of interviews varied between the participants and ranged between 10 and 19 minutes. Participants were informed that copies of the transcripts would be available to them, should they wish to check them before the data was analysed, as suggested by Kara (2012). However, none of the participants in Dataset One requested to view the transcripts.

The participants were provided with a research diary, and as noted by Kara, (2015) they were given stimuli for completing it, which was the opportunity to illustrate their experiences whilst being in education and the chance to talk about these openly during the interview. They were also given the option to take notes in their preferred language, draw images, cut out pictures, and highlight any moments in their life which have either helped them or restricted them from studying. The purpose of these research diaries was to use them as prompts and elicitation material to reflect upon during the interview. Flick (2018:217) refers to these as 'probes' to elicit 'more depth, detail and illustration'. The visuals produced are a form of art-based research (Theron *et al.*, 2011; Kara, 2015). All participants produced text alongside drawings, however it was the participants' reflections on the images and the text during the interviews that were analysed, not the pictures and text in isolation. Theron *et al.* (2011:4) contends that drawings are a useful tool for generating data, a 'super-effective way of encouraging people to express what they were thinking or feeling or longing for – or even what they had experienced-the good and the bad'. Theron *et al.* (2011) also describe visuals as effective in breaking the ice with particpants, especially for those who may be 'shy', as drawings helps them to share any complexities they experience. However, it

can be noted that both Kara (2015) and Theron *et al.* (2011) discuss art-based research conducted with children, and not adults.

Participants were not restricted to completing the research diary in English, as this could have acted as a barrier to the completion, due to a lack of confidence and literacy skills. The roles list was provided to the learners before commencing the interview. They ticked their roles and responsibilities, and this was used during the interview to reflect upon and discuss further. The participants were encouraged to talk about each of the roles they ticked. The information provided on the roles list was used as demographic data. Conducting semi-structured interviews, with the use of the research diary and the roles tick list, allowed the participants to reflect upon them during the interview and discuss their perceptions in depth. Ten learners out of sixteen (62.5%) completed the research diaries. The instruction was, 'Describe your experience of being an ESOL student'. Each participant adopted an individual approach to completing the research diary, possibly because they interpreted the instructions to complete the diary in a diverse manner. For example, while one learner drew a picture of herself and wrote in Urdu (see Figure 3.2), another learner wrote in both Arabic and English, and included visuals (see Figure 3.3). Those who wrote in their home language spoke to me about the diary in English during the interview. For nervous participants, the presence of the diary took their focus away from the formal interview setting; thus, they did not refer to it until the end of the interview. The diaries illustrated interesting information; in particular, many cultural issues were portrayed (see Section 4). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018:628) refer to such illustrations as 'visual media' and state that such sources of supplementary data are beneficial in combination with other types of data.

Figure 3.2 First Example of a Research Diary Completed by S13
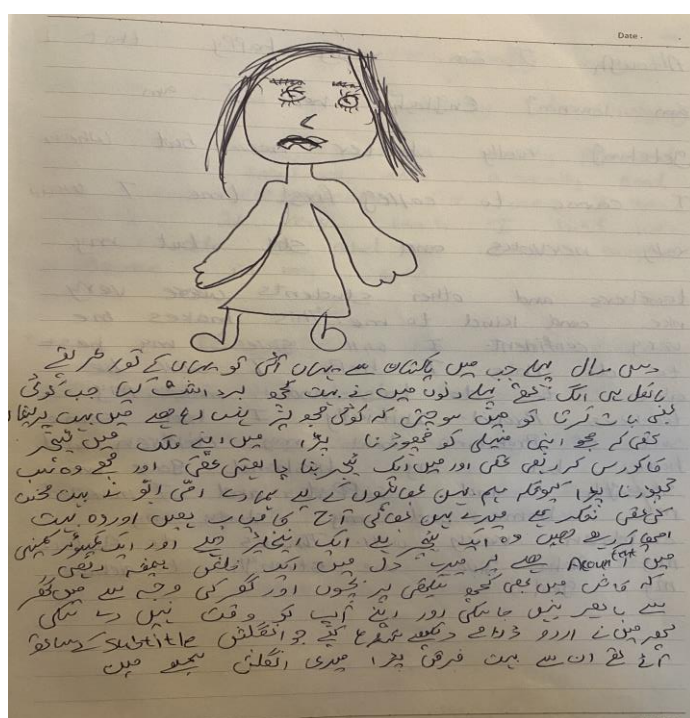
Figure 3.3 Second Example of a Research Diary Completed by S10

توصيل الأولاد الى الحضانات

Taking children to the nursery

تجهيز الأولاد للحضانات

Boys processing nursery

تجهيز الفطور

Prepare breakfast

تأخر وصول الباص

The late arrival of the bus

IT is commit at

زحمة الطريق في الصباح

Traffic road in the morning
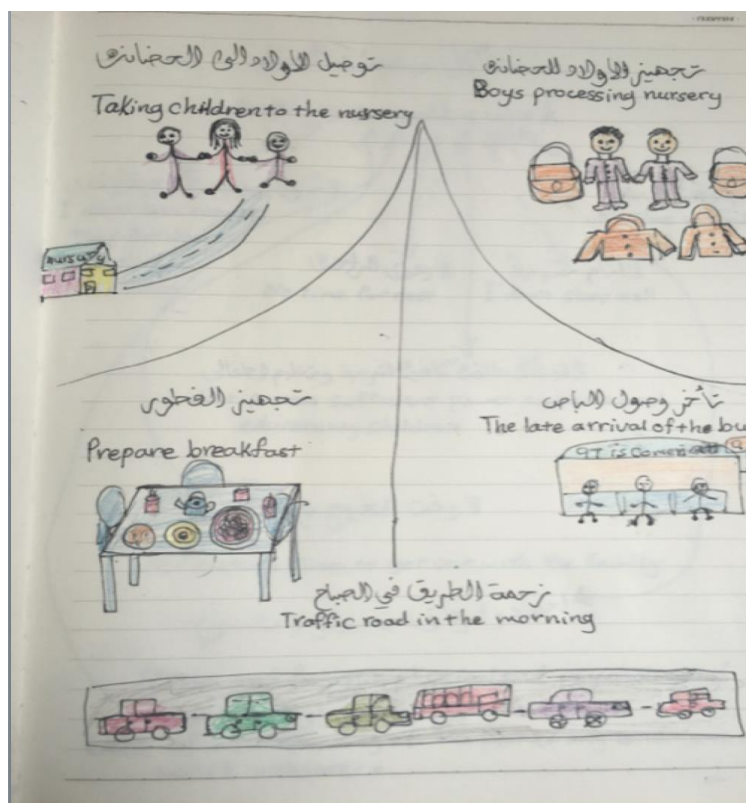
3.11.2 Dataset Two Interviews

The initial research design only included interviews with learners (Dataset One) with three research tools to assist the interviews. However, to add richness to the data gathered, it was decided to approach a different source for further data collection. Therefore, a conscious decision was made to also conduct semi-structured interviews with ESOL teaching staff, as they may be able to provide a narrative about their learners' profiles, whilst also giving the research another voice, the teachers' voice.

3.11.3 Dataset Two: Pre-interview activities

Dataset two participants were also recruited through opportunistic sampling from the population of 20 ESOL teaching staff at one campus. According to Flick (2018), opportunistic sampling involves selecting participants who are available at the time of the research and have sufficient time to partcipate in the research. Staff were emailed to request participation in the research. The email stated that the research methods include an element of creativity and were offered the option to complete the optional pre-interview activity, which was to produce an illustration of the life of an ESOL student, using colour and

being as creative as possible with any type of material, such as flipchart paper, A3 paper, creating PowerPoint slides, collage, mind map and beyond. Five participants completed the pre-interview activity, whilst the remaining five apologised for lacking the time to produce something. The activities produced varied from a paper-based illustration to electronic versions. In addition, as aforementioned in Section 3.6, one teacher participant provided further information following the interview. This included an email including further information which she forgot to mention during the interview and a text produced by an ESOL learner, The Cinderella Passage (see Figure 4.2).

Prior to the interview, the teachers were provided with a preliminary questionnaire to complete in their own time. This was to ensure that the length of the interview was as condensed as possible since the teachers had limited time to participate in the interview. This also informed the participant teachers of the nature of the interview and allowed them to begin their thinking, in preparation for the interview, though for those that had completed the interview activity, their thinking process may have already begun. However, once the data was gathered, I realised that demographic data was not collected; therefore, it was requested via email following the interviews. The demographic data did not form part of the research nor link to the research questions. Instead, it was collected to identify any correlation between the responses. For example, it was important to ask about their ethnicity as this information could interlink, or the responses could differ. The teacher participants' length of teaching experience and employment status was equally important, as this could be relevant to their knowledge of the support systems in place for learners.

3.12 Methodological Validity and Reliability

It is vital to critically analyse the validity and reliability of the selected research methods (Bell, 2010). This can be addressed when using methodological triangulation to test the accuracy and appropriateness of the research methods. Reliability tests to what extent the same research instruments will produce consistent data, when tested on different occasions (Denscombe, 2010). Basit (2010:69) confirms this by stating that 'reliability denotes that the research process can be repeated at another time on similar participants in a similar context with the same results',whereas, according to Denscombe (2002), validity is more complex and concerns with how accurate the interview questions are in relation to their purpose. In addition, the accuracy of the questions asked relates to the 'truth' revealed (Denscombe, 2002:100). Additionally, Flick (2011) highlights that validity assesses the research design and instruments. Furthermore, Bell (2010) and Basit (2010) contend that a reliable test is not necessarily valid, though an unreliable test will always lack validity. Basit (2010:64) highlights that 'validity is a vital element of effective research because if a particular study is invalid, then it is worthless'. The validity of the research design and research instruments, for this study, were tested in the pilot stage and throughout the entire research process (see Section 3.9).

Validity and reliability in this study also coincide with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) Evaluative Criteria. These hold the same definition in relation to

qualitative research. Also, it can be noted that this is a 'situated' study (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:114) and is generalisable and dependable only upon the cohort of learners that participated in this study. In addition, the study has a finite number of participants and therefore can only provide an illustration or an indicative account. Within the constraints of this study, it is possible for findings to be replicated in similar studies within a different context, as noted by Lincoln and Guba's (1985) in their element of transferability from their evaluative criteria. Based on their element of dependability, the findings of this study are consistent in the process of gathering data and therefore can be replicated. Lincoln and Guba (1985: 359) specify that transferability of a study requires a 'thick description', which is a method where qualitative researchers evidence a robust, comprehensive description of their experiences of collecting data. Hence, the study can be replicated with a similar methodology, where every step taken is transparent for another researcher to clearly see the design.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues can arise with access, consent, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity (Dawson, 2009). 'Ethical behaviour represents a set of moral principles, rules, or standards governing a person or a profession' (Lichtman, 2013:56). This suggests that researchers do what is right by treating people fairly and avoid any harm to them (Lichtman, 2013). Being a qualitative researcher involves having a large responsibility (Basit, 2013a) 'as this requires close contact and rapport with research participants on a day-to-day basis (Basit, 2013a:506). Similarly, Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2001) believe that ethical issues most commonly arise within qualitative research, due to the close relationship between the researcher and the participant. Both Basit (2010) and Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011) point out that ethical issues are raised through each stage of the study, from the design stage up to writing up the findings. When designing research, researchers must follow and implement ethical guidelines, to prevent any kind of distress in the participants who have agreed to allocate their time to assist us (McQueen and Knussen, 2008). Researchers are required to submit a research proposal to their universities' ethics committee to gain formal ethical approval; I have been subject to scrutiny with my subject and research design. Additionally, my proposed approach to gathering data has been scrutinised rigorously by the University's research committee for approval. Moreover, as a researcher in Britain, guidelines provided by the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011) have been followed (Basit, 2013a). For example, the guidelines state promoting respect to all involved in the research, including individuals who will read the research (BERA, 2011).

Dawson (2009:153-4) refers to a code of conduct which outlined issues around 'anonymity, confidentiality, right to comment, the final report and data protection' and the code of ethics, which supplies participants with details explaining that they and the data retrieved from them will be treated with 'respect and honesty'. The participants in the current study were provided with a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix 7). This was read to them since English is their second language, and, where

necessary, translated the text into English to give it authenticity. The participants were assured that their data would be kept confidential (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). Furthermore, as Kara (2012) ascertains, the participants were assured that they could withdraw from the research at any time.

Gaining the trust of potential learner participants prior to requesting their participation was critical (Boodhoo, 2017). Therefore, all conversations with them were 'non-academic and non-technical' to ensure that the learners comprehended (Boodhoo, 2017:42). With some learners there had been a level of trust built over the course of the academic year. This was especially important since I aligned with similar traits as some of them. For example, we were homogeneous, since I spoke the same/ similar language as some of the participants. Nevertheless, participants who were from a different ethnic group than me, for example those that were Somali and Arab, saw this as an advantage as I was trusted not to impart any confidential information to members of their community. All participants had the confidence to confide in me due to the positive teacher-learner relationship, together with the shared gender and religion. This created a positive environment, which allowed them to openly share personal stories, family relationships and beyond. Nonetheless, bias was avoided at each stage (see Section 3.2).

3.14 Consent

All participants in this research were volunteers (Denscombe, 2010). Informed consent ensured that the participants did not simply sign a consent form; rather they were fully informed and understood the implications of the research (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2011). Flick (2009) contends that the parent or guardian should provide consent for any participants who are considered vulnerable. Vulnerable participants could include those that are very old or people with certain illnesses whereby they do not fully understand the context of the research (Flick, 2009). Taking into consideration the participants' level of English, the consent form (see Appendix 6) was simplified, to ensure it was completely understood by each participant.

3.15 Confidentiality

Participants were provided with an information sheet, providing an outline of the research, alongside a consent form. One of the initial issues that were to be addressed was the participants' lack of understanding of a research project, as this may have been their first experience of participating in one. Therefore, it was important to explain the Participant Information Sheet and consent form to the participants and ensure that it was clearly understood (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). In all instances, this took longer than the actual interviews as the learners were unaware of what a research project involved and its purpose. It was explained how the paper-based data and consent forms would be securely locked in the researcher's confidential files and that the audio recordings would be stored on a password-protected computer file (Kara, 2012). Moreover, to facilitate confidentiality, all

participants were anonymous; thus they were not identifiable (Flick, 2018). In maintaining the anonymity of the participants, rather than using pseudonyms, the participants were asigned numbers in the order of the interviews, for example 'P1' was assigned to 'participant one'. Despite all the assurance provided, many learners took their time in confirming their participation, signing the consent form, and especially in agreeing to being recorded, as it almost appeared as a threat to them. They did not seem to be fully convinced about the confidentiality and anonymity; therefore, time was taken to explain the project and interview process to them until they felt at ease. For example, P2 spoke openly about her barriers to attending ESOL classes only after the interview had been recorded. While the semi-structured interviews were conducted in private, the results will be made public, except without mentioning any names. Also, the information retrieved was not passed to any third parties (Dawson, 2009). Furthermore, when gathering data, I was compliant with the Data Protection Act (1998), which sits within the General Data Protection Regulations (Data Protection Act, 2018).

3.16 Transparency

Deception has been avoided in this research by attempting to be as transparent as possible, as advocated by Lincoln (1995). Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011:9) describe deception as 'not telling the truth, telling lies or compromising the truth'. The authors also state that deception can include not informing participants of minor changes in case it influences their behaviour. However, although Kimmel, Smith, and Klein (2011:223) argue that deception in the form of 'white lies' is 'morally permissible' and harmless where the researcher can justify it, this was not necessary in this research. I was open with the participants and provided them with an Information Sheet explaining the scope and purpose of the study (see Appendix 7). The research was also transparent since it clearly set out its methodology and informed participants how their data would be used and stored.

3.17 Transcription

I transcribed the interviews myself as this allowed the opportunity of becoming familiar with the data (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). To ensure accuracy, the audio recordings were listened to numerous times to capture every word (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The words were written on a standard template (see Appendix 3) for all transcripts (Flick, 2018). Most interviews were carried out in English, though some were partially held in Urdu. Yet according to Murray and Wyne (2001), conducting interviews in participants' second language could have implications for the research as it may obtain impoverished insights. Furthermore, participants speaking in a second language may hesitate to fully express their feelings and thoughts, in particular on sensitive or emotional topics (Murray and Wyne). Similarly, Smith et al. (2008) add that due to the language barrier, some participants may find it challenging to articulate experiences of sensitive issues, as they may lack appropriate vocabulary to discuss such topics. Therefore, interviewees wishing to partially speak in Urdu were encouraged to do so.

Interviews that were carried out in English were transcribed verbatim (Basit, 2003). However, since I am proficient in Urdu, I translated the interviews partially held in Urdu, and then transcribed them; therefore, hiring a translator was not required. Abdi (2014) similarly translated the interviews herself in his mother tongue, Somali. Non-verbal sounds such as laughs and sighs were not included as they were not necessary for the information that was required for the purpose of this research (Flick, 2018). Furthermore, the textual document did not include metalinguistic observations, such as facial expressions. Only one instance of body language was recorded. This was when one participant nodded, instead of saying yes. However, I was not oblivious to the nuances and intonations in the responses. Although I was aware of them, they had no relevance to the responses and for the purpose of the interviews. Nevertheless, I made a note of when a learner cried during the interview whilst recalling her father's death. All the transcripts were reviewed for accuracy twice and although tedious, some were reviewed three times to ensure that they were a 'true representation of the interviews' (Braun and Clarke, 2013:168).

Whilst transcribing the teachers' interviews, there were instances when I was unable to recognise a few words and phrases spoken. In such cases, the transcript was emailed to the teacher participant to confirm the missing text. Teacher participant 5 requested to review and amend her transcript prior to data analysis. This was to fill in the gaps, where I could not recognise some words in the recording. T5 also removed some sensitive information since she was concerned about possible ethical conflicts. At the same time, she added further information which she originally forgot to mention during the interview.

3.18 Data analysis

3.18.1 Participant Demographics

Sixteen learners were interviewed. Their ages ranged from 26 to 56 . Fourteen participants were married and two were separated. The learners belonged to a range of ethnicities, for example, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Yemeni, Arab and Somalian. Ten teachers were interviewed, five females and five males. Their ages ranged from 26-40, and 56 and older. As shown in Table 3.3, according to the demographics form provided to the teachers with the descriptions of ethnicities, five of the teachers were White British, two Asian Pakistanis, one Black other, one Asian Indian and one Mixed other. Most of the teachers were Main Grade Lecturers (MGL) and their teaching experiences in general varied between three and thirteen years; their experience of teaching specifically ESOL ranged from one to 30 years.

3.18.2 Preparation of data

As noted earlier (Section 3.15), the audio files were uploaded to the password-protected computer file, and as advised by Flick (2018) the transcription of the interviews commenced soon after each interview took place. The transcription

process allowed the researcher to be 'immersed' in the data (Braun and Clarke, 2013:204). The interview transcripts were colour-coded for the purpose of identification during the analysis process. I had received training for the use of NVIVO (a software programme designed for inputting qualitative data), which other researchers have used (for example, Basit, 2003; Green *et al.*, 2004; Watkins, Razee, and Richters, 2012; Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos, 2014). Basit (2003) confirms that NVIVO aids the process of analysing qualitative data and is useful for managing data rapidly. Nevertheless, a manual approach to analysing the data was practical in this study as the data gathered were sufficiently small; therefore online software programs were not necessary. The manual data analysis allowed a broader visibility of the data and a hands-on approach to the data, though it can be argued that using NVIVO is digitally hands on. A Grounded Theory (GT) approach was utilised to analyse the data. This approach is suited for research involving human 'interaction' and early career researchers as it offers a systematic approach to making sense of data (Denscombe, 2010:121).

3.18.3 Grounded Theory

Grounded Theory (GT) is widely used in a range of disciplines, including qualitative studies within the field of education (Thornberg, 2012), for example, Ludhra and Jones (2009), Watkins, Razee, Richters (2012) and Basit (2013b). Glaser and Strauss founded Grounded Theory in 1967 (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This version of the theory recommends that the literature review be carried out following the data analysis, when theory is generated. This is to avoid bias through knowledge of pre-existing theories and contamination (Sutcliffe, 2016). However, this notion is widely critiqued (Bulmer, 1979). Thornberg (2012) argues that it is impracticable for researchers to carry out studies in their area of expertise without existing knowledge. For example, for the purpose of seeking funding for research, a literature review is conducted prior to the data analysis as this is a requirement to obtain approval (Dunne, 2011; Bryman, 2012). Initially, the literature review in this study was conducted prior to data collection, as one of the requirements of an EdD thesis is to identify gaps in the literature to justify the originality of the study. The literature review was then developed following data collection (see Section 2). Yet the themes that emerged from the data were not part of the original, pre-data collection literature, and have emerged from the data and subsequent analysis. This development took place after data analysis. To support this, Payne and Payne (2004:99) contend that the researcher cannot begin with no previous thoughts and that we should 'build' on preconceived theories rather than 'test' them. Similarly, Dey (1993:63) distinguishes between an 'open mind' and an 'empty head'. He points out that the issue is 'not whether to use existing knowledge, but how to use it'. Following a similar train of thought, Thornberg (2012:249) points out that being aware of literature is an 'informed grounded theory' approach.

3.18.4 Limitations of Grounded Theory

A potential limitation of GT expressed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018: 722), is that the term 'theory' in Grounded Theory is unclear. The authors therefore suggest that researchers are prepared for the 'challenges and criticisms' around GT, as coding has a risk of dividing key text into smaller segments since it loses the whole picture of what the story could be. Similar debates exist in the work of Flick (2018), who highlights that there are never-ending possibilities of codes, and that theoretical saturation only leads to a theory that is formed until the time the researcher decides to stop analysing the data. This suggests that theory could be further developed, depending on when the researcher decides to stop analysing. However, although these debates are both fascinating and important, the decision to use Grounded Theory was influenced by the work of Basit (1997a) and Parr (1996).

3.18.5 Coding

Following Bryman's (2012) advice, coding began soon after each interview was conducted and transcribed. Coding is a significant feature of the process of analysing qualitative data (Bryman, 2001). There are many approaches to data analysis and many methods of coding. This research takes upon Strauss and Corbin's (1990) GT approach. The approach involves three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. Open coding suggests it 'opens up the enquiry' (Yates:2004:205) for the phenomena being researched. The analytic process relating to the open coding began by reviewing interview transcripts and labeling concepts, which were grouped into categories (Bryman, 2001). As mentioned earlier, this is where no predetermined themes were imposed; instead, the themes appeared from the textual data. This technique prevents researchers from imposing their own pre-conceived perceptions and hypotheses of the data (Miller, 1955). As recommended by Walliman (2001) and Basit (2003), for the process of coding, a two-dimensional matrix on a Microsoft word document was created (see Appendix 8). Kara (2012) refers to this as an emergent coding frame that is like the open coding process which I followed. She points out that this results in 'more codes' and 'the coding is denser' (Kara, 2012:143). Interview transcripts were carefully read line-by-line. To begin, each transcript was colour-coded, and chunks of text were pulled out from the transcripts onto an electronic matrix (see Appendix 8). From these, a set of quotes, words, sentences, and phrases were broken down. This *raw* data was inserted and organised into a coding frame. Text consisting of similar meanings was chunked together, and the chunks of data were assigned a label (for example see Appendix 8). The interviews from both Data Set One and Data Set Two were managed in a similar manner.

Following the open coding, the process of *axial coding* data was performed by organising data according to patterns and similarities that had emerged, for example connections were made between the data that mentioned family members. As suggested by Dey (1993:27), the data were reduced and organised into categories, also known as 'data reduction' (Basit, 2003:152). These were then analysed and restructured by reassembling the data into more 'meaningful categories', which were then named (Dey, 1993:27); for example, employment and independence. Each part of data was selected and

assigned to categories (Dey, 1993). Categories were then subcategorised (Splitting) and 'Spliced' into overarching categories (Dey, 1993); for example, aspirations was a core category, whilst citizenship was labelled as a sub-category. Data were shaped (Charmaz, 2006) and matched by viewing them from different angles. The researcher attempted cutting through data in different ways (see Appendix 9). The aim was to narrow the data until it reached real depth. To achieve this, it was necessary to continue to drill down and refine the categories. The most prominent themes that emerged were identified. Refining continued until all the codes were aligned under categories, unless they were to be dismissed for the purpose of the research. In addition, some codes were dismissed for the purpose of this research. Interrelationships were identified and demonstrated on the matrix. Following the open coding phase, 83 codes were labelled to the data; this version consisted of 53 pages. Through this process, I recognised the connections with the *constant comparison* method used to identify connections and conceptualisation of the data (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The connections were, for example, empowerment, independence, employment and many more (see Appendix 8). The final stage is known as *selective coding* (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). This involves using the emerged categories and their interrelationships to build a theory (Adiredja and Karunakaran, 2016). Several versions of the matrices were produced in order to present, analyse, interpret, and communicate the findings of the research (Walliman, 2001). In total there were six major iterations, as the data analysis process was not a smooth process. For example, these included colour coding the transcripts, merging the coloured sections onto a matrix, deciding on initial codes, subcodes, categories, subcategories, and themes, condensing the data to fit into five columns of the matrix and removing the coloured text.

Before the data analysis stage, the focus was not on a particular theme that was being explored. Therefore, the conceptual framework was not anticipated prior to data collection. However, literature was sought around themes to which the data might be appropriate, rather than looking into the theory and trying to gather data in relation to that. Text that was grouped together formed codes and sub-codes. Core categories were also created, including themes. In later versions, these were refined, and the codes, categories and themes changed and reduced as the data was refined through the subsequent stages. The themes were carefully examined to ensure that the coded data supported them. Some themes were re-arranged and developed further, whilst some simply collapsed into each other. For example, version two of the data analysis included themes of identity of being a wife and the identity of being a daughter-in-law, though these later dissolved into an individual theme of identity. However, in the following versions, further themes appeared, those of empowerment, self-esteem and lack of motivation, which later merged into the theme of communication. The succinct themes arrived after many months of changing the focus of the analysis and refining the data. This involved changing the codes by including 'barriers', and 'opportunities', and changing the sub-categories to 'Drivers into Education, Benefits of studying ESOL, Experiences of learning ESOL, Aspirations, and Employment. Interestingly, 'aspirations' emerged in the data, though there was no specific question relating to this; therefore, this was unexpected and unanticipated. Other

barriers emerged under rich themes. Nevertheless, during the analysis, I was mindful of key issues relating to reliability, trustworthiness, and validity in research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Theoretical saturation was reached when no further insights and relationships could be added (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018:720). The distinct themes that emerged in the data, generated grounded theory, which are used to form a conceptual framework.

3.19 Intersectional Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is the organisation of ideas in a graphical representation (Ravitch and Riggan, 2016). The conceptual framework created in the current study situates the themes that have emerged from the data analysis; it features the interconnected nature of the concepts, themes and barriers to address them in a holistic manner. Croce's (2020) intersectional framework identifies some elements that are relevant to this study, such as of gender, power structures, multiple structures of oppression, privilege and inequality (Croce, 2020). Although Croce's (2020) framework was created for a different context, Indigenous women entrepreneurship, the framework in Figure 5.1 is applied in context with identifying barriers that female ESOL learners experience whilst in education, illustrating the complexities associated with the ESOL learners' lives. However, not all the elements of this intersectional framework apply to the current study; the purpose of the conceptual framework in this study is to illustrate how the barriers experienced by the learners overlap with one another. Nevertheless, since the concepts implicitly underpinning this research are interconnected, in the attempt to illustrate the complexity, this study builds on the critical intersectional framework developed by Croce (2020). The intersectional conceptional framework in this study consists of three phases, where Phase One is the pre-thesis stage. With the issues of Muslim women in mind, my initial thought was that gender was the key concept influencing the Muslim women's experiences. Therefore, gender was positioned as the umbrella concept, as it informed and guided this study (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4 Phase One, Pre-thesis Stage Conceptual Framework

Following data collection and analysis, Phase Two of the conceptual framework was identified, which included the key sub concepts of identity, power and patriarchy. Figure 3.5 illustrates these three intersecting concepts; these intersections were informed by Croce's (2020) intersectional framework. The image shows that gender remains in the background as the underpinning concept. Yet the three concepts of patriarchy, identity, and power at this stage are the main barriers.

Figure 3.5: Phase Two, Post Data Collection and Analysis Stage Conceptual Framework
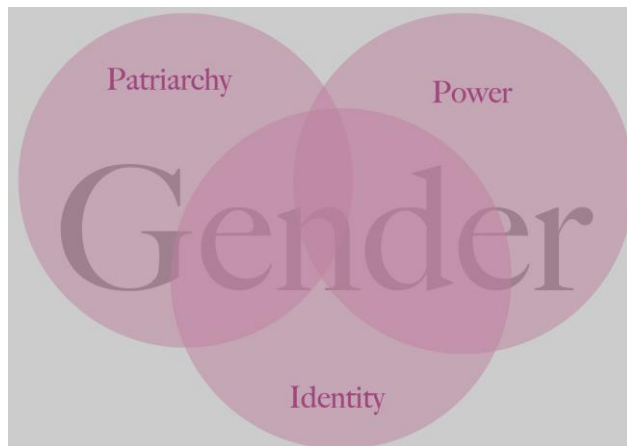
After data analysis, the literature review was revisited. My understanding of the existing concepts evolved and developed through the broad range of literature sought to further explore the barriers female Muslim ESOL learners experience. Combining the concepts from the data and the literature, Phase Three of the framework was developed, which illustrates a conceptualisation of the findings. This framework demonstrates that coercive control is the key barrier on the outset, within which sit the concepts of patriarchy, identity and power, whilst gender remains as a key element in the background.

