Rethinking power:

British Muslim women's understandings, experiences and performances of power

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To my grandmothers, "Abu" Carmen and "Iaia" Quimeta, who are unable to see me submit my thesis, but who inspired me to research on power and women, as they are probably the most powerful women I have ever known.

Abstract

British Muslim women are frequently represented as lacking power and oppressed in public debates. This thesis argues that current power theories fail to understand these women's power. Against this background, this thesis argues that power is culturally and contextually informed. Power is understood as relational, following previous social psychological research.

The thesis examines how British Muslim women understand, experience and perform power. It provides a qualitative-methods examination, drawing on social representations theory (SRT) and identity process theory (IPT).

The methodology is based on data triangulation. First, this research explores the British media representational landscape around these women's power from national, local and ethno-religious newspapers, adopting SRT (Study 1). Despite a prevalence of representing power as making choices, these women's choices are depicted as problematic or no-choices in dominant representations, which represent them as lacking agency. Contrastingly, minority representations portrayed these women speaking out and celebrating their success. Then, 21 semi-structured interviews were conducted with British Muslim women of three age groups to examine, adopting a phenomenological approach to power, their experiences of power in their everyday lives (Study 2). Unexpectedly, the thematic analysis did not reveal fundamental different accounts of power, participants mainly invoked individualised accounts of power (e.g., autonomy), despite their collective orientation (e.g., helping others), following their religious beliefs. Furthermore, participants barely mentioned their collective identity and power. Their presentation as active women was interpreted as strategic and part of a collective effort to contest their negative representation. The analysis also highlighted generational similarities and differences across groups. In light of this unexpected results, to explore further collective power experiences, 21 semi-structured interviews with British Muslim

women about their social engagements were conducted (study 3). The thematic analysis revealed a shared understanding of collective power as brining change in society and within themselves. Participants engaged in processes of (re)definition of their collective identity and religion, coming together and building collective efficacy.

This thesis shows how British Muslim women understand, experience and perform power combining Western and Islamic values. Furthermore, how they are actively contesting their (mis)representation collectively through identity presentation processes.

These results imply that in order to increase our understanding of these women's power, research should reflect on the social contexts, their identities and the meanings attached to their power relations. The findings and methods reported here suggest that adopting a phenomenological approach to examine power makes a substantial contribution to social psychology of power.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for the award of a higher degree elsewhere.

Signed:

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Chapter 1.

Introduction

"But what is power? Who has it (and how can we tell)?
How do we conceptualize and use 'power' as feminist, and as
psychologists?" (*Kitzinger, 1991a, p. 111)*

1.0. Preface

While I was settling in the UK, a narrative was building around the empowerment of women, driven by such figures as Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, and Arianna Huffington, co-founder and editor in chief of the Huffington Post. Their respective books, *Lean in* (2013) and *Thrive* (2014), opened my eyes to the large-scale dimension of gender inequality. At the same time, these books presented some inspirational examples of women who had developed themselves and become leaders of their organisations. However, the books also depicted, what seemed to me, a mainly white, upper-class, privileged path to power. They left me feeling like an outsider and excluded; that, like many other women, regardless of my hard work, dedication and motivation, I simply did not fit into this world and that such power was unattainable. It struck me how both narratives were mainly focused on what women should do, rather than on the organisations themselves and how they were systematically reproducing inequality. I concluded that these narratives were just another layer in the longstanding machinery to control and regulate women's lives. They were telling women what we should do — victim blaming at its worst — while leaving once more the structural power dynamics that sustain gender inequality and exclusion unchallenged.

Simultaneously, a huge media storm was brewing around young British Muslim women allegedly flying to the Middle East to join ISIS (so-called 'jihadi brides'). The narrow representation that was being offered of these women touched me. They were portrayed as radicalised, alienated by their societies, oppressed by their religion and publicly scorned for foolishly putting their lives at risk. This is not to say I supported any of their endeavours, but the situation affected me enough to start questioning the social processes underpinning those representations. Public debates seemed to struggle to make sense of why these women were leaving a safe England to travel to lawless countries to join barbaric men in what seemed to only foretell disgrace. The striking part was the gendered difference in the representation of young men in similar positions. They were also described as radicalised, but their actions seemed to be legitimated under categorisations such as 'terrorist'. There were no references to them being oppressed by their religion. Thus, young men in the same situation were not scorned, victimised or infantilised like their female counterparts. I could not help but wonder whether Westernised, patriarchal, if not misogynistic, beliefs were behind those representations, which seemed orchestrated to exclude women from a public domain that is restricted to men. It appeared to me as another blatant example of the fact that whenever women behave in unpredictable ways, taking the initiative and acting according to their views — which is indeed indicative of agency and power — they are contrastingly irrationalised and their agency denied, alienated or vilified.

The events described above triggered the questioning behind this current research endeavour. It began with an inquiry into how women could become more powerful. Halfway through, I realised that it may be very hard for women to become powerful in mainly man-made social organisations and institutions. In fact, the gender gap is the result of social machinery that has been created and designed by men for the interests of men. Consequently, I started to look at women around me and to entertain the possibility that women may understand power differently; or the idea of achieving power itself may differ; or their motivations altogether may

differ. By looking at examples of women around me whom I would consider very powerful — like my grandmothers who survived two wars and raised big families whilst working — I wondered if they might have enacted and experienced power in ways that might have escaped to male-oriented theorisations of power. Finally, I came across the idea that power itself, what it means to be powerful and to have power might, in essence, differ across people, cultures and experiences, opening a total new line of questioning that became my field of research.

Then, I went back to the case of British Muslim women and I kept on asking the following questions: Why are these women who follow the same actions as men portrayed differently? How can the contrasting views around their power be explained? What is the ideological rationale behind them? Are those views based on a lack of awareness of their power, or maybe a conscious neglect or denial by dominant groups? Or are they a result of a total failure to understand and acknowledge the power of British Muslim women and what they are capable of? More importantly, what kind of impact are those representations having on British Muslim women's everyday lives and their actual power? Eventually, this line of questioning became the first steps on the research journey, with the purpose to examine the power relations of British Muslim women on their own terms.

* * *

In this introductory chapter, the concept of power will be described and contextualised within the case of British Muslim women. Previous attempts to address power relations will be outlined. The need to expand our knowledge of power by examining power relations that might escape to dominant understandings of power will be pointed out. The theoretical framework used in this thesis to approach power — a phenomenological approach — will then be offered as a means of overcoming some of the shortcomings of previous research on power. Furthermore, the theoretical framework to examine British Muslim women's identity will combine identity process theory and social representations theory. As will be discussed, examining British Muslim women's power relations provides a unique

opportunity to challenge the limits of current power theorisation, and the interplay of concepts key to social psychology such as identity, power and social context. More importantly, it allows for an investigation into how British Muslim women contest and transform the current negative stereotype around them. In the last two sections of this chapter, the aims and contribution of this thesis will be outlined, and a summary of the chapters will be provided.

1.1. Rethinking Power: British Muslim Women's Power

Previous work within social psychology has offered crucial insights into power adopting a socio-cognitive approach, intergroup identity theories and relational approaches, as well as cultural and feminist perspectives, all of which will be reviewed. However, a persistent pattern of gender blindness has traditionally accompanied power theorisations (Rudman & Glick, 2012; Wilkinson, 1996). As a result, most researchers on power — except for feminist scholars — have paid little attention to gender (Howard & Hollander, 1997; Pratto & Walker, 2004). I would argue that gender in this thesis relates to the system of social relations based on sex category (West & Zimmerman, 1987), where power, resources and privilege are allocated to the valued genders (Lorber, 1994). By overseeing gender relations, power theories are at risk of reinforcing social inequality.

This thesis is particularly interested in gendered forms of power and their meanings (Kitzinger 1991b). It departs from the notion that mainstream research on power has neglected not only the power of gender in constraining or enabling the individual and the collective, but also alternative forms of power that might fail to be noticed or understood by Western theories of power. Here, the focus will exclusively be on how British Muslim women may understand and experience power in ways that might escape the dominant patriarchal understandings of power, and how that power might impact their everyday lives.

Within social psychological research, power has been conceptualised in multiple ways: relational; the ability to influence others and to achieve our goals; as

well as a position, a basic need and a social structure that subjects us (see Guinote & Vescio, 2010, for a detailed review; Pratto, 2016; Reicher, 2016). This thesis conceptualises power as a relation, following Foucault's work (1982). Thus, it is assumed that every relation involves power dynamics and different levels of awareness of the individuals involved. This relationship can adopt multiple forms (e.g., resistance, accommodation) in any given situation (Allen, 1998). The approach taken in this thesis considers that individuals as well as groups have certain degrees of power (agency); that is, to assert themselves in a desired manner within the available social options. However, this approach also contemplates the existence of social structures (e.g., gender relations, racism) that enable and constrain individuals' power.

Research on power is important as it relates to the ability not only to satisfy one's core self-needs, goals and desires at both the individual and collective level, but also to pursue our interests and to change the status quo (Guinote & Vescio, 2010; Reicher, 2016).

In considering issues of power in current times, one group that stands out because it is regularly represented as lacking power is British Muslim women. They are frequently at the centre of social debates that ultimately question their agency or oppression, their autonomy and their capacity to rule their own lives (Joly & Wadia, 2017; Ryan, 2011).

Despite being a very diverse group (Ansari, 2018), two major contrasting views are predominant. On the one hand, British Muslim women are often portrayed as passive, oppressed by their communities and their religion, and as victims who need to adopt British values in order to be empowered and liberated (Ansari, 2018; Martini, 2018; Rashid, 2014). On the other hand, extensive academic research shows that British Muslim women are agentic and negotiate their identities in their everyday lives (Brown, 2006; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Khan, 2005).

The plight of British Muslim women seems to act as an arena in which different cultural understandings of power relations and social ontology are debated. This thesis will claim that the contrasting views above are in fact illustrative of the conflict around the (mis)interpretation and (mis)understanding of power. Furthermore, it will argue that British Muslim women's power might not be able to be understood through Westernised theoretical frameworks of power (Abu Lughod, 1990; Bracke, 2003) that mainly enhance autonomy. Thus, the research will advocate for a conceptualisation of power that is not only relational and situated (Guinote, 2008, 2017; Reicher, 2016), but also culturally informed (Mahmood, 2005). In other words, power relations are not only informed by the social context and the identities of the individuals involved, but also by the cultural and religious systems that give meaning to them. Therefore, this thesis sets out to examine how British Muslim women understand, experience and contest power.

1.2. "Who Are British Muslim Women?" Identities, Systems of Representation and Power

British Muslim women essentially are women who identify as Muslims (religiously or culturally) and who identify as British (regardless of their citizenship status). This social group is quite often homogenised (Rashid, 2016) despite having very diverse backgrounds (e.g., ethnicity, class, generation). Yet, the social attention around this group is unparalleled. A quick Google search on "British Muslim women" returns almost 120,000 entries (20th August 2019). Now try any other female group, such as British Hindu or Sikh women, and only 2000 and 4000 entries appear respectively. The difference is stark, even taking into consideration the differences in population sizes. According to the British Muslim Council's (2015) report of UK's 2011 Census, Hindus accounted for 1.5% of the country's population, Sikhs 0.7%, while Muslims made up 4.4.%.

As stated earlier, British Muslim women are at the centre of ongoing public debates around multiculturalism, counter-terrorism and securitisation policies (Brown, 2013; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011b; Rashid,

2016); as well as social equality and feminism (Joly & Wadia, 2017; Scharff, 2011). Questions around their citizenship (e.g., their Britishness), social participation (e.g., employment), counter-terrorism (e.g., preventing radicalisation) and dress code (e.g., different veiling practices) seem to be central in those socio-political debates (Brown, 2013; Martini, 2018; Ryan, 2011) and in scholarly literature (Dwyer, 1999; Chapman, 2016a, 2016b; Joly & Wadia, 2017).

As previously mentioned, two major views seem to coexist. The first view is depicted by dominant systems of representations — mainly the media, social policy and public debates — where women lack agency and are subjugated by Islam and their communities (Martini, 2018; Rashid, 2016). In contrast, extensive literature research has shown how British Muslim women are actively pursuing their education and careers, organising themselves, engaging in civic life and rejecting Islamic agendas (Brown, 2006; Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Joly & Wadia, 2017; Ryan, 2011). Scholars from multiple disciplines have drawn their attention towards young Muslim women and their negotiations of their multiple identities (Dwyer, 2000; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013).

Such representations cannot be understood without regarding the socio-historical context of these identities, the discourses generated and the power relations behind them (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Reicher, 2004). In this case, representations are underpinned by a long tradition of colonial, neo-colonial and orientalist discourses (Khattak, 2002; Said, 1978). In those discourses, women are frequently portrayed as victims, oppressed by uncivilised brown men and in need of rescue by a white saviour. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, those same discourses fuelled the (re)actions of Western governments that materialised in military interventions and wars (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011b). For example, Afghan Muslim women were portrayed as oppressed and in need of rescue by a US administration keen to justify its intervention as part of the war on terror against the Taliban regime (Abu Lughod, 2002; Khattak, 2002). But these longstanding practices

did not benefit the interests of women; rather, they were instrumentalised and their experiences silenced.

This narrow representation is also part of a wider discourse that constructs Islam and Muslims as incompatible and irreconcilable with the West, and as a threat to British values and life-style (Ansari, 2018; Werbner, 2000). The multiple Islamist terrorist attacks that have occurred worldwide since 9/11, with many happening in European countries and in the UK in particular, have stirred those discourses up. Numerous tragic events like the 7/7 London bombings of 2005 perpetrated by British-born Muslims, the 2017 Westminster attack, the Manchester Arena bombing, and the London Bridge attack have motivated counter-terrorism policies (e.g., Prevent). Yet, in those counter-terrorism policies (Ahmad, 2017; Brown, 2013; Rashid, 2014) Muslim women continue to be presented as oppressed, infantilised subjects, but never as social agents for their lives and communities. The attacks and subsequent responses in policy have also increased the culture of suspicion and racism among the public (Ansari, 2018).

In this social context, visibly British Muslim women become the essentialised, exoticized and feared "other" (Mernisi, 2001; Said, 1978) and the main target of Islamophobic attacks in the UK (Bayrakli & Hafez, 2018). For example, last year, the current Prime Minister Boris Johnson — Foreign Secretary at the time — compared women wearing the full veil (burqa) with "bank robbers" and said that it was "absolutely ridiculous that people should choose to go around looking like letter boxes" (Parveen, 2019). The organisation Tell MAMA reported that Islamophobic incidents in the following week of those statements increased by 375%, with more than 50% against women (Sadique, Tangen & Perowne, 2018).

This portrayal of British Muslim women, while only existing in a symbolic dimension (Yuval-Davis, 1996), has serious implications for real women's lives in the form of Islamophobia (Bayrakli & Hafez, 2016). Broadly speaking, Islamophobia refers to prejudice toward Muslims (Choma et al., 2012). However, this concept is contested and there are ongoing debates (Erdenir, 2010; Poynting & Mason, 2007)

around the scope and content of the term and how it relates to other concepts such as racism and xenophobia. For example, can we assume that Islamophobia means the same in the UK as in the USA or Australia? Any examination of Islamophobia needs to consider the different local and national cultures as well as their own different national histories of racism (Poynting & Mason, 2007), which in this thesis it will be elaborated in Chapter 2. In this current research, Islamophobia relates to the dynamics and manifestations of anti-Muslim sentiment (Hopkins, 2006, p. 249). Specifically, "Islamophobia is about a dominant group of people aiming at seizing, stabilising and widening their power by means of defining a scapegoat – real or invented – and excluding this scapegoat from the resources/rights/definition of a constructed 'we'. Islamophobia operates by constructing a static 'Muslim' identity, which is attributed in negative terms and generalised for all Muslims. At the same time, Islamophobic images are fluid and vary in different contexts as Islamophobia tells us more about the Islamophobe than it tells us about the Muslims/Islam" (Bayrakli & Hafez, 2016, p. 7).

Hence, it is argued that such portrayals serve to advance multiple ideological purposes of dominant groups. For example, fully veiled British Muslim women serve to represent the failure of multiculturalism to integrate Muslims (Modood, 2013), while at the same time justifying securitisation policies (Brown, 2013) or even reaffirming liberal women of their own liberation (Scharff, 2011). Overall, this representation is seen by some scholars to be part of a xenophobic, misogynistic, nationalist discourse that reinstates their exclusion and more importantly silences them (Ahmad, 2017; Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011b; Rashid, 2014). It is unclear how this social attention helps British Muslim women to` advance their own agendas, or if it operates merely as a constraint.

Besides serving ideological purposes, this contrasting representation calls for a wider and deeper questioning around the logics of power between social groups — the core of this research. In other words, it shows how dominant groups impose their

systems of representation and meanings over minorities, determining what is rendered powerful or powerless, using and imposing their own systems of value.

1.3. Aim of This Thesis and Contribution

Given the plethora of social research already existing around British Muslim women, any critical reader might be wondering what this social psychological research might be able to contribute with regards to a group that is on the verge of being over-researched. Firstly, by drawing on the social psychology of power, it is argued that this research will help us to better understand not only British Muslim women's power, but also the social dynamics between their power relations, their identities and the systems of representation. Furthermore, this thesis will examine how these women understand and experience power. Thus, it will bring their experiences, meanings, perceptions and understandings of power to the forefront. This thesis also seeks to capture the psychological processes involved, such as their meaning-making processes, in the assertion of their power, their identities and their values, as well as their contestation of the negative stereotype. Finally, the thesis will also examine how British Muslim women construct and negotiate their identities in the current climate of social prejudice. Hence, this thesis also aims to elaborate on the socio-psychological processes and identity strategies involved in their identity construction and presentation.

Using a qualitative methods approach, the thesis sets out to investigate three main questions:

> How do British Muslim women understand, experience and perform power?
> How does their power and identity inform/impact each other?
> How do their own and other's actions, identities and systems of representation sustain and transform power relations?

1.4. Theoretical Framework

This thesis draws mainly on the social psychology of power and social research on British Muslim women to examine their power relations. As stated earlier, power is conceptualised as a relation (Foucault, 1982; Guinote, 2008, 2017; Reicher, 2016) that can adopt multiple forms (Allen, 1998, 2005).

In drawing on social psychology work (Kitzinger, 1991a; Reicher, 2004, 2015), any examination of power demands consideration of the social context, the individuals or groups at stake (their identities), and the perceptions and meanings of those relations from the perspective of those involved. Firstly, the *social context*, which in this research denotes two dimensions: a structure and processes of influence (Breakwell, 1986). The structural dimension relates to the social power distribution among groups, institutions and social networks (e.g., racism). Meanwhile, the processes of social influence among groups are an attempt by people within those groups to persuade one another to engage with a certain system of values and beliefs (e.g., education).

Secondly, *identity* refers here not only to who we are but also how we are perceived by others. Our identities inform our actions, our goals, our values and our social relations; thus power. Identities are sites of contestation (Hopkins, Greenwood & Birchall, 2007) where our own perceptions, desires, interests, expectations and agendas are constantly (re)made, (re)negotiated in a constant exercise of (re)definition of our sense of ourselves and others. Thus, any exercise of identity assertion, expression and renegotiation involves power dynamics (Hopkins, 2011b; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1996). Any examination of identity requires paying attention to the historical background of a particular identity, the identity politics (e.g., interests of a particular group) and the available systems of representation, by dominant and minority groups (Howarth, 2007; Reicher, 2004).

Thirdly, through examining individuals' identities, we also become closer to understand their perceptions of their power relations and the *meanings* attached to

them. Meanings (Ali, 2014; Kitzinger, 1991b; Mahmood, 2001) that may differ between individuals and groups, depending on religious, cultural, social and personal values that individuals may hold. Only then are we equipped to better comprehend individuals' power relations rather than impose our own views, perceptions and meanings on to them.

Power is situated and inextricably value-dependent (Lukes, 2005; Mahmood, 2005). In this thesis, in order to approach British Muslim women's understandings and experiences of power, which might not uniquely follow Western understandings of power, a phenomenological approach to power (Finlay, 2014; Langdridge, 2007) will be adopted. The reasons for choosing this approach are threefold.

First, a phenomenological approach to power might help to avoid the reductionism of Western dominant power theories, which typically emphasise autonomy and overlook gender dynamics by keeping these women's experiences and perceptions of their power at the forefront.

Secondly, a phenomenological approach is used as a means for investigating the relationship between power relations, identity and systems of representation. For this purpose, identity is theorised combining identity process theory (IPT) (Breakwell, 1986; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014) and social representations theory (SRT) (Moscovici, 1976/2008). This combined framework allows for the investigation of the social dynamism of power relations while focusing on individuals' perceptions, experiences, meanings, constrains and enablers of their power relations. Processes of social influence and social representation among groups inform individuals' identity content. Individuals draw on available social representations to identify themselves as well as to redefine them (Breakwell, 2010). Their actions are informed by identity principles, in that they work to satisfy the principles of continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem and self-efficacy (Breakwell, 1986).

Finally, adopting a phenomenological approach together with IPT/SRT is used in this thesis since all three acknowledge the agency of individuals in constructing

their world, while also consider the social dynamics that may constrain and enable them. In this manner, this suggested approach aims to move beyond intergroup perspectives — where the individual aspects (e.g., personal attributes, values) might be lost within the group—, and individualistic ones — which neglect the social basis of experience —, allowing for multiple levels of power relations to be considered.

1.5. Overview of the Thesis

Chapter 2 serves to situate the current research in its wider socio-politico-cultural context. For this purpose, it introduces the problematic misrepresentation of British Muslim women and the inherent implications. It then offers an overview of the history of Muslims in the UK and specifies events and policies that have shaped and continue to shape the representation of British Muslim women. It is argued that governmental policies around multiculturalism and counter-terrorism have largely neglected British Muslim women's experiences and have used them to advance their own agendas. The final section in this chapter offers a succinct review of literature from multiple disciplines around British Muslim women. Furthermore, it briefly introduces how scholars have mainly related to notions of agency and empowerment when researching British Muslim women's power. It is argued that those concepts are problematic; agency has an individual focus that leaves unchallenged structural power relations, while empowerment is mobilised in ways that seem to reify rather than transform social inequality.

In **Chapter 3**, the identity theoretical framework employed in this research, which consists of identity process theory (IPT) and social representations theory (SRT) is elaborated. In the first section of the chapter, the relationship between power and identity is examined. In the second section, social psychology research on British Muslims is critically reviewed. A preference for social identity and self-categorisation theories was identified. However, as useful as those approaches are, they are deemed insufficient for the current research, because they remain at the intergroup level, leaving other aspects of identity unexamined (e.g., values). Hence, it is argued that the study of British Muslim women necessitates a theoretical framework which

recognises the dynamism of the social context, the changing nature of dilemmatic representations, and the complexity of their identities (e.g., multiple memberships, personal attributes).

In the final section of Chapter 3, the current approach to identity that combines IPT and SRT is presented and its core propositions are explained and critically reviewed (e.g., identity guiding principles). It is argued that this combination offers multiple advantages to examine identity and power relations. It facilitates the examination of British Muslim women's power while considering the dynamism of the social context. It enables the investigation into these women's psychological processes, identity strategies and motivations involved in the construction and (re)presentation of their identities. In addition, it assists in investigating how their own and others' identity construction informs their power relations, and vice versa. Furthermore, it helps to capture processes of reproduction and contestation of current social representations.

The conceptualisation of power within the specific socio-political context of British Muslim women is presented in **Chapter 4**. Power in this thesis is understood as relational, situated and culturally informed. The first section offers a critical and detailed review of social research and main social psychological theories on power (socio-cognitive theories; identity-based theories; intergroup theories on maintenance of the status quo and social change; feminist research on power; and cross-cultural theories) to investigate which can better assist the current research. However, it is argued that these theories may fail to suitably encapsulate the power of British Muslim women, which might not follow Western understandings, or avoid imposing narrow readings on them.

The next section of Chapter 4 problematises previous research on British Muslim women's power that has focused predominantly on agency and empowerment. The former notion (agency) relates to an individualised approach to power that neglects the social context. The latter (empowerment) raises questions about who the agents of empowerment might be and for whose interest. Finally, it is

argued that the study of British Muslim women's power necessitates a methodological and theoretical framework that captures their everyday life experiences, meanings and values. Thus, a relational conceptualisation of power, which moves beyond influence and the ability to act, is elaborated drawing on previous research on British Muslim women.

Chapter 5 describes the methodological and epistemological framework of this thesis. First, it describes the critical realist position adopted. Then, it develops the phenomenological approach to power that characterises the thesis. It is argued that this approach allows for the examination of British Muslim women's experiences of power on their own terms and avoids imposing dominant understandings of power that could potentially undermine or misinterpret their power experiences. The third section presents the engagement of this thesis with feminist qualitative research. This helps to focus attention on the power dynamics within the research process and holds the researcher accountable for her decision-making process. The fourth section explains the three-study design of the thesis (triangulation) and the data collection methods (semi-structured interviews), as well as the rationale behind those methodological decisions. In the last section, it is argued that thematic analysis (TA) is considered to be the most suitable method for this research given its flexibility. That is, TA does not impose strong theoretical commitments, which permits its use in the different studies, despite its different aims.

The final section of Chapter 5 is a reflective exercise in which the researcher positions herself as a feminist, socio-politico, psychological researcher within the context of the research. First, I develop the motivations behind the research. Then, I reflect on the power dynamics and ethical issues within the research and particularly within the interview process. Last, I explore the dilemmas of representation triggered by this research.

Chapters 6, 7 and 8 present the empirical studies conducted in this thesis. The first study (**Chapter 6**) explores the social representations of British Muslim women's power in British newspapers (national, local and Muslim sources) during two different

periods. This study provides a starting point to examine how this power is socially represented and understood. It adopts SRT to investigate the processes of anchoring and objectification around British Muslim women's power. Particular attention is paid to the cognitive polyphasia of power, the issue of ambivalence and conflicting representations of power across the dominant and minority sources. This study advances the thesis by examining the representational landscape around British Muslim women's power. A consensus in objectifying power as a choice was found across sources. However, the meanings and values attached to those choices varied. Thus, some choices were constructed as legitimate while others, such as the veil or gender segregation, as "no choice" or irrational by dominant sources. Dominant representations anchored these women's power with barriers, which supported their depiction as lacking agency. Contrastingly, minority representations challenged the (mis)representation of these women by representing them as active social agents, speaking out and succeeding.

The second empirical enquiry (**Chapter 7**) examines British Muslim women's understandings, experiences and performances of power in their everyday lives. For that purpose, a phenomenological approach to power is adopted to capture their perceptions, beliefs, motivations, constraints and enhancers of power within varied social contexts. This study also investigates intergenerationality — that is, how power understandings, experiences and performances are similar/different across generations and how power relations are negotiated across different generations. Thus, this qualitative study comprises 21 semi-structured interviews conducted with women of three age groups (18-20; 25-32; 38-51) around their everyday lives. Special attention is paid to participants' processes of contestation of available social representations around their group and how those impact their identities and power relations. This study marks an attempt to approach British Muslim women's power on their own terms.

Unexpectedly, most participants across groups mainly invoked individualised notions of power while barely mentioned their collective identity or group actions

that could lead to change their social perception. The analysis showed an interrelational nature of their power relations, with participants continuously considering their significant others. It was also evidenced how their religion informs their power relations. Finally, participants engaged in multiple identity strategies, mainly individualised, to contest their negative social representation. Differences and similarities across generations were discussed. For example, how older participants also related to power as a process that requires time, or how middle-group ones emphasised success as proxy for power. During the discussion, it is argued that these prevalent individualised results might be part of an identity strategy to contest the negative stereotype.

Considering the previous findings, the last study (**Chapter 8**) is concerned with collective power. It is based on 21 semi-structured interviews with British Muslim women (20-50 years old) about their social participation and involvement in their communities. It advances the research questions of this thesis by showing in what instances British Muslim women mobilise their collective identity and power and its implications. The analysis illustrates a process of development of politicised identity as well as consciousness raising of British Muslim women, that by coming together, not only do they redefine their own representation, but also their religion and communities to build collective efficacy.

Chapter 9 provides a general discussion of the thesis. It outlines the key findings of the research and examines these in the context of social and political psychological research. It also emphasises the theoretical, empirical and methodological contributions of this thesis. Some limitations of this thesis as well as directions for future research are offered. Finally, a final word about the research is provided.

A final remark worth reiterating concerns the power of representation and the issues it raises. This thesis does not aim to speak on behalf of Muslims. I, the researcher, am neither a Muslim nor British: this will be addressed in the Methodology chapter. I do not seek to represent British Muslim women or to

appropriate their experiences. Instead, I belief this research and my expertise can help to advance our understanding of power in a way that is more inclusive and empathic of minority groups, such as British Muslim women. Thus, I approach their experiences with respect, humility and critical curiosity to hold honest and open conversations that invite reconsideration of questions such as: What is power? What is deemed powerful/powerless for people? What is power's impact? I invite the reader to reconsider these questions too.

Chapter 2:

British Muslim Women:

Socio-Politico Cultural Context, Identity and Power

"Every regime of representation is a regime of power formed, as Foucault reminds us, by the fatal couplet, 'power/knowledge'. But this kind of knowledge is internal, not external. It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that "knowledge", not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm…" (Hall, 1990, p. 225)

2.0. Overview of Chapter 2

This chapter will aim to situate the current research within its wider socio-politico cultural context. First, it will introduce the problematic misrepresentation of British Muslim women and its implications. Then, it will offer an overview of the historic background of Muslims in the UK and the multiculturalism policies adopted by the government. Finally, it will develop a succinct review of literature around British Muslim women from multiple disciplines, with an emphasis on social psychological research. Overall, the chapter will argue that the contrast between their social representation and the extensive research around these women is indicative of a wider debate around power and what it means to be agentic. Thus, it will advocate for research on power (Kitzinger, 19991b) that adopting a gendered approach helps to better examine British Muslim women's understandings, experiences and performances of power. Furthermore, the chapter will highlight the need for a more diverse focus, in terms of age and ethnicity, as well as intergenerational approaches.

2.1. The Problem: The Misrepresentation of British Muslim Women

British Muslim women are represented in social policies, public debates and especially in the media as powerless, passive, oppressed by men and their communities, in need of rescue, and a social problem that needs solving (Brown, 2013; Martini, 2018; Poole, 2002; Rashid, 2014). This representation contrasts with scholarly research that portrays British Muslim women as active agents negotiating their identities and being socially involved (Brown, 2006; Dwyer, 2000; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Joly & Wadia, 2018; Ryan, 2011).

This social focus on British Muslim women belongs to a wider geopolitical context in Europe and America, where Muslims and Muslim women are under scrutiny and perceived as a threat to liberal values (Amer & Howarth, 2018; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b). Comparisons across cultures are established in terms of gender, women's sexual freedom and equality (McRobbie, 2009; Norris & Inglehart, 2012). Thus, Muslim women are mobilised as a benchmark against which Western societies and Western women can measure their own freedom (Kitzinger, 1991a; Scharff, 2011).