Figure 3.6: Phase Three Conceptual Framework
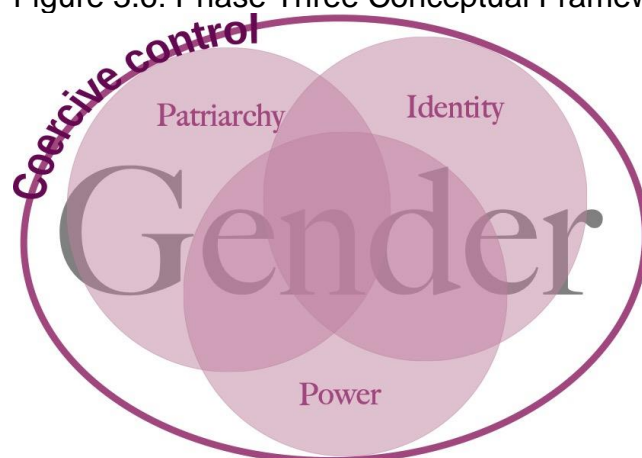
3.20 Summary

This chapter provided an insight into the journey of collecting data. It began by presenting the researcher's ontological and epistemological stance. This led to describing the qualitative study which is designed to capture the essence of female ESOL learners' lived experiences and teachers' perceptions of the barriers these learners experience. The chapter provided a detailed explanation of the research processes and methods adopted to facilitate the investigation, and justification. It then presents a detailed explanation of the process of the analysis of data retrieved from both the learner and teacher participants. This includes a profile of the research participants from both Datasets. The profile included relevant information, which will be reflected upon in the next two chapters. Furthermore, the chapter presented the three phases of the intersectional framework, created based on the findings and the literature sought. The findings and analysis are presented in the next chapter (Chapter 4). This will include the findings in relation to the barriers experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners in education, and the emergent themes that form the final conceptual framework in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis Chapter

4.1 Introduction

This chapter determines the findings in relation to the research questions. It analyses these from data gathered through sixteen semi-structured interviews carried out with female Muslim ESOL learners, and ten semi-structured interviews with ESOL teachers from the same institution as that attended by the participants. The findings are presented in relation to the aim of this study, which is to investigate the perceived barriers to education experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners. Throughout the chapter, data gathered from the female ESOL learner participants is referred to with a 'S' followed by a digit. The teacher participants are referred to with a 'T' and a digit. Extracts from the data are used to exemplify points relevant to the research aim and questions. However, it is important to note that while this study is specifically focused on Muslim learners of ethnic backgrounds (see Section 3.8), it acknowledges that some barriers have similarities with other groups of women, such as the white women in Parr's (1996) study. For instance, having multiple gendered roles, such as domestic chores and childcare, is often witnessed amongst women in general and is therefore not specific to Muslim women, yet they remain pertinent for this study. Muslim women who are currently married, or have been married, are the focus of this study, which draws on concepts such as identity and relationships. These concepts are important since the ESOL learners have arrived in this country through marriage. Although some learners are currently not married, they immigrated to this country while they were married. Such learners share the barriers they experienced whilst they were married, alongside their current experiences.

4.2 Relationships

The findings of this study show that identity is evolving and changing in time, as a result of change in the female ESOL learners' responsibilities and priorities (see Section 1.7.4). Being married to a British citizen gives the female learners the right to live in the UK with all the same rights and opportunities as any other British citizen (Basit, 2009). Such opportunities in some cases are greater in the UK than those in their original countries, yet immigration following marriage brings along certain responsibilities through, for example, their role of a wife, and most often a daughter-in-law (see Table 4.1). From the data gathered, the ESOL learners have been identified as having multiple identities (see Section 1.7.5), such as those illustrated in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 The Multiplicity of Roles of each ESOL Learner in the Study

Roles	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16	
Wife	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	14
Mother		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	11
Carer	✓	✓		✓	✓				✓					✓			6
Daughter		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	11
Daughter-in-law	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓		11
Friend	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	12
Neighbour	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	13
Student	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	15
Employee			✓									✓					2
Housekeeper	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	15
Mentor	✓						✓			✓		✓		✓	✓		6
Driver			✓	✓			✓							✓			4
Other			Sister				Grandmother		Grandmother					✓			
Prioritised role	Mentor	Mother	Wife, employee, student		Carer for dad	Mother	Wife	Student	Mother	Wife	Friend	Wife	Wife	Wife	Mother	Mother	

Attending ESOL classes can be challenging for the learners to manage, as according to the findings they are assigned to multiple roles and responsibilities (see Table 4.1) which associate with their multiple identities; this finding aligns with Green *et al.*'s (2004) findings. The multiple identities include, for example, their role as a sister and therefore making time to

contact siblings abroad (S11), being a friend (S8) and a neighbour (S7). Table 4.1 is formed from the Roles Tick List, a data collection tool provided to the learners at the beginning of the interview (see Appendix 2). Fourteen learners indicate having the role of a wife and eleven of being a daughter-in-law. The learners were also asked which role they prioritised, and six learners reported their role of a wife as their prioritised role, whereas five learners indicated being a mother as their prioritised role, yet only one learner prioritised their role of a student. This demonstrates that there is little difference in the roles of a wife and a mother, with a slight majority towards the role of the wife being prioritised. The data showing the role of a student as least prioritised is similarly documented in Higton *et al.*'s (2019) study. Moreover, marriage, and the roles associated with that identity, such as being a wife and/ or a daughter-in-law, do not present themselves in isolation; instead, they overlap and cannot be disintegrated. Since the identities appear to interrelate with other responses, these collectively form barriers to their ESOL education, as some of the comments about being a wife are very similar to being a daughter-in-law. This suggests that overall marriage, and the association of being a daughter-in-law, can be a barrier to participation in education. For instance, for some, being married could include caring for the husband's family or caring for a sick husband (see Section 4.4).

4.3 Wife

The findings in the current study suggest that the plethora of the divisive chores associated with the role of a wife create barriers for learners to attend college. For example, S10, is aged 25 years or under, of Arab ethnicity, and a mother of two children. She is responsible for making her husband's breakfast as well as caring for her children. This comment aligns with literature (Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008) which states that the time spent on domestic chores increases after transition to marriage and increases further following transition to parenthood. Although Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes' (2008) comments suggest that increased involvement is for both men and women following marriage, Higton *et al.* (2019) claims that childcare is gendered, which reflects the situation of S10, as she appears to be responsible for the bulk of tasks involved with childcare:

> I have a hard job in my house because I have two children, very hard. I clean the house four times in the day. Four, or five, or seven, maybe ten in the day. And I cook some food and I clean the house every, every five minutes, maybe… take the kids nursery and make breakfast for my husband and children… I clean his clothes (S10).

The above extract from the qualitative interviews indicates that the roles associated with being married can create singular barriers and interrelated barriers; for example the domestic chores, motherhood, taking the children to nursery and completing tasks for the husband. S10, who has just been studying ESOL for one month, appears to be overburdened with domestic responsibilities. Perhaps it was manageable until she started studying ESOL, or she was already overburdened with domestic responsibilities prior to joining

ESOL classes; nonetheless, studying ESOL is now an additional responsibility which she is finding difficult to manage. Additionally, it may be that S10 has an inferior position (see Section 2.7) within her marital relationship, as it appears that she is responsible for all the housework and the children. Nevertheless, drawing on feminist theoreticians, this echoes the work of Basit (1997a) on Muslim girls. Basit (1997a) conveys a gendered stereotype, by noting that men often have minimum responsibility in house chores amongst all societies. Rather they are involved in the odd DIY jobs in the house whilst the women complete the remaining chores. As aforementioned, this woman's identity formerly as a single person has a reformed identity due to her transition to being labelled as a wife (Basit,1997a). Like Basit's (1997a) comments, Mies (2014:7) identifies this as an overall construction of a male-dominant society and describes it as 'ill treatment' of women. This point is emphasised later in Section 4.7, which demonstrates S10's concerns.

A further barrier that is apparent in the above observation is the cultural conditions in which S10 lives, which could impact on her aspirations to study, a finding also present in Mclaughlin's (2009) study. For women living within a power driving community (see Section 2.10), it is the environment in which they live (Abdi, 2014) that creates the barrier for the aspirations being formulated in the first place and enacted thereafter. The learners' stereotypical thinking (Dunlap and Barth, 2019) could stop them from having aspirations or having them and quickly dismissing them. S11, is a Pakistani woman, also aged 25 years or under. She similarly highlights the extent of domestic responsibilities associated with the identity of a wife. She began studying ESOL five weeks ago, has no children, and is divorced. She opines:

> While I was living with my husband, I did nothing, only like housework. (S11)

Within the interconnecting discourses of patriarchy and cultural norms (Mirza, 1992), S11's comments perceive that whilst she had the identify of a wife, her lifestyle consisted of a lot of housework. Perhaps S11 is implying that as she has transited away from the identity of a wife, she now has little responsibility for housework, which correlates with Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes' (2008) comments, which state that women spend less time on housework after they are separated or widowed. It is possible that while she was married her busy lifestyle created the barrier to her attending college. Likewise, S16's comments demonstrate a busy lifestyle with the responsibility of completing jobs for her husband and children. Collectively, these responsibilities are creating a barrier to her education:

> Coming to college could be a problem for children's school appointments, doctors, hospital or any jobs my husband has. (S16)

S16's statement implies that her husband could be a barrier to her education, which is similarly expressed by S11. S11's husband restricted her from continuing with her final degree in her home country, Pakistan, whilst she was waiting for her visa to immigrate to the UK. S11's situation demonstrates that perhaps she is culturally constrained to abide by her husband's decisions.

The conditions in which she lives can be understood in the context of a patriarchal system, where the husband has significant power to control his wife before she arrives in the UK. The wife has obeyed his decision, suggesting that the power has made her give into the husband's choice, perhaps through fear, even though they were living a long distance apart.

> It was my first year [of a degree], then I got married and then the process of coming here. The husband did not give me permission. My husband has education from here, but he still disagreed with education… I said until the process of the visa, as it could take long, my year of this course could be completed, but he said you don't need it. (S11)

S11's reflection suggests that she was not able to complete her degree, perhaps due to her new identity of being a wife. In this particular situation, since the couple were not living together, and had no childcare responsibilities, the wife might have completed her degree, while she was living at her parent's house. In line with Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes' (2008) comments, since S11 may have had fewer responsibilities at that time, it could have been an optimal time for her to finish her degree. S11's situation illustrates power from the UK, controlling the wife overseas. Power can manifest itself cross-continentally through families living around the globe, from which cultural influences are continually practised. This aligns to several international studies (for example, Batool and Batool, 2018; Khurshid, 2017; Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos, 2014) that demonstrate cultural influences that are globalised. In addition, Firth's (2012) comments around gender associating with learned behaviours can be applied to sons modelling their father's behaviour towards their mother and repeating it towards their own wives and controlling them, even if they live in a different country. Such examples also link with Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study, which argues that controlling behaviour ascends from customs that immigrants have brought from their country of origin. Therefore, the fear of disobeying the husband's command remains, which links to the concept of coercive control (see Section 1.7.9). This could suggest that the women are influenced by their cultural backgrounds, which prescribes their roles developed through marriage, such as the identity of a wife, daughter-in-law, mother, and beyond. Additionally, in some situations, waiting for the visa could take several months or years, yet the learner only had one year remaining to complete her degree. Again, this shows how cultural backgrounds may have had an influence on whether she could continue studying or not, since her identity is now of a married woman. Additionally, even though S11's comments state that the husband is educated from the UK, this does not demonstrate his level of education. It is possible that he only has secondary schooling, which is a view taken from Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) study in which the husbands restricted their wives from learning so that they are not better educated than them (see Section 2.10).

Congruent with previous explorations of power, and cultural limitations due to living within a patriarchal society (Hunnicutt, 2009: Ijaz and Abbas, 2010; Abdi, 2014), S11's situation also illustrates her inferior position, where she is

afraid to make her own choice to complete her degree and disobey her husband. The power and control from the husband create a barrier to her education (Dale *et al.*, 2002; Kern, 2017) since he is making decisions for her and controlling her existing decision. Moreover, these gendered-power relations demonstrate a patriarchal controlling society, with the male gender having more power than the female (Abdi, 2013). Had S11 been permitted to continue with her education, this might have financially secured her future and enabled her to be empowered (Khurshid, 2017) when she arrived in the UK. A similar notion appears in Cuban and Stromquist's (2009) study, which establishes that formal education is a route to gain better employment, as well as empowerment. Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study notes that the men did not support their wives of the first generation to learn the English language since it would give the wives freedom, which they were afraid of them having. The above analysis illustrates learners' perspectives of the husband being a barrier to their education. Yet from a teacher's perspective, T2, who is a Muslim, seemingly not only are the husbands afraid of the women's education, but other members of the husband's family are too, thus accessing education following marriage needs to be negotiated with both the husband and his family (Dale *et al.*, 2002). T2 expresses her concerns:

> Then the other barriers like family barriers, they could be living in a joint family where they wouldn't be getting any encouragement to go out and work because their in-laws are sometimes even their parents but they're thinking that what would they do…if a girl or a woman is educated, they think they become too independent, and they probably wouldn't respect the family honour and values. (T2)

Contrary to T2's comments, in Dale *et al.*'s (2002) study of Muslim girls, the women state that studying in post-16 education could impact the family honour and jeopardise their family's reputation within the community. Nonetheless, T1's comments present a similar controlling situation where the husband controls an ambitious ESOL learner by being a barrier to her continuing to attend college. The husband arrives at the college to pull the student out of education. This resonates with the concept of power and coercion (Potter, 2014; Home Office, 2015). The teacher recalled:

> I have had a student…she needed to get the Entry 3 Speaking and Listening to be able to get her citizenship and she was really, really eager to learn and carry on. She wanted to be a police officer and as soon as she passed the Speaking and Listening exam, her husband came with her to the college and pulled her out and she couldn't learn anymore, that was it….… he didn't want her to get a job. In that circumstance, he was happy for her to get her citizenship so she could stay [in the UK] but he didn't want her to work. (T1)

T1's aspiration of wanting to be a police officer was her purpose of study. However, there is a different expectation of the husband, which is that she should not be in education for any longer than it takes to achieve the Speaking and Listening certificate. As a result, it appears that the learner's aspirations evaporated; perhaps she allowed it to happen due to the power

from the husband and her fear of him. This illustrates the husband having power over her aspirations as the husband dispelled them and limited her opportunities for both education and employment. By creating a barrier to her choices, and not allowing her to work, it is a demonstration of a patriarchal society, as patriarchy is the male holding a dominant position (Walby, 1990). Additionally, perhaps the husband expects her to now stay at home and remain as a housewife, which also illustrates an element of power in the coercive environment. Furthermore, the social structures that shape ESOL learners' educational choices could be due to living within a patriarchal community (Oplatka and Lapidot and Hewett, 2015). Afzal *et al.* (2015) further note that a traditional patriarchal community illustrates the wife's role of a homemaker and therefore sees no need to educate her. Through coercive control (see Section 2.10), the husband has made the choice for the woman, perhaps based on cultural expectations (Heenan, 2002), and he does not support her desire to continue in education. Additionally, the woman had the identity of a wife and was studying to gain an additional identity, that of a British citizen, which is the only identity that is obtained through receiving a passport (Woodward, 2004). Along with the passport come the citizenship rights, which are refused to those without the passport (Woodward, 2004).

The barrier to education revealed by T1 draws attention to Hunnicutt's (2009) concepts around power relations. This is apparent in the controlling situations expressed by the learners in this study. For example, elements of power and control are conveyed in S3's life, since she must gain permission to go outdoors; therefore, she fears her husband when she is late.

> By being a wife, obviously I cannot go anywhere without my husband's permission. I go after taking his permission… Even if I'm five minutes late, I need to phone him and tell him I'm coming, even if I'm stuck in traffic. (S3)

From the comments made by S3, it appears that perhaps due to her husband's belief of traditional male gender roles, he maintains control over her. She appears to accept the control from her husband and continues to follow his instructions to meet his expectations and shows no signs of resistance. Kern's (2017) study observes a similar situation amongst the wives who remain silent, and instead they discover methods to manage the situation on their own. Perhaps the women obey their husbands to keep their pride amongst their families and colleagues (Kern, 2017). Furthermore, it may be that wives of high-profile husbands, such as those in high positions within the army in Kern's (2017) study, are forced to stay with their husbands because it will look good on them, as they will have an image of having a good wife who looks after them and their families well. Furthermore, the wife seeking her husband's permission to go out demonstrates gender inequality in their marital relationship. To add to this, T1 and T2's comments also demonstrate that the responsibilities linked to marriage are a barrier to education, which aligns with the findings in Pattar's (2009) study.

> Sometimes a learner gets married and then stops coming to college … unfortunately got divorced after three months and she came back…that

student is now doing Childcare. But there can also be marital problems, marital issues that would stop a learner coming to college. (T1)

…they can't attend the classes because they have so much of domestic responsibilities, they have to take care of the children, they have to probably go and attend to the in-laws and there is childcare to be taken care of sometimes. Sometimes the timings don't work out for them and anything else…(T2)

T6 comments equally depict power within marital relationships.

… some spouses are unwilling for their wives to, to learn English. Maybe because they feel that it would distract them from their duties or simply a matter of, you know, wanting to maintain a certain power structure within the family. (T6)

T6 recognises a power structure within Muslim families, which could be due to cultural practices and living within patriarchal societies. This aligns with Lerner's (1993) and Abdi's (2014) comments that living within patriarchal structures presents women as dependent upon men, which is illustrated in S8's comments. S8 explains that her husband does not want her to study and become independent, so that she remains dependent upon him (see Section 2.10).

He want always feel I need help to my husband… If I need help to him, he like it. (S8)

This is another illustration of the couple living within a patriarchal society, with the husband in a more authoritative position in their marital relationship. The situation aligns with Davids' (2015) study, which confirms that Muslim women have and continue to experience inequality and oppression. Whilst Kern (2017) explains that power hierarchies emerge where there is financial dependence upon the husband, Abdi (2014) asserts that men continue to uphold power hierarchies, whilst women either resist them or perpetuate such gendered hierarchies. Yet in another instance, S14's husband supported her choice to continue with her education from where she had left it in her home country. This demonstrates a different perception, a positive attitude to learning, which also indicates equality in their relationship to some extent, as in other contexts, such as house chores, there is no equality. Below is an overview of the duties involved with S14's multiple responsibilities, illustrating a wide gap in gender equality in household chores, that align with Kan and Laurie's (2018) study, which reports that Pakistani men participate in the least amount of housework in comparison to other ethnic groups.

… responsibilities in wife, look after children, husband, mother-in-law and all house look after. Husband- making breakfast to him, lunch and dinner. Ready clothes, washing, ironing. Husband went work. Goes work 8-9. He's tired. (S14)

S14's extract illustrates that she is responsible for childcare, which is a gendered role (Higton *et al.*, 2019). Furthermore, in line with S14s comments, one of the most common caring responsibilities stated by the Bangladeshi and Pakistani participants in Aston *et al.*'s (2009) study is caring for parents-in-law, especially if they have poor health (Higton *et al.*, 2019). In addition, S14s experiences demonstrate a gender-segregated division of domestic chores (Cerrato, and Cifre, 2018; Kan and Laurie, 2018). Although the husband has strayed away from household chores, he has allowed her independence through attending college. Yet, the women convey the duties as wives, perhaps due to the power and control, as they prioritise the role of a wife (see Table 4.1). Although S14 is Bangladeshi, women from other ethnic backgrounds are in a similar situation to S3 (see Section 2.7):

> …my husband does not help at all, with anything. (S3)

> Cooking whatever he like and washing clothes and ironing his clothes, that's it. (S13)

> Give husband breakfast… give husband food on time, everything. (S15)

> For being a wife, you need to present your husband with everything on time. Looking after him. I might need to go somewhere to a job for my husband… When husband comes, to give him food. Whatever he wants to eat, to make it… Sometimes if my husband asks me to do something, I go and do it… or husband sends me to the bank or any of his jobs of paperwork. In the morning I wake up 2-3 times and I sleep 2-3 times. I wake up at about 5:30. I give my husband breakfast as he needs to go to work at 6.o.clock. (S16)

The learners recognise such gender inequalities in domestic chores as unequal, which resonates with Oakley's (1974) work around the unequal division of labour, highlighting that housework is perceived as predominantly a feminine role. A similar essence was observed by T5, who illuminates how one ESOL learner associated her role of a housewife to a slave:

> One day I was eliciting the word slave. I said "What is a person who works very hard all day and isn't paid?" The ESOL students immediately said 'Housewife'. (T5)

Similarly, a participant in Basit's (1997a:143) study refers to the role of a housewife as being a 'slave'. Nevertheless, Aston *et al.* (2007) confirm that husbands are beginning to participate equally towards domestic chores. Yet, more recent literature confirms that men's involvement in household chores continues to be far less than women's (Voicu, Voicu, and Strapcova, 2009; Cerrato, and Cifre, 2018; Kan and Laurie, 2018). Consistent with Oplatka and Lapidot's (2012) findings, T1 further explains the importance of the family's support to take the initial step to access education, that of enrolment. She recollected:

In order to enrol, they have to have the support of their family. If their partner, or husband or wife, or children aren't supportive about them coming to college then they won't be able to come in the first place. (T1)

Unsupportive husbands and family members are similarly highlighted in T2's observations. Yet this highlights cultural barriers to education, as cultural influences create gendered stereotypes of women remaining as housewives, and women prioritising their role of the wife, beyond their needs to educate themselves (Higton *et al.*, 2019). T2 recalls:

… especially the women ESOL learners, there's a lot of pressure from home sometimes. They have problem in their marriage, or their husbands are not supportive, or it could be that the family background is such that, they don't support the education. (T2)

Likewise, T5, who is a White British female, with 30 years of teaching experience, provides an example of the husband influencing the wife's choice to learn English.

One of my neighbours was explicitly forbidden by her husband to learn English. (T5)

The dominant status of the husband in T5's comments shows power over the wife, who is in a subservient position in the household (Walby, 1990). Her choice to be educated is controlled by her husband, which resonates with Hunnicutt's (2009) work on patriarchy in which the men, who are in the dominant position, control the women, who are in a weaker position in the household.

4.4 Friend or Foe

Gender inequalities in household chores become more apparent to a woman after she becomes married, as the data suggests that S2 did not realise until she got married that she would experience these responsibilities, even though she perhaps lives within a close community whereby she can see others, including her own mother, having similar responsibilities. Engaging in education was different whilst she was living in the parents' home.

In the parents' house studying was easy, and now it is very difficult because we need to do all the housework, look after the kids and serve for the in-laws…(S2).

Not realising how education could become a challenge after a marriage may be due to being unaware of the duties involved after marriage, and not fully appreciating how time-consuming these daily tasks can be. Contrary to this, the Muslim girls in Dale *et al.*'s (2002) study were aware that marriage would lead to some compromises, particularly if they live with the parents-in-law. Another possible reason could be power bargaining that is exercised between the learner and her husband, and mother-in-law, as they make the decisions

in the household. Where the decisions are not negotiated, this could result in the daughter-in-law's freedom being restricted (Dale *et al.*, 2002). Although the controlling nature of mothers-in-law stems from traditional expectations of their roles (Dale *et al.*, 2002), it could be argued that some women will be mothers to their own daughters and a mother-in-law to their son's wife. As such, they are known to treat their daughter differently to their daughter-in-law; they represent themselves as their mother-in-law did towards them, perhaps due to learnt behaviour that has a negative consequence on the daughter in-law. Perhaps their repeated behaviour is learnt through experiences and observations of mothers-in-law within their culturally embedded society. Nevertheless, having the identity of a daughter-in-law has appeared as a common factor within the data; eleven out of sixteen learners have the role of a daughter-in-law. The extract below illustrates that due to a learner's identity of being a wife and a daughter-in-law, she is expected to be home by a certain time to complete the domestic chores.

> Boy's side of the family, mostly… the husband actually supported the wife to go and just learn ESOL, while the family was not really happy… because they put down different requirements for her, different tasks which she had to complete before she can leave the house and she has to be home before certain times to prepare food and stuff for other family people, not the husband. (T3)

In this situation, it was not particularly the husband, but the in-laws creating the barrier to the women's education. Heenan (2002) takes a similar view that husbands do not interfere, as long as the women are flexible to continue to complete the expected household chores. Additionally, T3's extract shows a power imbalance (Shefer *et al.*, 2008) between the in-laws and the daughter-in-law, therefore, she is obliged to obey them, with little room for resistance. As a result of these power dynamics (Hunnicutt, 2009), the learners fear the in-laws and therefore do as they are told, as they respect older women in patriarchal societies (see Section 2.6). Yet they are full of aspirations, fight through, and manage the responsibilities to gain education (Cooke, 2006). T3 and S3 explain how marriage involves responsibilities and commitments to the in-laws as well as the husband.

> It's too much, like it's a lot more pressure. If they're married, they should marry just the husband and not the whole family but in our culture, it's like they're married to the whole family. (T3)

> At home I need to do all my husband's jobs. I need to go to my in-law's house if they have any jobs. (S3)

T3s' comments are consistent with the finding of Abdi's (2014) study, which reinforces that the contract of marriage is amidst the family instead of the married couple. In addition, Brah and Shah (1992) explain that often it is the in-laws who make the decision for the daughter, yet where the in-laws may deep down agree to the daughter-in-law's choices, they still cannot permit this as they are tied up with pressures from their community. S3's comment illustrates being available to complete domestic chores for either the husband

or the in-laws. Such family commitments illustrate cultural practices brought from their home countries (Abdi, 2014), which ultimately make the women's lives very complex (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016), and for some very difficult to manage. Rushing to complete all their husband's and in-laws' duties, which is prioritised over their education, could affect the learners' health by leading to depression (see Section 4.8). However, Aston *et al.* (2007) confirm that living within extended families means having more responsibilities than just caring for the husband and their own children. Furthermore, most women in Heenan's (2002) study stopped studying due to caring for the family, as they saw it as the moral duty for the women in the family to be carers.

From the data gathered, some comments about being a wife are very similar to those about being a daughter-in-law. For example, according to T3, although the husband was supportive of his wife studying ESOL, the in-laws were unhappy about the wife studying and this is often because they rely on the daughter-in-law to complete all household chores. T3's comments are consistent with the findings of Hashem and Aspinall (2010) who argue that although the lack of previous educational experience is not a barrier to ESOL learners' education, instead it is family and community structures which could either support accessing ESOL classes or act as a barrier. In the case of S3, the in-laws live within the family structures which form the barrier to her education.

From the literature search carried out for this study, there appears to be limited literature and reports regarding in-laws' relationships amongst Muslim women. However, earlier research (Lin and Breslerman, 1996) similarly draws on the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relationship amongst Israeli women, confirming that the number of sons had an influence on the quality of their relationship. The more sons the mother-in-law had, the better the relationship with the daughter-in-law due to the experience with varying personalities of daughters-in-law and the experience of being separated from the son more than once. They also found that in instances where the daughter-in-law no longer had a mother or was distant from her, the relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law was strong. However, this point is contrary to the data in this study as the daughters-in-law are immigrants and thus distant from their mothers, yet they appear to be in a controlling relationship with their mother-in-law (S1, S3, S4, S7, S11, S14).

> …need to listen to mother-in-law's demands. To look after her, make her food, take her to the doctors, if she needs shopping need to do that for her. (S4)

> Mother-in-law- this country with me. She's quite old. Everything, look after to her. Make her food, wash clothes, making bed, take her GP. (S14)

S1, aged between 41 and 55, has recently had a stroke and is required to care for her sick husband, as well as her sick mother-in-law, despite being immobile herself. In order to look after the two sick individuals, who do not live in one house, she needs to travel to look after the mother-in-law, and this

could be very difficult to manage, especially since she herself is immobile. The element of caring for the husband, resonates with Darby, Farooqi, and Lai 's (2016) research which states that caring responsibilities, such as looking after the husband were down to cultural norms. Yet, with reference to the mother-in-law, although, S1 lives in her own house, she continues to be controlled by the mother-in-law and is committed to look after her by travelling to her house. Despite these difficulties, the learner is still keen to learn as she has aspirations of learning English to gain British citizenship, and for functional purposes. For example, she aspires to able to go to the doctors unaccompanied. S1's aspirations of learning English resonate with Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) study, which notes that women acknowledge that learning English could better their lives. Views about aspirations concur with an illustration produced by T9 (see Figure 4.1), which portrays that female ESOL learners have some hope of their situation improving, following their difficulties.

Figure 4.1 T9's Pre-interview Activity

It will always be a struggle to manage so many things but one day……
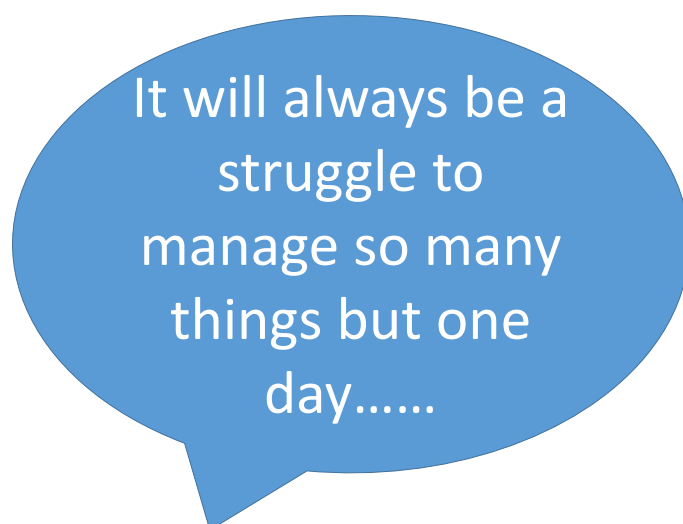
It is a struggle for S1, and she is overburdened with responsibilities, however, she explains how she managed attending ESOL classes, as well as taking care of her mother-in-law. This is a concern in relation to her punctuality at college; however, the following extract illustrates a supportive teacher who has allowed flexibility for the learner's consistent punctuality issue:

> I used to go to give mother-in–law food and be ten minutes late and the teachers did not used to say anything…The college was near so I could come at break time. I used to give my mother-in-law and husband food and the rest of the work I did when I came back. (S1)

S1 challenges the barrier of the mother-in-law, by adapting her life to manage the barrier in the attempt to achieve her aspirations to study English. Her duty of looking after the mother-in-law is shared between the other daughters-in-law. To some extent this coincides with Basit's (1997a) explanation that within

South Asian families, all the family members are obliged to maintain the respect of the family. Similarly, Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study confirms that it is the daughters-in-laws' responsibility to care for the in-laws. Nevertheless, perhaps the difficulties experienced by S1 inspired her to access education, and therefore exposed her to the opportunity to become educated. Conversely, Oplatka and Lapidot (2012) share an example of the mother-in-law being supportive with the daughter-in-law's education, though they highlight that this is extremely rare.

The findings demonstrate that house chores are not only an issue relating to marriage. T5's post interview activity included a letter from a current female Muslim ESOL learner. The learner was a second-generation immigrant, who is now a widow. She consented for her teacher (T5) to use the letter in this research (See Figure 4.2). The letter stated how she was heavily involved in housework and did not get an education; thus, it appears that the housework acted as a barrier to her education. However, there is no mention of her parents in the letter. Although it is possible that she was living with her parents, who expected her to complete all the domestic chores, on the other hand she could have been living with stepparents, or she may be adopted. Yet Brah and Shaw (1992) explain that South Asian Muslim girls were expected to be absent from school when the mother was sick, so that that they could care for her, complete the chores and look after other younger siblings.

Figure 4.2: The Cinderella Passage

I was born in the UK. But I didn't go to school or college. When I was 5 years old I did some housework and when I was 10 years old I did all the housework. When I was 16 years old. I got married when I was 17 years old I had child then after I had 4 more children. I am always busy. So Now I start college in 2013. So Now I study my English and Maths. I like my teacher. They all very helpful. That's why I can speak and read books.