Multicultural policies have been criticised for respecting the difference in terms of equality, while leaving unchallenged internal differences that legitimate inequality (e.g., domestic violence) (Joly & Wadia, 2017). Furthermore, it has been argued that most of these social policies have been implemented in accordance with community representatives, who are typically self-elected males and thus misrepresent the needs of women (Beckett & Macey, 2001; Rashid, 2014).

In addition, policies that over-rule Muslim social practices, such as banning the veil or gender segregation, are also being imposed within the context of national security narratives and empowerment arguments, where women are considered subjects and not agents (Brown, 2013; Rashid, 2014, 2016). According to Martini (2018), this representation of British Muslim women as "oppressed and passive

victims" is part of a specific process of production of knowledge that has created a "Western understanding of these subjects" (p. 2).

As a result, British Muslim women's power relations are obscured and jeopardised by systems of (mis)representation, identity construction and (mis)recognition. Hence, it is the purpose of this thesis to examine how British Muslim women understand, experience and perform power, by attending to their perceptions of their own power and how current social context impacts on them.

2.2. The Context: Demographic Profile, Historic Background, Muslim Communities, Multiculturalism and the Neglect of Women's Experiences

This section provides a demographic profile of, and brief historical background to, Muslim communities and multiculturalism in Britain, paying attention to gender relations wherever possible. This brief historical background has several purposes. First, to illustrate the origin of Muslims in Britain and the prevalence of multiculturalism. Second, to show how Muslims have been allocated to the centre of socio-political debates on multiple occasions, which challenges their identities. Third, and importantly for the current research, to argue that multiculturalism policies and research neglect gender and the experiences of Muslim women (Beckett & Macey, 2001; Joly & Wadia, 2017; Yuval-Davis, 1993), with some exceptions (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011b; Werbner, 1998, 1999). Lastly, to give account of some major events that inform the context of this thesis, which might have a direct or indirect impact on the participants of this research.

According to the report of the British Muslim Council (MCB) (2015) based on the UK 2011 Census, the Muslim population was 2.71 million, of which 49% were British-born. Recent statistics from the Office for National Statistics (2018) indicate that around 3.3 million Muslims reside in the UK, out of a total population of 65 million. Regarding ethnicity, the Muslim population is quite diverse, with 68% Asian (Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi). The majority of Muslims (76%) (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015, p. 16) live in "the inner-city conurbations of Greater London,

West Midlands, the North West and Yorkshire and Humberside. Muslims form 12.4% of London's population." However, 46% (1.22 million) reside in deprived areas. Regarding employment, 19.8% (1 in 5) of Muslims are in full-time employment, compared to 1 in 3 for the general population. "Excluding students, the rate of unemployment for Muslims is nearly double that of the general population (7.2% compared to 4%)" (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015, p. 58). Women represent 43% of Muslim's full-time students, which, given this number has increased since the 2001 Census, speaks of higher career aspirations. In contrast, 18% of Muslim women (16-74 age band) are "looking after home or family" (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015, p. 19) versus 6% of the general population (6%). Only 29% of young British Muslim women (16-24 years old) were in employment compared to approximately half of the general population (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015, p. 62). Recent reports indicate that visible Muslim women are the main target of Islamophobia in the UK, according to EU reports (Kallis, 2018; Šeta, 2016).

The Muslim presence in the UK traces back to the end of World War II. During the 1950s and 1960s, various waves of South-Asian Muslim migrants (mainly Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indians) arrived in Britain in answer to the labour shortage (Maxwell, 2006). Mostly, migrants were settled as urban professionals (Modood, 2006). The following waves, during the 1960s and 1970s, were predominantly East African and Asian. During the 1970s, waves of Muslim refugees and asylum seekers from Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Afghanistan immigrated to Britain (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011b).

Until the late 1980s, "Muslim identities were a very minor feature of mainstream accounts of ethnic minorities and discourses of multiculturalism" (Meer, Dwyer & Modood, 2010, p. 85). Yet significant differences in terms of class and education existed across those groups (Maxwell, 2006). Whilst Indians became economically successful, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis had lower levels of education and struggled with social mobility. As a result, those communities became and

remained the poorest ethnic minority groups in Britain (Heath & McMahon, 2005 in Maxwell, 2006, p. 738).

In accordance with the increase in immigration, multiculturalism policies were adopted to reduce racism (Modood, 2009). Since the 1980s, British policies of multiculturalism have allowed tolerance of religious and ethnic diversity, in contrast with the secularism of France or Turkey (Lewis, 2007). However, the politics of anti-discrimination in the UK were built in terms of race (Modood, 2006). Until 2003, it was lawful to discriminate against Muslims because they were not recognised as an ethnic group (Meer & Modood, 2009).

In the UK, equality was built in terms of "equality as difference" (Modood, 2006, p. 39), which referred to the right to have one's difference acknowledged and respected in the public space. However, from a gender perspective, the policies of multiculturalism were disadvantageous (Beckett & Macey, 2001; Joly & Wadia, 2017; Sahgal & Yuval-Davis, 1992; Yuval-Davis, 1996). For example, Sahgal & Yuval-Davis (1992) stated that those policies constructed racism in terms of preserving different traditions and cultures. In so doing, the power relations at the heart of racism (e.g., exclusion, subordination) were left unchallenged, preventing "certain segments of the British population from full participation as citizens" (p. 21). Similarly, Beckett and Macey (2001) contended that "multiculturalism not only exacerbates and legitimises oppressed minority groups but poses threats to liberal democracy and individual human rights" (p. 309). Such threats might include domestic violence, rejection of gay rights and female genital mutilation (FGM). In the case of domestic violence, these authors argued that respecting cultural difference facilitated its continuation. In addition, the policies operated through the dynamics of "non-interference" in people's lifestyles and in "community consultation" (p. 311), where the appointed were "male, self-defined community leaders". In this context, women's voices were mainly silenced and, more importantly, this silence still prevails (Joly & Wadia, 2017; Rashid, 2014).

Regarding integration, research on multiculturalism has continuously shown how "Muslims and South Asians have actively built integrated networks, have trust in mainstream and political institutions" (Maxwell, 2006, p. 736). Yet politicians have been exploiting the view that Muslims do not feel British even though, since the 1990s, research indicates the opposite (Meer et al., 2010).

Several episodes have tested multiculturalism policies and triggered such critical views, from terrorist attacks to revivalisms of religion (Meer & Modood, 2009). For example, the controversy over the publication of Salman Rushdie's book *The Satanic Verses*, known as the *Rushdie Affair,* motivated Muslim protests around the UK for its ban. These protests that made aware the wider population of the existence of Muslim communities in the country is considered as the beginning of a Muslim politicised identity, according to Modood (2006). Yet no event had marked a "before and after" in terms of escalation of negative prejudice towards Muslims until 9/11. Post September 2001, "an anti-Muslim wind blowing across the European continent" (Modood, 2009, p. 193), fuelled by the media coverage of the terrorists, increased the perception of Muslims as impossible to integrate into Western society. In that climate, the Labour government, motivated by an EU ruling, introduced the 2003 Equality Act, which situated religion and belief at the same level as race (Modood, 2006, 2010). As a result, a law against discrimination in employment was set, but it was not extended to all settings until 2007 (Meer & Modood, 2009).

The attacks on the London underground on 7th July 2005 reinforced this position of Muslims at the centre of security discourses (Modood, 2009). The fact that the terrorists were British-born encouraged the construction of a narrative of Muslims as a homogeneous suspect community related to extremism (Gale & Hopkins, 2009; Ryan, 2011). Hence, 7/7 marked a dramatic change for Muslims to prove that "it is possible to live happily in the West" (Bi, 2006). Negative Muslim representation extended the stereotyped perception of their group, and Muslims became discriminated against (Hopkins, 2006) and stigmatised (Ryan, 2011). Debates on the problems of Muslim integration into the British way of life were vividly

relaunched around issues like “faith schools” (Bowskill, Lyons & Coyle, 2007) and the veil (Modood, 2006, 2010). Multiculturalism was coined as a “failed project” (Ahmad, 2017; Meer & Modood, 2009). Muslims were accused of segregating themselves (Meer & Modood, 2009). These discourses were strongly gendered. For example, the hijab was seen as the sign that Muslims were “a problematic minority refusing to integrate” (Werbner, 2007, p. 163) with British values (Meer et al., 2010). Yet again, British Muslim women’s voices were often absent from such public debates (Bilge, 2010; Rashid, 2014).

Since 7/7, governmental counter-terrorism strategies have problematised Muslim integration and launched anti-extremist programmes (e.g., Prevent) oriented to de-radicalise communities and empower women (Ahmad, 2017; Brown, 2008, 2013; O’Toole et al., 2016; Rashid, 2014). Brown’s (2013) analysis demonstrated how Muslim women were considered subjects, not agents, in those policies. Muslim women were essentialised as mothers and denied agency, which justified state intervention. Another crucial episode was the so-called “Jihadi brides” or ISIS brides phenomenon (Martini, 2018). The idea of British Muslim women joining ISIS challenged not only multiculturalism policies, but also gender constructions of Muslim women as “peaceful life givers” (Martini, 2018, p. 3).

Finally, with regards the context of this research and the period over which it has been written (2014-2019), multiple dramatic events and terrorist attacks have taken place around the world and in the UK. Muslim identities have been challenged and interpellated in the UK around the Syrian refugee crisis, the Rohingya Muslim massacre in Myanmar, the 2017 London terrorist attacks, and even the Grenfell Tower fire. In an attempt to give context to the constant pressure that Muslims in the UK must cope with, a detailed list of events is provided below. This list also aims to illustrate the socio-political context in which the studies (interviews) of the thesis took place; thus, several of the events listed below likely occurred during and/or influenced the interview process.

Since 11 September 2001 up until 9 July 2019, tragic events (Since 9/11, 2011) have included: the massacre of 700 people by ISIL fighters in Syria (August 2014); the Kano bombing in Nigeria and the kidnap of at least 185 schoolgirls by Boko Haram (November and December 2014); the Peshawar school massacre in Pakistan, where Taliban militants killed 132 children (16/12/2014); the Charlie Hebdo shootings (7/01/2015); the Tunisian hotel attack (28/06/2015); the Bangkok bombing (17/08/2015); Ankara's bombings (10/10/2015); and Beirut's bombings (12/11/2015). From 2015, the terrorist wave spread around multiple European cities and other sites (Reuters, 2017). They included (Since 9/11, 2011): the Paris and Saint-Denis terrorist attacks (November 2015), where 130 people were killed; the Brussels bombings (22/03/2016); the Orlando gay nightclub shooting (12/06/2016); the Saudi Arabia bombings (4/07/2016); the Nice truck terrorist attack (14/07/2016), where 86 were killed; attacks in Munich, on a southern German train and at a festival in Ansbach (July 2016); the Berlin Christmas market (19/12/2016); the Istanbul nightclub shooting (1/01/2017); the Stockholm shopping centre attack (7/04/2017); the Barcelona and Cambrils attacks (17/08/2017); the Marseille attack (1/10/2017); the Rohingya Muslim massacre (27/08/2017), in which more than 1000 Muslim minorities were killed by the Myanmar government; the Mogadishu attack (14/10/2017), in which a truck bombing killed 350 people and injured 400 in Somalia; the Paris stabbing (13/05/2018); and the Sweida assault (25/07/2018) by ISIS that killed 240 people in Syria. In addition, the Syrian refugee crisis has been ongoing since 2011, with peaks of refugees in 2015, 2016 and 2017. In total, five million people have left Syria (UNHCR, 7 March 2018).

Regarding recent UK-based events (BBC, 2017) that have rocked society, there has been the shooting and stabbing of Labour MP Jo Cox by a far-right extremist (16/06/2016); the terror attacks on Westminster Bridge, which killed six people and injured 50 (22/03/2017); the Manchester Arena attack by a suicide bomber, which killed 22 people and injured 59 (22/05/2017); the attack around London Bridge (3/06/2017) that left seven people dead and 48 injured; the Grenfell Tower fire

(17/06/2017); and the Finsbury Park mosque attack (19/06/2017) against a group of Muslim worshippers.

Thus far, the experience of British Muslim women has been examined only in broad terms, with the historical background that informs the current research sketched. Multiculturalism policies have been challenged under the premises of Muslims' (in)ability to integrate, where they are blamed for self-segregating themselves (Meer & Modood, 2009), and for neglecting gender (Beckett & Macey, 2001).

2.3. Previous Research on British Muslim Women

British Muslim women have attracted scholars' attention from multiple disciplines. In this section, literature will be reviewed from different disciplines such as sociology, geography, anthropology and cultural studies, and especially from social and political psychology, which inform this research. For analytical purposes, this review will be divided into three sections: social representation and identity; social participation and citizenship; and agency and empowerment. At the end of this section, some conclusions will be offered.

2.3.1. Social representation and identity construction/negotiation.

Media representations of British Muslims have captured many scholars' attention (Amer & Howarth, 2018; Baker, Gabrielatos & McKenzie, 2013; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b; Meer et al., 2010; Moore, Mason & Lewis, 2008; Poole, 2002; Poole & Richardson, 2006; Richardson, 2001, 2004; Saeed, 2007; Samad, 1998). Muslims have been portrayed as part of a mono-dimensional (Samad, 1998), deviant and homogenic community (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b; Saeed, 2007). However, a limited amount of research (Al-Hejin, 2015; Khiabany & Williamson, 2008; Martini, 2018; Macdonald, 2006) has investigated gendered representations, focusing primarily on British Muslim women in the media. For example, Martini (2018) signalled that women being represented as oppressed and passive victims contrasts with the "Jihadi brides" phenomenon. Khiabany and Williamson (2008) showed how the veil

was represented as an obstacle to integration, while Poole (2002) found that women in the media were marginalised as significant actors.

In the light of those representations, social researchers have focused on examining Muslims' construction and negotiation of their identities. This line of research has predominantly focused on young women (Abbas, 2003; Begum, 2008; Dwyer, 1999, 2000; Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Hutnik & Coran, 2010; Ryan, 2011) and neglected older women. Some exceptions can be found that have researched mixed elites (Ahmad & Evergeti, 2010), female activists (Brown, 2008; Werbner, 1999) and older women (Ryan, 2011). Veiling practices and constructions of Muslim women's religious identity have been given special attention in several studies (Dwyer, 1999, 2000; Begum, 2008; Haw, 2009; Ramji, 2007; Sartawi & Sammut, 2012; Siraj, 2011). Young women are portrayed as tactical subjects who negotiate their identities, reworking gender roles and remaking their religious identities (Bowlby & Lloyd-Evans, 2009; Brown, 2006; Dwyer & Shah, 2009; Mohammad, 2013; Ramji, 2007). For instance, embracing Islam served young British Pakistani Muslim women to reject their parents' traditional practices and constraining cultural bonds (Mohammad, 2013). Those girls engaged in a process of self-definition of their social and religious practices. Similarly, Begum (2008) showed how young British Bangladeshi women constructed an alternative identity in the remaking of Muslim identity through the usage of space. They relied on the idea of the global space of the Islamic *Ummah* (worldwide community of believers) to challenge the social control and backward practices of their community. However, another aspect to highlight is that social research has mainly focused on British Pakistani women (Ahmad, 2012; Burlet & Reid, 1998; Dwyer, 1999, 2000; Mohammad, 2013; Werbner, 1999, 2000), while only a few studies have examined other ethnicities like British Bangladeshi (Begum, 2008), Arab (Amer et al., 2015) or mixed ones (Hutnik & Street, 2010; O'Toole & Gale, 2010).