This extract (Figure 4.2) illustrates an isolated example of parents controlling their daughter, which is a reflection of the story of Cinderella, who is portrayed as helpless and controlled by female members of the household, namely the stepmother and stepsister (Su and Xue, 2010). This example is contrary to other data in this study that discusses the in-laws preventing daughters-in-law from studying, as in this instance it may be the girl's parents who restricted her education. In line with the story of Cinderella, this woman appears to have

accepted being powerless during her childhood, by seeing the situation as the cultural norm. A similar observation is made by Hewett (2015), suggesting that since the late 1990s and early 2000s, Muslim girls are situated in an oppressed position by their parents and communities. Although this concept has been greatly researched, little research has been carried out regarding Muslim in-laws' views on supressing the daughter-in-law. Furthermore, the above extract echoes Dale *et al.*'s (2002) observations of parents in traditional families restricting girls from going out alone or entering FE as they would like to maintain the family honour. This could also explain why the Cinderella learner only attended college after she became a widow, suggesting that her husband may have prevented her from attending college. Again, this reflects upon Cinderella's character, who feared independence, remained patient and accepted being treated unfairly (Su and Xue, 2010).

4.5 The Role of the Father-in-law

Being a daughter-in-law is reported as a barrier to education from the learners' perceptions, as well as the teachers' perceptions. For example, S4 continued to work as a teacher in her home country after her marriage until she gained a visa and arrived in the UK. She reported her father-in-law as the main barrier to education as opposed to the mother-in law. She wanted to continue with her teaching profession when she arrived at the UK; however, due to her father-in-law's cultural beliefs, she had no freedom while he was alive. He did not trust what would happen once she was educated and gained knowledge of the UK system. Moreover, a notion of fear is presented in S4's situation, where the father-in-law is in a more powerful position and wants to control the daughter-in-law, perhaps in the fear that education could be threatening and enable her to become independent. While Van Leeuwen (1993) recognises that men have a more powerful position than women, who are inferior in patriarchal societies, Abdi (2014) agrees that women become independent once they understand the system of the country. However, presumably, the father-in-law is a first-generation immigrant, and therefore does not comprehend the advantages of education (Dale *et al.*, 2002).

> In Pakistan I was a teacher. I worked there but stopped when I came here because my in-laws did not like daughters or daughters-in-law working or educating. Because they were old fashioned and they said that when women went out, they changed and become easily influenced by others and to stay at home. When they go out, and listen to other women around, firstly they become clever and secondly, they change. My father-in-law has passed away. While he was alive, we couldn't go anywhere. There was a barrier everywhere. Couldn't go out alone nor learn how to drive. Couldn't do anything at all. (S4)

The above quote illustrates fear of changing power dynamics between the daughter-in-law and father-in-law. The father-in-law was afraid of the daughter-in-law becoming influenced by the culture. The concept of Westernisation has been addressed by Ijaz and Abbas (2010), yet their findings revealed this was a concern of Muslim parents for both their sons and

daughters. S4 expresses the father-in-law competing with cultural practices and social norms. Therefore, he followed what is the norm within other social structures and the norm to him was for the woman to remain as the homemaker and have no freedom. The women repeatedly perform stereotypical gender roles and duties, which aligns with Firth's (2012) explanation that gender is associated with learned behaviours and socially constructed expectations. S4 appears to have rebelled against the father-in-law's expectations, as she had to be secretive about her driving lessons early in the morning while the rest of the family were asleep, to remain discreet and not be seen. She also attended ESOL classes without their knowledge. Thus, she found a way to circumnavigate the home and father-in-law in order to achieve her aspirations.

> The classes I attended before, was while he was alive, but I had to hide and go. If he ever saw me then there would be trouble. (S4)

It is important to note here that the term 'trouble' was not elaborated. However, this term could open a range of possibilities, such as abuse, a threat to send the daughter-in-law back to her home country, or as noted by Abdi (2014), a divorce and therefore a cause of shame to the family. Similarly, the Muslim participants in Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study report being traumatised and depressed following divorce or separation, as well as being stigmatised by the community. Likewise, an ESOL learner in Pattar's (2009) study stated that she wanted to study English and get a job, but her husband did not want her to go out on her own, as working would bring shame on the family. Parallel to this notion is the work of Brah and Shaw (1992) who acknowledge that an employed woman could cause social stigma. Nevertheless, despite fearing the father-in-law, S4 was brave enough to learn to drive and attend ESOL classes, which demonstrates resistance to gender subordination (Abdi, 2014). Learning to drive could help remove other barriers that are created through the school run and shopping. Arguably, having access to a vehicle offers opportunities for more freedom and flexibility for learners to attend college. Conversely, having a vehicle could increase family requests to take them to hospital appointments, shopping, and other places of their choice. Yet being able to drive could save a lot of time, as opposed to travelling by bus or on foot, which could take longer and result in less time available to complete other chores. Furthermore, learning to drive allows independence by not relying upon family members for travel purposes, as doing so could place one in an oppressed position. Similar to S4, S3 has also learnt to drive and attends ESOL classes. Learning to drive allowed S3 to be autonomous, a view similarly expressed by the participants in Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study.

4.6 Motherhood and Caring Responsibilities

Data from both the teachers and learners reveal that childcare is a significant barrier to women accessing ESOL classes. This is evident from the teachers' pre-interview activities (four teachers), which indicate that childcare is a barrier to education. Similarly, the learners' pre-interview activities specified that most of them (eleven learners) had the role and responsibility of being a

mother. Interestingly, the learners in this study pointed out that although childcare is a barrier, this is not due to the cost of nurseries, which contradicts Heenan's (2002) research in which the cost of childcare was the barrier to the women's education. Furthermore, Kan and Laurie (2018) note that caring for dependent children increases women's house chores. Other people also have house chores but may not see them as barriers to their education; perhaps the domestic inequality in household responsibility is creating the barriers to their education. In line with Higton *et al.*'s (2019) observations, S8 notes that childcare is a barrier to her attending ESOL classes, due to the distance of the childcare provision. It is unclear whether S8's concern about her husband feeling angry is because he is required to take the children to nursery himself or whether he is just not happy about the children being at a nursery.

> Childcare, too far, husband some time angry. (S8) pre-interview activity

S8's comments are supplemented with the illustrations below. In her research diary (see Figure 4.3), she illustrates the challenges she faces in being punctual, which are in line with Higton *et al.*'s (2019) study, which also notes that childcare has an impact on attendance.

Figure 4.3 S8's Pre interview Activity
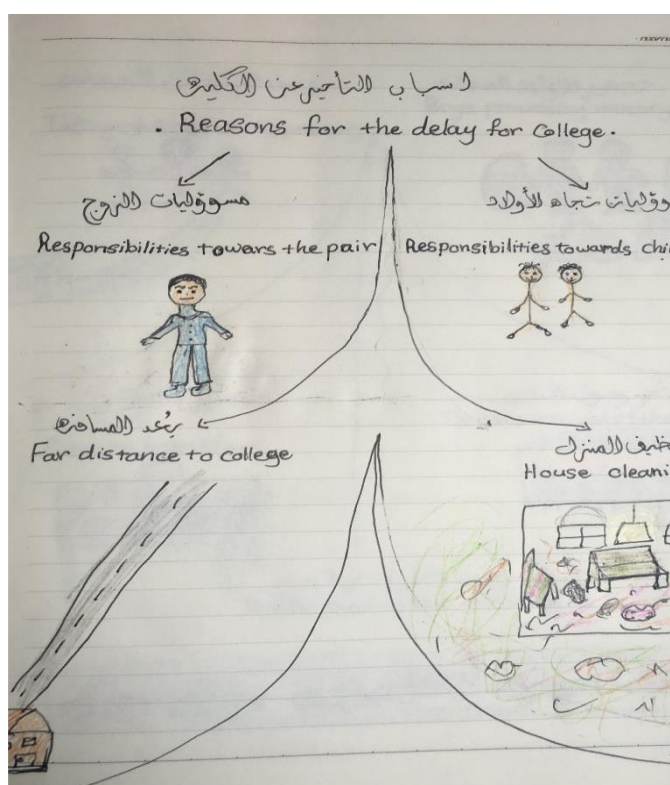
The duties associated with childcare and travel are contributing factors to both S8 and S10's punctuality at college. S10 shares her perceptions around her multiple responsibilities and her frustrations around being late for college as a result of these responsibilities:

> I have problem, I come to the college late because far, and work in my house and take the kids nursery… S10

S10 illustrates these responsibilities in her research diary (see Figure 4.4.).

Figure 4.4 S10's Pre interview Activity
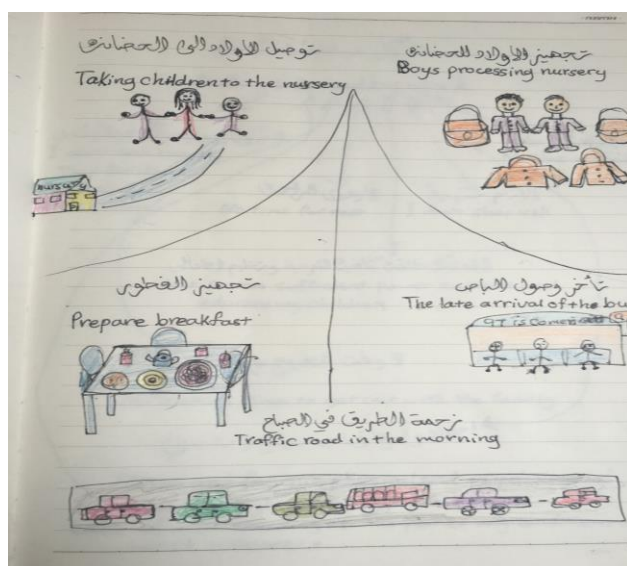
Findings from both S8 and S10's research diaries also illustrate the gendering of time (Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008), as it appears that the identity of motherhood has presented the women with almost the entire responsibility for the chores associated with childcare. Nevertheless, families struggling with childcare are not restricted to just one cultural group (Raynolds and Birdwell, 2015) as childcare is traditionally a feminine role; thus predominantly women are responsible for childcare (McKie *et al.*, 1999; Cerrato and Cifre, 2018). Yet the data retrieved also confirms that childcare is similarly presented as a barrier for learners who do not have an established network, as they have no friends, family or neighbours who can help with the children. T5 reports:

> I find increasingly that even if students are in Birmingham with their partner and children, they have no other relatives or friends here. Especially if the husband is working shifts, there is no one else at all to care for the children if they are ill or pick them up from school. This makes it very hard to study ESOL or get a steady job/career. (T5)

On a positive note, having no family could demonstrate that the women may have fewer relationships; for example, they may not have the identity of a daughter-in-law. This could imply fewer responsibilities than those mentioned by the women who live with extended family or have family ties in the UK (see Section 4.2, Table 4.1). Conversely, having family or social relations could be beneficial for women not wishing to send their child to a nursery (Aston *et al.*,

2007). T4 presents her observations of learners who are unable to attend classes due to childcare responsibilities, which can include attending appointments that are arranged either for themselves or family members (Aston *et al.*, 2007). T4 recollects:

> It was recently experienced that the students who, I can't get them to attend. They were enrolled on the course in February, and they just say that there's nobody to look after their young children. That's why they're refusing to attend the classes…they're just saying that they need time off for childcare and there's also some learners who regularly take, you know, at least half a morning a week or possibly a whole morning a week for appointments and things like that. (T4)

Medical appointments are common reasons for not attending classes (S16), though sometimes this could be due to having disabled children or generally for healthy children who have become sick. This illustrates the identity of a mother creating a barrier to attending ESOL classes due to hospital visits, which has also been identified as a barrier due to their role of daughter-in-law, which for some involves taking the mother-in-law to doctors' appointments. Yet McLaughlin (2009) reports that this responsibility could make the mothers susceptible to stress. Nevertheless, T5 encourages the learners to think of methods of support for childcare.

> I do say, try and think very carefully, when is a teacher training day, who can look after your children. Who is a good person that you trust, that can look after your children? And I go through every conceivable person from neighbours to friends to relatives. I try and make them think. So that's one barrier. It's just through discussion, trying to give them different ways to cope with different things. (T5)

T4's concerns are supported with a snapshot of a day in the life of a female Muslim ESOL learner.

> One of my current students: walks her children to school in the morning, rushes to college (on time), has approx. two hours in the afternoon to do housework, from 3.15 till 7 p.m. walks backwards and forwards to the mosque to take her children to a variety of classes. After that, has to give them supper and supervise their English homework. The next morning it all starts again. (T5)

A similar snapshot of mothering duties is provided from a learner, S16:

> Being a mother, too much at this time. Need to look after the kids a lot at this time. I need to keep an eye out on each child according to its age. If they are sitting in their bedroom, I need to go there to see what they are doing. Help with their homework. I have two young daughters and their homework too. Sometimes they argue and I need to sort that. Their food, school pick and drop, their shopping. (S16)

Learning English helps women support their children with their homework (Aston *et al.*, 2007; Higton *et al.*, 2019), which is similarly expressed by S16 and S14. Although for most women caring for their own children is a barrier to their education, interestingly one learner (S12), who does not have children of her own, is caring for seven children of a family member. Heenan's (2002) study made a similar observation, where mature students prioritise the care of their grandchildren before their aspirations to study at university, as they felt morally obliged even if it damaged their own aspirations. At the same time, the women in Heenan's (2002) study felt there was no option to put their needs first. A striking response in Heenan's (2002:47) findings revealed that:

> …caring was part and parcel of being a woman, and for her it had been the main feature of her life. This was not something that she was bitter about but accepted it as part of life.

Perhaps S12 was heavily dependent upon the family she was living with. She has been learning English for a year, studying at Entry 1/Entry 2 (see Table 2); thus it is possible that she has recently arrived in the UK and feels obliged to look after the children. However, interestingly she not only has the seven children to look after, but also a husband and a job. Therefore, she is juggling between multiple roles and responsibilities, some due to her gender and the expectations that brings, and others due to her identity and the inferior position she appears to be in. S12 and S4 also seemingly have a busy life, tied with varying responsibilities:

> I wake up early, cooking, cleaning and have a bath the children. Is like seven children, I feel very tired. Sunday is a lot of job because we have four girls in house so their mother, she's not feeling well that day I iron to make ready their uniform and doing hair for girls. (S12)

> It's just that I need to quickly complete the housework in the morning, need to do the cooking because since it is an afternoon class, when I come back its time for my husband to return and then I need to go home and make him chappatis. The main dish is ready and that's why I need to finish everything quickly. (S4)

These narratives explicitly illustrate that the women are not only overwhelmed with the number of responsibilities they have but are also struggling to complete them within the time available. This is reinforced by Darby, Farooqi, and Lai (2016:18) who argue that the female ESOL learners in their study are 'not only cash poor, but time poor', with struggling to run the household, employment and caring responsibility. The gendering of time is similarly emphasised in Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes' (2008) study. The comments below illustrate that the women's day begins as soon as they wake up, with just enough time in the day to complete roles associated with their cultural and gendered expectations. These roles leave them with less leisure time than the men (McKie *et al.*, 2019).

> When I wake up in the morning, I begin. First make the breakfast and give the husband, he goes to work. Then the housework, cleaning,

washing, doing everything…Then I prepare the food for when he comes back from work. S4

I wake up at 4:30 in the morning and pray. Then I make breakfast. I give it to my husband and eat myself. I give him his medicines and injection. S1

I'm starting when I wake up. I give everybody's breakfast and give your clothes and everything's clean and lunch time everything. S2

I need to wake up before he goes to work to get things ready for my husband… need to make him a nice breakfast, quickly iron his shirt, immediately find his socks and quickly put them in front of him. Quickly, quickly get him ready, open the door and send him out and say goodbye. That's how it is. A wife's responsibility is to always support him. That's the main thing. S7

Cos if I stay at home, I feel tired, I feel bored. I hate my life if I stay at home. I don't have nothing benefit to do at home myself. S8

When I have job in future, the problem is time because the time is very, very little, little time. I can't find any time for cook. I can't find time for sleep and I can't find time for comfortable and with myself and…relax S10

The data demonstrates that S8 is bored of staying home. Basit (1997a) reinforces this by confirming that the repetitive housework leads to the girls' boredom. While the reflections below indicate that S8 enjoys attending college. Engaging in college may be a substitution for completing housework, as McKie *et al.* (1999) assert that some women participate in education to escape from relatives.

But if I stay at home, nothing I do, just clean and wait my husband to come. Is nothing for me…I like this college so much. I'm so happy to come here. S8

I like my teachers. I like my friends. I like the college, is clean college. It's lovely. Have security inside college, you feel safe. Yeh, I like that. S8

Afternoon ESOL classes at the FE institution under study end at 3:15, which aligns with the time school finishes. Therefore, learners enrolled onto an afternoon course negotiate with the teacher to leave the class early to collect their child. However, a significant concern is that there is no indication of support, in terms of after school provision for parents who cannot collect their child at 3:15. S15 reports:

Need to leave class early to pick up children everyday-fifteen minutes early. (S15)

T5 points out how the schools' policies do not take into consideration parents who are studying and are unable to collect their child promptly or attend curriculum briefings. Furthermore, since most female ESOL learners are unemployed (Raynolds and Birdwell, 2015), paying a fine may prove to be difficult. Since current ESOL policy does not consider flexible classes, this makes it stressful for ESOL learners. Where the child is attending a free nursery, the mothers are finding it difficult to manage the school run and promptly attend ESOL classes. Yet ESOL institutions are bound by college polices around attendance and punctuality and continue to pressure learners on attending classes on time (see Section 2.2).

Figure 4.5 T5's Pre-Interview Activity

Authoritarian head teachers

I am uncomfortable with some of the local schools:

*you MUST be there at 9 a.m. or we FINE you;

*parents' briefings on the curriculum are COMPULSORY;

* you MUST collect your child at 3.15 p.m. or we will call Social Services.

T1 similarly comments on how the learners' multiple responsibilities could affect their attendance and have a psychological impact on them (see Section 2.9). However, ESOL policy does not encounter the attendance difficulties experienced by the learners and therefore do not offer support. Therefore, the government does not provide practical support for all ESOL learners to access, attend and progress in education.

> It can affect their attendance which comes back on us. It can affect their progression. They just don't do as well. It can affect their concentration in class, their mood. Sometimes a student could be crying. I've had students break down during exams and it can affect. (T1)

Caring for sick relatives could also impact on the learners' attendance. T6 shares her observations:

…the problem is when they have sick relatives or they have family duties and what would often happen then is that they will take time out and their attendance will not be good. (T6)

The next extract explains how the family influences the learner's independence.

One of my students was not allowed, by her family, to have a pram when she had her first baby, even though her husband was a wage-earner. This effectively tied her to the home. (T5)

The extract implies that since this learner's husband is in employment, there are no financial restrictions to purchasing a pram. Instead, this appears to be due to power domination (Abdi, 2014). Perhaps the daughter-in-law has a lack of power to resist the controlling situations at home, which prevent her from going far afield. Therefore, not having a pram is imprisoning her in her own home and restricting the movements of both her and the child. Furthermore, although there is no cultural reason not to have a pram, there may be a cultural expectation of allowing the finances to be controlled by the person who is the head of the family (Abdi, 2014). Furthermore, the extract suggests that the mother has not challenged the gendered power arrangements (Abdi, 2014) possibly due to her immigration status (Devlin and McKenna, 2009).

T5's further draws on another learner's experiences, where her relationships, such as that with her child and mother-in-law, and the identities formed through these relationships have created a barrier to her education. She recalls:

I knew a woman born in South Asia whose youngest child had just left for university. In her 40s, she was just exploring her next steps at college. After only 2 or 3 weeks, her mother-in-law had a stroke, and she became the woman's full-time carer. End of career ideas. (T5)

T5's comments show that the learner was ambitious and waited till her barrier of motherhood was removed once her child became independent. Possibly the child progressing into education inspired her to study, though the unfortunate situation of her mother-in-law's illness meant that instead she was obliged to take up the unpaid job of caring for her mother-in-law. Literature (Aston *et al.*, 2007; Heenan, 2002) indicates that caring for elderly and ill family members is a significant barrier to education. The employed White British women in Green *et al.*'s (2004) study, also had the responsibility to care for the elderly in the family and sick family members; this was part of their daily routine, suggesting that caring is not a responsibility that only Muslim women encounter. The mother-in-law being in a more powerful position relates to matriarchy (see Section 1.7.2).

The data reveals that caring for disabled children is a barrier to the female ESOL learners' education. Parr (1996) affirms that women are mainly responsible for disabled children, even if the children are her partner's. Although cultural practices such as cross-cousin and consanguineous

marriages are encouraged within Muslim families (Akrami and Osati, 2007), which is practised particularly amongst Pakistani migrants (Charsley *et al.*, 2012), the data indicates that there is little help from the family for the consequences if a child is disabled.

> I've come across several cases of ESOL students having severely disabled children, possibly due to repeated cousin marriages in the family. The mother's life is consumed by medical appointments and caring duties (T5).

Caring for a disabled child on their own and trying to attend ESOL classes could be challenging to manage. Consequently, for some women, attending ESOL classes is a route to exit from the normal expectations, such as completing household routines, that may cause depression (see Section 4.11), as according to Oakley (1974:41), housework is perceived as 'degrading, unpleasant and essentially self-neglecting', since it is perpetual job that has a psychological effect on women. However, according to Deem (1986) the impact of housework could differ according to age, class and socio-economic background. Culture is also a significant factor as women living in different cultures could encounter different expectations from their spouses and family.

4.7 Expectations

The findings exhibit that ESOL learners come from diverse backgrounds and bring with them diverse cultural experiences. T1 shares:

> I wouldn't say that students from one country in particular have a different motivation for coming to college but students definitely, from different backgrounds and different educational backgrounds and different family circumstances, they come to college for different reasons. (T1)

Muslim families have cultural expectations of maintaining contact with their extended family and therefore visit them regularly (Basit, 1997a). Preserving cultural norms is evident in the quote below:

> Some of the local families expect at least one person to be at home at all times. Front door keys are not made available to every adult in the family…In some cultures, you are not allowed to send visitors away. Students often get a visitor as they are just leaving for college. Even some of the ethnic minority teachers find this a problem at weekends. (T5)

T5's extract demonstrates that the cultural expectation of upholding regular contact is a barrier to attending ESOL classes, and thus could affect their attendance and punctuality. In addition, S15, whose mother-in-law is in Pakistan, is expected to call her mother-in-law every day. Furthermore, S16 often has unexpected guests who she cannot turn away.

> Today I dropped the kids in the morning then I had guests arrive…They said we came 2-3 times and you weren't at home…I gave them breakfast and they left at 11.o. clock. when I saw the clock, I quickly got the little one ready…Then I had it myself, put my clothes on and came to college. (S16)

S16 illuminates how stressed and rushed she was as she needed to attend guests at her house and college. She appears to be unhappy with attending to guests as she has other commitments, which concurs with Basit's (1997a) study where the girls disliked family involvement. However, Heenan (2002) stipulates that although women are keen to study, they fail to challenge the cultural expectations as they are habituated to place their families' needs before their own aspirations. These situations also demonstrate that the ESOL learners' identities and familial relationships are wrapped around the cultural expectations. Collectively, S16 and T5's comments show that such expectations add to their current responsibilities, causing them to be overburdened.

4.8 Overburdened

The data from the ESOL teachers yields a complex picture of the learners' lives (see Figures 4.9). As aforementioned in Section 4.3, Figure 4.9 shows that time is a significant factor in the learners' lives. Due to the patriarchal conditions in which they live (Ahmed, 2001), where the women are responsible for most domestic duties and caring responsibilities (Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008), and the multiple identities they have encountered following marriage, the number of tasks involved exceed the amount of time they have in the day to fulfil their roles. Consequently, the learners are not able to manage the roles associated with their identities in the given time constraints, thus causing them to feel overburdened. In the context of Heenan's (2002) study, the women are extremely reluctant to give precedence to their own needs as they are morally obliged to help family members, and are not prioritising their own needs; as such they perceived it as selfish to have ambitions, as well problematic to justify. Therefore, according to the illustration (see Figure 4.9 and 4.10) the expectations of the learners' multiple identities are unrealistic, as there are not enough hours in the day to achieve their expected duties alongside their aspirations to access education.

Figure 4.9 T9's Pre-interview Activity

I am an ESOL student with a family.

My life seems to be like a lot of different boxes and something crazy is happening in each box! Good crazy and bad crazy!

Sometimes it feels that I have a clock for a head!

Most of the time it is good crazy.

Sometimes it is bad crazy and that is when I feel I need to shut each box to keep everything in there.

Or lots of clocks actually. One for Every part of my life! All showing a different time! And telling me I have to be somewhere else.

The boxes portrayed in Figure 4.10 illustrate individual elements that supplement an ESOL learner's aspired organised life. These elements picture their responsibilities in isolation, as no correlation is displayed. This suggests that ideally these responsibilities and expectations would be managed individually. There is no indication of the learners' education, nor leisure time, which implies that expected roles and responsibilities take priority over them. Therefore, although they aspire to live a comfortable and organised life, it is not possible.

Figure 4.10 T9's Pre-interview Activity Depicting an Organised Life

Kids

School

Classes

Shopping

Parents

Hospital

Extended family

Visiting family

Money

Weddings

ME!

A nice organised life
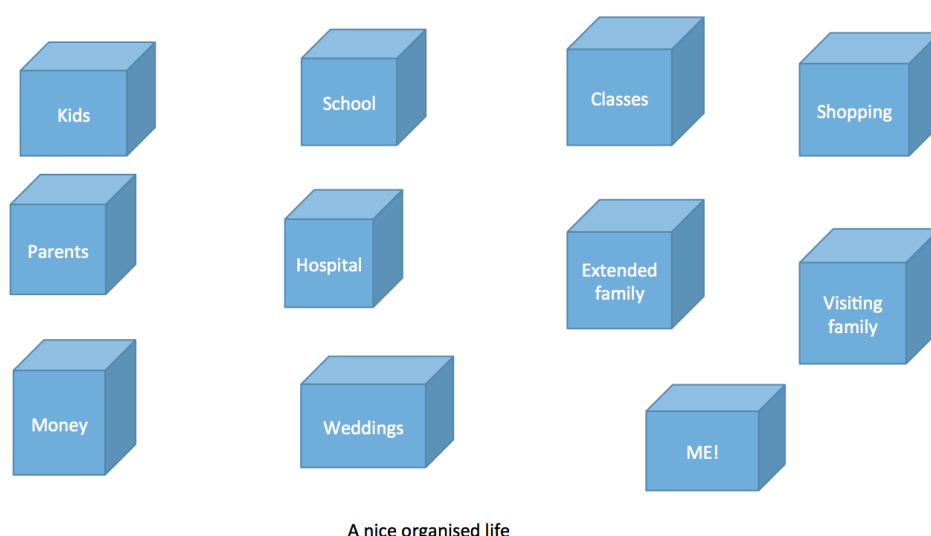
T9 further provides an image with the boxes piled on top of each other, depicting a disorganised life, which is messy and full of chaos (Figure 4.11). The 'Me' box appears to be buried within the responsibilities that relate to the learners' identities, relationships, expectations and enrolment on an ESOL course to learn to communicate in English. Congruent to literature around patriarchy, the image illuminates the learners in an oppressed (Walby, 1990), inferior (Van Leeuwan, 1993) and weak (Lerner, 1993) position. The expectations identified in the blue boxes could explain why female ESOL learners are vulnerable (Afzal *et al.*, 2015; Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's, 2016), as are women in general (Ludhra and Jones, 2009; McLaughlin, 2009; Potter, 2014). Furthermore, Figure 4.11 could indicate that the ESOL learners feel that they are surrounded by layers of disturbances, with little control to better the situation. This is perceived from the chaotic nature of the illustration, with the boxes in an organised fashion.

Figure 4.11 T9's Pre-interview Activity
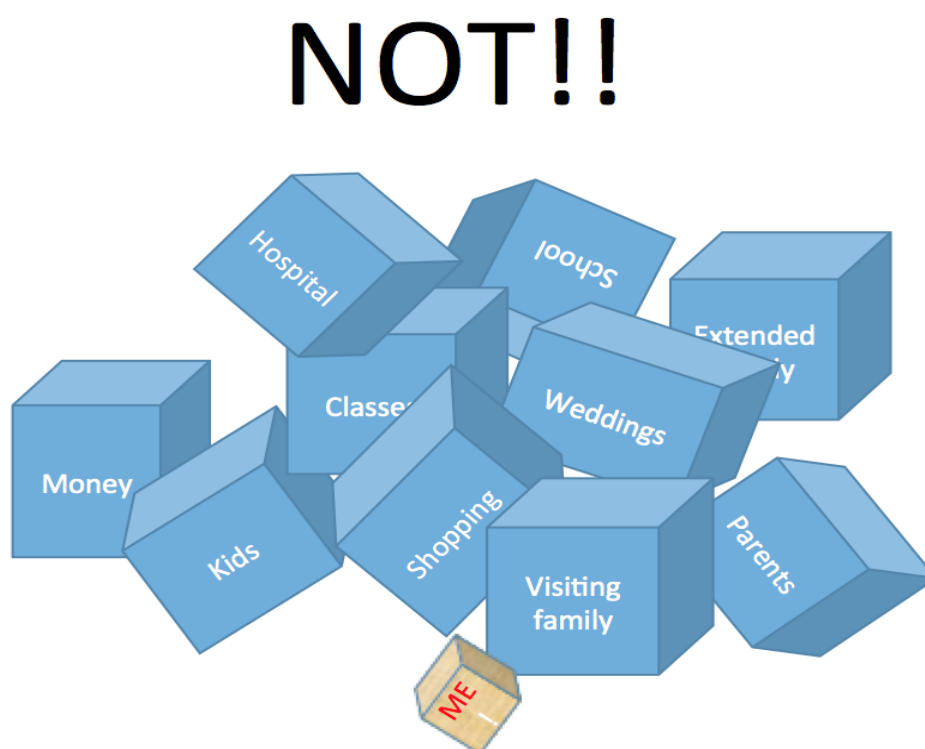
T9's account unfolds her perception of a typical female Muslim ESOL learner's situation, which supplements the images in Figures 4.10 and 4.11.

> I think she feels like I'd feel underneath all those boxes. She feels overburdened. She feels stressed, upset, unable to cope. And then the language thing just makes it worse because she can't explain to people. She can't express herself. She can't express herself in the language but perhaps that she can't express herself to her family and to her partner because what would be the point. (T9)

T9's account shows that the ESOL learners feel powerless, and their voices are unheard. Batool and Batool (2018) assert that women's voices are

suppressed as a result of cultural aspects, which could be the reason in T9's extract. Moreover, T9's comments refer to what could create a health issue, as the women are described as stressed, 'upset, unable to cope'. Similarly, Figure 4.12 highlights that there are a number of underpinning psychological issues that create barriers for the ESOL learners from balancing their education with their other commitments due to a lack of time. Seemingly, the unrealistic expectations of ESOL learners and the lack of sleep affect their health due to the stress involved. Although Figure 4.12 states 'problems caused by work', she does not mean employment. Instead, the learner refers to 'work' as the daily chores.

Figure 4.12 T5's Pre-interview Activity

مشاكل بسبب المعلم

Problems caused by work

لا يكون لدى وقت كافى لاولادى
I don't have enough time for do care about my children

لا وقت للراحة
No time for rest

لا انام جيدا
I don't sleep well

لا وقت للطبخ
No time to cook

لا امتلك طاقة كافية للتربية وتعليم اطفالى
Not possess sufficient power to raise and educate my children

لا وقت للخروج مع العائلة
Not enough time to get out with the family

اجهاد وارهاق جسدى ونفسى
Stress and fatigue physical and psychological

عدم تفهم الزوج لاى ظروف (او ضغوط العمل)
Lack of understanding of the pair to any conditions and work pressure

4.9 Health

T6 discloses that ESOL learners drop out of education due to health reasons, such as depression. Literature explains that Muslim women, from ethnic and other minority groups, especially recent immigrants who cannot speak English, are specifically vulnerable to mental illness and are suffering from depression (McLaughlin, 2009). Glass and Fujimito (1994) also confirm that more women show depression symptoms than men.

> Health is a significant issue, especially in with the older students…In this year, I've had a couple of students who've dropped out through health,

ill health. One of them, she came to me and she disclosed that she was suffering from depression and I tried to encourage her to stay but she decided she wanted to leave. (T6)

The learners put on a façade when they come to college, as for some their navigation to education exposes the possibilities of being exposed to physical or emotional violence to restrict their freedom. In addition, their migration to the UK places them in vulnerable positions (Potter, 2014). T5 explains that the learners are exposed to barriers of finance, as they have insufficient funds to purchase warm clothing.

I have noticed quite a lot of bullying of new immigrants by their UK-based relations. Especially they are called 'freshies'/f.o.b., their overseas qualifications are belittled, and they are given childcare, other caring duties and a large amount of housework to do. I've also seen them being denied things like warm winter coats. (T5)

T1 equally believes that female ESOL learners are vulnerable to health problems:

They could have health problems or mental health problems. T1

Furthermore, the findings suggest that the women fear the male members of the family, who are in a dominant position of the household. For example, S4 expressed her fear of her father-in law because she was attending ESOL classes or learning to drive (see Section 4.5). In addition, the extracts below from S10 and S3 show that the learners fear their husband.

…make breakfast for my husband…I don't have time; my husband says OK but he's angry. (S10)

I'm always scared in case my husband says she still hasn't come back. (S3)

Fear on its own can create a barrier and result in less confidence in learning and lead to depression by staying at home (see Section 4.14). The married women in Yount and Carrera's (2006) study confirm that their husband would beat them if they went out without informing him. In addition, the female Bangladeshi learners in Pattar's (2009) study appear to be afraid to access education due to their husbands (Section 2.10). However, a significant point here is that the consequences of disobeying their husbands are not identified or are just not documented in Pattar's (2009) study, just as it is not elaborated upon in the current study. Nevertheless, fearing the husband suggests that he is of controlling nature, and is in a more powerful position than the wife. The controlling behaviour could be inherited from cultural expectations passed down, as noted by Aston *et al.* (2007). Thus, the fear could be internalised, which stems from the broader cultural practices and expectations that the family collectively pursue. This demonstrates the complexity of the situation which contains many layers of intricacies (see Section 6.4) that cause the women to feel stressed about doing the wrong thing, letting the husband or

family down by disappointing them. Furthermore, Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) findings indicated less confidence and poor mental health amongst ESOL learners. These included feelings of isolation, being voiceless and depressed (Darby, Farooqi, and Lai, 2016). In addition, many of the participants in Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) study experienced a culture shock when they arrived in the UK, which could be a reason for depression or mental illness amongst the participants in the current study. Alternatively, depression and stress amongst the learners in this study could be due to work overload, which both the learners and teachers have mentioned.

4.10 Stress

The ESOL learners are immigrants and new to this country. They are adjusting to a new identity, family members, culture as well as studying ESOL. T5 explains that immigrating to a new country could cause stress, for financial and health reasons. While Muro and Mein (2010) associate stress with being traumatised, Glass and Fujimoto (1994) relate stress to the household labour overload, leading to depression.

> a) I have noticed, both in people immigrating to the UK and friends who have gone to live abroad, that they catch every bug going for the first two years.
> b) The stress of emigration is well documented to have a detrimental effect on people's long-term health.
> c) Stress itself lowers the strength of a person's immune system.
> d) It is well documented that people on JSA/benefits do not receive enough money to eat healthily, so many of our [students] are not eating properly, which affects their overall health. (T5)

T5 illustrates further reasons of depression, including being unloved and in a situation where the husband has another partner. The husband may see himself in a superior position where he can have another partner, despite his wife's disapproval. Having several wives in the men's home country is reported in Abdi's (2014) study of those who migrated to the US from Africa. The female ESOL learners may feel that if they dispute the situation, the husband will send them back to their country. The worry and sadness involved could act as a barrier to their engaging in education.

> I have taught hundreds of divorced ESOL students, mostly women, mostly have some children. They are brought over here but realise sooner or later that their husband already has a partner (sometimes a male partner). Trying and succeeding, to improve your English, care for children by yourself and get a job takes real grit.
> (Extract from T5's Pre-interview activity)

T5 further discusses learners who feel depressed and take anti-depressant drugs, which could also have a negative effect on their learning.

> Rejection, tiny houses, lack of sunshine, fresh air and exercise, family problems, lack of friends, language barrier – all lead to depression for many. Both depression and the drugs used to treat it lead to difficulty with concentrating in class. (T5)

> Feared, rejected and sometimes physically assaulted by people from the majority culture. (T5)

T5 feels emotional about the negative experiences she has observed as a teacher. These experiences indicate a correlation between power and culture.

> … it's a related issue of money and power. I get very angry when I see students, friends and neighbours entering into unregistered marriages, and losing property and pension rights which should be theirs under British law, but which is denied them by 'Sharia. (T5)

A number of integrating complexities are revealed in the extracts by T5, some relating to environmental issues for which the learners lack the power to address themselves, perhaps due to their lack of language skills or lack of confidence. Issues of abuse are also drawn upon which affect the learners' health. However, T5's account demonstrates stereotypical views and misconceptions of the Sharia law (Esposito, 1975). Yet Moors and Moors (1995) confirm that according to Sharia (Islamic) law, women can manage their own employment income and any earnings they may have from properties.

4.11 Domestic Abuse

Being controlled and threatened could lead to depression. Both T5 and T7's statements demonstrated that abuse is a barrier to the learners' education. T1 associates abuse with mental health, collectively creating a barrier to the ESOL learners' education, which corresponds with McLaughlin's (2009) research that confirms that mental health is a critical barrier to women's education. However, the abuse may not be reported, or the women may not seek help, either because they felt that they will not be protected, or they will be blamed for the abuse, and if they left the marriage, they will be considered a bad wife (Kern, 2017). Abdi (2014) explains that minor abusive situations where the woman has not been beaten is not seen as a valid reason to involve the police; rather it is seen as abusing the 911 system. Thus, women are reluctant to report abuse as it will cause stigma in the community. Furthermore, where the women have involved the police, they would later drop the charges because they feel reliant on the husband for when children have issues as their relatives are not in the same country to support them. The men feel that marital disputes should instead be resolved by the elders in the family (Abdi, 2014).

> There could be issues going on at home… There could be physical or emotional abuse at home, and they could just have number of children and be finding it difficult to manage the children and coming to college...there could be a learning difficulty, like I said, and they may not be able to complete their course. T1

Domestic violence is definitely a barrier. T7

Similar to T1's observations, T7 confirms that health and domestic violence are a barrier to education. The Office of National Statistics (ONS) (2016) define 'domestic violence' and 'abuse' as 'controlling' and 'threatening behaviour'. With reference to this definition and drawing on the data, it is evident that the women being controlled by their husbands or in-laws are all victims of domestic abuse, which is a barrier to accessing education (see for example S4, S10, S3). In addition, many of the comments of the lives of ESOL learners relate to factors that sit within the 2015 Coercive Control Law and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. Being controlled is expressed in both the learners' and teachers' accounts. However, T2 specifically refers to examples of dealing with learners experiencing abuse. This demonstrates that teachers have identified that there are safeguarding concerns, which according to Isserlis (2000) is common amongst female immigrants in relationships, as they are often coerced by their male partner. T2 reports:

> I have had a couple of students who were actually victims of abuse... There was a student who was a victim of domestic violence…(T2)

> Oh, this was absolutely heart breaking. This is a real example. From here, this centre, about two or three years ago, an Entry 2 student, intelligent, lively, pretty, married, age 29 with children. She was a learner voice rep. After her first learner voice reps meeting, her family immediately withdrew her from college and took away her mobile phone and when I asked student services to safeguard her, they said they couldn't because she was an adult, which is not true, I found out since… The point is, she was in the learner voice meeting, speaking in a confident way, in front of other people from the community who obviously gossiped to her husband or mother-in-law. (T5)

The above extract illustrates an example of a woman with a lot of courage, as often ESOL learners are shy (see Section 4.14). However, it appears that since her peers at college have connections with the same community, this learner's educational chances have been disadvantaged. Considering this was a lively and intelligent learner whose mobile was confiscated by her family, this may have disempowered her and left her feeling oppressed. This incident reflects the work of Aston *et al.* (2009) which states that the community has an influence in negatively affecting women's educational aspirations as they fear that education would allow the women too much power and freedom (see Section 5.5.2). Moreover, the fear of being abused could be the reason for giving in to their parents (the Cinderella extract T5), partners or in-laws. This aligns with the possible barriers mentioned by Darby, Farooqi, and Lai (2016), who refer to the migrant women in their study as 'vulnerable' due to their low level of English knowledge. Both physical and emotional domestic abuse is experienced from female ESOL learners' husbands. This has made learning English a struggle for these women, and being abused during the time when their ability to speak English was poor made it more difficult for them to overcome their situation (Darby, Farooqi,

and Lai, 2016). Perhaps living beyond the household is problematic where the person has a limited understanding of English. On the other hand, in line with comments made by Abdi (2014) (see Section 2.9), knowing the language could provide them with some knowledge of the law and empower them to access support services for support with domestic abuse, and how to speak to the emergency and support services. Furthermore, some learners may be powerless in situations of abuse, which aligns with Kern's study (2017) where the women do not have a choice in their circumstances due to cultural barriers to escape their situation. Although the Care Act (2014) aims for women to be safeguarded so that they can make their own choices, it appears that since the women are not confident in accessing the support, they are not gaining the support that they are entitled to.

The next example, of rape within marriage, also illustrates the learner being in an inferior position, with no bargaining power (see Section 2.8). Dealing with chores, husbands' demands, in-laws, and being raped, is too much to deal with (see Section 2.9). As a result, the learner may be left feeling that things will never change. However, if that is what they believe, they may not be aware that rape is a form of domestic abuse, which illustrates 'male power' (Hunnicutt, 2009:560), just as unwanted pregnancies is a form of coercive control (Fontes, 2015). Unwanted pregnancies will require the learner to attend midwife and hospital appointments, which could create a barrier to their attendance in ESOL classes. Furthermore, feeling depressed as a result of the unwanted pregnancy could also create a barrier to their participation in education. A teacher participant recounted:

> I had a friend who grew up in a former English colony and had a well-regarded professional qualification, but she never had an opportunity to enter the UK job market, because even though she had health problems and did not want lots of kids, her husband insisted, he raped her basically. So that, the last time I saw her, she was a complete nervous wreck. (T5)

Just as health is a significant barrier to employment (Aston *et al.*, 2007), it is also a common reason for learners not being punctual at ESOL classes (see Section 4.4). Learning English is very important to these learners in accessing help and becoming more empowered. However, it can be noted that although the ESOL learners did not disclose abuse, it does not mean to say it did not happen. Often, they are afraid to say things of such nature, and expressing their true voice (see Section 4.12), to receive support. Yet, since abuse is a safeguarding concern and therefore needs to be reported so that the women receive adequate support, as they have the right to live safe lives, free from violence and neglect (Care Act, 2014).

4.12 Support

T1's comments imply that the ESOL learner is alone; therefore they need to manage things themselves, and would consequently benefit from support provided by the college. They are not allowed to have friends for support, for

cultural reasons (Section 2.4), though they may lack relationships with others due to the language barrier.

> Sometimes families and friends can help but sometimes they can be a hindrance as well. Sometimes there can be a culture of you should just put up with it. So, they don't help. (T1)

The teachers' responses provide useful insights into the support available from the college for ESOL learners. For example, one tutor (T4), who is a visiting lecturer and has been teaching at this institution for two years, was unaware of any support available. A Pre-Entry tutor (T1) mentioned that the level of support had been reduced and that learners who are working part-time are asked to pay for the course and are unaware of support such as the Learner Support Fund, and are therefore not continuing with education. She also said that none of her learners are claiming any financial support towards childcare provision. T1 and T2 confirm language as a key barrier in accessing the college support services, as there are no translation services available. She suggests that more financial support and translators would help to better facilitate the learners' needs being met.

> I mean the college can't afford to pay for translators for all languages but there, you are lucky sometimes if someone in student services can speak Urdu or Punjabi, who can communicate with some of those learners but if that student is Eritrean or Somalian, then they can't get that support. So, I think that would help and providing more financial assistance. (T1)

> Pre-Entry learner, I think the college doesn't have enough support for that. I think they need to have more translators because the students are from different backgrounds, different nationalities, we don't have enough translators…until they can really communicate in English, we wouldn't be able to really communicate with them and they might have problem to express whatever that they are facing in the college and whatever barriers they have. (T2)

T1 provides further perceptions of the student services support not being accessible to ESOL learners, as the learners are from diverse backgrounds, and therefore support would be required in many different languages. Yet, T1 highlights that ESOL learners are more in need of support in comparison with learners studying other subjects at college. Bhatti (1999) explains that migrant mothers often experience isolation due to the struggles of upholding their cultural values. Perhaps they require more support than their counterparts due to their insecurities, which according to Bhatti (1999), have stemmed from racism towards their religion.

> I don't think they would go to student services because of their English and I have tried, I have tried and it's a shame because they probably need support more than other students and they don't get it. With our students, they tend to be quite isolated, I think they can go to the GP or

come to college for support, but I think, Muslim learners doing other courses probably have access to more support. (T1)

T1 shares further negative and positive perceptions of the support available to ESOL learners.

> Sometimes it can be very good. Again, I've had refugees and asylum seekers with mental health problems that student services really help them get in touch with counselling services. And there was a case once of, this was a long-term, there was a young Pakistani girl, she is worried that her parents would take her back to get married off and the college actually helped her to another city without her parents' knowledge. And her dad came into college to find out where she was. Those were a few circumstances that the college has really gone out of their way to help. But sometimes I think as English is not their first language, then sometimes our students don't get priority and they don't get the help that they could get if they spoke English. (T1)

> They used to provide a lot more [financial support]. It's been reduced and reduced and reduced now and I am concerned about the students who are working part-time and are on low income and having to pay for their course as well [stop coming]. I haven't got any students this year who are receiving help with childcare. (T1)

> And barriers to work, these girls, ok, twice at college I was involved in cases where second generation immigrant girls qualified as administrators. They were highly successful in their work placements and were offered permanent jobs, in the teams where I worked. In the first case, the woman's brother forbade her to do paid work, they were a Pathan (=Pastun) family and in the second case, the girl's parents literally kept her locked in the house, pending a forced marriage, they were of Mirpuri ethnicity. The forced marriage one, I could not get the authorities to listen or take action. I phoned the forced marriage unit and they said we can't do anything unless the girl complains- she was locked in the house. I do know that now the police would've considered that kidnap. (T5)

A similar view of more officers or support workers is expressed by T3. Currently, the teachers from this study are helping the learners with the support which student services are assigned to give. The type of support the ESOL teachers provide the learners to manage their barriers are administrative support and strategies to boost their confidence in speaking. However, since ESOL policy cannot fund this support, it places an extra burden on teachers.

> Provide them guidance on filling their forms. Just help them fill, like job application forms, making CVs, give them confidence in class, like when they have presentations so they come in front of class to speak so they get confidence booster. (T3)

> Students come to me and if they say, look I wasn't paid by the job centre this week, I try to investigate that myself, whether I should or not, I don't know but they can barely communicate what the problem is to me. (T4)

Considering this, teachers in this study find themselves helpless in supporting the learners since they are already under so much pressure from other individuals in their family. T1 mentions that the learners with the higher aspirations are those who have studied and worked in other countries, prior to arriving at the UK. According to Basit (1996), such aspirations could derive from having career-minded members of the extended family who are their role models. In addition, having prior education enables the person to have study skills and then possibly grasp the English language more easier than those that are illiterate, for example, some that are from Pakistan and Bangladesh, as explained by T6:

> …The fact that many of them come from countries like Pakistan or Bangladesh where they don't use the Roman alphabet, that is a significant impedance to, to their learning English, that's a barrier. (T6)

Similar to T6's comments, Basit (1997a) notes that families from Pakistan and Bangladesh have a limited educational background since it is not compulsory and not necessarily free. Therefore, verbal communication is more widely used in Pakistan and Bangladesh (Bhatti, 1999). Another reason noted is that the individuals are expected to earn money at a young age, and therefore are not encouraged to become educated (Basit, 1997a). In addition, following the second World War migrant women arrived from poor countries, with different cultures. In their home country, verbal communication may have been sufficient, though in the UK, the culture differed. They women are expected to reconstruct their culture to fit into British society (Werbner, 1990). Nevertheless, the data in this study presents that those that are illiterate have the option of accessing support services within the college. T5 expresses further reasons of low literacy levels:

> Lack of Mother Tongue literacy or only Primary education makes English language acquisition a very difficult and lengthy process. (T5)

> [ESOL students] Often live in areas where they can't practise English properly because few other people speak it fluently. (T5)

From teaching the learners, it is learnt that the learners in this study have varying levels of education from their home country. For all learners, despite their prior level of education, due to their limitation in the English language skills they are seen as inferior to their husbands, even though the husband may not be educated in more than secondary schooling in this country. In line with this, the Muslim women in Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) were also not allowed to learn English because their husbands did not give them permission. Reasons included that their husbands did not want them to become independent or because the husbands were not provided an opportunity to study themselves and so did not want to be less educated than

their wives. This aligns with Yount and Carrera's (2006:378) study of married Cambodian women which confirms that men could be 'threatened' by their wife being more educated than them, and instead of physical violence they would use 'nonphysical violence' to maintain their dominance. Nevertheless, from a teacher's perspective, learning English and understanding the systems in the UK are essential for situations relating to marriage. However, T5 highlights that numerous ESOL students experience learning difficulties, which could make engaging in ESOL more challenging, and thus could benefit from support whilst at college.

Many ESOL students seem to have learning difficulties (T5).

Yet T8 and T10 point out the lack of support staff and interpreters, due to the lack of funding available to the college (see Section 4.12). Considering the financial issues in recruiting further staff, there is little acknowledgment of how these learners' voices will be heard and how they will achieve freedom if they do not acquire the skills to access this service. Thus, according to the findings, the learners studying at Pre-Entry Level ESOL are at a great disadvantage as they are unable to communicate with support staff due to a lack of English skills. This draws attention on Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) work, which projects that the lack of literacy skills is a practical barrier to education. Furthermore, Pre-Entry learners are often unaware of the support available to them, and this presents the risk of them dropping out. Those who are unable to afford the fees may not be aware of the Learner Support Fund. T3 argues that there is support available for ESOL learners to fund childcare and travel costs, though it is subject to whether the applicant meets the eligibility criteria. Slade and Dickson (2021) note that fully funded childcare is a basic need for ESOL learners to access classes, yet it is not considered by ESOL policy. T9 provides an illustration of how the ESOL learners may be feeling due to their lack of English skills:

Figure 4.14: T9's Pre-interview Activity

Of course I know lots of people feel the same way!

It makes perfect sense in my head!!

But Its very hard when sometimes it seems that all I can hear is noise and not words that make sense.

There's lots I don't know and lots I can't understand because my English is not good yet.
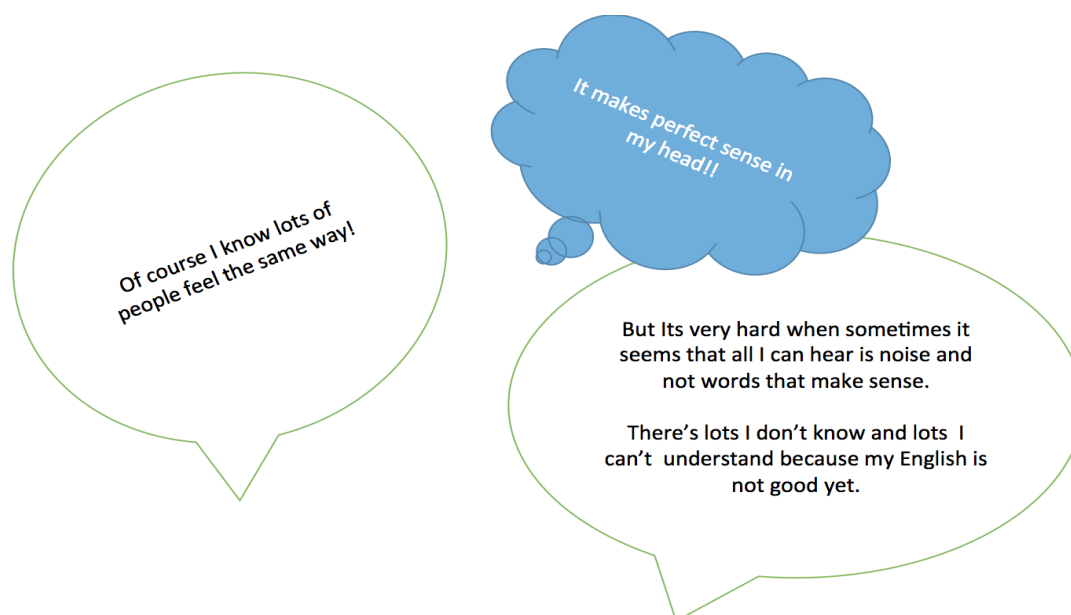
S11, the Pakistani learner, aged 25 or under, reveals that she is currently unsure about her career aspirations and has had little career guidance. This finding appears to support Heenan's (2002) assertions of women having negative experiences with the career advice available to them, and that it was unclear, and inaccessible; thus the women were unsure about their future career opportunities, causing frustration. S11 explains:

> My future ambition is that if after Entry 3, I'll see in which field I can gain admission. I think after Entry, Level 1. If I enrol into Level 1, can I also do GCSE's? Or can I directly go into university? In Pakistan I did 'ICOM' before I stopped studying, and I was at university. So it's the thing that I have no one to guide me or how can I get information from someone. I'm still thinking of what to do after Entry 3.

Yet, despite the teachers' busy schedule at work, T4, for example stated that he is willing to assist learners by completing application forms for them in the evening at home. He also completes additional tasks at work, such as phoning the job centre. In addition, he guides the learners to the support services department. However, it appears that it is important that the learners receive the support they require, to reduce their stress levels.

> Complying with Job Centre requirements is a source of stress in the lives of some students. (T5)

The data from the ESOL shows that the student services team has been supportive in other contexts:

> One of our x-students, it was like a forced marriage issue. So I ring actually student services and they provided her a hostel where she

lived a couple of weeks before they sorted out different accommodation for her. (T3)

There was one student who had a problem with the house and she was kind of becoming homeless and they [student services] very quickly sorted it out for her within a couple of weeks. (T2)

If they need some counselling, then I would definitely guide them to the person, the student services or safeguarding officer. For instance, if they are undergoing some kind of abuse at home, that could be a barrier as well. So I will definitely support them by sending them to the, guiding them to go to the student services and they would definitely get help about it. (T2)

Learners experience several barriers when they go to the student services department for support, which suggests that safeguarding support is not accessible for ESOL learners. The interviews conducted demonstrated that they could only go to student services during class time as they are expected to be home before and after class (see Section 3.9). Additionally, they will not wish to disclose the issue (see T6's extract below), possibly if they are uncertain whether the information will remain confidential. Moreover, they may not feel comfortable speaking to a male support worker, as mentioned by T5. T5 highlights the importance of the gender of the support worker and privacy measures:

A year or two ago I took down a girl who I thought was, she was a very young wife and she slightly lost her way. She managed to antagonise her family. I thought that she was a, perhaps not physically in danger, she was getting into a sticky situation and I took her down. The only person down there, who could talk to her was a male guidance officer and what's more, there weren't proper screens and this was all in public and it really was useless. (T5)

Dealing with such alarming situations adds a level of psychological distress to teachers, as being exposed to learners' issues could affect the teachers' health.

Actually, this even affects some of the teachers at the weekend…I find it extremely distressing, dealing with their problems. (T5)

Since the teachers are adamant to support the ESOL learners to manage their barriers to education, they continue to think about the situations they are dealing with at work, during and even outside their workplace and working hours. Nevertheless, T6 confirms that some of the troubles experienced by ESOL learners are undisclosed.

The problem is that I'm maybe not as aware of the barriers, that they maybe they don't disclose them so much. (T6)

Health issues and depression demonstrate psychological intricacies, which could also act as barriers to women's education. This view links to Mencarini and Sironi's (2012) study, which implies that the women's psychological well-being is shaped by gender discrimination and their level of empowerment.

4.13 Aspirations

Despite the multiplicity of barriers and difficulties that ESOL learners experience whilst in education, they appear to have a range of aspirations. While some learners have aspirations for unskilled jobs, such as a dinner lady, cleaner (S1) or working in Subway as a sales assistant (S15) (see Figure 4.6), others have aspirations of a skilled career, such as an interpreter (S14).

Figure 4.6 S15's Pre-Interview Activity

Teaching, especially of children, has emerged as a common aspiration within the data retrieved from ESOL learners (S2, S5, S6, S9). Making gendered career choices is not only associated within Muslim cultures, as it is common for women to choose traditional, feminised professions such as teaching across different cultures. For example, Dunlap and Barth (2019) regard teaching as a female-dominated career which is a nurturing role that women

have acquired through their role as a homemaker. However, Kazi and Akhlaq's (2017) study of Muslim university male and female learners notes that gender was not a barrier to their career choices, though family and peers did have an influence on it. This corresponds to Basit's (1997a:143) study, which reiterates that parents as well as peers have an influence on Muslim girls' career aspirations, through 'persuasion' and 'negotiation' of shaping their multiple identities. Basit's (1997a) study refers to unmarried girls; however, the women in the present study are married and according to the findings, following marriage, the women's own families are no longer culturally able to influence their daughters, instead the daughters' husbands and in-laws take control. This indicates that once the girls enter the institution of marriage, their career choices are based upon the husbands and/ or in-laws' decisions. Furthermore, the girls in Basit's (1997a) study are from a working-class background, where people have unskilled jobs such as cleaners, yet they uphold middle class aspirations of skilled jobs, such as a teacher. Some learners in the current study also aspire to a teaching career, while two learners have a more creative ambition; for example, S10, who is aged 25 or under, aspires to become an artist or fashion designer. As demonstrated in Section 3.8, these are the only Arab learners in this study amongst the 16 learners interviewed. From the sixteen learner participants of the three participants who are youngest, two are Arab (S10 and S8), and one is Pakistani (S11). S10's ambitions are similar to those of S8, who is also aged 25 or under. However, S8 initially stated that she aspires to become a nurse; however, later in the interview she felt confident in sharing her true aspiration of becoming a fashion designer or makeup artist.

Figure 4.7 S8 and S10's Pre-Interview Activities
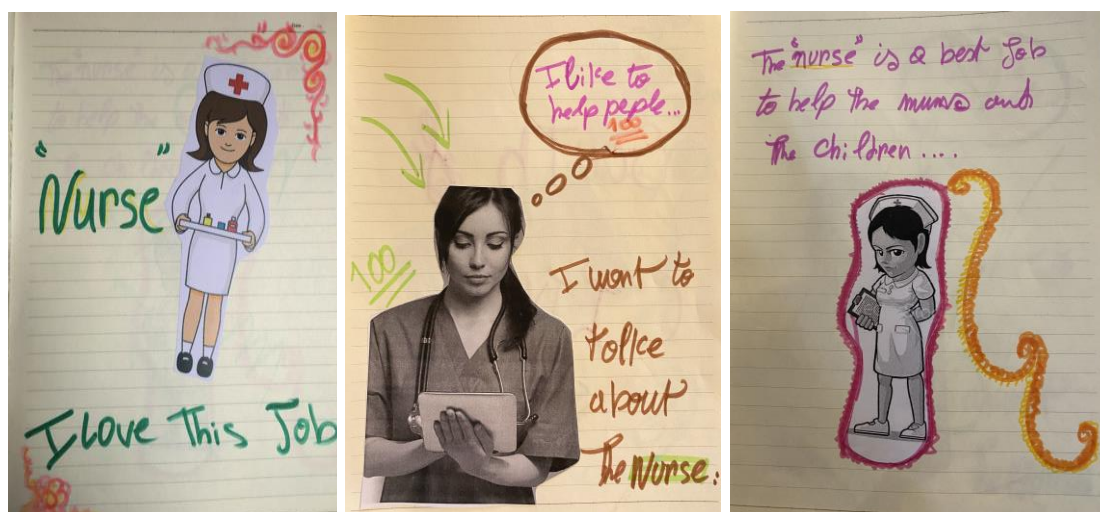
In relation to the above pre-interview activities, it can be noted that S8 and S10 downloaded images of white female nurses by chance, and there was no intention of specifically selecting white women.

S8 reveals a secret:

I'll tell you something secretly. I don't like the nurse too much. I like to be fashion cos I like fashion, make up, like that. But if I say my family that doesn't like that and they say to me it's not job to benefit you. So it's better I should take nurse. But I'll try my best to take this job. (S8)

S8 may be concealing her aspirations due to the influence of the power of her family, which may include her husband. Alternatively, perhaps she is afraid of her ambitions being shared amongst extended family members or her community. In addition, perhaps S8 and her family consider the professions of a fashion designer or makeup artist as not a respectful nor professional job; therefore, she is forced to choose to be a nurse, as it is a gender-stereotypical female occupation (Dunlap and Barth, 2019) which may be more acceptable to the family. Furthermore, in line with Bhatti's (1999) work, S8's aspirations may have not been culturally acceptable. Although S8 is from an Arab background, Bhatti's (1999) work is useful in understanding different cultural practices. Therefore, perhaps S8's family regards culture with high importance, and she did not want to be seen as moving away from her culture by revealing her true aspiration and disagreeing with her family's opinions and choices. The participants in Bhatti's (1999:49) study disapproved of the parents' choices of small matters such as 'clothes, fashion accessories and hairstyles', which are bound by their cultural belonging. Such culture-driven practices and expectations have resulted S8 to suppress her aspirations. Choosing a gendered career is also mentioned by an ESOL teacher, T1.