Within social psychology, lines of enquiry have revolved around Muslim political activism (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2004a, 2004b), representation (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b), identity construction (Jaspal & Coyle, 2009; Hopkins, 2011a;

Hopkins et al., 2007b; Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006; Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002), recognition (Blackwood, Hopkins & Reicher, 2013, 2015; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011) and intergroup contact (Hopkins et al., 2007b; Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006). For example, Kahani-Hopkins and Hopkins (2002) showed how Muslim identities were not given but strategically constructed by Muslim activists in order to advance political projects. They also illustrated how notions of *da'wah* (representing Islam/bringing people to Islam) were mobilised by participants to promote engagement. Similarly, Hopkins (2011b) examined British Muslim dual identities and their recognition in a qualitative study. He found that participants constructed their identities to assert commonality with the wider British society, while asserting a distinctive religious identity. Being misrecognised has socio-psychological implications, such as developing beliefs of powerlessness, as Blackwood et al. (2013a, 2015) found in their research on how authorities alienate minorities. More attention to socio-psychological research on identity will be provided in the following chapter, which examines British Muslim women's identity theorisation (Chapter 3).

Nevertheless, a criticism that one could level at most socio-psychological research on Muslims is its neglect of gender by focusing on one single social identity (Greenwood, 2012). Neglecting gender is problematic because most pivotal Muslim community organisations are male-dominated (Joly & Wadia, 2017). Of what little research there has been on British Muslim women — Amer et al. (2015), Chapman (2016b, 2018) and Hopkins and Greenwood (2013) — has focused specifically on headscarf and identity negotiations. For example, Hopkins & Greenwood (2013) examined how university students' visible religious identity (wearing the hijab) negotiated their religious, national and gender identities. They found how participants presented themselves strategically, resisting and negotiating available systems of representation. Similarly, almost no research on British Muslim women has been found that addresses questions of class, likewise, of ethnicity, except for Amer et al. (2015), which focused on British Arab Muslim women's representations of virginity and identity construction.

2.3.2. Social participation and citizenship.

Social research has also raised questions around British Muslim women's social participation and collective power, offering thorough examinations of civic engagement and political activism (Erel, 2016; Joly & Wadia, 2017; Lewicki & O'Toole, 2017; Wadia, 2015; Werbner, 1999, 2000) as well as everyday citizenship (Ali & Hopkins, 2012; Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2012; Nyhagen, 2015). For example, Joly and Wadia (2017) researched Muslim women's ability to participate in French and English societies. Participants identified prejudice, Islamophobia and lack of funding controlled by men as obstacles to their engagement. Similarly, in Nyhagen's (2015) research on Christian and Muslim women in Norway and the UK, Muslim participants perceived stereotypes as barriers to their participation. Participants perceived gender segregation within the mosque as an opportunity for their participation in religious life.

From political psychology, Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larkin (2009, 2011a, 2011b) have thoroughly examined how Muslims negotiate their citizenship in Europe. They conceptualised three ideal types on how Muslims negotiate their citizenship identities: retreatism, essentialism and engagement. Retreatism refers to Muslims keeping to themselves as "a way of staying under the radar" (Kinnvall & Nesbitt, 2011b, p. 188), mainly prevalent among first-generation Muslims. However, it has also been used as a coping mechanism by younger Muslims who face exclusion and mistrust. The second strategy, essentialism, entails responding to fear and insecurity by secluding themselves, reinforcing the barriers to protect themselves. This strategy was particularly salient after 9/11 when hostility against Muslims intensified and they found comfort in their religious identities (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011a). Engagement involves openness, celebration of one's hybrid identity and being in constant dialog, redefining identity and recognising plurality. It is important to remark that these three strategic responses to insecurity are not meant to be used for classification purposes, but rather to show the diversity of strategies that Muslims can encompass simultaneously (Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011b). Kinnvall and

Nesbitt-Larking (2011b) also signalled the pressure on Muslim women and emphasised the headscarf debate. They stressed how "essentialist strategies are often focused on women's bodies, clothing, and behaviour" (p. 158) and highlighted the need to attend to women's experiences and meanings. Their research provides a unique examination of three major identity strategies that British Muslim women might adopt when negotiating their power relations. In addition, it also points at intergenerational differences across women, unlike much other research.

Another line of research has focused around Muslims' economic integration and employment (Bowlby & Lloyd Evans, 2009; Cheung, 2014; Lindley, 2002; Khattab, 2012, 2016; Khattab & Johnston, 2013). Lindley (2002) identified that Muslims experienced a *Muslim penalty*, particularly women in employment, when compared to other ethnic religious groups. Twelve years later, in Cheung's 2014 research, this penalty persists in second-generation ethno-religious minorities and it appears higher for Caribbean, African and Muslim women (p. 157). In 2016, the House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee launched an inquiry to investigate the high rates of unemployment of British Muslim women (65% unemployed) and to address the lack of data on their experiences. The report (Women and Equalities Committee, 2016) highlighted that these women faced real inequality, discrimination and Islamophobia. Furthermore, it was recommended to create mentoring programmes to help women "realise their potential in employment" (p. 5). However, as Gilliat-Ray (2010) suggested, at the heart of this high rate of unemployment lies a deeper questioning of how work and workforce are defined. In that sense, volunteering is central for Muslim women and quite often is operated as an intermediate route towards accessing the labour market. Similarly, Muslim women are also the main caregivers (of children and elders) in their communities, with higher numbers than the general population, as stated in a previous section. This thesis follows this line of questioning, widening the scope to power, by focusing on how British Muslim women understand and experience power.

Scholarly literature has also focused on the role of women in counter-terrorism (Ahmad, 2017; Brown, 2008, 2013; Rashid, 2014). For instance, Brown (2008) explored the role of women as agents of change of UK mosques, under the current debates of securitisation and mosque reform. She found that women were caught in a narrative crossfire, where gender played a role in portraying them as civilising influences on men and on Muslim communities, while at the same time they were being instrumentalised by the government to support their narratives. This instrumentalization of women has been extensively supported (Ahmad, 2017; Brown, 2013; Rashid, 2014). Women are mainly portrayed in reductionist ways (as mothers or victims) that reinforce the negative stereotype. This research highlights the need for increasing social research that focuses on these women's lives, experiences and perceptions, which helps to improve future social policy.

Finally, another course of work has specifically focused on the intergenerational transmission of Islam and parenting strategies (Franceschelli & O'Brien, 2014; Ryan & Vacchelli, 2013; Scourfield, Taylor, Moor & Gilliat-Ray, 2012). For example, Scourfield et al. (2012) showed how Islam is an educational source for parents, while Ryan and Vacchelli (2013) examined the complex intergenerational relationships between mothers, from diverse backgrounds, and their British-born children. This line of research has underscored the critical role of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, despite sharing religious faith. Furthermore, research has also examined mothering experiences and marriage, both central to Islam (Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2016; Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Mohammad, 2015; Ryan & Vacchelli, 2013). For instance, Cheruvallil-Contractor's (2016) comparative study on first-, second- and third-generation experiences of motherhood showed how women chose motherhood as one of the many fronts on which to challenge patriarchy, and how this became a space of commonality for women. Some research has also examined Muslim revivalism religious movements (Amir-Moazami & Salvatore, 2003; Bracke, 2003) and religious circles of Muslim women (Bhimji, 2009). This line of research helps to consider crucial aspects of British Muslim women that might be at the core of their power relations.

2.3.3. British Muslim women's power: agency and empowerment.

When exploring British Muslim women's power, scholarly literature has mainly focused on the notion of agency and empowerment. These concepts will be critically described in the following chapter (4) when theorising power in this research.

British Muslim women's agency has drawn significant scholarly attention (Bilge, 2010; Bhimji, 2009; Burke, 2012; Chapman, 2016a, 2016b; Joly, 2017; Hopkins et al., 2006; Salem, 2013). Media research (Atasoy, 2006; Macdonald, 2006; Khiabany & Williamson, 2008) suggests there is a perennial belief that women's agency is incompatible with the veil, despite the fact that veiling has multiple meanings contingent with multiple contexts (e.g., devotion to Islam, protest, cultural or political identity) (Hirschkind & Mahmood, 2002; Hirschmann, 1998). According to Macdonald (2006), this belief and the obsession for "unveiling" Muslim women finds its roots in colonialism and its ultimate purpose is to bring cultures into "conformity with ideological norms of the dominating power" (p. 9).

One might think that interest in the veil is a result of the current social prejudice around this group. Yet back in the 1990s, the agency of veiled women was already being challenged by (feminist) scholars, even before Muslim communities were portrayed as the "problem" (Werbner, 1990) that needed solving. Hirschmann (1998) claimed how, despite the multiple practices of veiling, the "one thing that is fairly universal is Western reactions to it" (p. 349). Nowadays (in 2019), almost 30 years later, in the light of an increasing presence of Muslims in the West (Modood, 2009), huge scholarly attention from all over the world is committed to examining veiling practices and social policies around them (Atasoy, 2006; Joly, 2017; Zimmerman, 2015). This reinstates that the veil is a "contested signifier" (Dwyer, 1999).

This interest in British Muslim women's agency connected to the veil needs to be circumscribed within wider debates around the neoliberal regulation of

women's bodies (Gill, 2007a; McRobbie, 2008; Scharff, 2016), where agency is equated to choice and autonomy (Madhok et al., 2013). Neoliberalism is a political discourse that stresses self-development, individualism, autonomy and freedom (Rottenberg, 2014). However, as Rose (1999) argued, it is through these logics of freedom and desire that people are being governed, limiting the individuals' autonomy.

In this global ideology of "apparent" individual autonomy, British Muslim women are also portrayed as choosing agents and wearing the veil is constructed as a matter of choice (Meer et al., 2010). As one participant in Siraj's (2011) examination of modesty and the hijab in Glasgow explains: "*For me, as somebody who was brought up in a Western environment, the hijab was a personal choice. It has little to do with my husband"* (Faeza, 36 years old) (p. 723). Note how the participant presents herself in an agentic manner mobilising choice, while contesting assumptions of oppression (where her husband would pressure her to wear it).

The headscarf, though, is often framed as a marker of women's oppression in Islam (Chapman, 2016a; Mahmood, 2005). In that framework, choosing the veil becomes a paradox (Hirschmann, 1998). Hence, choosing the veil is not socially interpreted as a sign of autonomy but as oppression, which seems to invalidate their choice, transforming it into a "no choice". Some authors like Duits and van Zoonen (2006) illustrate this paradox around women's choices and oppression, juxtaposing the hijab (Muslim headscarf) and the G-string (female underwear) in their research on Dutch youth. With their provocative research (Duits & van Zoonen, 2006), they aimed to illustrate the ways in which young women's bodies have become the locus of contemporary dilemmas about feminism and multiculturalism. Similarly, Hirschmann (1998) invited Western feminists to enquire for themselves "whether the veil is any more oppressive than Western clothing trends such as Wonderbras, miniskirts, or even blue jeans" (p. 361). Yet if making one's own choices is central to agency, these women seem to be denied agency. But then, what is agency? In

Chapter 4, a careful examination of Muslim women's agency will be provided when discussing the theoretical framework of this research on power.

In a different trend, debates around British Muslim women have also been framed in terms of empowerment, in government policies (Ahmad, 2017; Rashid, 2014) and in the news (Sherwood, 2018). For example, Rashid's (2014) examination of UK counter-terrorism policies showed gendered practices. Narratives around empowering women were sustained by the belief that mothers would be better positioned to identify the first signs of radicalisation. Yet, as it will be argued in Chapter 4, empowerment is an unclear concept (Drydyk, 2013) used in social interventions that is criticised for its reification, rather than transformation, of power relations (Ali, 2014; Syed, 2010).

After considering the social context and previous research around British Muslim women, it becomes apparent the need for adopting a gendered approach when examining power (Kitzinger, 1991b). The current contrasting representation of British Muslim women shows an entrenched social debate around power and what it means to be agentic. This ongoing debate tends to miss the people at its core, these women's voices and accounts of their own experiences. Thus, it is the argument of this thesis that only by exploring British Muslim women's experiences of power, and paying attention to their own terms, meanings and motivations, will we be in a position to begin to understand their power and the forms it may adopt. Thus, we will be in a better position to reconsider established (Western male-dominated) social knowledge around power and move beyond narrowed definitions of their experiences as oppressed or agentic. Furthermore, when researching British Muslim women, it has been signalled the need to enrich the scope in terms of age, ethnicity and class, as well as to adopt an intergenerational perspective.

2.4. Conclusion of Chapter 2

This chapter has situated the aim of the thesis by addressing its socio-politico-cultural context, as well as reviewing previous literature on British Muslim women. For this purpose, attention has been drawn to the Muslim community's historical background in the UK and multiculturalism policies.

In this chapter, a brief review on British Muslim women has been offered. Some conclusions can be drawn. British Muslim women are misrepresented (Poole, 2002), problematised for lacking agency and employment (Khattab, 2016) and instrumentalised by social policies (Ahmad, 2017). Research has been conducted predominantly with young Muslim women (Gilliat-Ray, 2010), disregarding older women. Within social psychology, most research has neglected gender and other differences, such as ethnicity or class, with few exceptions (Amer et al., 2015; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013). Regarding British Muslim women, scholars have focused on agency and empowerment. Both concepts are quite problematic, and this notion will be further addressed in the following chapter on power (Chapter 4). It has been the purpose of this chapter to demonstrate the need to adopt a gender lens to view these women's power experiences. In doing so, the aim has been to reconsider current approaches to power and systems of representation that fail to capture British Muslim women's power experiences, as will be elaborated (Chapter 4).

Chapter 3.

Identity, Social Representation and Power

"Power is not a force which acts on individuals from the outside at a distance: it is intimately involved in the construction of the individual and her sense of selfhood." (Kitzinger, 1991a, p. 124).

3.0. Overview of Chapter 3

Chapter 3 will outline the identity theoretical framework adopted in this thesis, which consists of identity process theory (IPT) and social representations theory (SRT). Several elements will be discussed. First, the chapter will examine the relationship between identity and power relations. It will be argued that any exercise of identity involves power relations. Then, social psychology research on British Muslim identity, which has mainly adopted a social identity approach, will be critically reviewed. This approach is deemed insufficient to investigate British Muslim women's identity because it remains at the intergroup level (e.g., British Muslims), disregarding other group memberships (e.g., women, the working class) as well as other aspects of their identities (e.g., personal values) that might be central and more salient in guiding their behaviour in a given context. Another objection is its neglect of the role of gender in identity construction.

The third section will offer the identity theorisation of the thesis, which combines IPT and SRT. Using examples to illustrate the different propositions of the theory, IPT will be critically reviewed. SRT will then also be critically explained. It will be argued that combining these two approaches offers a holistic approach to British Muslim women's identity and power relations, while simultaneously allowing the

dynamic social context to be contemplated. Furthermore, this combination allows for the consideration of multiple aspects of British Muslim women's identities (memberships, roles, values, etc.). It facilitates an examination of their identity processes and motivations, and how their identities inform their power relations and vice versa. This approach also helps to explore the polyphonic and dialogical nature of social representations (SRs) of British Muslim women's power, focusing on the agents involved in their making and their effects. It assists in investigating identity strategies and in capturing the patterns of reproduction and contestation of available SRs. Finally, the approach helps to record processes of influence, legitimisation and contestation of the current system of representation.

3.1. Introduction: Power and Identity

Identity is at the heart of power relations. Broadly speaking, identity relates to the ways in which we are defined by ourselves and by others, the meanings attached to those definitions and their effects. Identity is not static. It is an ongoing process of definition, recognition and negotiation with ourselves and others, which informs our behaviour, values, interpretations and our social relations. Focusing on identity involves issues of identity construction (how British Muslim women construct their identities and for what purposes), definition (how they define themselves and are defined by others) and recognition (if others recognise the ways they present themselves) (Chryssochoou, 2003; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011).