Some learners have very low confidence in themselves and so their aspirations are very low as well, so they take things one step at a time so they just want to come to college, see how it is. If they pass their exams, then, that's great. And some have really high aspirations of wanting to go to university and wanting to get jobs as nurses… (T1)

The data from six teachers and all learner participants shows that the ESOL learners have aspirations (Pre-interview activities of T2, T5, T7 T9 and interviews of T1, T2) and want to be role models to their children, which reflects the finding in Aston *et al.*'s study (2007).

My dream is that if I can speak English, I would like to do a teaching assistant course. (S16)

I always wonder about how she was so ambitious, and she really wanted to study. (T1)

I think that like any other learner, in fact they're much more hard working. So like any other learner they can achieve their aspirations. (T2)

When I look at an ESOL learner, I feel that they are full of dreams so if they insist they want to do something, it's because they dream big. (T2)

T2 reads out a poem in her interview which she has created to illustrate a female ESOL learner. The element of war resonates with Abdi's (2014) study

which documents Somali women's migration to the US following war, and Afshar's (2007) study which reinforces that while the men migrated to escape war, the women migrated as their dependants. The task of moving resulted in their identities becoming fluid. The extract implies that the women wish their previous identities to vanish (Mies, 2014), and be replaced with their dream identity.

> This particular poem, it just kind of sums up the experience. They're all from different, different parts of the world but they all dream of peace and love because they would have come from countries where there is war and conflict. When they come to UK, their first dream is that of a peaceful and subtle night. They want to be more, they want to be free from those born from the, from the memories of the past. They don't want that hatred anymore. They want to mix with people from different cultures and language, from different religions. It's kind of sunshine they are looking in their life. They want to put behind their past. They want a better future for themselves and their family. It kind of opens their heart to other people. Probably when they're here, in the beginning, they kind of don't open up but slowly as they start communicating with each other, they learn that people from other cultures and religion are just like them, they undergo the same experience in life, the same suffering, the same joys and they kind of are able to connect with other people. They connect their happiness and their tears to those people. They want to be, if they are in UK, it's for them the first step of achieving their dream. They have come back come from, not necessary all of them, some of them have come from a background which they want to leave behind so they can edge new dreams and achieve them. I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past. So they want to forget the history of the past. It's the future that they think, if not for them, at least for their future generation, their children, they want to have that future. They think that education can definitely provide a better future for them. So, learning English is a first step for them to have a better future, to achieve their dreams. (T2)

S18 also illustrates her hopes and dreams prior to migration:

Figure 4.8 S18s Pre interview Activity

"I was studying on a teaching course in my country because I wanted to become a teacher. I had to leave all that as my parents had done a lot for us siblings. Today my siblings are successful and are doing very well. One is a teacher, one is an engineer and one is an accountant in a computer company…but in my heart I have always had the desire to become something, but due to the children and the house I was unable to go out to do something and make time for myself. Then I began watching Urdu dramas, with English subtitles. This made a huge difference to my understanding of English."(P13)

Similar observations were made by Afzal *et al.* (2015), where some female ESOL learners had qualifications from their home countries, and sought to develop their skills and educate themselves further as they require English to gain employment. This contradicts early literature, which found that Muslim girls did not have higher career aspirations in comparison to their non-Muslim peers (Siann and Knox, 1992). In contrast, Basit's (1996) study shows Muslim girls having high aspirations. Although her research states the girls had role models, it does not state that the girls want to be role models to others. However, Hewett's (2015) analysis suggests the aspirations of Muslim girls are concealed by the expectations of the family and community. With reference specifically to Muslim women, Aston *et al.* (2007) contend that Muslim women do have aspirations, which may not have any significance, as their husbands will shape their lives by making the decisions about what they should and should not do (see Section 2.8). On the contrary, Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos' (2014) research on White female Finish managers found that their husbands were extremely supportive of their wives' careers, and that they could not have fulfilled their roles without the support of their spouses (see Section 2.8).

4.14 Communication

The findings confirm that the lack of motivation creates a barrier to their education. T2 reports:

> …it's a lack of confidence as well. To start with, when they come into ESOL, their confidence level is very low. As they progress slowly, they get the confidence. And one more thing I have noticed is also unemployment. Most of these learners are not employed. They're on benefits so there's a lot of pressure on them to attend classes just because they have to keep to the benefits. If they were employed, they would have realised the intrinsic value of education, rather than being pushed to do it for the sake of getting the benefits. (T2)

Some learners wish to be freed from some of their responsibilities to allow them to develop their self-identity. S3 reports her route to freedom and independence as a result of learning English. She is currently studying Entry Level 2 ESOL and through the skills she has acquired, she has become less reliant on others and become more autonomous:

> …at first I didn't even get out of the house. It was very difficult when I used to go the shops and the doctors. I needed to take someone with me. Now I can go anywhere on the bus, I have learnt how to drive and I work in a school so now I really like it and I can do it. When I need to answer a question I just need think about it but I can. It's a nice feeling. (S3)

On the other hand, S8, also an Entry 2 learner feels that she needs to learn more English, and only then she will become independent from her husband. Both extracts emphasise that education is key to their freedom, which is similarly highlighted in Khurshid's (2017) study.

> Wherever I need to go, he tells me to go by myself and I can go. This is his benefit and whatever job I had to do, he had to do and now I do it myself. If I need to go to the bank or anywhere, I can go myself. (S3)

> … after ESOL, if I learn ESOL, I don't need help too much. (S8)

The learners in this study were learning English for diverse reasons. This was either as a result of their current identity or their aspired identity. For example, this could be due to a need or desire to become less enmeshed in some of their cultural expectations and more immersed in the UK for social and employability reasons. The identities relate to their relationships through marriage. For instance, for a few participants who arrived at the UK via a spouse visa, British citizenship was their main reason to learn English (S1, S2). One participant was seeking to adopt and was learning English since it is the requirement of the adoption process (S4). Other participants, who were already mothers, reported a diverse range of reasons and benefits of studying ESOL. For example, while one mother expressed her desire to be able to support her children with their studies (S2), other mothers wanted to be able to communicate with the staff at their children's school (S5, S14, S15, S16).

> Sometimes I used to get confused in schools because I didn't understand the teachers. I used to be able to speak but it wasn't good. Now it's become a bit better. I understand about sentences, past and future. (S16)

S1 emphasised the importance of learning English to access public emergency services, a view similarly expressed by Ijaz and Abbas (2010) and Heenan (2002); yet these authors add that education enhances women's confidence.

> I can phone the ambulance. They ask what you need, the ambulance people. Which do you need, do you need the fire brigade? Do you

need the police? Do you need the ambulance? I can tell them. I can speak to them. (S1)

S8 expresses how learning English has helped her to communicate with others:

> Before ESOL I don't know how I go supermarket. I don't know how I buy something. I don't know how I send my message to people, if I need help or I need something. But after ESOL I'm trying slowly, slowly to send my message for people. Ask me people, comfortable with people how I can say. Yeh, that's it. I like ESOL. S8

The data illustrates the importance of learning English. This appears to be a significant characteristic of women. There may be different reasons for this aspiration than those held by their male counterparts. In relation to Bhopal's (2014:495) research on Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women, my findings support the importance of being able to communicate with the staff at their children's schools. Similar motivations for studying ESOL have been documented in further literature (Afzal *et al.*, 2015; Hashem and Aspinall, 2010). This includes studying ESOL for both instrumental and functional purposes. Furthermore, despite the family creating barriers, as evident from the findings, in most cases the woman is the person taking the children to school and appointments and she is the one who requires the skills to communicate with confidence. She understands and appreciates the importance of learning English as she is experiencing the situations in which it is needed and not the in-laws or husband. In support of this, Afzal *et al.* (2015) conclude that being proficient in the English language is a significant factor enabling integration into the British society. Furthermore, the learners' expressions highlight their desire to be integrated. However, Hashem and Aspinall (2010) argue that family commitments, childcare and time restraints are factors affecting all women's movement into education, despite their ethnicity. Yet it is noteworthy that their study fails to acknowledge cultural factors that could influence the level of support the women receive from their family.

S16's comment below reinforces Afzal *et al.*'s (2015) findings, which illustrate the motivations for women attending ESOL classes. These include learning English to be able to access medical services, supporting their children's schooling by being able to communicate with their teachers, and learning English to basically survive in a foreign country (Afzal *et al.*, 2015).

> My future planning is to have good speaking and listening. Benefits of this are for schools, doctors, shopping. If someone speaks to me, I can understand them. (S16)

T2 explains how ambitious the ESOL learners are:

> … most of the ESOL learners, they definitely have a very strong aim when they come here. It's not just learning English. So they want to put on a lot of hard work. Once they're able to communicate in English,

they definitely have a different level. They want to climb up the ladder. They want to be like the others. They look around them. They want to be able to speak and write good English. They want to get good training and they want to practise what they've learned so they can climb the ladder of success and take a good career. Most of them want to go to uni and get a good job. So success is definitely their aim. (T2)

Twelve out of sixteen learners in this study illustrate learning English to be able to use it beyond the household (S1-S9, S14-16). Furthermore, acquiring English in the cognitive sense could also become a struggle for women experiencing abuse as, although they attended English classes, they may not have had sufficient time outside of the class to practise their English and complete homework. One teacher perceived:

A lot of them struggle with doing homework, finding the time to do homework, which is unfortunate because I'm sure that if they did homework more, they would make more progress. (T6)

T6 acknowledges that completing homework is a challenge for ESOL learners. Although Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) study confirms that finding the time to learn English is a significant challenge, they do not specifically refer to time in accordance with their homework. Similarly, Basit's (1997a) study confirms that being bilingual has a positive impact on supporting their children's homework; yet she does not discuss any issues relating to their own homework. T6's comments imply that if the learners did have the time to complete their homework, they would successfully make progress, seemingly in their English skills. Yet T6 asserts that communicating in English itself is an initial barrier to enrolling on an ESOL course.

First and foremost, I think it's confidence or lack of confidence. When they first come into the college, what they think is, oh I can't speak English, how would I approach someone, so I need somebody's help. I can't even apply because I don't know how to read and write properly, or I don't know how to go through the Initial Assessment. So, it's kind of not being able to communicate, is the first barrier. T2

It is therefore essential for the students to have the confidence to make this first step towards education, as according to Basit (1997a), parents marry their daughters to a British national for upward mobility, which is similarly conveyed in T5's comment. Dale and Ahmed (2011) relate this to South Asian cultural practices whereby women migrate to the UK from impoverished families from their countries of birth, and rural areas with a cultural expectation of being the homemaker, which will better her economic status.

A move to the UK may be seen by families as a career move…(T5)

T5's comment aligns with Ijaz and Abbas's (2010:318) study, which states that education provides women with a 'security net' in the event of any financial hardship. This is evident in S3's reflections:

At first my husband did not allow me to work but now I want to work because he no longer has a job, and he does not give me any money to spend. I've now said that I want to work myself and be successful. (S3)

Similar to S3, S15's earlier statements propose that learning English would help her with future job opportunities. However, T5 makes a valid point that learning English may not be free for newly arrived immigrants and that childcare could be a barrier by the time the women are eligible for free English classes:

The rules have varied over the years, but usually new spouses have to wait 1 to 2 years before accessing free ESOL classes, by which time they have a baby and cannot learn English for years to come. (T5)

T5 also reports that state benefits being ceased could result in learners dropping out of the English course. The extract below illustrates an exceptional example of progress right from Pre-Entry to Level 3 (see Table 2.1). The learner progressed through six levels of ESOL, despite having children, yet her potentially successful educational journey ended once she was no longer eligible for state benefits. This is a unique example which demonstrates that it is possible to overcome barriers the learners may have had, and that not all Muslim learners experience the same barriers.

One of my best-ever ESOL students, a single mother who had been abandoned by her husband, moved from no formal education, through Pre-Entry, E1, E2, E3, Level One, GCSE and A level English, and reached Level 3 Childcare, the level she needed for employability. Half-way through the academic year, she had her benefit withdrawn because of the "when your youngest child reaches 12" rule, and she and her children became homeless. I have never seen her since. (T5)

ESOL learners develop skills and subsequent confidence to be able to help themselves and other family members in accessing medical services, for themselves (S3), the children (T4) and the mother-in-law (S4). These skills increase their confidence in, for example, speaking to staff at their children's school and managing their banking (S16). This supports the assertions of Cuban and Stromquist (2009) that formal education enhances the learners' self-esteem and efficacy. S13 expresses her feelings of happiness as a result of her progress in learning English:

Although I am really happy that I am learning English, now I am getting really better but when I came to college first time, I was really nervous and shy, but my teachers and other students were very nice and kind to me. This make me very confident. (S13)

Comments from S13 and T2 depict the female ESOL students feeling shy, due to a lack of confidence. However, for some it may just be a lack of motivation, as Basit (1997a) notes that the Muslim girls in her study are shy to speak to staff that are not their teacher who may be of a different culture and

not female (Basit, 1997a). In addition, congruent to Basit's (1997a:119) study, some of the learners in this study may be 'shy' due to the oppressive lives they live, as they spend a large amount of time in the house. Therefore, their silence is due to their modesty and reserved behaviour (Basit, 1997a), perhaps because they honour the elders in the family (Watkins, Razee, and Richters, 2012).

> I think once they're on the course, slowly they start gaining confidence. But the barriers still could be that they might not be able to communicate as well as they want to with their peers and their teachers. Or they might find that it is very difficult for them to adjust with people from other backgrounds, other cultures sometimes. Sometimes they might be very shy, even to talk and express their needs to the teacher or to their peers. (T2)

Similar to earlier comments made by S13, S3 also articulates the satisfaction of acquiring the English language.

> I have benefitted a lot as at first I didn't even get out of the house. It was very difficult when I used to go the shops and the doctors. I needed to take someone with me. Now I can go anywhere on the bus, I have learnt how to drive. I work in a school so now I really like it and I can do it. When I need to answer a question, I just need think about it but I can. It's a nice feeling. (S3)

S6 expresses her passion for learning English in her Pre-interview activity.

Figure 4.13 S6's Pre-Interview Activity
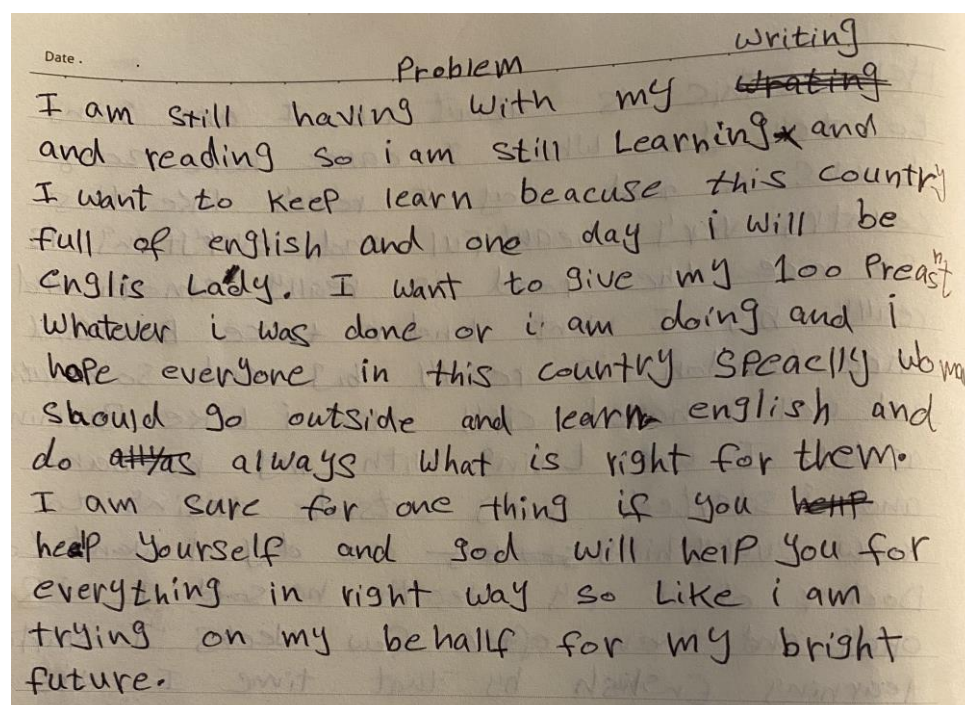
S1 feels confident about now being able to independently visit the doctors, and not rely on her husband, just as the women in Khurshid's (2017) study felt.

> My husband was ill and I used to go to the doctors and was a problem since I didn't know English. (S1)

> I can read a little, speak a little, I go to the hospital and can speak a little, I go to the doctors and I can take my prescription, I can order it, make an appointment…I can phone the ambulance. (S1)

Ijaz and Abbas's (2010:318) suggested that education was essential for women's 'independence, confidence, and personal development'. Their findings included similar examples of where the women need to use English, such as to be able to communicate with a postman. Furthermore, corresponding with Sultana (2015), the women's multiple identities are shifting as they take on additional roles such as attending ESOL classes, and the family, community, and educational environments have an influence on the shifting identities. For example, as aforementioned, attending ESOL classes has a positive influence on the learners, and this is illustrated through their enjoyment in attending and their desire to progress. More importantly, it has a positive influence on their well-being. Similarly, the white mature women in Heenan's (2002) study enjoyed learning and felt happier. Furthermore, congruent to the findings, Higton *et al*. (2019) note that women were motivated to attend ESOL classes, as they enjoyed forming new relationships and socialising, thus creating an alternative life that was outside of the home environment.

> … when I go out, I feel fresh. At home it is depressing. (S4)

> I had been in a lot of stress and depression but now I am a lot better. (S11)

> I like any day but I feel comfortable when I come here because no children, no headache. I love study and I love college, I love teacher, everything. (S10)

> …improve my English and meet friends. Mind becomes fresh (S15)

> Honestly, I don't like Saturdays. There are too many jobs to do on a Saturday. (S13)

Six out of the sixteen ESOL learners state that their favourite days of the week are those when they attend college. The above comments are very uplifting and illustrate freedom, perhaps because at college they were detached from the controlling home environment. It appears that once the learners move from their home life into college life, they form their own new identity as an individual. Their identity is changed and although they do not remove their responsibilities, perhaps they block them out or replace them with different responsibilities, that of being a learner. By attending college, the

learners have their own time in which they are free to be themselves and communicate with other learners and staff in the setting, which for them is a departure from the norm. Moreover, the data demonstrates that participation in education is the key to female ESOL learners' freedom. In particular, the learners have appreciated their voices being heard through participating in this research:

> I let them know that support is available from the college and that they can speak to me, but I think we are hindered by the fact that we don't have one to one time with our students. I think that quite often they are suffering. They're having lots of problems, but they don't get a chance to talk about it. (T1)

> I have dream and I'm try to do it my dream. And I wanna say something for my teacher, thank you for do interview with me and you listen to my dream. Thank you very much. S8

> … it felt nice having an interview with you. This is the first interview in my life with anyone... This is a good experience, it is because of college. S11

> It felt nice to talk to you about this research. S4

Figure 4.15 S13's Pre-Interview Activity
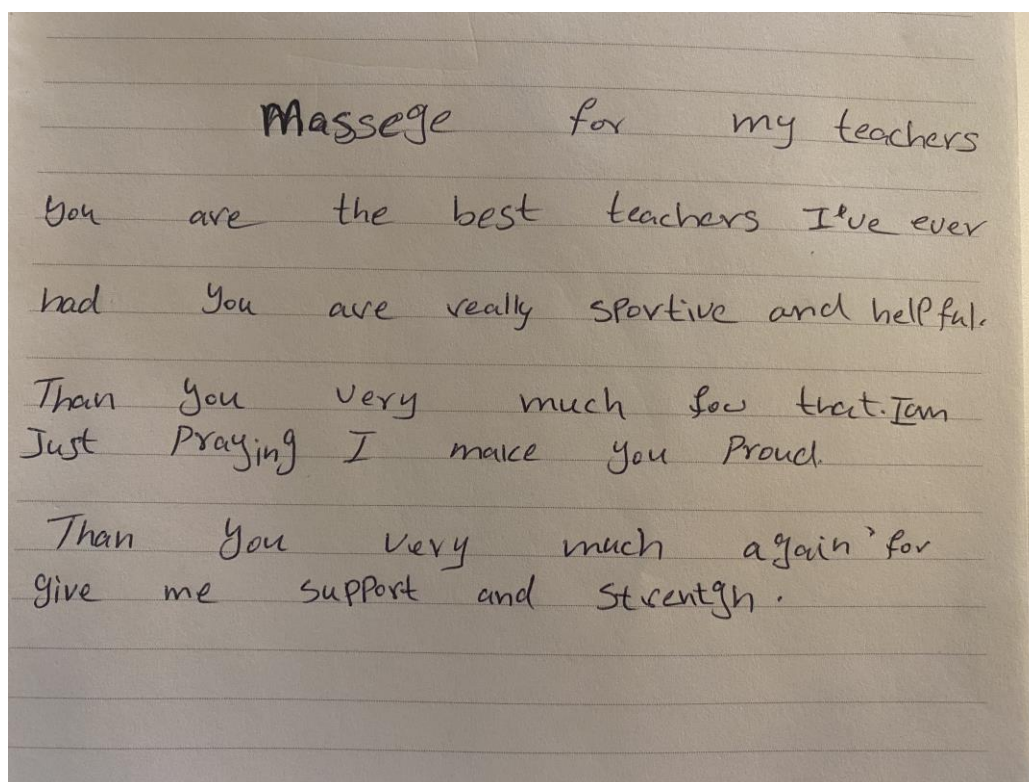
4.15 Summary

In this chapter, the qualitative data gathered through interviewing ESOL learners and teachers was presented and analysed, through a feminist lens, and in light of literature from Chapter 2, to address the three research questions of the study. Authors mentioned in this chapter were pertinent to discussing the findings and analysis of the data. The findings provide a detailed account of the barriers experienced by ESOL learners and the support available to them from the institution at which they study. Both teachers and learners provide examples of how the relationships formed through marriage create barriers to the Muslim women's education. The husband and in-laws have power and control over the women who live within a patriarchal society. This creates power imbalances amongst relationships in which superiority oppresses the women to become fearful and powerless. The ESOL learners appear to be highly ambitious; however, patriarchal forces and gendered cultural norms influence their career decisions. The ESOL learners appear to be exposed to many complex issues, such as forced marriage, unwanted pregnancies through rape in marriage and caring for disabled children. There is a strong existence of power and control emerging through each issue as a form of domestic abuse, through coercive control.

Alongside this, some experience housing and financial issues. By including the house chores, regularly attending ESOL classes, and completing homework, their lives become overburdened, which could lead to health issues such as depression. Although there is evidence that support is provided for the ESOL learners, it is uncertain whether the support is appropriate, considering the ESOL learners' level of confidence, the gender of the support worker and whether there are enough support workers due to the effect of funding cuts. The ESOL learners are attending college, despite the barriers they experience, as for them education is the key to their freedom from their normal routines and they therefore honour this opportunity to express their voices. The concepts emerged from the findings provide the illustration of the second phase of the conceptual framework (see Figure 3.5). The next chapter discusses these findings in depth with reference to relevant literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This study sought to investigate the perceived barriers to education experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners. Drawn from these and viewed predominantly through a feminist lens (see Section 3.1), this chapter provides a discussion of four concepts (coercive control, patriarchy, identity and power) which have emerged from the findings in Chapter 4. Within these concepts exist themes of relationships, expectations and communication. Although each concept and theme have their own distinctiveness, they also inter-relate with each other. By adopting an intersectional conceptual framework to analyse the data in the previous chapter, coercive control is outlined as one of the pertinent axes of the framework that are central to this study. The chapter unfolds through combining the barriers as perceived collectively by the learners and the teachers, with those that have emerged in the literature reviewed, to create phase four of the conceptual framework. From exploring the women's barriers to education through this conceptual framework, a new analytic space has emerged, revealing the relationships within a household of domination and oppression, which according to Severs (2016) relates to power relations. The chapter illustrates how these relationships are tensions that influence the learners' experiences whilst being in education, and how some of the relationships that act as a barrier to the women's choices also form into a cluster of opportunities for them. Furthermore, the chapter provides insights into the support available for the learners at the FE institution.

5.2 Coercive control

5.2.1 Relationships

The female Muslim ESOL learners demonstrate being coerced by the relationships formed between different members of the family following marriage (see Section 5.3.1). For example, the learners are controlled by the husband and/ or father-in-law, who are in a dominant position in the household; according to Mies (2014), this demonstrates that they live within a patriarchal setting. In addition, the mother-in-law has a superior position in the household, for some more superior than that of the ESOL learners' husband. The ESOL learners' lives are shaped by being controlled by these three relationships (see Section 4.5). These relationships control the learners' choice to study, whether they can complete a course, and whether they can progress in education and employment. They also control the learners' choice to drive and socialise (see Section 4.5). Although Basit (1997a) notes that Muslim girls' marriages could lead to their freedom, the experiences of the ESOL learners in the current study align more with Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study, which illustrates women being controlled by their husband and in-laws, who restrict their freedom. Controlling the women's choices demonstrates power

and coercive control, which is evidenced in various aspects of the ESOL learners' lives, placing them in an oppressed position. This aligns with literature from Mies (2014:6), who agrees that women are oppressed and exploited by men, who are the 'villains', and the women are the 'victims'. Since the women in the current research appear to be in subordinate positions, they attend ESOL classes to be free from this identity and gain autonomy (see Section 4.12). At the same time, attending ESOL classes provides them with safe places, where the women can seek safeguarding support for any abuse that they may experience in their relationships. While some women may not be aware of the support available to them, attending college could raise awareness and increase their confidence in approaching a member of staff for support.

The data from the current study reinforces Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) study, which states that ESOL learners feel isolated. Therefore, attending ESOL classes is providing them with the opportunity to build different relationships, that of friends, which the women enjoy (Higton *et al.*, 2019). For some, their only chance to socialise is whilst being at college (see Section 4.6), as according to Aston *et al.* (2007), some husbands may see having friends as a danger, since they describe the men as controlling and suspicious. In addition, Fontes (2015) states that the controlling men do not allow their wives to socialise with other women who are in inferior positions and refuse to obey their husbands, as following education they could become more confident and may no longer tolerate their restrictions. Furthermore, some participants in Abdi's (2014) study sought advice from a counsellor and achieved freedom. Correspondingly, perhaps the participants' husbands in the current study feel that if the friends are in an equal or superior position within their marital relationship, it could encourage the ESOL learner to compare and make choices by taking advice from friends or seek opportunities that may allow them to have some freedom from their current duties (see Section 2.9). Ultimately, this suggests that the wives' education is a threat to the husbands.

The learner participants appear to put on a façade when they come to college, as for some their choice to become educated imposes the possibilities of being exposed to physical or emotional violence by family members, which restricts their freedom (see Section 4.5). Yet their immigration status in the UK is impacting on the ability to seek protection from domestic violence (Devlin and McKenna, 2009), causing them stress (see Section 4.12) as they do not wish to be deported to their home country, which is often impoverished (Phizacklea, 1996; Bhatti, 1999). Nevertheless, considering the level of fear the learners experience from their relationships (see Section 4.11), they are resilient enough to attend ESOL classes to gain some control over their own lives. This demonstrates that despite the level of control, the learners attend college. Perhaps they are tired of being controlled, and seek a change in their life, and perhaps want to become superior within their relationships at home. Consequently, they break through the fear and achieve their aspirations of learning or improving their English. The learners enjoy attending college, during which time they form new relationships with their teachers (Higton *et al.*, 2019). Although control may exist in their new relationships, it may be to a different extent, or the women may find an alternative way to deal with the

control. Coercive control and restricting individuals from independence is a form of domestic violence and abuse (ONS, 2016; See Section 1.7.8). In line with this, McLaughlin (2009) points out that women experiencing violence also experience a range of barriers to education.

Similar to the data in my study, literature (for example, Leeuwen, 1993; Basit 1997a) notes that women are seen as inferior to men, whilst this study adds that the women also feel inferior to other women, such as the mother-in-law, depending on who is on the higher level of the family hierarchy. Hunnicutt (2009) explains that age is connected to such a hierarchy, where the younger individuals are perceived as inferior to older people. This aligns with the current study, as control emerges from family members higher in the hierarchy. One participant was afraid of being viewed negatively by her father-in-law and the community, had she been seen attending ESOL classes or seen driving, which she kept a secret (see Section 4.5). This demonstrates that despite the control, she continued to study, which shows motivation to improve her skills through education, whilst another learner's father-in-law controlled her choice to continue her education in the UK. The concept of patriarchy is useful in examining the relationships between the family members of the Muslim women. Used as a concept, it has provided understanding of the barriers created towards the Muslim women becoming independent, restricted access to education and any nuances created within the family structure. With reference to Walby's (1990) work, this allows identifying the oppression of women and domination of men in social structures. The social structures in this situation include those relationships that the father-in-law has with the members of the Muslim community.

5.2.2 Expectations

Some women in this study have placed their aspirations against the expectations of their controlling husband or in-laws in order to reach their goals (see Section 4.5), whilst one has received support from her husband (see Section 4.4). There are variations in how the husbands and in-laws influence the women based on cultural and gendered expectations. For instance, some have objections to studying at all, whilst some only allow the woman to study to a certain level and believe that to over-educate a woman could make her too wise and want to achieve more, which they and the community disagree with. In addition, some family members allow the woman to study but have no plan in place for homework to be completed as they are still expected to complete the same number of chores as before. Even though the women in this study enjoy studying, just as the women in Heenan's (2002) study do, it is combined with a burden of expected housework, which is similarly expressed as a burden in Basit's (1997a) study. Whilst the girls in Basit's (1997a) study escaped the burden of housework, the ESOL learners in the current study appear to have no form of escape. Yet since the women in this study really want to study, they make changes such as waking up earlier in order to manage the day (see Section 4.6). This suggests that the husbands and in-laws have retained their control of the women, though the women have managed a way around the expected chores.

The extreme level of control from the husband and the in-laws affects the women's health and has a psychological impact on them (see Section 4.11), causing health issues. However, some women feel that things will improve, though this may not be true, and things could stay the same until they age; for example, the learner who is aged between 41 and 55 is still expected to complete the in-laws' chores despite being poorly and immobile (see Section 4.4). This explains why some women in this study aspire for a change in their life, to gain independence and become empowered, which the women in Khurshid's (2017) study achieve by educating themselves. The learners who are or were married appeared to be controlled and emotionally dependent upon their husbands, as also observed by Lerner (1993), though they have illustrated challenging gendered norms through attending college. They challenge the control by the dominant members of family by taking on and coping with the extra workload. However, for some leaners, the controlling situation makes them feel suppressed and helpless (Parr, 1996); thus they appear to want to climb out of their existing situation, due to the myriad expectations that together wear a person down. These responsibilities situate the women so deeply in their culture that they fear escaping from it. Or it might be, as Mies (2014) states, that the women who do not have many social outlets (T5), feel that their problems are unique, and it is only when they come out of their confined spaces that they realise that inequality is a social issue which many women experience. This also highlights why learning English is an opportunity, as the women could be exposed to other women who are or were in a similar situation and discuss how they escaped from the 'ill treatment' of men (Mies, 2014).