Identity informs individuals' and groups' power relations. Identity construction, expression and (re)interpretation is an exercise of power (Hopkins, 2011b; Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2004b; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1996; Salem, 2013). In other words, who we are, the groups we belong to and the social contexts in which we are immersed, inform what we can or cannot do (our behaviours) and what we might wish to do (goals) at an individual, interpersonal and collective level. Identity is always a site of contestation and in constant remaking (Hopkins et al., 2007b). Thus, examining British Muslim women's power relations is inseparable from examining their identity.

Investigating power relations also demands careful attention to the social context and historical background of the identities at stake (Abu Lughod, 1990; Reicher, 2004) and how religious, cultural, social and personal values and the meanings attached to those identities inform them (Hopkins & Reicher, 2011). The underlying argument here is that any exercise of identity involves power relations by defining, contesting and reifying systems of representation (Breakwell, 2010, 2014a; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Howarth, 2006). Thus, it is only by examining British Muslim women's identities and their effects, in combination with the levels of subjection attached to every social membership, that will we be able to start comprehending their power relations.

Another aspect to consider around power relations is identity recognition and social perception. One's power does not only depend on oneself and the perception of one's own identity. It also depends on how others — significant and non-significant dominant groups — perceive and represent us (Blackwood et al., 2015). Social psychological research has provided extensive evidence on the negative effects of being stereotyped (Barreto & Ellemers, 2003; Branscombe, Schmitt & Harvey, 1999; Howarth, 2007) and specifically for British Muslims (Blackwood, Hopkins & Reicher, 2013a, 2015; Ryan, 2011) and Muslims in other European countries (Brüß, 2008; Cárdenas, 2019).

Failing to be recognised or to match other people's perception can constitute a threat to the self (Branscombe et al., 1999; Breakwell, 1986). Misrecognition can take several forms, like having one's membership of a valued group denied (Blackwood et al., 2015) and being seen as Muslim, when one wishes to be seen as British or as a doctor (Barreto, Ellemers, Scholten & Smith, 2010). It can also have a negative impact on our own self-perception (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013) and can translate in feelings of lack of self-worth, depression and powerlessness (Blackwood et al., 2013; Breakwell, 1986; Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007). Research also suggests that those with less power (e.g., prejudiced minorities) are particularly sensitive to and affected by their perception of what outgroup

members might think about them (Galinsky et al., 2006; Lammers, Gordijn & Otten, 2008).

This is important for the current research on power because it highlights the need to examine not only how British Muslim women perceive their identities and their power, but also how other people perceive them. Other people's perceptions of their identity can have an impact on their capacity to act and assert their power (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Blackwood et al., 2103a; 2015). These perceptions may enable them (e.g., the privilege of being British), constrain them (e.g., being perceived as oppressed) or fail to recognise the ways in which one is attempting to assert power altogether (Mahmood, 2005). In this respect, British Muslim women's power relations will be dependent on their own and other people's perceptions, which demands the investigation of how those may limit, enable or interpret their power.

Another aspect to consider when examining power is ideology. Ideology is understood here as a system of knowledge and beliefs (e.g., neoliberalism) held by a dominant group that influence, determine and allow certain perceptions of what is powerful and the possibilities of social change (Breakwell, 1979, 1986). Depending on the dominant knowledge and representation, members of marginalised groups might be more likely to be misrepresented or fail to be recognised. Thus, their power relations may also risk being misunderstood, misrepresented and/or unrecognised (Howarth, Andreouli & Kessi, 2014; Mahmood, 2005). For example, Joly and Wadia (2017) highlighted the historical absence of women in research on British Muslim communities. If they have been addressed at all, it has only been in terms of questions on sexual and gender relations (e.g., dress-code, forced marriages), which reproduces stereotypical views and excludes them as social agents.

In this section, the relationship between power and identity of British Muslim women's identities has been discussed. This will be revisited in section 3.3., when the identity framework of this thesis will be described. In the next section, a

comprehensive review of social psychology literature around British Muslims, emphasising women, will be offered.

3.2. British Muslim Women's Identity Within Social Psychology

Scholars from different disciplines have adopted different identity frameworks to approach British Muslim women's identity. Sociologists, geographers and other social researchers (Begum, 2008; Brown, 2006; Dwyer, 1999, 2000; Essers & Tedmanson, 2014; Khan, 2005) have mostly adopted a postcolonial framework, which allows them to explore identity through the lens of colonialism and its consequent power inequalities between colonisers and colonised. In doing so, "cultures and identity are seen as mixing and moving: where here and there, past and present, self and other are constantly being negotiated with each other" (Bhatia, 2002, p. 72).

A postcolonial framework centres on cultural approaches to identity, such as Hall's (1992) theorisation of 'new ethnicities' or Bhabha's (1994) hybridity and third space. Within Hall's (1992) scope, identity is a process in constant making across contexts, rather than fixed. Thus, social researchers (Begum, 2008; Dwyer, 2000; Mohammad, 2013) approached British Muslim women's identities as contextual and relational positionings (Hall, 1992). Research has shown how these women strategically negotiate their identities to fulfil their goals, such as achieving rights (Brown, 2006) or reworking their gender identities (Begum, 2008; Dwyer, 2000; Mohammad, 2013). Similarly, hybridity (Bhabha, 1994) aims to capture the interdependency between cultures and the active role of social agents, by pointing at "the mutually dependence between colonizers and colonized in constructing a shared culture" (Yazdiha, 2010, p. 31). Bhabha (1994) proposes a *third space of enunciation,* which refers to an ambivalent mode of articulation, a way of describing, that entails new possibilities, where colonisers and colonised meanings and representation are renegotiated. For example, Khan (2005) examined two Muslim women's stories living in Canada. She showed how they negotiated their identities despite being immersed in social discourses, that "shape their agency and determine

their strategies of resistance, often to the extent that progressive politics do not appear possible within the category muslim" (p. 463, lower case in original).

Within social psychology, the social identity approach (SIA) (Reicher, Spears & Haslam, 2010) has been paramount in research on British Muslims (Amer et al., 2015; Blackwood et al., 2015; Chapman, 2016a, 2016b; Hopkins, 2011b). In contrast, some studies (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010a, 2010b; Jaspal & Coyle, 2009) have also adopted IPT (Breakwell, 1986, 2014b), which is preferred for this research.

3.2.1. Social identity approach (SIA).

The current section focuses on how British Muslim women's identity has been theorised mostly adopting SIA. First, the tenets of SIA are explained. Then, research that has adopted SIA to examine British Muslims is critically reviewed. It is argued that this approach may be insufficient to discuss British Muslim women's identities and power relations, for several reasons. SIA only contemplates the intergroup and ingroup levels, missing other aspects of identity (e.g., personal values) beyond social memberships that might be central in informing their behaviour (Breakwell, 1986). It underplays the role of gender in identity construction (Amer et al., 2015; Yuval-Davis, 2006). Also, the few studies that have drawn on this approach focused only on gendered issues (veil and virginity), reifying stereotypical views (Joly & Wadia, 2017) by leaving out other important aspects of British Muslim women's lives and experiences.

SIA (Reicher et al., 2010) combines Tajfel's (1978) social identity theory (SIT) and Turner et al.'s self-categorisation theory (SCT) (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). SIT is an intergroup relations theory created to understand social conflict between groups, while SCT is a cognitive theory that expands SIT by focusing on ingroup behaviour.

SIT (Tajfel, 1978) considers individuals for their belonging to particular social groups. In essence, SIT suggests that members of an ingroup ("we") will seek to find negative aspects of an outgroup ("them") in order "to maintain or enhance their self-

esteem" (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 16). Thus, individuals' sense of self comes from every social identity (which has attached value and emotional significance) and the level of affiliation to a group. Social comparison is at the heart of intergroup dynamics and intergroup stereotyping processes (e.g., racism) that reproduce social inequality. Not surprisingly, SIT has also been regarded as a theory of social power (Reicher, 2016), interested in oppressed groups and how they organise collective resistance versus dominant groups.

SCT (Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994; Turner et al., 1987) proposes that individuals identify themselves and others using social categories within certain social groups, in which a series of values, attitudes, emotions and interpretations are shared. SCT also distinguishes between a personal identity (the personal self, "me") and the social identity ("us" versus "them") (Onorato & Turner, 2004). Empirical research has provided substantive evidence that people define themselves in terms of hierarchically organised categories (Oakes et al., 1994). For example, Hopkins & Reicher (1997a, 1997b) showed how Scottish political electoral candidates organised collective action to construct ingroup identity strategically, in a way that was "uniquely expressing national qualities" (1997b, p. 343).

Tajfel and Turner (1979) also identified three strategies that individuals may adopt when facing negative or threatened social identity: individual mobility, social creativity and social completion. First, when group boundaries are perceived as permeable, individuals who — by social comparison — feel dissatisfied with the conditions of their current lives imposed by a particular membership (e.g., as Muslim or as women) might move into another group that suits them better (e.g., de-identifying as Muslim and identifying as British; Blackwood, 2015). Second, group members — in cases of perceived social impermeability — might seek positive distinctiveness from the ingroup by redefining or altering elements of the situation (e.g., removing the veil or capitalising on other aspects such as showing goodness; Ryan, 2011). Finally, by social competition, members from the ingroup may seek positive distinctiveness through direct competition with the outgroup, which might

involve comparisons at the structural level and will possibly generate conflict (e.g., claiming social justice for British Muslim women; Werbner, 2000). These strategies are relevant in so far as they might be adopted by British Muslim women when negotiating their power relations.

Within the SIA tradition, different lines of research have been identified: collective identity construction of British Muslim political activists (Hopkins, 2011b; Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2004a, 2004b, 2009; Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins 2002); identity recognition in everyday lives (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011), with special emphasis on airport settings (Blackwood et al., 2013a, 2013b, 2015, 2016); multiplicity of identity (Hopkins, 2011a; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013); and, finally, examinations of identity construction around virginity (Amer et al., 2015) and the veil (Chapman, 2016b; 2016b) combining SIT and SRT.

Regarding identity construction of British Muslim political activists, Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins (Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins 2002; Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2004a, 2004b, 2009) mainly focused on SCT (Turner et al., 1987). These authors (2004a) examined the antecedents of superordinate categorisations of Muslim identity in the British Muslim public sphere (as British and as members of the transnational Muslim community). Their findings showed that these antecedents were constructed strategically to contest the negative representation of British Muslims and to motivate activism and collective action (Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). In another study, Hopkins and Kahani-Hopkins (2004b) explored Muslim identity construction in the British media. They focused on how different constructions of Islamic identity sustained contrasting visions of British Muslims' collective interests. For example, they found that religious knowledge (the prophets) was invoked in opposite positions, such as to participate in elections but also to boycott them. This thesis owes to these authors their unique approach to examining how social actors construct their social reality, "rather than imposing our own" (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2009, p. 99). Thus, the thesis also examines how British Muslim women

construct and experience their power relations rather than impose a dominant perspective of power.

Another extensive line of work has explored issues of identity and recognition (Blackwood et al., 2013a, 2013b, 2015, 2016; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). Hopkins and Blackwood (2011) examined British Muslims' accounts on how other people's perceptions of their identities affected them in everyday interactions. Patterns of exclusion, misrecognition and overvisibility were found in the data. Those patterns affected participants' ability to act in terms of their own, and their ability to contribute to social and political debate. For example, participants felt that their Muslim identity was constructed in ways that constrained their ability to be heard and to speak. Blackwood et al. (2013a; 2013b) also focused on the impact of misrecognition of valued identities, by examining Scottish Muslim individuals' encounters with airport authorities. They identified a prototypical "Muslim airport story" of anxiety and hypervigilance. Participants also expressed that valued identities (such as being British, respectable and Muslim) were denied and misrecognised. This finding had tremendous impact on participants' power, as their agency was denied for being positioned in terms that were not their own. This line of research is unique in illustrating how failure to be recognised by members of the dominant group has a major impact on British Muslims' capacity to enact their identities and their power relations.

On recognition, only two studies (Hopkins, 2011a; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013) that addressed the multiplicity of British Muslim identities were found. The multiplicity of social identities is inherent in SIA; yet most studies within this tradition examine a single (Greenwood, 2012) or dual (Wiley et al., 2019) social identity. Dual identities can be very important for minorities (Verkuyten, 2007). People who hold compatible dual identities are more likely to be happy and healthy (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013) and to bridge gaps between the different groups to which they belong (Love & Levy, 2019). However, their identities are also more likely to be questioned by members of their different groups (Albuja et al., 2019). For example,

Hopkins and Greenwood (2013) explored how young British Muslim women's performance in wearing the hijab related to their religious, national and gender identities. Participants constructed the hijab as an identity-consolidating performance. One participant expressed how the veil made her feel comfortable and confident ("it doesn't stop me"; p. 442) despite her awareness of hostility. This study also showed that dress coding assisted participants to perform certain identities. For instance, participants combined the hijab with Western clothing to perform "a *British* Muslim woman identity" (p. 442, italics in original source). Additionally, the study illustrated various ways in which participants' gender and religious identities intersected. For example, some participants expressed how they partly modified their performance of their Muslim identity to contest others' assumptions of Muslim women's oppression. This line of work provided this current research with exceptional insight into how British Muslim women construct and perform their multiple identities.

3.2.2. Social identity theory (SIT) and social representations theory (SRT).

A few studies (Amer et al, 2015; Chapman, 2016a; 2016b) have also adopted SIT (Tajfel, 1978) combined with SRT (Moscovici, 1976/2008, 1988) to research British Muslim women's identities. SRT is an explanatory framework created by Moscovici (1976/2008) that situates the construction of reality onto the site of human communication (Slunecko & Hengl, 2007). Broadly speaking, it is a theory of social knowledge that focuses on how people (as individuals and groups) makes sense of phenomena. This theory of communication considers individuals and groups as active agents in the co-construction of knowledge (Howarth, 2006). SRT will be thoroughly reviewed in the following section (3.3.) as part of the identity framework of this thesis.

Drawing on SIT and SRT, Chapman (2016b) examined Muslim women's responses to the stigma of veiling in Denmark and the UK. She focused on the social identity strategies (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) adopted by participants to respond to social identity threat. She found that participants responded in three main ways. First,

participants adapted their veiling practices to the context (e.g., workplace) or stopped wearing it altogether to reduce stigma. These dress negotiations were considered forms of social mobility (passing as members of the majority group). Second, they engaged in social creativity strategy, which entailed rejecting and renegotiating the negative representation of the veil as oppression. Finally, participants also engaged in processes of re-representing the veil in different ways (e.g., "humility" or "protective", p. 362). Overall, this study illustrated how participants engaged in processes of resistance, redefinition and change of the negative representation and the meanings attached to their religious practices. Amer et al. (2015) also adopted SIT combined with SRT to examine social representations (SRs) of virginity and identity construction among British Arab Muslim women. They found that non-practising Muslim women's accounts of why they remained virginal were bounded by culture, while practising women perceived virginity as a religious obligation in addition to a ruling of culture.

The previous studies illustrated and emphasised British Muslim women's agency in negotiating their identity, contesting SRs and constructing knowledge. As valuable as those studies are to this thesis, their focus was mainly on gendered issues (e.g., veiling). They also signify the lack of attention given to British Muslim women within social psychology. What is required of this thesis is a broader consideration of British Muslim women's identity processes, not only as women or in relation to particular gendered topics, but as citizens, mothers, workers, volunteers and any other aspect of identity construction crucial to their lives.