5.2.3 Communication

Most learner participants in this study enjoy being at college and communicating with friends and teachers, while for some it is the best time of their week (S3; S5). Taking time out for oneself could encourage wellbeing and avoid depression, which many ESOL learners experience (see Section 4.6). The women's ill health is driven by the level of control they experience. For example, preventing women from gaining their aspired identity is a form of control (see Section 2.10). For some women, restrictions from their aspired career due to family responsibilities (see Section 4.7) affect their health (see Section 4.11). In addition, depression caused by the mundane domestic chores (see Section 4.14) has pushed some women to aspire to do something different (see Section 4.7). Consequently, the women appear to see their life in a 'prison', due to the lack of freedom, suggesting the impact it is having on them (Basit, 1997a:66). Therefore, they attend college to escape home life, for social reasons and to learn social skills, which according to Basit (1997a) enables them to adjust their identities in different contexts, though through these interactions they learn to manage more things, such as learn to communicate in English. Yet, those that are not eligible to attend free ESOL courses, could experience isolation, and affect their mental wellbeing (Isserlis, 2000). Isolation is also experienced by women who are struggling to maintain their cultural values and passing these to their children (Bhatti, 1999).

Basit (1997a) explains that the girls' social choices are shaped by their parents, whilst the current study illustrates that women's choices are shaped by the husband and his family. The only difference is that the girls in Basit's (1997a) study are not allowed to go out on their own in the evening and are expected to spend their free time at home, while the women in the study have no free time. Basit's (1997a) study states that prior to marriage the girls cook at their leisure, whilst the current study confirms that following marriage it becomes a chore. Aston *et al.* (2007) explains that parental influence on unmarried women is by older family members who control their social life, by asking where it is spent, and whether it could be spent indoors instead of outdoors. The reason for this is that the parents, husbands, and the community are assured that the women are socialising in 'safe settings' which limits their contact with strangers (Aston *et al.*, 2007: 74), whereas in this study, despite the men having control over their wives, the women's aspirations have endeavoured them to find a solution to study English. For example, the ESOL learners have managed to achieve support from the husbands, in situations when the purpose of being educated is to gain citizenship (see Section 4.3). It is beneficial for the husband if the wife gains British citizenship as it would allow her permanent UK residency (Woodward, 2004), and a British identity (see Section 4.3). In addition, through the education and interactions with other individuals at college, in preparation for the citizenship test, she may acquire more knowledge about her rights before and after gaining citizenship. In line with Abdi's (2014) study this could give her more bargaining power, enabling her to take control of her life. Furthermore, the current study confirms that there is support available for female ESOL learners which in previous years has helped women in controlling situations to be safeguarded (4.11). However, non-ESOL learners are able to access the support more easily than ESOL learners, due to the communication barrier that ESOL learners experience.

5.3 Patriarchy

5.3.1 Relationships

The insights into the complex lives of the ESOL learners demonstrates that the women struggle to manage living in a patriarchal society where their identity of a wife brings several expectations by their familial relationships (see Section 4.11). The expectations from the relationships cause a barrier to their education because of the time taken in completing the myriad of house chores due to their role of a homemaker (see Section 4.2). However, Basit (1997a) explains that although in many societies, role expectations are different, they remain gendered based, and domestic inequality is evident within most cultures even before marriage (Basit, 1997a). Aston *et al.* (2007) adds that the females in patriarchal societies are responsible for the general housework, whilst according to Basit (1997a) and Cerrato and Cifre (2018), the males take care of any 'male domestic tasks', including taking out the weekly household bins and DIY tasks in the house. However, equality in completing chores between husbands and among other family members could help ease the burden. In some situations, the husband and in-laws have

the same control, yet it is not used in the same way. For example, although, they allow the women to attend college, they may not allow progression (T1), or progression to a field that may not be culturally accepted (see Section 4.13). In terms of progression, Basit (1997a) similarly documents that the female Muslim girls in her study were not allowed to progress to FE as they were expected to marry as soon as they completed compulsory education. Reasons for not being permitted to study could be the interpretation of Muslim womanhood in their particular families. In addition, the class and socio-economic background could explain the underpinning reasons for parents/ husband/ families not allowing women to progress. At the same time not having the choice to progress in education indicates oppression and being in a subordinate position in the household or society.

The learners in this study have shown patriarchal bargaining (Abdi, 2014) and found a route to education, which for some is their route to freedom from being controlled, whilst for others it is simply freedom from the routine gendered chores (see Section 4.5). This suggests that they have distinctive reasons to be free. For example, some learners are tired of the overburdened lifestyle (Brah and Shaw,1992; Parr, 1996; Darby, Farooqi, and Lai, 2016), whilst others appreciate a change from their lifestyle, where they can accomplish a little time away from their familial relationships. Some of the girls in Basit's (1997a) study also aspired to secure freedom; however, at the same time they justified that this could well lead to trouble. Therefore, they accepted the limited freedom they experience, whilst Mirza (1992) states that the level of freedom of girls matched with that also experienced by their parents. In line with Mirza's observations, it could be argued that mothers-in-law expect the daughters-in-law to have the same level of freedom as them. However, Basit (1997a) explains that this responsibility of protection is only until the girl is married, which then raises questions around who protects them after marriage, and whether they are even protected at all, or exploited, as evident in some of the narratives in the current study (see Section 4.11). Yet, the Cinderella learner (see Figure 4.2) was not protected by her parents before marriage; instead, she was suppressed, which features intricacies of power from the relationships she was involved in, which controlled her according to the expectation of being a female gender in a patriarchal way of life. Yet one of the parents interviewed in Basit's (1997a) study reported that following marriage girls could live their lives as they desire, which is rather naïve, as the current study does not take this view. Instead, the current study offers a more complex picture of the women's lives and choices following marriage (see Section 4.13). This view is supported by Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study in which prior to marriage, the girls saw marriage as a route to independence; however, instead some lost their independence through marriage since the control had shifted from one set of relationships (with the parents) to another (with the husband). Combining the information from literature and data from this study, it confirms that freedom is not guaranteed for the women either before or after marriage. Although before marriage, the girls' freedom is constrained by control from the parents and the influence of the community, following marriage the women's freedom is controlled by the in-laws and the impact of the community. Other elements that control the women are the level of responsibilities, which could also be influenced by the size of the family,

and whether it is a nuclear or three-generational family within one household. Nevertheless, the girls manage to balance between the level of freedom and control through the creation of their individual identities (Basit, 1997a), just as the ESOL learners demonstrate.

Whilst Basit (1997a) notes that instead of gaining support for doing something additional such as study, the girls are forced to feel guilty even though they in practice spend more time on chores than the men. They also try hard not to inconvenience the husband (Basit, 1997a), which is similarly evident in this study, though this study adds that the women also do not want to inconvenience the in-laws. Therefore, acquiring a limited academic education is perhaps corresponding with a patriarchal community, as indicated by Afzal (2015) that within patriarchal communities, the women have the role of a homemaker, in which there is perceived to be a lesser need for education.

5.3.2 Expectations

Although the women in the study are allowed to gain education, as also stated by Ahmad (2001) and Heenan (2002), at the same time they are expected to prioritise their primary role as a homemaker. It is possible that adhering to cultural expectations of a Muslim wife places the learners under pressure in trying to balance the chores alongside attending and engaging in education. Although literature indicates that the domestic responsibilities are influenced by the family's and community's expectations, level of education and class, these are changing through the generations, creating a balance in domestic responsibilities (Aston *et al.*, 2007). This study shows that the daily chores are prioritised over the wife's education. In the patriarchal way of living, being exposed to gendered roles appears as the norm for these women; thus, they accept the domestic divisions in the household and serve meals to the husband and prepare their clothes (see Section 4.3). Therefore, they maintain cultural practices, traditions and values from their country of origin (Werbner 1990; Bhatti, 1999). Relocating to a new country has meant that while they may negotiate other cultural-specific activities, such as education, they continue cultural roles of being a homemaker. However, the new social norms and struggles between the cultures could result in the women feeling isolated (Bhatti, 1999).

The women may not be physically or verbally forced to complete the chores; instead, they are persuaded through long-held cultural beliefs of defined gendered roles. Therefore, the women continue to remain in what could be perceived as inferior tasks and positions, as similarly expressed by Basit (1997a), and do as they are expected, though they are not happy to do so and feel stressed (see Section 4.10). Although Basit (1997a) notes that completing house chores as well as looking after the children shows love to the family and are a method to gain love in return, the findings from this study do not evidence these views. Instead, this study portrays that completing the domestic chores is a cultural expectation, a view similarly expressed by Parr (1996). As the women are living within a patriarchal community, they feel obliged to take on more responsibilities than the men (see Section 4.4). Where there is an expectancy for the women in the current study to do most

of the chores, this aligns with Green *et al.*'s (2004) comments around women being expected to complete most of the domestic chores and largely responsible for childcare. These culturally embedded attitudes are similarly expressed by Raynolds and Birdwell's study (2015) (see Section 2.11); however, the literature sought illustrates that such gendered roles are not specific to Muslims as they are also practised by other cultural groups (see for example, Parr, 1996; Heenan, 2002; Watkins, Razee, and Richters, 2012).

The learners' lifestyle demonstrates that the women are the main caregivers. Underpinning cultural traditions and expectations have created an unfair balance in the responsibility for childcare, which resonates with McKie *et al.*'s (1999) comments that men are in a more powerful position than the woman in the family hierarchy. Perhaps where the expected roles of the women change, the man becomes less powerful; alternatively, this could make him more powerful by learning a new skill of looking after the children. Furthermore, since the findings show that the learners prefer the days that they are in college, this could suggest that they are relieved from some of the repetitiveness of chores, which aligns with Basit's (1997a) comments on tasks being repetitive. Mencarini and Sironi (2012) confirm that repetitive housework is associated with women becoming depressed. Glass and Fujimoto (1994) further add that women become depressed when being overloaded with housework, due to the time involved, leaving little time for leisure activities in which they could lessen the stress. Yet, according to Deem (1986) time is not only the factor as economic factors could also influence one's participation in leisure activities. The element of time however could relate to age, as the older the women, the more time she is likely to have for leisure. However, the type of leisure (indoor or outdoor) could be based on the women's class and income.

The lack of time is expressed as a significant factor in previous research (Brah and Shaw,1992; Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008; Voicu, Voicu, and Strapcova, 2009; Darby, Farooqi, and Lai, 2016), whilst the current research adds to this by confirming that it is the time and energy which collectively make the chores difficult to manage since some learners state that they feel tired with the number of tasks they are responsible for completing. Feeling tired is similarly articulated in previous research (Parr, 1996; Darby, Farooqi, and Lai, 2016), whilst Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) research goes a step further by explaining that feeling tired has a negative impact on the women's learning, health and attendance. Despite feeling tired, the women in the current study cope with being overwhelmed with the expectations of living within a patriarchal community, which is apparent from those who continue to study, whilst some participants in Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) study articulate being overwhelmed by being in the classroom environment, or the enrolment process. Although some women dropped out because of the overwhelming experience, others continued to study with the motive of no longer feeling 'invisible' in society, due to the lack of English skills (Darby, Farooqi, and Lai, 2016:4). This equally relates to the women in the current study.

5.3.3 Communication

Statistics presenting gender inequality by Raynolds and Birdwell (2015) of more women being economically inactive due to caring for the family and looking after the home (see Section 1.3), and more Muslim men in education than women, raise questions of whether the women wish to be employed and have a career, or whether they prefer to be homemakers and do not aspire to work. It is also a concern in terms of whether the level of participation in employment is so low due to the lack of English skills, and whether their increased participation in education would narrow the gap between women and men in employment across all ethnic groups, and specifically within the Muslim population. Based on the findings, it is evident that the ESOL learners aspire to be more empowered through communicating in English, which aligns with Cuban and Stromquist's (2009) notion of formal education leading to empowerment. In order to achieve this, they initiate methods to move beyond their current identities and boundaries, in which they perceive a sense of fear and a sense of entrapment, to become more independent (see Section 4.12). However, arguably, had they not moved to the UK, to a more Western culture, their original culture would have remained acceptable for them, which includes living in a patriarchal culture and accepting the responsibility of providing for the husband and his family. This view is based on Mencarini and Sironi's (2012) research, which confirms that if the woman lives in a country where completing all the domestic household chores is seen as the norm and fair, it will not have an impact on their well-being and happiness, whilst women with a large domestic responsibility in a country with more egalitarian lifestyles would feel depressed, as equality in domestic chores would be perceived as the norm.

While the term 'Cinderella' is used in the current study to refer to a particular learner, Basit (1997a) also uses that term for girls who have many responsibilities in the house. Basit (1997a) refers to the 'Cinderella Figure' (see Figure 4.2) as training towards performing as a good housewife. The story of Cinderella reflects on the ESOL learners, as they are also controlled by members of the family higher in the hierarchy (Aston *et al.*, 2007) and are therefore powerless in controlling their own time (Su and Xue, 2010) to manage studying without feeling stressed. The 'Cinderella' learner in the current study did not attend school; however, Basit (1997a) explains that children have low attendance and extended holidays to their country of origin due to parents not understanding the value of education. Moreover, through observations during my teaching, I have also seen low performing learners with high absence rates, as noted by Basit (1997a), though this is often to take children to appointments, as the parents may not be able to communicate with the medical staff, or other family commitments (see Section 4.7). Furthermore, Aston *et al.* (2007) confirm that it is usually the eldest sibling's responsibility to care for the family members. This is also evident in Pattar's (2009) study, as noted in Section 2.10, which mentions the older siblings being predominantly responsible for going to the doctors with the mother to communicate for them. However, it is not known whether the learner mentioned by T5 was the eldest sibling. A further interesting point is that the Cinderella character is not an immigrant and is British born; therefore,

she should not be attending ESOL classes, as these are designed for non-native speakers. However, as evident in the text she produced (see Figure 4.2), her English communication skills are weak since she was taken out of school. Her situation appears to align with findings in earlier scholarship, where the Cinderella character was sealed away from the community and possible opportunities (Su and Xue, 2010), although the opportunities are not specified.

5.4 Identity

5.4.1 Relationships

The ESOL learners are from diverse ethnic groups (see Table 2), though all are Muslim. Therefore, the focus of this study is on their Muslim identity. Basit (1997a) confirms that religion has a significant role in the lives of many British Asians, which models and leads their life accordingly. The findings and analysis in the previous chapter portray the lives of ESOL learners, struggling to gain education through a number of complex barriers, which aligns to Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) study. Yet prior to marriage, the female ESOL learners appear to have had little idea how life would be different following marriage, and instead, as noted by Basit (1997a), believed that they will become educated and work whilst living with their parents, and continue with their career once married; thus they had different expectations as they were living with different relations at that point, which were relations within their parents' households. Following marriage in their own country to a British Muslim male, the ESOL learners' identity evolves to being a wife. During this process, their identity, according to Basit (1997a:6), gets 'torn apart…disintegrates…and created anew'. Multiple relationships are formed through their marriage, as the women arrive in this country and are expected to have diverse roles and responsibilities, and are assigned to labels such as daughter-in-law, sister-in-law, and beyond (see Table 4.1). Basit (1997a) notes that the formation of their identity occurred during transitions of their relationships, and through the tedious task of migration, in which their identity was redefined. Literature states that the ESOL learners' identities evolve (Beijaard, Meijer, and Verloop, 2004), to develop a 'unique' identity (Basit, 1997a:66). The women in the current study demonstrate that their identity is fostered through exposure to different cultures and experiences, which corroborates with the work of Woodward (2004).

As evidenced in the data collected (see Section 4.5), once a person moves from being single to married, arguably they no longer have total control over their aspirations, as they are then exposed to a number of responsibilities that are culturally expected of the wife (see Section 5.4.2). The responsibilities arise from relationships within the household. For example, through the relationship with the husband, other relationships and identities are formed, that of being a daughter-in-law, which develops a relationship with the father-in-law and the mother-in-law, and beyond. Such relationships also result in responsibilities of caring for sick members of the family (the in-law's family), and/or caring for disabled children (see Section 4.6). For some women, their

identity has further evolved since having children, from which point they develop an additional role as a mother.

The data evidences that the learners' role in the marriage is given great importance (see Table 4.1), which is similarly stated in Basit's (1996) study. As also noted by Basit (1997a), this demonstrates that family values shape their aspirations. While the women are actively attending ESOL classes, their parenting responsibilities are acting as a barrier. From a feminist yet a non-Muslim perspective, McLaughlin (2009:8), also researching in the same geographical region, points out that the inadequacy of childcare is distinctly the largest barrier preventing women from committing to all aspects of life including education. However, the data from the current study shows that family members other than the ESOL learners' own children also need to be cared for, which corresponds with Heenan's (2002) stating that mainly women are the carers for children and the elderly, as well as responsible for most of the domestic chores, and if the woman decides to become educated then it is her responsibility to negotiate the burden of education as well as family commitments. This is in line with Green *et al.*'s (2014) study of White British women, which concludes that childcare and caring responsibilities are the main barriers to both education and career progression. Yet for some, caring responsibilities include caring for elderly relatives, which is a barrier to the ESOL women's education. However, childcare responsibilities also include caring for disabled children (Parr, 1996). Disabled children are more common amongst Muslim families who have first cousin marriages (Akrami and Osati, 2007). Such marriages are arranged to avoid divorce (Basit, 1997a), and to become familiar with the family background to maintain connections with the extensive family in case they need to intervene if any issues within the marriage arise, as they themselves have had an arranged marriage (Basit, 1997a).

Basit (1997a) asserts that gender equality is a significant issue to deal with as it links to the women's identity in terms of developing aspirations. From being accustomed to a male dominant society in their home country, when the women arrive in the UK, they are then exposed to a cultural shift towards equality and different cultural ways of living. Based on the findings about the ESOL learners' aspirations, they observe other women in employment (see Section 4.7); thus, they may conceivably observe other Muslims in the community, which could open a window for them to compare themselves to other women in the UK. For instance, they may compare their lifestyle, including relationships, whether other women live with their in-laws or not and if they are still under their power, or are independent in their own house just living with their husband. The institution of marriage cannot be overlooked as it influences the individual's complete life and moulds the person's current experiences as well as potential aspirations. These include aspirations that are educational, employment related or related to their social desires (Basit, 1997a).

Gender appears to have a significant influence on the women's career choices (Kazi and Akhlaq, 2017). This aligns with the multiple identities and daily responsibilities of female learners such as being the caregiver and

maintaining a family, which has an impact on their employment choices and opportunities (Green *et al.*, 2004). However, according to Basit (1997a) religion has an impact on women's career choices. Having a career is permissible in Islam; however, the cultural expectation is for the women to have the ability to manage both careers at the same time, as being the homemaker is also a career, though an unpaid career (Basit, 1997a). Marriage and career involve a lot of juggling between both, so the women need to balance them. In addition, the stereotyped expectations have a negative impact on their education as although the girls' parents in Basit's (1997a) study want them to succeed, they are held back by cultural attitudes that females should only study till they marry.

5.4.2 Expectations

Basit (1997a) asserts that identity is shaped through how the adolescent girls' parents see them, and a similar concept can be applied to this study, to confirm that the women's identity is shaped by how the husband and his family sees the women, and the cultural and gendered expectations that they have of them. This research shows that one woman is discreet about her true aspirations to be an artist or a fashion designer (see Section 4.7), as these careers may not be culturally expected, or according to Dunlap and Barth (2019), these are not traditional female dominated careers. This demonstrates that she has developed multiple dimensions of her identity by witnessing and modelling other career-oriented women. Basit (1996) and Flynn *et al.*'s (2011) comments on these multiple identities relate to emulating of role models, which is also evident in the ESOL learners' interviews, and pre-interview activities which illustrate their role models, for example that of a nurse (see Figure 4.7). Therefore, by witnessing other women in careers, they aspire to gain a similar identity; this is a consideration based on the findings. In order to achieve this aspiration, they have taken the initial step of enrolling onto an ESOL course. However, attending ESOL classes proves very challenging for all the women at all stages of the course due to multiple intersecting barriers. As also highlighted by McLaughlin (2009), these barriers are integrally linked to each other. Even though they aspire for gendered occupations such as a nurse or a teacher, this is their motivation. They have a drive to gain education and do things they may not have been able to do before (see Section 4.12). This supports Heenan's (2002) comments, which state that women often study with the purpose of fulfilling their academic potential as opposed to studying for the purpose of entering the workforce. Yet some women do aspire to enter employment with the purpose of achieving freedom from their current identities (Dale *et al.*, 2002).

Due to the immense level of control through the barriers to accessing education, women who receive no or insufficient support from their male counterparts become emancipated from their initial identity and find a way to access education by navigating around the barriers. In situations where the level of equality remains the same, the learners have found a route to navigate around the barriers for the freedom to learn English whilst in a few situations, the barriers of being a wife have been removed, as the women only accessed education following their divorce. In line with Watkins, Razee, and

Richters' (2012) study, the current research confirms that women are more tied up with expected domestic chores whilst being married than following a divorce. This aligns with Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes' (2008) work, where power relations were removed. This transition from being married to divorced would reduce the amount of time spent on domestic chores (Abdi, 2014). Women accessing education after divorce is presented in Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) study. This portrays a construction of their identities; for instance, being divorced eliminates the barrier, and allows a reconstruction of their identities when they have achieved the freedom to access education. However, once a barrier, such as those listed at the beginning of this chapter, is removed, it is possible that others could arise which would then also need to be removed.

Data from the teachers' interviews provides examples of women feeling inferior due to the inequalities in their marriage. For example, T7's pre-interview activity states that one of the barriers to the learners is the families' diverse cultural expectations of girls and boys. In addition, the learners perceive their responsibilities as barriers to their education (for example see Section 4.3). This perception is perhaps created through cultural heritage, which has trained their mind to think that chores are a barrier. Perhaps the Muslim women lack mental resilience to manage their time effectively, in order to fit in all their roles and responsibilities, as well as attend ESOL classes, without feeling stressed (see Section 4.10). For example, one participant in Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study hired a domestic cleaner in order to balance work and home life, as she felt that it was culturally unacceptable for her husband to help her with the chores.

While some of the women in the study live within close-knit extended families, others have unexpected visits from relatives (see Section 4.7). However, since the women aim to attend their ESOL classes, attending to the visitors becomes challenging and can prove to be stressful, because they have many chores to complete and childcare responsibilities. However, in this context, strong parallels can be drawn with Basit's (1997a) work as she explains that South Asian communities often live within hierarchical structures and there are strong family ties, with solid family loyalty. This suggests that the family visiting each other shows 'affection' (Basit, 1997a:47). However, the visitors clearly fail to acknowledge the level of burden it creates on the women, who have multiple responsibilities other than to attend to them. In addition to their daily responsibilities, regular phone contact with family is required, including with family in their home country (see Section 4.7). Basit (1997a:32) adds that contact with extended family is maintained for the purpose of familiarising their children with the 'religion, history, culture and language', to conserve their 'distinctive' identity. Nevertheless, since the women in the current study attend ESOL classes, which alone is challenging to manage, amongst their other responsibilities, to also maintain ties with extended families could increase their burden. McLaughlin (2009) acknowledges the gendered expectations of women's domestic roles and how large their workload is. She argues that for women who are managing house chores as well as childcare, undertaking a course is too much of a burden.

As the women move away from their current culture and see other cultural practices, their identity shifts as well as their thinking, and they experience and perhaps observe different dimensions of power. This has been observed in the comments made by learners who are divorced, as their identity has shifted. Additionally, it is observed amongst the married women, as they talk about how they saw life differently before they started learning ESOL, that they describe being confused in situations in which they had limited English skills to communicate. In addition, they recognise their inequality with males and are aware of the parallels that exist across cultures. This demonstrates a shift in the learners' conditions and their thinking, which applies to learners in this study as they have observed the changes. Similarly, the teachers in Basit's (1997) study see being westernised as progressing in life. Learning will provide knowledge and not necessarily make the women become westernised, without encouraging them to be like the majority groups. However, ESOL learners observing other women who are educated, independent, can speak English or drive notice a cultural shift. Nevertheless, it is possible that even for women who live in a relationship within which both partners share domestic responsibilities, being free from one cultural expectation could lead to being tied to other cultural norms and systems of living, to which they would then need to adjust. Hence this may result in further barriers to their education, which would need overcoming.

5.4.3 Communication

Most learners had the identity of a mother. However, one learner (S4) was not a mother, and with the purpose of adopting a child, she enrolled onto an ESOL course and gained the identity of a learner, since learning English was a requirement for the adoption process (see Section 4.14). Her situation of not being able to have children led to an opportunity for her to learn English. At this point, she conformed to a new identity, of a learner, whilst maintaining her existing identities, which reflects Woodward's (2004) work confirming that identity changes in different social structures and that individuals can have other identities whilst keeping their original identities. As per Woodward's (2004) comments, this learner kept the identity of a wife as she acquired the new identity of a learner.

The women manage what is happening in their marriage institution by breaking down the barriers for themselves. This provides them with a self-identity and social structure, to have a life or sense of what it is like outside of a marriage institution, and a life in which they can support their children. The women want to make a beneficial move so that their children are more informed and can belong to society. This would allow them to have the power and control to educate the following generation (Basit, 1997a). In order to do so, they want to study to understand the school system (Basit, 1997a). Although the women in this study lack knowledge, they are supportive of their children's education. However, whilst the participants in Hashem and Aspinall (2010) and Pattar's (2009) studies aspire to communicate in English to support their children's educational development, this was not mentioned by the participants in the current study.

The female Muslim ESOL learners are studying English for diverse reasons (see Section 4.14). Whilst Afzal (2015) states that women mainly study ESOL to receive citizenship, the current study shows that some women are learning English to gain citizenship, providing them with an additional identity of a British citizen, and as noted by Darby, Farooqi, and Lai (2016) they are learning to feel empowered and engage in British society. However, those that are learning English citizenship aspire to achieve more than just the citizenship (see Section 4.4), though they may be afraid to present their aspirations due to being held back by cultural attitudes (Darby, Farooqi, and Lai, 2016). Others are gaining educational experiences, which are beneficial for them to live a more independent life, to gain English language skills to communicate to people beyond the home such as medical services (Aston *et al.*, 2007; Afzal *et al.*, 2015; Darby, Farooqi, and Lai, 2016; Khurshid, 2017). Furthermore, some learners are seeking to acquire sufficient language skills to be able to shape their child/children's lives by communicating with staff at their schools, improving social interaction and broadening their social field (see Section 4.6), whilst some want to gain confidence to access public services (see Section 4.4). Regardless of the multiple reasons to learn English, the findings indicate that all learners claim dissatisfaction with their current identity and therefore attend ESOL classes. This is perhaps because immigrants generally tend to be more aspirational in comparison to other individuals from a similar heritage, since the main reason they migrate is for upward mobility (Basit, 1997a). Yet some migrate from war torn countries or as wives of workers (Phizacklea, 1996). Nonetheless, through migration they escape from not only poverty but also from oppression led from oppressive patriarchal cultures but are then tied into unhappy marriage upon their arrival to Britain (Phizacklea, 1996:322).

Through negotiation, the women in this study have won greater freedom as a result of the experience of attending college, just as the girls in Basit's (1997a) study achieved more freedom as a result of accessing education. Furthermore, some women in the current study have developed a more powerful position in their marital relationships. For example, if they gain citizenship they will have more rights in the UK. If these are unknown to them, they will learn these during the citizenship course. The current UK government requires applicants to achieve an Entry Level 3 Speaking and Listening qualification in order to gain citizenship (see Section 2.2), which has provided an opportunity for the women to enter education, leave the house and integrate with other individuals, such as the staff employed within the organisations delivering the citizenship courses, and other women from similar and different cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, the experience of learning could motivate the women to enter employment (see Section 4.9).

Darby, Farooqi, and Lai (2016) refers to having low literacy skills as a practical barrier to education. Moreover, being in education provides women with the opportunity to gain skills to support their children with their homework (Aston *et al.*, 2007; Darby, Farooqi, and Lai, 2016; Higton *et al.*, 2019). However, although the women in this study are currently helping their children with their homework as part of their daily routine, they do not state that learning English would further support this. Nevertheless, according to Basit

(1997a), Muslim girls were not supported by their parents with homework, nor did the parents check their homework due to their lack of literacy skills. Instead, the children asked their older siblings for help (Basit, 1997a; Aston *et al.*, 2007). In terms of the women in the current study, having the responsibility of helping with children's homework is yet another task to fit in during the course of the day, although this task is something they may do with happiness and not see it as a chore.

5.5 Power

5.5.1 Relationships

The data demonstrates that some of the barriers identified by the learners and teachers are related to power dynamics (see Section 2.6) within the family, such as with the mother, husband, and in-laws, whereas others are deep-rooted within the patriarchal culture of the ESOL learners and their social circles (see Section 4.4). Regardless of the power dynamics amongst the family members, it is evident that they have successfully negotiated their identity and are flexible in how they manage their daily routines in order to be in education. Similar concepts emerge in Basit's (1997a) study, in which the Muslim girls' identities are portrayed as spiral and flexible. Furthermore, the findings in this study demonstrate that due to the ESOL learners' stressful lifestyles, they do not want to remain within the rules and inferior positions of their current identity, such as being a wife or a daughter-in-law (see Section 4.3). Therefore, they aspire to move beyond their current situations. Moving from being in an oppressed situation of male coercion to a more privileged role, could result in power bargaining between the husband and wife, as their roles change (Abdi, 2014). According to Aston *et al.* (2007), initially the men are more powerful; however, once the women gain education and rebel, the men become less or equally powerful. This indicates a shift in the level of power for some, as noted in Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study, which states that women with qualifications and those that were employed encouraged more equality in their marital relationship. Although acquisition of new knowledge may not result in a drastic change in the amount of power that men have, women who had previously only experienced life in the home and gain more knowledge can arguably feel more empowered, resulting in a shift in power dynamics, leaving the men in their lives feeling threatened.

This study shows that when the ESOL learners have new and additional roles, for example attending college, their stress levels increase (see Section 4.10), and some feel overburdened (see Figure 4.12). In support of the learner participants' comments, the teacher participants also state that the women are overburdened and stressed (see Figure 4.9). Perhaps the stress is as a result of coming out of their accustomed lifestyle prior to marriage and entering a new space which includes being in new relationships. Thus, the relationships involve entering the public sphere in a new country, and communicating with people in a new language such as doctors.

Where the power emanates from the mother-in-law, this echoes the story of Cinderella which demonstrates women having power (see Section 2.6). The literature read (Ludhra and Jones, 2009; Pattar, 2009; Hashem and Aspinall, 2010) shows that cultural identities change through migration. This study accepts this concept and takes it further by adding that the women's identities evolve through the power structures that are embedded in the cultural identities and cultural understanding of their marriage, which they bring with them from their home country; thus, there is an evolution of power through migration. Such understandings create complexities between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. Furthermore, the ESOL learners' cultural heritage is patriarchal, and this portrays marrying the husband as marrying the whole family (see Section 4.4). Nevertheless, other cultures do have the same cultural practices, though within Muslim cultures patriarchy is learnt from older generations and followed through to the new generations (see Section 4.4). Applying Aston *et al.*'s (2007) lens to read the data around power suggests that power is embedded within individuals for generations, within cultural traditions of the ethnic groups that the learners belong to (see Section 3.8). Furthermore, the migration background of the learners influences the women's expectations in terms of education and employment (Aston *et al.*, 2007), though there is more influence on the older generations than the younger generation (Aston *et al.*, 2007). The current study confirms that the husband and in-laws have a dominant position in the family and hold power to control the ESOL learners. Power is routinely actioned, for example, through expectations of preparing the husband's food on time, not having a pram or being raped (see Section 4.6). Such power and coercion raises safeguarding concerns (El-Metoui and Graham-Brown, 2021). The women are vulnerable to physical and psychological abuse, which can have an impact on the rest of the family, and on their learning.

Aligned to other studies around empowerment by female feminists (Khurshid, 2017; Batool and Batool, 2018), and unpacked from the findings of this study was a consensus that the more Muslim women become educated the more empowered they will become, as education, knowledge and power interlink. Furthermore, their education allows them to see the conditions of their oppression more clearly. Therefore, potentially, education could present a danger to the husband and in-laws, as men could feel threatened by the women having power over them. They feel threatened with no longer being in the powerful position and are concerned about how others in the family and community may perceive this (Aston *et al.*, 2007). The power of the learners' husbands reflects upon Aston *et al.*'s (2007) work demonstrating the husbands' power and control over the wives, and therefore not supporting their education as it could give them excessive power, and this is seen as a potential risk of them becoming independent. In addition, the Muslim women's husbands have the power, which they use to force their wives to stay at home and not seek education and employment (see Section 4.3). However, the women in the current study are held by this power and have already begun to empower themselves by finding a way round the patriarchal culture, to attend college (see Section 4.5, 4.11). Yet, with reference to the married Muslim women, the cost is the threat of becoming divorced and sent back to their own country where they would live a more deprived life, which could bring shame

to the women's family (See Section 4.5). This is an important point, demonstrating the particular cultural power within this Muslim community. Furthermore, divorce is seen as a tragedy (Basit, 1997a; Aston *et al.*, 2007) and is the most disliked act that is Islamically permitted (Basit, 1997a). In addition, Muslim immigrants do not want to return to settle in their home country as the consequences of returning would have a negative impact on their children's well-being and education (Basit, 1997a). Moreover, perhaps the in-laws fear that if the women learn English, they will no longer be in control.

Since the women live within a patriarchal society, a male-dominated society, in which it is expected of the males to be the head of the family, Basit (1997a) and Linn and Breslerman (1996) note that the mothers-in-law have the power of dominance within the family hierarchy. In addition, this complex relationship illustrates women being dominated by other women, as also illustrated by Hunnicutt (2009). Another interesting point is that the daughters-in-law are consenting and reinforcing the elevated position of the mother-in-law. Nevertheless, women are in this position due to cultural practices sustained through intergenerational influences. As these dimensions of power dynamics have not been identified in the literature reviewed for this research, it is worthy of further research. Furthermore, some elders have a negative attitude to education, that it is unnecessary for girls to become educated (Basit, 1997a), and this could explain why the mothers-in-law and fathers-in-law make it difficult for the women to study. In addition, they are restricted from going anywhere after college, which Basit (1997a) explains is not due to oppression and instead to protect them against perceived bad influences and straying away from their responsibilities. Therefore, the ESOL learners go home after study because they do not want to abuse the trust of their husbands and in-laws and risk their education. This further explains why the ESOL learners in this study struggled with interview timings, and why they have issues making an appointment at the student services department for support. Instead of a career's advisor, Basit (1997a) states that parents take advice from educated family members within the wider family.

In addition, as aforementioned in Section 4.4, there is a cultural belief that the intelligence and success of a daughter-in-law could prove to be a threat to her husband and in laws, rather than a blessing through education and achievement. This connects with Ijaz and Abbas's (2010: 319) study, in which the parents of the girls feared that by socialising with other people within the educational setting and allowing them freedom and independence could enable girls to become 'corrupted' by Western values. Similarly, Aston *et al.* (2007) notes that other men within the community believe that women achieving their educational aspirations could confer excessive independence and power. Arguably, women from other cultural groups and societies could hold similar views. This situation reflects Hewett's (2015:72) research on Muslim girls' aspirations, in which he uses the term 'power of the community' to express his notion of surveillance. The concept of being watched by the community links to the situation in which the father-in-law shows concern about his image and position within the community (see Section 2.11). In line with this, Ahmad (2001) notes that being away from home gives scope for the

community to be suspicious and gossip. This provides an explanation as to why the father-in-law is afraid of what the community would think and say if they witness the daughter-in-law go out to college or learn to drive. However, this study shows that despite the women's multiple dimensions of identities, they attain a method of dealing with the power and control from the father-in-law, through their aspirations of learning English and learning to drive. The women aspire to live within the same situation, and not move out, as they want to retain the positive identity of being a good and caring daughter-in-law who lives with the in-laws and cares for them. In addition to remaining in that community, at the same time they want to move beyond that, thus they have found a way to successfully attend ESOL classes.

5.5.2 Expectations

Aligned with Darby, Farooqi, and Lai's (2016) reason given for men not wanting their wives to receive an education (see Section 4.3), perhaps the mothers-in-law are a barrier to the ESOL learners' education as they did not have the opportunity to gain education themselves; therefore, they do not approve of the daughter-in-law's education. Applying the same concept, whilst the daughters-in-law continue to fight through the barriers to education, the mothers-in-law maintain the traditional values and expectations in terms of being cared for and the housework (see Section 4.3). This could also be since the mothers-in-law maintain their traditional gender-role attitudes, as noted by Kan and Laurie (2018). Yet, for some ESOL learners, where the mother-in-law has passed away, the barrier was removed through natural occurrence. However, McLaughlin (2009) explains that since all the barriers that women experience are interlinked, the elimination of one will not resolve the issue and enable women to fully engage with education. This suggests that even if a couple has moved out from their in-law's house, the power of the in-laws could still control the daughter-in-law, in terms of what she can and cannot do. For example, Section 4.2 presents an example of a daughter in-law who is aged between 41 and 55, has a sick husband, and is immobile. Although she lives separate from her in-laws, she must visit her mother-in-law to help her with the chores. This notion of power remains even when the person with the power is removed. Furthermore, although through emancipation the learner successfully learnt to manage her life differently to reach her aspirations, despite she and her husband experiencing health issues, she was obliged to go to the mother-in-law's house to care for her (see Section 4.4).

Although Basit's (1997a) study focuses on South Asian families, since the current study also includes participants from Somali and Arab backgrounds, her concepts around relationships that have prominence on respecting the elderly within the family hierarchy and the importance of remaining loyal to the elders are the same as with the participants in this study. This is also emphasised in Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study, which explains that to care for the elderly relatives in the same family home is a community expectation, and it would damage the family's expectation if this was not practised. Another reason, which aligns to Basit (1997a) is that the sons feel that they owe the parents for their love and upbringing and therefore remain in the close-knit family, though Aston *et al.* (2007) assert that this is achieved through the

daughter-in-law's gratitude by looking after the in-laws instead of the son doing this. However, the daughter-in-law's gratitude is cultural, just as is living within large families. Basit (1997a) explains that Muslims like to live within a household consisting of three-generations so that the elders could spend time with their grandchildren. There is a link here with the current study and with some participants in Basit's (1997a) study, where the girls express being at a disadvantage, as the boys in the family are favoured as they are expected to support their parents in their old age. Yet this is not what happens in reality, as instead of the sons helping their parents with daily chores the daughters-in-law have this responsibility (see Section 4.4), whilst the men may be only responsible for financially supporting them. The women in Aston *et al.*'s (2007) study noted that they cared for the elderly because this is how they would also expect to be treated in their old age. This shows the expectation of caring continuing to the next generations. Basit (1997a) explains that this could be either through observing what has been happening for generations within patriarchal cultures, or simply due to ignorance. Furthermore, they could be continuing practices in other countries, such as Pakistan and Bangladesh, where there is no welfare system that provides care for the elderly, thus not caring for elderly relatives leaves them in poverty (Alam et al., 2016; Amin, 2017).

Basit's (1997a) study also sheds light on this concern by clarifying that the educated fathers of the Muslim girls in her study valued gender equality, whilst the uneducated fathers disagreed with it and disregarded education because it encourages gender equality. This also explains why the fathers-in-law of the participants disapproved of both education and gender equality, by not allowing the daughter-in-law to study or drive. Furthermore, the negativity towards education and gender equality could be explained by Basit (1997a), who states that since the previous generation were of working-class background, who arrived in the UK for employment purposes, education was simply a luxury and therefore unaffordable for the ethnic minority immigrants. In line with the comments made by Abdi (2014), perhaps the older generation could not study because they were content with the patriarchal arrangements and the conditions of gender inequality, which the women in Abdi's (2014) study saw as an Islamic principle which must not be challenged. This is similarly explained by Darby, Farooqi and Lai, (2016) who state that many migrants come from countries where there are defined gender roles and a scarcity of gender equity, and they therefore expect the same in the UK.

This study confirms that education is an opportunity to achieve financial stability in terms of employment prospects (see Section 4.12). However, the only financial barrier that has appeared is the cost of childcare (Heenan, 2002). The learners rely on free childcare, and therefore leave class a little early to collect their child (see Section 4.6). This is since the women are not able to afford childcare and there is a cultural attitude of steering away from paying for childcare (see Section 2.8). This is also expressed by Basit (1997a:48), who notes that South Asian families take children to all special events and do not consider childcare for this. However, with reference to Muslim women living in a patriarchal society, with the identity of a wife, it appears that the reason they have financial issues is because they do not

have access to their own money. The women are economically inactive since they financially rely upon their husbands; this shows financial power and control, a view also expressed by Kern (2017) but amongst non-Muslim women. Women do not like to rely on the husbands' or in-laws' money and prefer to be financially independent (Khurshid, 2017; Ahmad, 2001). However, Khurshid (2017) establishes that it is the men's responsibility to financially support the family. Although it is acceptable for women to become educated, it is not respected for women to be seen as earning money (Khurshid, 2017). Nevertheless, although Khurshid's (2017) study is about Muslim women, it is conducted in Pakistan which may have a stricter culture than that in the UK. However, it is noteworthy that elements of class and socio-economic status and ethnicity could identify differences in attitudes to education in Pakistan. Furthermore, economic reliance could influence a woman's choice of leisure, as the less she relies on the husband's earnings, the more inclined she may be to choose how to spend her leisure time, if the leisure activity involves a cost (Deem, 1986). Equally, women's experiences of education could differ depending on their class, age and sexuality (Deem, 1986).

5.5.3 Communication

Cuban and Stromquist (2009) argue that knowledge acquired through formal education could raise gender awareness by women knowing their rights to protect themselves from issues such as domestic violence and rape. Arguably, by educating the female ESOL learners could acquire more knowledge and awareness about equality laws such as the 2015 Coercive Control Law and the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 (see Section 2.8) and be more informed about their legal rights (Abdi, 2014). Equally, this could tip the balance, and create 'gender power struggles' as the women resist and become more powerful than the men by challenge patriarchal practices (Abdi, 2014: 470) and entering education.

As is evident throughout this thesis, the ESOL learners are full of ambition and keen to learn the English language. Acquiring the language will shape the migrant learners' identities in their new country of residence, as without language proficiency they have restrictions to integration with the British community. The data and literature confirm that one of the benefits of learning English is not relying on their husband and children to access public services (Aston *et al.*, 2007; Pattar, 2009). Khurshid (2017) adds to this by confirming that education is not only about learning the skills to read and write; rather it is about becoming more practical and gaining the acquired ability to do things that individuals without education cannot do; this aligns with earlier comments made about awareness of equality laws. Khurshid (2017) notes a range of examples from going to the doctors, to knowing how to speak, behave and dress. Benefits of education emerged equally in the data in Parr's (1996:96) study of white mature women. Whilst referring to one of the learners, she states:

>   Education was her way of ameliorating this situation.

> …education seemed to be a vehicle which the women were using to deal with some of the consequences of their experiences.

Darby, Farooqi and Lai (2016) note that although the female migrants acknowledge that acquiring English language skills would better their lives, due to the struggles in their daily lives learning English becomes the least of their priorities. Yet the current study highlights that through emancipation the ESOL learners find their way around the power within the household to overcome the dominance of men and the in-laws, in order to access and continue the education of their choice (see Sections 4.4, 4.5 & 4.7). Furthermore, emancipation has enabled the women to achieve freedom from their overburdened lifestyles and the fear of the husband, in-laws, and the community to enter the world of education. They are now free to make their own choices, not feel oppressed and eventually not answer to anyone. However, not feeling oppressed is normal for women who live within a relationship that has equality (Basit, 1997a) and it is evident that the more the women become educated, the more equality they will experience, for example equality in domestic responsibilities (Aston *et al.*, 2007). In addition, through learning English, some of the women free themselves from certain concepts of the prevailing cultural and gendered expectations of living within a patriarchal society to form an identity that allows them to gain power and endure the complex barriers to education.

5.6 Intersectional Conceptual Framework: Phase Four

From the barriers discussed and analysed in this section, below is a visual representative of how the diverse layers of the perceived barriers are positioned within the conceptual framework in accordance with the inter-relating themes and concepts.

Figure 5.1 Phase Four, Intersectional Conceptual Framework with Themes and Barriers
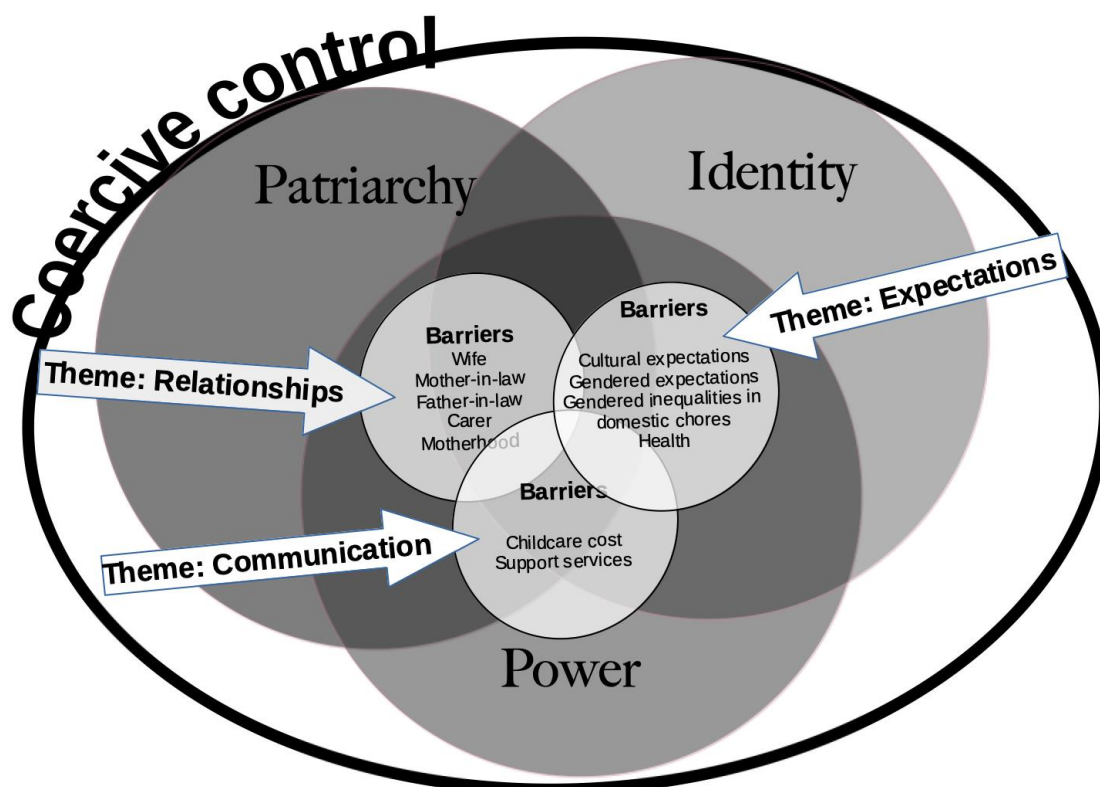

Figure 5.1 illustrates the final phase of the conceptual framework. This framework demonstrates that coercive control is the umbrella concept, which stems through the three central concepts of patriarchy, identity, and power; the three themes of relationships, expectations, and communication; and the barriers stated in the three inner circles. Thus, coercive control prevails as the overarching barrier to the female Muslim ESOL learners' education. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that although the element of gender has been removed in this phase it remains in existence of the framework and weaves through the different layers of the framework. Gender exists within the concept of patriarchy, as patriarchy refers to men in a more dominant position than women. Ultimately, the concept of gender coincides with the power struggles and power imbalances between the males and females. This overlaps with the identity of the ESOL learner, which is that of being female. These three central barriers hold a number of further intersecting barriers that stem from three emergent themes. The theme of relationships demonstrates the barriers that are created through different relationships that the learner is tied to, due to her identity, and the power relations within most of the relationships, some of which are caused by living within a patriarchal society. In addition, the gendered divisions between the husband and wife cause the power struggles, which are demonstrated by the theme of expectations. The barriers presented in this theme show that gendered and cultural expectations of domestic chores and caring correlate with the different roles and responsibilities associated with the diverse relationships within which the women are involved. Correspondingly, the theme of communication creates

barriers as childcare costs may not be culturally acceptable or, due to the learners being in subservient positions, they are not empowered to challenge cultural expectations. Such responsibilities affect the learners' health through feeling disempowered as they are in oppressed positions, with little power to make the decision to leave their child at a fee-paying nursery. Moreover, the barrier of support services shows that the women are not able to confidently access support services at college due to their limited English communication skills. As a whole, the concept of coercion portrays that the women are oppressed by the multiplicity of barriers that they are surrounded with.

5.7 Summary

In this chapter, the qualitative data was discussed through the lens of an intersectional conceptual framework and relevant literature in the field. The chapter discusses the lives of the ESOL learners, from arriving in this country and being very controlled. Based on empirical findings, it is apparent that female Muslim ESOL learners are exposed to a multiplicity of barriers whilst being in education; however, their experiences are nuanced, depending on the diverse elements of intersectionality that prevail in their lives. Additionally, there are variables in the responses in terms of how these women have managed their lives to access education to reach their aspirations. The learners have made changes to their life by reflecting upon their identities and made adjustments in order to construct their new, additional identity as a learner. The identities of the learners in this study have evolved at many points since marriage. It changed firstly when they married, whilst they were still in their home country and then, as noted by Afshar (2007) following migration when their identities become fluid. The women have multiple dimensions of their identities, which are from the multiple relationships they have within the household as well as their identities as learners. In discussing these unequal relationships, the findings have unveiled the depth and breadth of the constitution of marriage and tensions within relationships. The complex issues are due to the patriarchal structures of the family in which in most situations the mother-in-law is in a superior position, and has more power than the husband, and in a couple of situations the father-in-law is in a dominant position, while the daughter-in-law is in the inferior position. Whilst being suppressed, the women have shown that they are fully conscious about their limited English skills and the impact it has on accessing medical services, and in shaping the lives of their children by being able to speak to staff at the school and supporting them with their homework. Therefore, they are ambitious and courageous enough to attend ESOL classes, considering the multiplicity of barriers they experience in doing so. However, the stories heard about their experiences have led to lifting the veil from the façade to look into the problems the ESOL learners often experience, which are now disguised. These barriers include the poor health of the women, which is caused through the control and is a form of domestic violence and abuse. Nevertheless, despite the diversity of individual experiences of the Muslim ESOL learners, they all experience some types of barriers as well as opportunities. The opportunities include the privilege to attend ESOL classes, which all the learners enjoy, cherish, and believe has led them to some sort of

freedom. Furthermore, learning English has enabled the women to feel empowered and confident in their lives. The discussions in this chapter centre upon the conclusions drawn in the succeeding chapter.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

This research has investigated the barriers to education experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners. The findings from this research support and bring together concepts from previous literature, thus presenting four key concepts: coercive control, patriarchy, identity, and power. From these concepts emerge the three themes of relationships, expectations, and communication. Beneath the themes are eleven barriers, which interrelate within this study's intersectional conceptual framework (see Figure 5.1). This portrays a nuanced account of the layers of complexities operating as barriers to the learners' education. While the focus is Muslim women, the barriers are not necessarily exclusive to that group and it may be that other studies/further research on women from other ethnicities may, to an extent, have similar findings, such as the white women in Parr's (1996) and Heikkinen, Lämsä, and Hiillos' (2014) research.

Conducting this interpretive qualitative research with female Muslim ESOL learners has allowed for marginalised voices to be brought to the surface and heard, as also noted by Ahmad (2001). As part of my positionality and reflexivity (Boodhoo, 2017), the arguments presented also justify the legitimacy of my own voice, which is conveyed through this thesis (see Section 3.2). Nevertheless, I treasure the new knowledge and insights, which have challenged my assumptions prior to this research, as through this research I have been able to unravel numerous complexities and conditions that collectively create the barriers that women experience whilst in education. As part of the transparency and credibility of the research, perspectives from both Muslim (Basit, 1997a; Khurshid, 2017; Shain, 2003) and non-Muslim (Parr, 1996; Bhopal, 2014; Hewett, 2015) feminists have been included. The research findings confirm that it is not only the Muslim ESOL learners that experience such complexities, as non-Muslim women, similarly, experience them.

Through empirical research with sixteen Muslim female ESOL learners and ten ESOL teachers, this chapter answers the three research questions that have guided this study. This is achieved through reflecting on the analysis of the findings and consideration of the literature reviewed:

1. What are the perceived barriers to education experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners whilst attending a further education college?

2. What are ESOL teachers' perceptions of the barriers experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners?

3. How are female Muslim ESOL learners supported to overcome the perceived barriers?

The next section will consider how the intersectional conceptual framework has provided a response to the research questions, which will form the contributions to knowledge. Research questions one and two are answered collectively.

6.2 Research Question 1 and 2

6.2.1 Relationships

The research concludes that the intersecting concepts in the conceptual framework do not act as a barrier in isolation; rather, there are a complexity of issues enfolded, which include the multiple relationships the women are bound with. The learners' perceptions illustrate that their transition to the role of a wife has created multiple barriers to their education, a view also noted by Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes (2008) in their study examining the transition of men and women to marriage and parenthood, whilst the current research adds that collectively the women's multiple identities, formed through relationships with their husband, mother-in-law, father-in-law and children are a barrier to their education. Therefore, it can be concluded that relationships formed through marriage represent the root of the barriers experienced by Muslim women accessing education. The theme of relationships links with identity as this research suggests that marriage and immigration to the UK transform the women's identities. From the relationships formed through marriage, the learners are exposed to multiple, intersecting identities which are very complex in nature. This is consistent with Basit's (1997a) study, which reinforces that identity formation is complex. These identities stem from the women's prime identities of being single, prior to marriage, to being wives, which introduce a range of gendered roles, such as predominately being responsible for childcare, caring for other family members and the domestic chores. Thus, the gendered assumptions of roles within families living in a patriarchal society prevail upon the expectations of the women.

6.2.2 Expectations

This study concludes that the women are expected to be solely responsible for stereotypically female chores, a result consistent with Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes' (2008) findings. The current study adds to this, as the ESOL learners perceive they have insufficient time to complete all the household chores assigned to them. The women try to balance their current responsibilities with studying, by managing their time differently and waking up early to fit in all the chores in the time available, which makes them tired and depressed (see Section 5.3.2). Furthermore, the learners recognise that coming to college is a benefit for them in relation to their depression (S4) as they enjoy interacting with others (S15) and being in a different environment (S8). Based on the ESOL learners' perceptions, this thesis confirms that the domestic expectations of women, such as household chores, do not necessarily create a barrier to education. Instead, the barriers are created by how the chores are

managed and by whom. For instance, the barriers are created through unequal gendered and cultural expectations of the women living within the patriarchal society. As such, the woman's role is to carry out most of the chores (Green *et al.*, 2004; Cerrato and Cifre, 2018), which creates the barrier. The identities of the women that create the barriers are formed from living within a patriarchal society, as it sets out the gendered roles and cultural expectations which can make it difficult for some women to access education (see Section 5.3). This demonstrates how the concept of patriarchy links with concepts of identity and expectations. These concepts further link with coercive control as the study's findings suggest that power exists within the patriarchal structures of the husbands' families as well as within the community (Dale *et al.*, 2002). Consequently, the men (the husband and the father-in-law) and older women (the mother-in-law) are in dominant positions, through which they control the lives and choices of the women. Coercive control weaves between the different family relationships, and in diverse aspects of the ESOL learners' lives, for example their educational and career choices.

This study concludes that coercive control oppresses the women, restricting them from seeking educational opportunities. Muslim women, in particular, encounter unique challenges that impact upon their educational choices and their future career decisions, due to family and cultural expectations (Kazi and Akhlaq, 2017). This includes being conscious of the stereotypical views of the extended family and the Muslim community (Basit, 1997a). This illustrates the connection between the concepts of relationships and expectations. Furthermore, the power in the family and community contributes to the choices the women have made in relation to their academic achievements as the formation of their identities. The controlling situation shapes the women's educational and career choices, making accessing and progressing in education and achieving their aspirations more challenging. This is consistent with Heenan's (2002) study, which confirms that the women's caring responsibilities prevented them from progressing further in their studies.

The study also unravels cultural norms that create the barriers to women's education (Afzal *et al.*, 2015). The cultural practices are influenced by a patriarchal society, which provides the environment for the Muslim women (Afzal *et al.*, 2015). In this environment, the men are in superior positions, which is the norm according to the culture they follow (Fontes, 2015). Furthermore, the unequal power relations between other family members (Parr, 1996) cause gendered divisions in the households (McKie *et al.*, 1999). The unequal power relations result in more responsibilities, which arise due to gendered and cultural expectations of their family whom they live with (Watkins, Razee, and Richters, 2012). The family members, such as the husband, mother-in-law, and father-in-law therefore hold certain expectations of the daughter-in-law, which seemingly hinder the ESOL learners' educational choices and career decisions in relation to their identities. Such expectations follow generational patriarchal practices (see Section 5.5.1). These relationships correlate with the women's identity by controlling their life. For example, the influence of the husband's family shapes these women into obedient wives and daughters-in-law. Moreover, within extended Muslim

families, other family members also need to be cared for either because they are elderly or sick (Aston *et al.*, 2007). Collectively, these concepts restrict the women from becoming educated, making them feel powerless (see Section 4.4).

Many learners are also perceived as oppressed in a variety of ways due to the control they experience (see Section 4.11). This is illustrated in the stories elicited from the ESOL learners, which present a snapshot of their daily lives. For some women, barriers to education were created through their overburdened lifestyle, though they have successfully managed to overcome these to attend college (see Section 4.13). However, some learners continue to feel hopeless about completing their homework due to the lack of time, as they have multiple roles and responsibilities (see Section 4.11). The women also feel helpless in progressing in education and onto aspired careers. Furthermore, the study shows that the women experience various degrees of mistreatment due to their multiple identities, roles and responsibilities and the power and coercive control this presents (see Section 4.11). Therefore, although Muslim women have ambitions (Basit, 1997a), some lack the power to progress in education or into their desired career (see Section 4.9). As a result, some women have hidden ambitions, and as they trusted the researcher, they were confident in expressing their views. Yet their resilience, resourcefulness and overall actions have created opportunities for a form of education by stealth.

Additionally, the conditions in which they live, the overburdened lifestyle, and the patriarchal society build cultural boundaries for the women. For these reasons, subsequently their aspirations are not achieved, yet the learners do not like being in this situation but have little choice. Nonetheless, they have all shown strength and skills by attending college, though most learners are disadvantaged due to their limited language skills restricting them from independently accessing public services (see Section 4.14). Due to the gendered divisions within the household, there is a notion of power and control through the literature (for example, Ludhra and Jones, 2009; Abdi, 2019) and the findings (see Section 4.2). Control is a form of violence (Wright, 2016), which affects the learners' choices and their emotional wellbeing. Though, conversely for some learners, poor health has proved to be a facilitator as the learners enjoy the days that they attend college the most, and thus avoid feeling depressed. The learners recognise the benefits of attending college and the positive impact this has on their overall health, since it not only empowers them but also gives them a break from their normal routines in which they appear to be in a status of subordination. Thus, this illustrates power dynamics, as, according to the data, while the students are at home they are powerless and appear to have limited freedom, but while at college they are in an arguably superior position.

6.2.3 Communication

The learners have expressed their aspirations to learn English and their commitment to attend college by breaking through the barriers that they are confronted with. However, they also draw on progression to stereotypical

gendered careers, such as nursing and teaching (Dunlap and Barth, 2019) to, honour family values, in particular honouring the husband's wishes. The most significant advantage of learning English is to access public services, gain knowledge of the UK education system and support their children with their homework (see Section 4.7). Furthermore, this empowers the women and gives them freedom, whilst remaining within their cultural spheres.

Whilst some ESOL learners refer to feelings of stress in their interview and research diary due to the lack of time available to complete their daily duties, (see Figure 15), the teachers add that their overburdened lifestyle causes them depression which affects the women's full participation in education, a view similarly expressed by Mencarini and Sironi (2012). In addition, the fear the women have from the control of their families also impacts their health (see Section 4.9). From a feminist lens, the power and control they experience within their marital relationships is a form of domestic abuse and violence (Kern, 2017). Yet despite being in an oppressed and confined situation they are able to overcome cultural barriers as they have transitioned from their home country to the UK. However, although the women have overcome some cultural barriers, they are then exposed to a different set of barriers to various degrees.

6.3 Research Question 3: How are female Muslim ESOL learners supported to overcome the perceived barriers?

This study concludes that ESOL learners' role of being a mother is a barrier to their education. This is because motherhood is entirely a feminine role (Cerrato and Cifre, 2018), thus increasing women's responsibilities (see Section 4.6). Furthermore, the ESOL teachers confirm that the funding for childcare is being reduced. Therefore, learners who live within a patriarchal culture and are culturally expected to be primarily responsible for childcare may find that although the barrier of childcare cannot be removed, they may benefit from talking to a member of the student services team to discuss strategies to manage childcare. For some learners, who do not have a broader network, paying for childcare is a barrier to their education. This aligns with similar findings from Darby, Farooqi and Lai (2016).