Overall, this literature review offered very useful insights into how British Muslims construct and negotiate their identities and SRs. Of particular use, given the interests of the thesis, was evidence on how processes of (mis)recognition of British Muslim women's identities limited their power relations in different ways. Regarding gender, despite the shortage of research, the few studies available provided better understandings of these women's experiences and agentic performances. However, for the purpose at hand — of examining British Muslim women's identity and power

relations — adopting any variation of SIA is deemed insufficient. The scope of SIA research is limited at the intergroup level, which raises questions about the interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. In addition, other aspects of British Muslim women's "whole identity" (Breakwell, 2010, p. 6.6) such as personal values and/or attitudes might also be important in informing their identity and power relations, instead of only those derived from group membership. Another objection to this approach is that most studies on British Muslims only have focused on a single category of identification, most commonly ethnic or national identity (Greenwood, 2012), disregarding the multiplicity of social identities inherent in SIA. Another strong concern is the small attention that the role of gender in identity construction has received (Amer et al., 2015).

3.3. The Current Approach: IPT and SRT

This section describes the identity framework of the research. First, it reviews IPT alongside social psychological research to support its core tenets. Then, SRT is also critically elaborated. Finally, it discusses how combining IPT and SRT operates as the identity framework of the current research on British Muslim women's power.

3.3.1. Identity process theory (IPT).

Following on from previous research on British Muslims' identities (Jaspal, 2011; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010a, 2012; Jaspal & Coyle, 2009) that adopted identity process theory (Breakwell, 1986, 2001, 2010; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014), this thesis also draws on the IPT approach to conceptualise British Muslim women's identity. IPT is a comprehensive theory concerned with the holistic analysis of the total identity of the person (Breakwell, 2014b). Identity is considered a dynamic social product that cannot be understood unless it is examined in relation to "its social context and historic perspective" (Breakwell, 1986, p. 9). Accordingly, British Muslim women's identity can only be understood by considering the current socio-political context (Chapter 2).

According to IPT, “the structure of identity is a dynamic social product of the interaction of the capacities for memory, consciousness, and organized construal with the physical and societal structures and influence processes which constitute the social context. Identity resides in psychological processes but is manifested through thought, action and affect.” (Breakwell, 2010, p. 6.3). The structure of identity is conceptualised in two dimensions: content and value/affect.

The content dimension consists of all the characteristics that mark someone as unique. It includes those characteristics previously considered as social identity (groups, memberships, roles, social category labels, etc.) as well as personal identity (values, attitudes, cognitive style). However, the distinction between personal and social is abandoned in this theory. IPT proposes that the content dimension is continually growing and accumulative. Therefore, from a biographic point of view, “social identity is seen to become personal identity: the dichotomy is purely a temporal artefact” (Breakwell, 1986, p. 190). IPT also eschews notions of multiple identities (Breakwell, 2014b). However, it acknowledges that any individual can hold multiple social memberships, which may be either positive or negative. Arguably, it may entail benefits, such as opportunities for social interaction and mobility, or as a coping strategy when one identity is threatened (Breakwell, 1986). In some cases, it can also have negative consequences for the individual, like experiencing feelings of incoherence for being Muslim and gay (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010a).

The content dimension is organised in terms of the degrees of centrality, the hierarchical arrangements of elements and the salience of components. As stated, IPT’s identity structure is not static and responds to changes and demands from the social context. By centrality (Hook et al., 2011; Stryker & Serpe, 1994) it is meant the degree to which an individual might perceive a group membership as a core aspect of their identity (e.g., Muslim, or woman, or professional) and self-definition. This is important, as it will inform us about how British Muslim women might perceive the stereotypes attached to their group. Research indicates that higher centrality might make some people more vigilant of discrimination (Sellers & Shelton, 2003).

However, higher centrality and strong group identification is also related positively with well-being (Greenaway et al., 2015), which might protect them from negative consequences (e.g., depression). Identity salience (Markus & Nurius, 1986; Stryker & Serpe, 1994) is understood as the extent to which one's group membership is a relevant part of one's self-concept at a particular moment or in a particular situation. Thus, salience is concerned with a particular event or given context (Markus & Nurius, 1986). The probability that a particular membership (e.g., Muslim, or British, or woman, or teacher) may be salient varies across individuals and situations (Gurin & Markus, 1988).

Regarding the value/affective dimension of identity, each element in the content dimension has a positive or negative value/affect attached to it, depending on social beliefs and codes of values. All those values and affects together constitute the value/affective dimension. This dimension is subject to constant reappraisal, as a result of changes in the system of social values and in individuals' position in relation to the system. Overall, the identity structure in IPT is understood as "fluid, dynamic and responsive to its social context" (Breakwell, 1986, p. 19).

Conforming to IPT, the identity structure is regulated by two universal processes — processes of assimilation-accommodation and processes of evaluation — that operate simultaneously. Assimilation-accommodation are components of the same process and work interdependently. While assimilation concerns the absorption of new components into identity, accommodation refers to the adjustment needed in the existing structure to incorporate those new components. This process can be conceptualised as a memory system subject to bias (retention and recall). The process of evaluation entails allocation of meaning and value/affect to new and old identity contents.

These processes of identity are guided by several principles that define desirable states for the structure of identity (Breakwell, 1986). Originally, four principles were identified: self-esteem (feelings of self-worth or social value), continuity (a sense of connection across time and situation), distinctiveness

(uniqueness from others) and self-efficacy (perception that one can influence one's environment effectively). The salience of these principles varies developmentally across the lifespan (Breakwell, 1993).

The universality or culture-specificity of these principles has been debated (Breakwell, 1993; Breakwell, 2014b). Empirical evidence has demonstrated that the attainment of these desired states varies across cultures and contexts (Becker et al., 2014; Breakwell, 2014b; Kim & Chu, 2011; Vignoles, 2011; Vignoles et al., 2000, 2002). In the case of self-esteem, Becker et al.'s (2014) work with late adolescents across 20 cultural groups indicated differences across groups. Participants of more individualistic nations oriented towards autonomy (control over one's own life) as a source for self-esteem; whereas in more collectivistic nations, participants' self-esteem derived from doing one's duty (more consistent with cultural and value priorities). Similarly, Mahmood's (2005) work illustrated how pious Muslim women in Egypt attained self-esteem through modesty. This type of research illustrates how bases for self-assessment are defined collectively, reflecting culturally normative values rather than personally endorsed ones.

The principle of continuity can also be constructed in various ways. Cross-cultural research has suggested that continuity might also be moderated by culture (Chandler et al., 2003; English & Chen, 2007; Vignoles, 2011). For example, Chandler and colleagues (2003) examined identity strategies used by Canadian adolescents of indigenous and European descent to assert their continuity over change. Two main strategies were found, namely essentialist and narrativist. The former is rooted in the belief of a stable and essential core of identity, whereas the latter denies or trivialises change, establishing a coherent narrative. Indigenous adolescents were more likely to use narrativist strategies while those from European descent were more likely to use essentialist ones.

The principle of distinctiveness has also been problematised. Individuals may hold different views of what it means to be a British person, a Muslim or a woman. Those views will depend on what the person sees distinguishable from others in those

groups, and the meanings attached to them (Vignoles et al., 2000). For instance, second-generation young British Muslim women might be seeking distinctiveness from their older generation by pursuing higher education (Ramji, 2007). Threats to distinctiveness can translate into negative emotions (e.g., isolation) and the perception of the group in stereotypical terms (Vignoles, 2011). Some researchers have suggested that seeking distinctiveness might be a result of individualistic values of the West, which might be weaker or absent among people living in collectivistic cultures (Triandis, 1995). Contrastingly, Vignoles et al. (2002) demonstrated that distinctiveness is universal. Yet they also argued that distinctiveness might be constructed in different ways according to cultural beliefs, values and norms.

Finally, the motive of efficacy refers to individuals' attempts to maintain an identity structure characterised by competence and control. This principle emanated from Bandura's (1989, 1997) theory of self-efficacy. This theory emphasises the key role of beliefs in modulating individuals' performance. People who believe in their own capability to achieve a desired outcome can enhance actual performance. According to Bandura (1997), people with higher self-efficacy beliefs tend to set higher goals for themselves, try harder and persevere more when they face impediments. Feelings of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Reis et al., 2018) are strong predictors of subjective well-being; satisfaction with life and relationships; and increased life span. In contrast, feelings of helplessness and inability to influence one's surroundings are associated with depression and negative well-being (Reis et al., 2018; Seligman, 1975). The feeling of being competent, despite its universality, might also adopt different forms across cultures. For example, Markus & Kitayama (2003) argued that there might be different forms of agency between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. In the former, agency is seen as located in the individual and in the latter, agency is perceived as arising from the collective effort.

IPT identity principles might be at the basis of desired/feared possible selves (Vignoles et al., 2008), as they are strong motivators of behaviour. "Possible selves" is a theory developed by Markus and Nurius (1986) that contemplates individuals'

ideas of what they might become and what they might desire/fear to become and the effects therein. To illustrate how desired/feared selves might operate here, let's entertain an example. A young British Muslim woman might desire to develop a career and to become a mother, which might relate to feelings of self-esteem, continuity and self-efficacy. Achieving these goals might increase her levels of self-efficacy, distinctiveness and self-esteem. However, her feared self might be failing to achieve those goals; or failing to comply with her parents' expectations (e.g., to get married in her early 20s); or failing to be recognised as a professional altogether by wider society induced by the negative prejudice. Thus, despite achieving her goals, she might also experience feelings of helplessness or lack of belonging, and she might engage in identity strategies to cope with those feelings.

These identity principles have been expanded by further research to include new ones, such as belonging (feelings of closeness with and acceptance by other people) (Vignoles et al., 2006); desire for growth (Murtagh, 2009); meaning (to find significance and purpose in one's life) (Vignoles et al., 2006); and desire for psychological coherence (feelings of compatibility between their interconnected identity) (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010a). For example, Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010a) researched how British Pakistani men, who identified as Muslim and gay, negotiated their religious, ethnic and sexual identities. The authors proposed coherence as another principle guiding participants' identity processes.

In regard to this research, these identity principles also guide British Muslim women's actions, affect and power relations. Thus, in order to explore the relationship between their identities and power relations, what is needed is an examination of: how certain power relations make them feel (self-esteem); to what extent they perceive their power relations to be similar or different (distinctiveness) to other British Muslim women, other British Muslims, other women and other people, and how they perceive others' expectations; how they maintain their sense of continuity across different contexts; and also how they perceive their own power

in different contexts (self-efficacy); and to investigate if any other principles, like the ones detailed above, are also involved.

Concerning the social context, IPT recognises that "identity is created in a particular social context that is within a specific historical period" (Breakwell, 2010, p. 6.4.). Within IPT (Breakwell, 1986), the social context is conceptualised in two dimensions: as structure and as processes of social influence. In the former dimension, structure comprises "interpersonal networks, social groups and institutions" (p. 36), the material existence and power distribution that influence each other in their own interpretations of reality. The content of identity is assimilated from this structure in the social context. These structures generate systems of belief and value that provide roles and the acceptable behaviours and attitudes to be adopted by individuals (Breakwell, 1986). The given codes of value and morality bear "the criteria against which evaluation process identity must make its comparisons" (Breakwell, 1986; p. 36). The latter dimension — context as processes of social influence — refers to the ideological substance (e.g., education, propaganda), where each group establishes its system of values and beliefs and attempts to persuade others to adopt them (Breakwell, 1986). Those systems are "reified in social representations, social norms, and social attributions, which specify an arena in which both the content and the value of individual identities are constructed" (Breakwell, 2010, p. 6.4.).

In this thesis, the current social context described earlier (Chapter 2) is conceived as crucial because it informs, challenges and sustains social dynamics of identity construction and representation, as well as power relations. According to IPT, identity is not determined by its social context, insofar as "the person has agency in creating identity" (Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000, p. 357). (This notion of agency will be discussed further at the end of this section).

The social context can also present challenges to the identity, which can become a threat. Within IPT, a threat to identity happens when the processes of assimilation-accommodation appear unable to comply with the guiding principles of

identity. In other words, when feelings of self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness and/or efficacy are undermined or in some ways become unsecure (Vignoles, 2011). In the case of British Muslim women, examples of potential identity threats they might experience include: low self-esteem (e.g., abuse/negative representation), lack of continuity (e.g., not being recognised as British) and failure to influence other people (e.g., work colleagues misrecognising their professionalism) — threats that may translate into feelings of lack of efficacy. In such cases, in order to attenuate the identity threat, these women might adopt coping strategies (Breakwell, 1986). A coping strategy is considered "any activity, in thought or deed, which has as its goal the removal or modification of a threat to identity" (Breakwell, 1986, p. 78). IPT details various coping mechanisms at three different levels: intrapersonal, interpersonal and intrapsychic level (see Breakwell, 1986, for details on each). However, IPT establishes that for "a threat to evoke action, it must gain access to the consciousness" (Breakwell, 2014b, p. 33). This is relevant here, as there will be instances in which participants might occupy a threatening position and yet not be experiencing a threat.

Some critics have regarded IPT mainly as a theory of identity threat and coping mechanisms rather than a theory of identity processes (Breakwell, 2014b). However, as Breakwell (2014b) explained, her focus on identity threat was "a means to exploring the ways identity processes work to construct and maintain identity" (p. 33). In that sense, identity threat was envisaged as a laboratory facility that allowed her to examine the identity processes.

In this thesis, IPT will be used as an interpretative lens for the analysis of participants' accounts of their power relations and how they construct their identities. IPT will allow the thesis to examine British Muslim women's identities in a holistic manner, by considering the different aspects of their identities while keeping the person prominent (Deaux, 2014). It will also help to explore different levels of social interaction (intergroup, interpersonal and intrapsychic) as well as the social context, which has been deemed crucial for researching power relations. Regarding

multiple levels of relation is important because power relations operate at all levels of social interaction. Accordingly, different degrees of oppression, systems of representation that dictate what is feasible or not, and also room for contestation are embedded in every level of social interaction.

3.3.2. Social representations theory (SRT).

Social representations theorists (Duveen, 1993; Duveen & Lloyd, 1986; Jodelet, 1991; Jovchelovitch, 2001; Moscovici, 1988) have examined the intricate relationship between identity and representation. Social representations (SRs) are at the core of identity as they inform the content and value dimension of identity (Breakwell, 2010, 2014a). People take available SRs and engage with them to identify and position themselves and others (Duveen, 1993; Howarth, 2002; Moscovici, 1988). For example, in Hopkins & Greenwood's (2013) study, British Muslim women mobilised SRs around Muslim women being oppressed, when explaining how they negotiated their everyday interactions. More importantly, they also engaged in a process of contestation of those SRs.

Originally, SRT was based on Durkheim's (1898, in Farr, 1998) concept of collective representations, which referred to the outcomes of collective elaborations of social objects. Moscovici signalled to Durkheim's work as his starting point to produce SRT (Duveen, 2007; Moscovici, 1988, 2001). However, he criticised Durkheim's approach for being too concerned with the structure and for being too static (Duveen & Moscovici, 2000). Thus, Moscovici focused his attention on the social dynamics and plurality of representation (Duveen, 2007).

SRT was conceived as a reaction to the individualisation of social psychology (Moscovici, 1963, 1988; Wagner et al., 1999). Moscovici aimed to reject the positivistic approach of experimental psychology centred on the concept of attitude, which ignored the role of power and oppression in psychology (Howarth, 2006). Consequently, his theory concentrated on the social construction of knowledge (Markova, 2008) as opposed to the behaviour of singular elements. For example,

Herzlich's (1973) classic study examined, adopting SRT, how middle-class Parisians made sense of health and illness. She found that SRs of health and illness were operating both at the subjective and intersubjective level. She showed how health and illness SRs coexisted and allowed multiple conceptions, rather than mere opposites.