Cultural expectations of gendered roles make it unacceptable for the women to pay for childcare; therefore, it is preferable for children to be cared for by family members (Aston *et al.*, 2007; Watkins, Razee, and Richters, 2012). Thus the cost of childcare is a barrier to women making their own choices as to who cares for their child, as due to their inferior positions and being reliant upon their husbands, the husbands control the women's choices. Being financially dependent upon their husband, economically inactive, and less educated than the husband all make the women suppressed, and they aspire to move out of the situation in order to gain financial independence and gain more control of their lives (see Section 4.12). This study confirms that ESOL students are supported in some issues that demonstrate power and control, such as safeguarding against forced marriage, through counselling and the provision of accommodation. Yet, they are not able to support the learners

with their individual problems; therefore, the ESOL teachers go out of their way to provide support for Jobcentre requirements that cause the students stress, which could increase the teachers' workload.

The data illustrates that seeking advice empowers the women, yet student services are unable to offer support in the learners' different languages due to a lack of funding; therefore, the students are unable to talk about their numerous problems (see Section 4.12). The teachers assert that talking about their problems would empower the women, since they have few friends and lack confidence. Literature notes the female students feel shy (Parr, 1996; Watkins, Razee and Richters, 2012; Afzal et al., 2015; Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016; Khurshid, 2017), which is also demonstrated in this study, where some ESOL learners are shy when it comes to talking to their regular teacher; consequently, talking to a stranger in student services would likely be more difficult for them. This aligns with cultural challenges experienced by the ESOL learner who was pulled out of college because she spoke at a learner voice meeting, which is an example of the learner's voice being restricted (see Section 4.11). The voices of the ESOL learners and teachers in this study supplement existing literature and provide further understanding of the issues presented by the Muslim ESOL learners. The issues include the intersections of gendered roles and identity, and their impact on the ESOL learners' lives and education choices. In doing so it has revealed that the learners are possibly afraid of their own courage. However, it could be beneficial if women reflect upon their situations, think outside the box and plan to make changes, possibly by adjustments to their daily routines, in order to continue studying, progressing in education and seeking a career.

Due to the communication barrier (Afzal *et al.*, 2015), ESOL learners, especially those with lower levels of language competence, lack the confidence to take the initial step to seek and access any support services. The learner support services department at the college can fund childcare, depending on the learners' eligibility (see Section 4.12). Yet although the number of female ESOL leaners outnumbers the male learners (Foster and Bolton, 2018), this study shows that there is insufficient provision of support for these learners, and especially those that are studying ESOL at Pre-Entry Level (see Section 4.12). The ESOL teachers perceive that although some support is available for ESOL learners, due to the reduction of funding, there is a lack of interpreters and private spaces where women can express their concerns and request support (see Section 4.13). This is important as the challenges and constraints experienced by learners in attending ESOL classes are similar to those that were manifested whilst inviting learners to come for interviews. However, it is noted from the literature that childcare problems are not restricted or limited to one cultural group (Hashem and Aspinall, 2010), as women within all cultures have trouble with childcare when accessing education, and not only Muslim women. Therefore, this is predominantly a gender, cultural issue, as opposed to a religious issue.

Learners with limited communication skills are not prioritised by student services; therefore, the ESOL language skills are a barrier to the women in not only accessing education, but also the support they may require in

managing education and family expectations. This places ESOL learners, in particular Pre-Entry learners, at a disadvantage since they require more support than other learners (see Section 4.12) and cannot express their difficulties due to the communication barrier. Although communication is a barrier for the women in having the confidence to access education, learning the language is an opportunity for them to no longer be reliant upon others to access public services. Acquiring the English language makes the women feel empowered and happier, which has a positive effect on their health (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016). The women aspire to support their children's education and be part of their career decisions. However, for those with a disabled child, learning English becomes a greater challenge as they need to seek methods to balance their lifestyle in a way in which they could cope with education as well as their time-consuming childcare and domestic responsibilities. Through education, the level of power shifts between the two married partners, with the women with more or equal power, creating power struggles and gender bargaining (Abdi, 2014). The women aspire to become educated further and become more empowered so that they can achieve a different lifestyle. This illustrates that 'education is a key to their freedom'.

6.4 Contributions to knowledge

This study makes four contributions to existing knowledge.

Firstly, this study extends the current research on Muslim women, as it provides insights into a diverse group of Muslim women. Although literature does exist around Muslim women and barriers (for example, Oplatka and Lapidot, 2012; Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016; Mirza and Meetoo, 2018), little literature exists specifically in relation to the barriers female Muslim ESOL learners of this cohort experience. These insights are unique since perspectives of learners from distinct backgrounds have been explored: Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Somali, and Arab. Adding to these views are the perceptions of ESOL teachers from different backgrounds and levels of expertise (see Table 3.3). These insights paint a picture of the complex roles of women related to patriarchy, power, and identity. Furthermore, these can be useful in further understanding concepts that collectively illustrate the dynamic experiences of an ESOL learner and how learning English could enable them to be in a more powerful position to take control of their own life. In addition, acquiring the English language enables the women to be empowered (Darby, Farooqi and Lai, 2016) and independent (see Section 4.14).

Secondly, this study allows voices to be heard through the methodological approach taken (see Section 3.12). The unique research design, which incorporates creativity alongside traditional research methods, allows further opportunities for elicitation and prompts during one-to-one interviews with the participants. The insider knowledge of an ESOL teacher provided insights that perhaps traditional research tools such as surveys, or interviews alone, may have been insufficient to meet the learners' needs to express themselves and could limit their responses. Therefore, in order to develop the learners' voices,

research diaries were selected, which were used to reflect upon during the one-to-one semi-structured interviews. As a result, those who completed the research diaries felt proud of these, and all learners appreciated the time and opportunity for their voices to be heard (see Section 4.13). As a researcher, I also felt proud of finding a way to hear the women's voices.

Thirdly, this thesis offers a unique contribution to existing knowledge by adapting Croce's (2020) intersectional conceptual framework (see Section 2.11), designing a new intersectional conceptual framework, and applying it to this study (see Section 5.6). This contribution uncovers the very complex layers of issues involved with female ESOL learners' experiences of being in education. Furthermore, the intersections of the conceptual framework illustrate how nuanced the ESOL learners' lives are, as they are wrapped around barriers created through spousal relationships, expectations following marriage, the community and culture, as well as the level of empowerment and autonomy the women currently have and aspire to have through communicating in English. The conceptual framework could be used as a tool for teaching staff and student services staff how to support female ESOL learners by acknowledging the barriers the learners may be experiencing and identifying possible strategies to eliminate these. However, at a global level, the intersectional conceptual framework provides educators with a better understanding of the co-existing complexities and prevailing tensions, to allow for the educational experience of such women to be improved.

Finally, at a wider scale, the discussions around depression and abuse in this research offer a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge in gender inequalities, and to studies in other fields such as health and psychology (see Section 4.11). Although it was not anticipated, the ESOL learners have indicated that they enjoy the days they attend college the most, thereby having a positive impact on their overall wellbeing.

6.5 Strengths and Limitations of the study

Strengths

Within the scope of this study, a range of strengths and limitations have been identified. Firstly, whilst employing a feminist lens, one of the main strengths of this study is the development of the intersectional conceptual framework which mirrors the experiences of the female ESOL learners (See section 5.5). The framework unravels the multiple intersecting layers which explain the tensions, which for some women are forever present and cannot be dissolved. Thus, the key strength of the intersectional framework is that it articulates how the concepts are nuanced, in the sense that sometimes the familial relationships have greater emphasis, whilst at other times it is the prevailing cultural community ambience that has a greater influence on the women's choices. In addition, there are old-fashioned gendered divisions which are culturally inflected. These nuanced accounts of intersectional complexities could be used to inform all involved in education, with a deeper understanding

of the barriers to ESOL female learners and how to improve the experiences of women on such programmes.

A further strength of this study is the research methodology, which enables triangulation including perceptions from both ESOL learners and ESOL teachers (see Section 3.7); the teachers were from different backgrounds, and not all Muslim. All participants were very cooperative and willing to participate. Those who completed the research diaries did so with interest in the task, in their own time, and reflected passionately upon it during the interviews. Considering that no incentives were offered to them, they built time in to share their perceptions in this study. For the students, reflecting on their lives allowed their voices to be heard, which the learners really appreciated (see Section 4.13).

Limitations

There are a number of limitations that pertain to this research, as it was beyond the scope of this study to address all these. Firstly, this study does not research the views of the mothers-in-law and I have seen that potentially these could be important. Yet the time constraints of completing an EdD only allowed me this sample, whereas a longitudinal study would have broadened the sample of the study to include the mothers-in-law.

Furthermore, there is insufficient data reflecting on the theme of finance, and therefore more extended questions could elicit further data around this which would allow firm conclusions to be drawn regarding how finance is either a barrier or could support the women's education prospects.

In addition, asking student services to participate might have yielded useful comments, which could have then aligned with the teacher participants' perceptions of the support provided to the female ESOL learners. Moreover, since the teacher participants have raised the issue with the student support available (see Section 4.12), it may have been potentially beneficial to include members of the student services department to gain their perceptions.

Moreover, since the participants' cultural, class and social backgrounds have not been discussed, this presents potential implications for a deeper analysis of the current research. Oakley (1974) notes that the view towards the domestic chores varies between different social class systems. For example, women who belong to a working-class system are responsible for greater domesticity than those in the middle-class (Oakley, 1974). Likewise, understanding the cultural backgrounds of the women could provide context to the research as cultural dynamics could critically impact the experiences of migrants, for example racism (Werbner,1990; Bhatti, 1999). Furthermore, the socio-economic class of the participants could further explain women's experiences of education, leisure and housework (Deem, 1986). This information could be used to make comparisons by identifying differences and commonalities between the participants' background, and how this may or may not influence their educational experiences. Using an intersectionality framework and identifying determiners of participants' race, gender and social

class could recognise interconnections that reflect upon the broader patters of privilege and oppression in society. In addition, using reflexivity may have created space for understanding the power differences between the researcher/ participant relationships in feminist research (Phoenix, 1994).

Finally, during the interview process in this study, I was only able to translate for learners from Pakistan and Bangladesh, but not for those that were Somali and Arab. Being able to cater for all native languages of the participants in this study could ensure that there is no language barrier between the researcher and all the participants.

6.6 Recommendations for professional practice

Based on the key concepts that have emerged in this study, coercive control, patriarchy, identity, and power, the following four recommendations have been identified for ESOL practice which align to the research questions and the literature sought.

The findings illustrate that female Muslim ESOL learners are bound by cultural norms which relate to patriarchy (see Section 4.3), in which following marriage they are expected to spend more time completing domestic chores (Baxter, Hewitt and Haynes, 2008). Therefore, during the ESOL course it would be beneficial for the women to be exposed to a broad range of career choices beyond gendered careers such as childcare. Using teaching material that promotes gender equality, when teaching topics of daily routines and jobs, could provide learners with more awareness of equality in the involvement of domestic chores. It may require further training and development for the ESOL professionals to produce and use culturally diverse resources. Gendered expectations also exist, with women being the main carers of children in general, disabled children and family members (Brah and Shaw,1992; Parr, 1996). Learners' caring responsibilities have implications for practice in terms of recruitment, timing of classes and whether there is scope for flexibility when the women need to be at medical appointments (see Section 4.11). The outcomes of this study could inform practitioners of female Muslim ESOL learners' multiple identities (see Section 4.12), so that they could consider strategies to support them in achieving their aspirations. Additionally, although this study has provided some in depth contribution to the study of patriarchy, which could be replicated in another study, more research is always beneficial.

This study demonstrates that ESOL learners would benefit from practical skills related to communication with public services (see Section 4.12), for example speaking to hospital and school staff (Hashem and Aspinall, 2010). It is therefore recommended that ESOL professionals continue to embed topics that teach the learners practical skills, allowing them to communicate and engage with public services. These skills could empower the women so that they can independently attend hospital appointments and are no longer reliant upon their husband, children, or other family members (Aston *et al.*, 2007).

Practitioners need to acknowledge that ESOL learners encounter a range of complex barriers whilst being in education, be aware of what these barriers are and the implications of these on their health, homework, and progression (see Section 4.11). Such information would be useful in terms of planning lessons, providing advice on progression routes and where necessary signposting to student services for any support required.

In addition, according to the findings, several teacher participants mention that there is a lack of translators to accommodate ESOL learners' first language. Hence, the current student services support is not accessible to ESOL learners, specifically pre-Entry learners, due to the language barrier and lack of confidence to communicate in English with professionals other than their own teacher (see Section 4.13). It is therefore recommended that FE institutions invest further in providing accessible support for ESOL learners, through funding for preferably female multilingual support workers and the provision of more private spaces and screens for meetings with the student services department. I also propose that further research is conducted in the role of the student services team in supporting ESOL learners. Since literature (Basit, 1997a) and the findings in the current study show that Muslim women are stressed due to their overburdened lifestyles (see Section 4.4), it is recommended to set up workshops around balancing studies and life and managing stress. The findings of this study (see Section 4.6) and the literature sought (for example, Hunnicutt, 2009; Kern, 2017; Walmsley-Johnson, 2018) illustrate strong evidence of power and control emerging through each issue as a form of domestic abuse, through coercive control, which is a criminal offence. Therefore, I recommend that ESOL providers proactively acknowledge the difficulties experienced by ESOL learners, especially that this could include domestic abuse, and have accessible support mechanisms available throughout the academic year. In light of this, another potentially worthwhile recommendation is to conduct further research to gain a deeper understanding of the level of abuse experienced amongst female Muslim immigrants, since this is a sensitive issue, and learners may not openly discuss it nor admit to it, especially since Mclaughlin (2009) asserts that abuse is unreported amongst ethnic minorities (see Section 2.9). In addition, it is recommended that support is available for teachers who experience an emotional impact from dealing with learners with negative experiences (see Section 4.11).

Female ESOL learners' educational choices are shaped by the controlling nature of the relationships they are tied into. Raising awareness of the learners' background and culture (Bhatti, 1999), and the prevalence of domestic violence abuse experienced by them should inform practitioners, through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of strategies to incorporate and/or modify to facilitate safeguarding. Violence is exerted to women through the power and control of their family members, over either their immigration, financial, emotional status, and sexual abuse. ESOL policies are urged to consider building in time for ESOL practitioners to allocate sufficient one-to-one time to allow them to share any concerns they may have either in relation to their attendance, retention, or progression. Just as the learners appreciated their voices being heard in the current, research,

more opportunities would invite them to share either positive or negative experiences of their daily lives. Where the teacher is proficient in the learners' first language, managers should encourage them to communicate in their first language to build a closer relationship with the learner and empower them to discuss sensitive issues. Training should therefore be focused on safeguarding issues affecting learners of different cultures, to prepare teachers in providing adequate support to those who have revealed any safeguarding issues in their daily lives.

Migrant women are burdened with multiple responsibilities, yet they are motivated to learn English and attend ESOL classes. However, current ESOL policy fails to consider flexibility around attendance, making accessing education more challenging for women who may encounter poor attendance due to their gendered roles (for example, childcare in general, caring for disabled children and caring for the elderly). Nonetheless, the pressures for good attendance are sustained by the providers. Therefore, policy should consider the challenging nature of female ESOL learners' daily lives and offer funding for flexi-time courses that cater for their needs. This would make learning more manageable for the women and contribute to their well-being. Furthermore, since ESOL courses are not fully funded for all immigrants, ESOL policy should consider widening eligibility by offering access to education to all immigrants regardless of their immigration status. In addition, where possible ESOL provision should increase fully funded childcare provision to assist learners in accessing and progressing in education.

6.7 Recommendations for Future Research

Following completion of this study, several areas have been identified that would merit further investigation. Firstly, exploring how learning English could support the ESOL learners' children's education. The data in this study demonstrates that some ESOL learners help with their children's homework (S16) and supervise the children as they complete it (T5). Literature (Aston *et al.*, 2007; Higton *et al.*, 2019), also confirms that learning English allows parents to support their children with it. However, the participants were not specifically asked about this in the current study, so it would be worthy of future research.

Future research could use intersectionality to segment participants' perceptions based on their class, social and cultural backgrounds. This would reveal interesting insights for each group, and add weight to the research, yet these socio-demographic questions were not asked in the current study. Therefore, it is recommended that further research considers collecting this information to gain a better understanding of the participants' background to identify where they fit in within the wider population, whether they are fairly represented in the research sample, and to analyse the data in greater depth. Feminist research examining the intersections of gender, race and social class can instigate emotional dynamics and nuanced relationships between the researcher and participant (Phoenix, 1994). In terms of the research methodology, future research should consider analysing these intersections to

illustrate the complexities and power hierarchies between the participant and researcher.

The literature and data in the current study have demonstrated that Muslim women have career aspirations (see Section 2.11 and 4.9). Due to time, resources and word-limit constraints, a large-scale longitudinal study with data collection at the beginning and the end of the academic year may have provided greater insights into ESOL learners' aspirations at different stages of their course. This could be an area for development for a subsequent study.

Further studies on the perceptions of key relatives, such as mothers-in-law, fathers-in-law, husbands, and others, could be useful (see Section 4.4). Therefore, if the study was conducted again, I would recruit a broader sample of participants, with a different cohort to include their perspectives. It was not possible to include their perspectives in the current study due to the scale of this thesis and time conditions. However, due to the complexity of the ESOL learners' situation involving key relationships which depict power and coercion, it would be an area worthy of research. Furthermore, both the ESOL learners' (for example S4) and ESOL teachers' (for example T5) comments on, for example, the mother-in-law suggest that she is in a more powerful position in the family hierarchy and controls the daughter-in-law's decisions, so it would be an area worthy of research. Safeguarding aspects emerged from female ESOL learners' being controlled by family members. Future research should therefore consider a detailed examination of the effectiveness of current strategies adopted to identify safeguarding concerns and how these could be improved to better prepare ESOL practitioners in supporting learners who either indicate signs of such issues and/or openly disclose them.

6.8 Doctoral Journey

In this section, whilst embracing reflexivity, I reflect on my doctoral journey (Boodhoo, 2017), which has allowed me to explore an area I am passionate about. Boodhoo (2017) draws attention to the importance of engaging in reflexivity as it allows the researcher to identify various issues to solve. As a practitioner, I have been concerned about the struggles the ESOL students have presented, and this research has provided me with a deeper understanding these. Furthermore, the research has developed my own professional practice, as I now have a full picture of ESOL learners' lives and their experiences that create barriers to their education. I have identified the situations in which learners need to use English language skills for functional purposes, all of which has informed and will continue to inform my future planning. I have also learnt that ESOL learners often struggle with punctuality and attendance as they frequently have appointments (for example, medical appointments) and have childcare commitments. Therefore, I have changed my practice to facilitate their needs by not being so harsh and instead asking learners to consider alternative arrangements and strategies in achieving an education-life balance. Having acknowledged the complex lives of the women has enabled me to make recommendations about how their difficulties can be addressed.

Alongside this, the structure of the EdD has enabled me to acquire a myriad of invaluable skills, including confidence gained through numerous opportunities to present at international and national conferences (for example, the British Education Research Association (BERA) and conferences at Staffordshire University), and meeting with other students and practitioners across a wide range of backgrounds. I have also gained confidence in reading literature through a critical lens and conducting research at doctoral level. In addition, being a feminist researcher has changed my professional life through having more awareness about the issues women may experience and the communication and confidence barriers they encounter in seeking support.

Moving on, I intend to publish the main findings in academic journals and make them available to practitioners. Finally, combining the EdD, a full-time job, and being a parent has made these past seven years rather challenging. Nevertheless, I have enjoyed every step of this journey and it has all been worth the effort.

6.9 Conclusion Summary

The purpose of this research was to investigate the barriers experienced by female Muslim ESOL learners in full-time education. This has been achieved through answering the research questions, which draw on perceptions of both ESOL learners and ESOL teachers. Viewed from a feminist lens, qualitative data was gathered to identify the barriers experienced and support available to the learners. ESOL learners illustrated their experiences of being in education in research diaries which were reflected upon during their semi-structured interviews, while ESOL teachers illustrated barriers to education encountered by women through a pre-interview task. The study concludes that the distinct, and intersecting barriers experienced by the women reflect interrelating concepts of coercion, patriarchy, identity, and power. The novel contribution of an intersectional conceptual framework is applied to this study, which reveals the issues involved with female ESOL learners' experiences of being in education. The framework uncovers the complexities in ESOL learners' lives, as they are wrapped around barriers formed through marital relationships and expectations that follow from being married. Yet, through participation in this research, the women's voices have been empowered, allowing them to express their experiences involving life, home and education.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 : Learner Preliminary Questionnaire

Demographic information

    1.   What is your age?

- 25 or under

- 26-40

- 41-55

- 56 or older

    2.   What is your marital status?

- Single

- Married or domestic partnership

- Widowed

- Divorced

- Separated

- Would rather not say

    3.   What is your ethnic origin?
- Pakistani
- British Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- British Bangladeshi
- Indian
- British Indian
- Yemini
- British Yemini
- Somalian
- British Somalian

- ▪   Mixed- any other background
- ▪   Arab
- ▪   Any other ethnic group

4. Number of children
   - ▪   0
   - ▪   1
   - ▪   2
   - ▪   3
   - ▪   4 or more

Appendix 2: Learner Roles Tick List

Gendered Roles and Responsibilities	Please tick
Wife	
Mother	
Carer	
Daughter	
Daughter-in-law	
Friend	
Neighbour	
Student	
Employee	

Housekeeper	
Mentor	
Driver	
Other	

Appendix 3: Learner Participant Interview Schedule

<u>Muslim Female ESOL Learners: Experiences in Education</u>
Interview Schedule

<u>Section 1: Warm up questions</u>

1.   Can you tell me how you got into studying ESOL? How did it come about? What lead to it? What did you hope to get out of it?

2.   For how long have you been an ESOL student? When did you start learning ESOL?

3.   Can you talk about your experience of being an ESOL student?

4.   Which level did you start at and which level are you at now?

5.   How do you feel about your progression between the levels? Was it at the speed you expected?

6.   Would you say learning ESOL has helped you? If so, how and in what ways?

7.   Would you say learning ESOL has helped your family? Can you tell me a bit more about it?

8.   Are you planning to enrol onto a course next year? Which courses do you have in mind?

<u>Section 2: Employment</u>

1.   Do you work?

2.   Do you have a paid or voluntary job? Have you had a job before, either in this country or your home country? If not, would you like to have a job? Please explain.

3.	How many jobs do you have? Do you have one job or two jobs?

4.	How many hours a week do you work?

5.	Describe how your life is whilst having a job?

6.	How does having a job benefit you and your family?

7.	Do you experience any challenges by having a job? Any difficulties?

8.	What are your career ambitions? Can you achieve them with your current job and qualifications?

Section 3: Daily routines

1.	From the roles you have ticked on the grid, are there any you would like to talk about?

2.	Which do you prioritise? Which are more important to you? How do they impact on your daily routine?

3.	What does a day in your life look like? What time do you start and end your day?

4.	Do you like being at college? What do you like about it?

5.	Do you like being at home? What do you like about it?

6.	Which are your most enjoyable days? Explain why.

7.	Are there any days you don't enjoy? What are the reasons for the days you don't enjoy?

8.   Do you experience any challenges (difficulties) by being at college?

9.   How do you fit in your daily activities when you are at college? How do you manage your day when you are at college?

10.   How do you fit in your daily activities when you are at work? How do you manage your day when you are at college?

11.   What would you like to do in the future?

Section 4: Pre-interview activity (Questions from this section will only be asked to the participant with the research diary)

Please could you talk me through your diary, highlighting any moments in your life which have either helped you with or restricted you from studying or having a job?

Section 5: Closing of interview

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer my questions. Is there anything else you would like to mention on any of the topics covered?

Appendix 4: Learners' Background

	Years in this country	Years of studying ESOL	Which level did you start studying at and finish at?	Benefitted from studying ESOL	Can you drive?	Do you work?	Worked before?	In own country?	Most enjoyable days of the week?
S1	11	3	I started at Entry 1 and went up to Entry 3, didn't pass 3.	Yes	No	No	No	No	Mon-Fri
S2		1	Entry 2	Yes		No	No		Nothing Every time is busy busy
S3		Almost 2	Entry 1 start now Entry 2	Yes	Yes	Yes cleaning job in a school 15 hours	Yes voluntary shelving work	In my country it was just housework and farming, what everyone else did. My dad was a farmer.	I like it during the week because at the weekend I stay at home and my husband is at home too, and it doesn't go well.
S4		At first, for two years, I went to a different college and studied but it wasn't good there and I didn't learn anything.	Entry 2	Yes		No		Yes in Pakistan I was a teacher.	Weekend…because my husbands at home and I spend time with him. We go out, for shopping, or anywhere we need to visit.
S5		3	Pre-entry-Entry 2 now	Yes		No	No	No	The college days, because I be alone at home and college is better. I enjoy with my friends.
S6		8	Pre-entry – E2			No	No	No	Weekend because I have time to go shopping, park, visiting friends, staying at home.
S7	Over 30	3	Pre-entry-E2		Yes	No	Yes at Dudley College I did BTEC sewing work with them.		
S8	5	2-3	Entry 1-entry 2	Yes		No	No	No	The days of college. 4
S9		3	Entry- entry 2			No	No	No	College days, truthfully.
S10		1 month	Entry 2	Yes			Yes		When I come to the college. Because I love study and I love college, I love teacher, everything. (P10)
S11	18 months	This September 5 weeks	Entry 3			No	No	No	During the week. (P11) Because of college and during the week I am do something, something, something.
S12		1 year	Entry 1- Entry 2			Yes			Friday I don't want to go like college and doing jobs. Just I want to do some reading Quran to go Mosque. That's it then have rest. (P12)
S13	10	6 weeks	Entry 3			No	No	No	I especially really like Friday because I go from here to especially pray. That's why I really like Fridays. (P13)
S14		2 years	Entry 2- Entry 3	Yes					Saturday because weekend I visit somewhere with my family. (P14)

S15		5 months	Entry 1-entry 2			No	No		Saturdays and Sundays Going out, eating out, Star City, watching movie. (P15)
S16		About 2 months	Entry 2 first year		Yes	No	No	No	Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday. (P16) I enjoy class. (P16)

Appendix 5: Research Access Letter to Organisation

FAO The Faculty Head   Date 4th July 2016

Dear Pauline Harrison

Authorisation request to carry out research relating to: An Investigation of the barriers to participation in education and employment for female Muslim ESOL learners': Education, the path to freedom and empowerment

As part of my Doctorate in Education, which I am studying at Staffordshire University, I wish to carry out research in relation to the above title. I am currently at the data collection phase. I am seeking permission to interview 10 of my former E2 ESOL students. The students will be progressing to E3 in September, but I will need to talk to them during August. They will be formally invited into college for this purpose.

Participation will be completely voluntary, anonymous and confidential. All participants will be provided with an information and consent form.

There will be no need for the research to identify individuals or the college and all questions will relate to the research topic.

The overall aim of the research is to make a contribution to knowledge in relation to the research topic and, if necessary, to make recommendations for change.

Upon completion the research findings will be available to the college. The college could, of course, withdraw from the research at any time.

If you require any further information, my contact details are below. Could you please complete the tear off slip below and return to me before 1st August 2016. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Fouzia Choudhry
Research Student Ed.D.
07907350342

....

I do/~~do not~~* give permission for ....*Fouzia*....to carry out research with.... *students @ sccb*....

Signed.... *P. H*..... Date... *6/7/16*...........

*Delete as appropriate

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Appendix 6: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Muslim Female ESOL Learners: Experiences to Access Education

1.   I have read and understood the Information Sheet and have had the opportunity

to ask questions.

⚪

2.   I agree to talk to the researcher about my experiences.

⚪

3.   I am happy for the researcher to record what I say.

⚪

4. I understand that I do not have to answer all the questions and can leave at any

time without giving a reason.

⚪

5.   I give permission for my words to be used in publications and understand that my

name will not be used.

⚪

6.   I agree to take part in an interview for the above study.

⚪

Participant name	Signature	Date
Researcher name	Signature	Date

Appendix 7: Participant Information Sheet

![Staffordshire University logo]

Participant Information Sheet

Project Title

Muslim Female ESOL Learners: Experiences to Access Education

Invitation

You are being invited to take part in a research study that is being undertaken by Fouzia Choudhry at Staffordshire University.

Before you decide whether to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information and ask if there is anything that is not clear, or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the aim of the research?

The aim of this research is to carry out a case study of Muslim female adult ESOL learners from Africa, the Middle East and Asia and investigate how their multiple role identities may influence their career choices.

We will ask you about your different roles and how these could help you access or be a barrier to education and employment. We will then be able to compare your answers to those provided by participants of the other ethnic groups.

Time Commitment

You will take part in a one to one interview for approximately 40 minutes.

Where will the research be conducted?

The research will take place on your college campus in any quiet location you choose.

What happens to the data collected?

The intention of the project is to develop a better understanding about the support available for women in making their career choices.

How is confidentiality maintained?

All participants will be anonymised so that those reading accounts of the research will be unable to identify them. Any data stored on a computer will be encrypted, password protected or anonymised. Digital audio recorders will be used to record interviews and copies of the audio

files will be destroyed within ten years of the completion of the project. Copies of transcripts and other data will, subject to stringent checks regarding anonymity, be kept. This will mean that the data collected is available to researchers in perpetuity.

What happens if I do not want to take part or if I change my mind?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. However, you could decide to stop being a part of this research at any time without explanation. You have the right to ask that any data you have provided to that point be withdrawn/destroyed.

Cost and Reimbursement

Your participation in this study is voluntary.

Benefits and Risks

There are no known benefits or risks for you in this study.

Contact for further information

If you would like further information regarding the project please contact Fouzia Choudhry via Email: fouzia.choudhry@sccb.ac.uk Tel: 0121 702 1025

Supervisor

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Appendix 8: Data Analysis Matrix

Question	Emergent Theme	Core Category	Sub-category	Codes
How did you get into studying ESOL?	Identity	Relationships	Word of mouth	
			Friends	
			Family	Husband, husband's family, uncle
Reasons for studying ESOL	Empowerment	Communication	Language	General interest, improve, find our level
			Employment	
			Not wasting time	
		Independence & Communication	Not relying on husband	Language, accessing medical services
			Spare time	
			Boredom	
Benefits of studying ESOL	Empowerment	Independence	Not relying on husband	Accessing medical services
				Shopping
				Driving
				Public transport
				Banking, Paying bills
		Communication	Reading, writing, listening & speaking	TV, News, people, friends, neighbours, children, school staff
		Employment	Job centre requirement	
	Identity	Relationships	Family	Adoption requirements
				Mother-in-law- taking her post office
				Husband- not relying on him-
	Empowerment			Husband not happy about wife becoming independent

Appendix 9: Example of Data Analysis Stage

Emergent themes	Core category	Sub-category	Codes	Sub codes		Memos
		Educating own kids				
		Communication				
			Helping others	Helping community		
				Guide children in the community		
				Dream	Being able to share dream	
	Aspirations	Progression to further courses	Positive	Improve English in general		
				Study only until the end of this level		
				Other courses after this one	Study the next level	
					Childcare	
					Fashion design	
					Beauty	