SRT addresses the process of creating social knowledge, but what exactly is a social representation? "SR is essentially a construction of reality which enables individuals to interpret the social world to render it meaningful" (Breakwell, 1986, p. 55). In other words, representations of ideas, beliefs and practices are shared and allow individuals and groups to make sense of their worlds. Yet it is important to highlight the interactive process and co-constructive nature of SRT, where individuals and groups are considered agents who actively engage and create knowledge. In that sense, SRs are more related to something that "we do, rather than we have" (Howarth, 2011, p. 2). Looking closer, representations are "the products of patterns of communication within social groups and across society as a whole, and thus, importantly, are also susceptible to change and transformation" (Duveen, 2007, p. 545). Here, it has been attempted to provide a definition for the unfamiliar reader to approach SRT. But it is also necessary to signal the controversy around the difficult enterprise of defining SRs (Howarth, 2006; Moscovici, 1988; Voelklein & Howarth, 2005).

SRT states that the process of creating social knowledge is achieved through two socio-cognitive mechanisms: objectification and anchoring (Duveen & Moscovici, 2000; Moscovici, 1988). The former relates to how an abstract phenomenon becomes concrete. According to Wagner et al. (1999), objectification is "a mechanism by which socially represented knowledge attains its specific form" (p. 98). For example, Islam, which can be considered a complex phenomenon (religion, culture, history, value system, etc.), is made visible by adopting the veil as its iconic representation. The product of objectification creates a basis for shared knowledge and collective memory.

Anchoring, on the other hand, refers to the process of grounding and understanding unfamiliar phenomena in what is already known, into pre-established categories, in order to reduce the unfamiliarity. For example, by associating and categorising a phenomenon into existing knowledge or by naming it, this allows us to talk about it (Wagner et al., 1999). It is standard practice the use of metaphors (Moscovici, 1988). For example, a few young British Muslim women in 2015 left the UK to join ISIS. This phenomenon was captured in the media as "Jihadi brides" (Martini, 2018, p. 458). This illustrates a process of anchoring, in which the British media made sense of women joining ISIS by representing them through gendered stereotypes, as brides of jihadists as opposed to terrorists, a notion mainly related to men.

SRT allows for the examination of particular phenomena within their social context. This has already been deemed crucial for this thesis. For example, Wagner, Sen, Permanadeli and Howarth (2012) studied veiled Muslim women's perceptions in two countries: Indonesia, where Muslims represent the majority; and India, where they are a minority. The Indian women saw the veil as a cultural identity affirmation. Indonesian women, as members of the majority, related to the veil as fashion, modesty and convenience, hardly referring to religion. These findings challenged perceptions of Western countries, where the veil is seen as a religious signifier of oppression. In addition, this study illustrated how SRs are made and vary within a particular social context. This consideration of the social context in the examination of human behaviour is one of the major contributions of SRT. This consideration of the social context also makes SRT a very suitable theory to research power relations.

Any given context offers multiple and diverse SRs. The multiplicity and diversity of SRs was captured by Moscovici under the notion of cognitive polyphasia (Duveen & Moscovici, 2000; Wagner, Duveen, Verna & Themel, 2000). This term refers to the co-existence of multiple, diverse modes and even sometimes to the incompatible ways of thinking that we can engage with depending on the groups we belong to, the context that we find ourselves in, etc. Polyphasia is relevant here

because it infers that any understanding of power and the consideration of certain social practices as powerful or powerless may differ across groups and settings, and the SRs that individuals hold on to. For example, Abu Lughod (2001) illustrated how Bedouin Muslim women built on piety and modesty to assert power, which contravenes Western representations of power that exalt autonomy and achievement.

In relation to power, SRT also allows for the examination of processes of social influence and legitimisation of systems of knowledge between different social groups, as well as possibilities of resistance (Howarth, 2006, 2011). In that sense, SRT is also a theory of conflict (Elcheroth, Doise & Reicher, 2011) and social change (Duveen, 2007; Howarth et al., 2014; Klein & Licata, 2003), as it examines different versions/constructions of reality and how SRs evolve, are challenged and open opportunities for change. For instance, Howarth (2002) examined how the SRs of others impact individuals' identity constructions. She conducted focus groups with teenagers to examine the strategies they adopted to present a positive identity as Brixtonites (social identity), considering the negative social representation around Brixton. She found that participants positioned themselves using available SRs in different ways, while at the same time they were contesting them.

SRT has been criticised and praised for different reasons (see Howarth [2006] for a detailed summary). Potter and Wetherell (1987) problematized the makeup of the theory itself. They deemed the corpus to be contradictory in its nature, which has motivated multiple interpretations. Others, like Breakwell (2014a), have argued that it is precisely its openness and "anti-orthodoxy" (p. 23) that has kept SRT in constant activity and progress for over 30 years.

Considering the interest in power of this thesis, any reader familiar with social psychology approaches must be wondering at this point why SRT was preferred instead of discourse analysis (DA), or even a more Foucauldian analytic approach. Scholarly debates around the pertinence of SRT or DA have persisted since the latter appeared in the 1980s (Flick & Foster, 2008). For example, Batel and Castro (2018)

recently reopened this dialogue, offering a detailed review. In their work, they advocate for integrating conceptually and empirically SRT and discursive psychology. Their approach has also been contested (Augoustinos, 2019; Jovchelovitch, 2019). For the matter at hand in this thesis, adopting SRT helps to ensure methodological flexibility at an epistemological and ontological level, which would have been lost by adopting DA. As will be discussed in the methodology chapter (5), this thesis adopts a critical realist perspective, while DA is rooted in social constructionism (Flick & Foster, 2008). Both approaches share a focus on how people construct versions of the world through language. However, in the light of the overall research question of this thesis — "How do British Muslim women understand, experience and perform power?" — SRT contributes to answering it by focusing on different aspects, some of which are less central to DA. First, SRT is interested in everyday-life dynamics and the processes involved in challenging "taken for granted" traditions or knowledge from the past (Jovchelovitch, 1996); for example, certain understandings of power such as oppression/resistance. Second, SRT emphasises the social context (Howarth, 2006) and exploration of the dialogical dynamic of representation, examining the interplay of individuals, groups and institutions that produce understandings and interpretations around British Muslim women's power representation. Third, it contemplates the symbolic function and effects of SRs of power (Moscovici, 1976/2008). Fourth, SRT acknowledges the agency of individuals in (re)defining, constructing and transforming SRs. Finally, it was also adopted for methodological reasons, as committing to SRT in the first study of this thesis offered a theoretical flexibility for the following studies.

This section has critically presented SRT. The following section elaborates on the SRT/IPT approach of this thesis.

3.3.3. Combining SRT & IPT: an approach to power relations and social change.

This section focuses on the relationship between IPT and SRT and describes the benefits of combining these theories to research British Muslim women's power relations.

Within the IPT framework, SRs inform the content and value dimension of identity (Breakwell 1986, 2010). SRs carry normative and prescriptive obligation of identity formation (Duveen, 1993), which also determines, limits and constrains the positions available for individuals. However, IPT and SRT both recognise how individuals manoeuvre to customise SRs to suit their own interests (Breakwell, 1993, 2001; Howarth et al., 2014). For example, Amer et al.'s (2015) study on SRs of virginity and identity formation, among British Arab Muslim women, showed that participants adopted certain available positions to secure their identity. Participants positioned themselves as virgins, which initially could be conceived as a matter of honour and religious normativity. Yet careful examination showed that adopting this positioning was a "significant cultural symbol that secured their sense of cultural identity" (Amer et al., 2015, p. 3).

Another aspect of the relationship between SRT and IPT is that SRs and social influence processes also shape the identity principles (Breakwell, 2014a, 2014b). Thus, given a particular context, individuals might sometimes appear to challenge negative SRs around their group to gain self-esteem, while at the same time reify them in an attempt to seek distinctiveness. For example, a British Muslim woman contesting notions of British Muslim women being oppressed might refer to her own experience and how at least people in her community are not oppressed. She may present herself and her community in a better light (self-esteem), self-differentiating herself from other women who might in fact be oppressed; though in doing so, she might be reinstating the stereotype.

In addition, both theories also agree that structural inequalities might limit or facilitate individuals' agency. IPT (Breakwell, 1986) suggests that structural power inequalities might constrain or enable individuals' access to identity strategies. SRT states that the access to the field of representation might be more limited for certain individuals/groups than others. It also emphasises that social inequality is maintained by institutionalised practices or social conventions of symbolic order (Elcheroth et al., 2011; Howarth, 2006). In this sense, British Muslim women might have access to certain identity strategies, which may vary depending on other identity aspects (e.g., ethnicity), while SRs may have considerable potential for facilitating or constraining their power.

The current negative system of representation around British Muslim women (described in Chapter 2) suggests that these women, as a group, may lack the means or the symbolic power to assert their perspective of the world and to persuade others. Consequently, they might have to deal with the only representations available, which are constructed by others (Howarth et al., 2014). For example, Brown (2013) and Rashid (2014), as stated earlier (Chapter 2), showed how narrow representations of British Muslim women were mobilised to justify governmental intervention in their daily lives for counter-terrorism purposes. However, in the light of SRT and IPT and previous research, this does not discard that these women might be actively (re)making their SRs, which may adopt multiple forms. For example, Amer and Howarth's (2017) examination of white British Muslims in the British media showed the predominant SR of this group to be multi-layered threat (security, social and culture). The authors identified two patterns of contestation of this negative hegemonic frame: direct challenge and mobilisation of their ethnicity as whites.

Combining SRT and IPT helps to capture processes of influence and legitimisation in the knowledge production that reinstate and maintain certain representations (e.g., what it means to be powerful/have power) while undermining others (e.g., British Muslim women's power). Any process of representation is embedded in the dynamics of social influence, legitimisation and conflict between

agents (individuals and/or groups), and thus power (Elcheroth et al., 2011). Groups compete over meaning and representation (Howarth, 2006). Powerful groups will have more power in defining social reality. Consequently, their SRs might become normative, informing patterns of thinking that may exclude other representations (Howarth et al., 2014). While the majority will be interested in maintaining and reinstating the status quo, minorities sometimes might appear to justify it (Jost, 2011), while others might seek to challenge and transform it (Staerklé, Clemence & Spini, 2011).

Combining IPT and SRT also allows to examine identity strategies mobilised by individuals and/or groups to maintain, contest or transform SRs. As explained earlier, SRT and IPT also find common ground in their consideration of individuals and groups not as mere containers of social representations but as active agents in the co-construction of knowledge (Breakwell, 2010, 2014a; Howarth, 2006). Here, individuals' agency denotes the ability to sustain, challenge and transform social representations (Breakwell, 2010). For example, a British Muslim woman by presenting herself as actively involved in society and pursuing her goals (e.g., career), she could be attempting to challenge and change the negative SRs around her group. Similarly, within SRT resistance is also possible at the point where individuals/groups oppose any attempt to influence their identity in the making process of SRs (Duveen & Lloyd, 1990). For example, Sartawi and Sammut and (2012) examined the negotiation of British Muslim identity of first-generation Muslims in London. They found a dichotomy between personal and public space in participants' behaviour. While some participants had abandoned Islamic rituals in their public everyday life as a result of identity threat, they resisted and maintained the orthodoxy in their private life matters (e.g., marriage).

In conclusion, this thesis aims to capture how British Muslim women (re)present their identities and their power in the current representational landscape, and to examine "spaces of delegitimization" of reified SR (Howarth, 2006, p. 75), where dominant social practices are challenged and problematized. For that

purpose, combining IPT and SRT offers the possibility of examining British Muslim women's identity and SRs of their power in different ways. It allows for the consideration of various SRs (polyphasia) around British Muslim women's power relations. In addition, it helps with the investigation into what implications those SRs may have on British Muslim women's identity construction, their perceptions of their own power, and other people's perceptions of their power. Furthermore, it supports the examination of opportunities of social change (Klein & Licata, 2003) of the current system of representation by attending to how British Muslim women construct, sustain, contest and transform available SRs. In conclusion, this framework (Breakwell, 2010, 2014a; Howarth et al., 2014) allows this thesis to approach British Muslim women as social agents with agency to sustain, challenge and resist dominant social representations, as well as to create alternatives.

3.4. Conclusion of Chapter 3

The identity theoretical framework adopted in this thesis, which consists of IPT and SRT, has been elaborated in this chapter. First, the relationship between identity and power relations was addressed. In essence, it was discussed that who we are and how we are perceived informs what we can do (our power relations). Similarly, it was considered that the social context might limit or enable individuals' power relations.

A review of social psychological literature has deemed the SIA tradition inappropriate to examine British Muslim women's identity and power relations. Despite the useful insights into how British Muslim women negotiate and construct their identities, this line of work remains at the intergroup level, disregarding other memberships and aspects of identity. In this literature, it was also signalled the neglect of the role of gender in identity construction, which is capital for the current thesis.

Hence, an alternative approach to identity is offered by combining IPT and SRT theories. After critically reviewing IPT and SRT, it is argued that combining these two approaches:

- Offers a holistic approach to British Muslim women's identity construction, while simultaneously allowing for the consideration of the dynamic social context and how it informs their power relations;
- Allows for the examination of SRs around British Muslim women's power and their effects;
- Helps to explore the polyphonic and dialogical nature of social representations, focusing on the agents (individuals/groups) involved in their making, and vice versa;
- Supports the examination of identity strategies involved in the construction of British Muslim women's identities, as well as patterns of contestation and reproduction of available SRs;
- Contributes to the capturing of processes of influence and legitimisation in the knowledge production, which reinstate and maintain certain representations while undermining others, considering patterns of consensus and conflict.

Chapter 4.

Power, Agency and British Muslim Women

> "(...) I am the most radical enemy that one can imagine of the idea of power, and I don't ever speak about power, (...) but rather speak of different instruments, tools, relations, techniques, etc., that allow for domination, subjectification, constraint, coercion, etc. I hate power, I hate the idea of power" (Foucault, Gordon & Patton, 2012, p. 106)

4.0. Overview of Chapter 4

In Chapter 2, research on Muslims and British Muslim women was reviewed, examining their socio-historical background and the current socio-political context. Chapter 3 focused on their social representation and the approach to their identities. The current chapter will examine the power framework of this thesis. Power will be conceptualised as relational, situated and culturally informed.

To support these arguments, the chapter will begin by critically reviewing several social psychological power theories, as well as feminist and cross-cultural research on power that inform this thesis. It will be argued that most of these theories remain at the intergroup level, are mainly laboratory-based and underpinned by Western assumptions (e.g., desire of autonomy), and are therefore not well suited to research on British Muslim women's power. However, several aspects of them might support the aim of the current research and will therefore be discussed. Contrastingly, feminist and cross-cultural research offer crucial insights for this research, like the need to examine women's understandings and experiences of power that might escape to male-dominated theorisations, and the need to consider how cultures inform power theorisations.

The following section will examine notions of agency and empowerment adopted by previous research on British Muslim women's power. It will be argued that those approaches may be insufficient to fully tackle the power relations discussed. Agency is mainly an individualised notion that neglects the relational aspects of power. Empowerment approaches will also be problematised as these seem to neglect women's interests and reproduce social inequality, rather than to assist in overcoming it.

Ultimately, the chapter will advocate for a relational approach to power as the better equipped approach to consider gender relations, and to capture British Muslim women's power understandings and experiences, which might escape to Western understandings of power. For that purpose, the final section will develop an operationalisation of the relational approach of power, supported by research on British Muslim women.

4.1. Theorising Power Within Social Psychology

4.1.1. Introduction.

Traditionally, power has been associated exclusively with those in control of valued sources — the power holders such as the monarchy, the elites or the government (Allen, 1999), mostly men. Conceptually, power has been equated with influence and control. For example, French and Raven (1959) described power as the potential to influence others.

Within social sciences, there have been several attempts to approach power through categorisations. For example, Dirks et al. (1994) described a binominal perspective: power at a micro-level, conformed by everyday relationships between individuals (Bourdieu, 1990) and a macro-structure of social relations (Foucault, 1980). Debates on power have also worked around the primacy of structure and agency (Dowding, 2008; Giddens, 1984). Broadly, *structure* relates to the social arrangements that regulate social life, limiting its options, while *agency* relates to the ability of the individual to act individually, making their own choices (Dowding, 2008).

Despite this interconnected dualism, for many years academics have perceived power as a structure that constitutes subjects (Butler, 1997; Foucault, 1982). Following this perspective, individuals would internalise forms of power through tradition, institutions and culture in this social structure.

One of the main contributors to power theorisation was Michel Foucault (1978, 1982), for whom power operates in relations. "Power only exists in action (...) it is not given nor exchanged nor recovered but rather exercised" (Foucault, 1982, p. 89). His approach motivated a complete transformation towards traditional perspectives that conceptualised power as a unique possession of the elites. In his bottom-up approach, he focused on the mechanisms that allow individuals to become and remain subjects of power and domination (Keenan, 2001). For Foucault (1980), power was productive rather than repressive. Hence, power worked through discourse, shaping social practices (e.g., beliefs) and configuring *systems of truth* (1977/1995, p. 23) that determine social norms (e.g., gender) and how people think about them (e.g., sex). Foucault's work will be revisited in section 4.1.5. on feminist research.

Within social psychology, power as a relational construct is well established (Guinote, 2008, 2017; Guinote & Vescio, 2010; Reicher, 2016). Within this approach, power is mainly understood as dependent on social influence (French & Raven, 1959; Turner, 2005) through giving or withholding rewards and punishments (Keltner et al., 2003). However, this line of research on social influence seems to reproduce a binomial intergroup logic comprising powerful and powerless groups (Overbeck, 2010), which neglects personal and interpersonal levels of power, as well as everyday life interactions.

In recent times, a renewed interest to theorise power within social psychology research has been identified (Guinote, 2017; Lammers et al., 2015; Reicher & Hopkins, 2013). This growing interest builds on the idea that power relations have been under-examined and oversimplified (Pratto, 2016; Reicher, 2016). Two main objections to current relational approaches are highlighted: the fact that there is still

little known about “the role of subordinates in power dynamics” (Guinote, 2007, p. 374); and whether power-related processes apply to non-Western cultures (Overbeck, 2010).

This thesis will adopt a relational approach to power (elaborated at the end of this chapter, section 4.3.) to examine British Muslim women’s power understandings, experiences and performances. In doing so, it will contribute to research examining power relations of prejudiced groups, whose experiences of power might not uniquely follow Westernised understandings of power.

This introduction has served to briefly introduce social science approaches to power and the capital contribution of Foucault’s relational approach to power. The aim of this section is to review social psychology power theories to identify those aspects that can contribute to the research as a whole. Thus, this critical review will be divided into five blocks, socio-cognitive theories; identity-based theories; intergroup theories on maintenance of the status quo and social change; feminist research on power; and cross-cultural theories that inform this research.

4.1.2. Socio-cognitive power theories and effects of power.

Socio-cognitive approaches to power have developed around dependency and social influence between those who hold and those who lack power. For example, Fiske and Dépret (1996) suggested that individuals or groups are powerful to the extent that the control of their own outcomes is less dependent on others than others’ outcomes are dependent on them. Their *asymmetrical outcome dependency theory* is based on dependence; hence, independence is desired and the more dependent one is, the less power one has. Similarly, Keltner et al.’s (2003) a*pproach-inhibition theory of power* associated powerful people with increased awards and freedom, and the powerless with punishment and social constraint. Thus, low-power individuals tend to inhibit their behaviour, which is also more contingent on the behaviour of power holders.

These two lines of research were mainly conducted in a laboratory setting, examining low- and high-power individuals (Guinote, 2007; Overbeck, 2010). But as individuals, we are never low- or high-power people in absolutes in our everyday lives. Power varies within the context and politics of the identities at stake. Another objection to these socio-cognitive theories is that they are built on the assumption that independence and freedom are desired. Yet as previous research (Mahmood, 2005) on pious Muslim women showed, autonomy might not always be desired by religious women. Similarly, Keltner et al.'s (2003) approach leaves unattended "what constitutes a social reward (or punishment) to whom, why and when" (Simon & Oakes, 2006, p. 107). Yet, as already argued in Chapter 3, any research on power needs to examine individuals' meanings attached to power relations. Therefore, other theoretical avenues might be more suitable.

Despite the oversimplification of these socio-cognitive approaches (Guinote, 2017), they might also provide useful insight into understanding British Muslim women's power. For example, Guinote et al. (2015) showed that people in disadvantaged positions prioritise social goals (pro-social and communal behaviour), compared to people in advantaged social positions. Vescio and Guinote (2010) also illustrated how lacking power produced negative effects on: well-being and health (e.g., chronic stress and mental health issues); cognition (e.g., avoidance and attention to threats); and behaviour (e.g., less action-oriented; compliant behaviour). Furthermore, Cook et al. (2011) found that feeling stereotyped is a forerunner to feelings of low power and inhibition among stigmatised and non-stigmatised individuals, impacting on the perception of one's own power.

The current subsection has addressed socio-cognitive theories on power and signalled some aspects that might support the research overall. Those theories have also been criticised for neglecting identity. Thus, the following subsection will examine identity-based power theories.

4.1.3. Identity-based power theories.

Identity-based power theories are rooted in social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), addressed earlier (Chapter 3). First, Turner's (2005) *three-process theory* states that sharing a social identity is a necessary antecedent to achieve social influence. Thus, power is "the capacity for influence and that influence is based on the control of resources valued by others" (Turner, 2005, p. 1). Most research (Brauer & Bourhis, 2006) assumes that influence is the result of power (e.g., power holders will have greater influence). Yet for Turner (2005), power is a consequence of groups' social influence, and groups' social influence is caused by psychological group formation. Turner focused on three processes of influence: persuasion (capacity to convince others), authority (ability to control in-groups through norms and the right to control others) and coercion (attempt to control others, by force if necessary). In addition, he warned that power relations are always situated and need to be examined in the context in which power relations emerge, according to groups' beliefs, values and norms. This approach highlights the importance of group formation in power relations and the social dynamism of the context, which will also be considered in regard to British Muslim women.

Second, Simon and Oakes (2006) proposed the *identity model of power*, which also focuses on intergroup relations. This model considers the coercive nature of power, emphasising its consensual and productive capacity (Arendt, 1969). Thus, power is "directing others' efforts towards one's own projects" (Simon & Oakes, 2006, p. 113), rather than outcome control. In this approach, the power holders recruit agency (free social actors) by encouraging some identities and marginalising others. The authors' assumptions about the freedom of social agents defuse potential issues of false consciousness (Jost, 2011; Meyerson, 1991). False consciousness is defined as the holding of "false beliefs that sustain one's own oppression" (Cunningham, 1987, p. 255). This notion is quite often used in regard to Muslim women (Hirschkind & Mahmood, 2002), which suggests that these women may be living in oppressive regimes or environments, yet they might not only not be aware

of their oppression but also be complicit in it, by considering it normal. Therefore, Simon and Oakes (2006)'s assumptions about freedom neglect the meanings that power relations might have for the people involved. In this thesis, careful examination of the meanings of power relations for British Muslim women will be paid.

These identity-based theories are deemed inadequate to examine British Muslim women's power as they are limited to forms of social influence, neglecting other forms of power (e.g., resistance) that might not fit within Western forms. Also, they remain at the intergroup level (SIT) and thus fail to address other aspects of identity (e.g., personal attributes) that are better conceptualised in other theories like IPT, as discussed earlier (Chapter 3). The following section will explore intergroup power theories.

4.1.4. Intergroup power theories.

Given the negative prejudice around British Muslim women, power theories that focus on the role of individuals/groups to maintain or to challenge the status quo might be helpful to examine their role in maintaining and contesting the current social context. First, theories around social order and system justification will be critically reviewed and some critical elements for the current research will be highlighted. Second, social change theories will be explored.

Two theories — *social dominance theory* (SDT) (Pratto, Sidanius & Levin, 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and *system justification theory* (SJT) (Jost, 2011; Jost, Banaji & Nosek, 2004) — have aimed to address the social psychological processes involved in maintaining the social system of inequality. SDT suggests that group-based hierarchy maintaining inequality is characteristic of social systems, resting on economy, gender, race, etc. One of the psychological mechanisms to sustain inequality is through *legitimising myths* (Pratto et al., 2006), like sexism. Myths around British Muslim women as victims or oppressed figures might operate in sustaining their powerlessness. Hence, these myths would contribute to *system*

justification, understood as: "the psychological process by which existing social arrangements are legitimised, even at the expense of personal and group interest" (Jost & Banaji, 1994, p. 2).

SDT (Pratto et al., 2006) devises *social order* not as merely imposed by a dominant group, but as "a collaborative process by which existing structures of inequality are accommodated, justified and rationalized by nearly everyone in society, including those who are most disadvantaged by the status quo" (Jost, 2011, p. 225). In doing so, it recognises the agency of all members of society to not only sustain it, but also to change it.

Central to these theories is the notion of *false consciousness* (Jost, 2011; Meyerson, 1991), whereby an individual or group might hold beliefs that only work towards sustaining their disadvantaged position in society. In this respect, British Muslim women are quite often accused of favouring a system that oppresses them (Hirschmann, 1998; Mahmood, 2005). According to SJT (Jost, 2011), their support of the system that oppresses them would lie in their psychological motivation to defend, legitimise and encourage the social order (e.g., patriarchy) as it reduces uncertainty, threat and social discord. In this sense, their need to believe in the fairness of the system would conflict with the need to maintain a positive social identity (Kay et al., 2010). Yet, SDT (Pratto et al., 2006) also recognises their agency into changing the status quo.

This line of research is deemed inappropriate for two main reasons: it remains at the intergroup level and it is mostly laboratory based, which raises questions about its applicability in real-life contexts (Guinote, 2007). Yet it is also beneficial as it illustrates potential lines of criticism of the current work (e.g., false consciousness).

Contrastingly, different lines of research have sought to understand and explain social change: *collective relative deprivation* (CRD); *prejudice reduction*; and *collective action*. CRD (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Mummendey et al., 1999) focuses on how individuals perceive intergroup inequality and its impact. This perception of

deprivation is assumed to lead to collective action to change the status quo. Prejudice reduction (Dixon et al., 2012) aims to reduce prejudice and group inequality by changing dominant views and promoting contact. While CRD focuses on minorities' perceptions, prejudice reduction is mainly oriented towards dominant groups. Lastly, collective action (see Dixon et al.'s 2016 review; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995b) examines how individuals, particularly minorities, engage and organise themselves to bring about change. For the current research, CRD and prejudice reduction might be insufficient as the scope for each does not extend beyond the intergroup level. Instead, collective action might help to examine how British Muslim women organise themselves to bring about social change, and how they understand, experience and perform collective power. The following subsection will elaborate some aspects of this theory that might contribute to the current research.

4.1.4.1. Collective action.

Traditionally, two main independent pathways have been identified as predictors of collective action (Stürmer & Simon, 2004): shared group identification, combined with the experience of the group-based injustice collective (Simon & Klandermans, 2001); and assessment of cost and benefits (Simon et al., 1998; Van Zomeren, Leach & Spears, 2012). Recent examinations (Hartley et al., 2016) identified social identity, experience of group-based injustice and group efficacy as the main social variables for collective action. Some of these variables will be elaborated below in relation to this research.

Group identification is still considered one of the strongest predictors of participation (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995b; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Simon et al., 1998; Veenstra & Haslam, 2000). Social psychology research around Muslims' political activism has examined processes of identity construction (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2004a, 2004b), as reviewed in Chapter 3. Most research on collective action has adopted SIT (Drury, Evripidou & van Zomeren, 2014). Research adopting this approach focuses largely on a single identity (Greenwood, 2012), which is deemed problematic. As was argued earlier (Chapter 3), the SIT approach may give too much

weight to the collective identity at stake, neglecting other identities and individual differences. In addition, recent research (McGarty et al., 2009, 2012) has also revealed that belonging to opinion-based groups (e.g., left-wing supporters) might be a stronger predictor than identification (e.g., Muslim). The current research indicates that British Muslim women might engage in collective action not only as Muslims or as women, but also through belonging to opinion-based groups.

Simon and Klandermans' (2001) examined how groups become politicised through processes of identification and alliance-seeking might also support this research. They showed that identification as a member of a group that has been long-term prejudiced or treated unfairly by another group was critical to the pursuit of social change. In their model, the aggravated group seek to convince a third party to support their struggle. Previous research on British Muslim women's collective action (Joly & Wadia, 2017; Lewicki & O'Toole, 2017; Werbner, 1999) provides examples that may fit with this model. For example, Werbner's (1999) examination of Al-Massoom, a women's group of activists in the Manchester of the 1990s, might serve to illustrate this model. South Asian British Muslim women challenged their position within the male-dominated community by creating transnational and national alliances (e.g., MPs). Thus, examining processes of identification and politicisation of British Muslim women might help to understand how they perceive and experience their power and social change. Similarly, Lewicki and O'Toole's (2017) research on British Muslim women's activism in Bristol found that their identification and networks of support surpassed the local and national level and were entrenched at a transnational scale. They also illustrated their efforts to bring about social change by renegotiating on more inclusive mosques and seeking to end violence against women and female genital mutilation (FGM). Thus, examining processes of identification and politicisation of British Muslim women will help the current research identify how they perceive and experience their power; sustain the social system and/or seek social change.

Another predictor of collective action, and central to identity, is efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Breakwell, 1986). At a collective level, this concept relates to one's belief that collective effort can solve collective problems (Bandura, 1997, 2000). The Kelly and Breinlinger (1995b) classic study on Western women's collective action highlighted that efficacy was a prerequisite for women to engage in. It was found that women needed "to have some confidence that change is possible" (p. 44). Other factors identified in relation to women's participation were gender identity, collective relative deprivation, collectivist orientation and identification as an activist. Collective efficacy is crucial for this research insofar that it informs of individuals' perceptions of their own power and their ability to change the circumstances of their group. Collective efficacy allows the research to examine the relationship between power and identity, how British Muslim women contest and subvert the current negative stereotype around their group and bring about social change.

A final consideration for the purpose of this thesis is the small attention given by collective action research to obstacles to social participation, how people overcome them and ethnic-cultural differences. Major constraints for women's engagement are sexism and prejudice (Becker & Wright, 2011; Ellemers & Barreto, 2009). For example, research by Radke, Hornsey & Barlow (2016) on barriers to women's collective action argued that women might struggle to express anger due to internalised sexism. This was deemed problematic as anger and negative emotions are considered predictors of collective action (Britt & Heise, 2000). Hence, women are less likely to engage in anger-group-based collective action (Van Zomeren, Leach & Spears, 2012). For the current case on British Muslim women, Joly & Wadia (2017) also signalled prejudice, Islamophobia and lack of funding as deterrents of collective action. Regarding ethnic-cultural differences, as Cole and Stewart (1996) demonstrated, it is important to consider that meanings attached to social participation might differ among people of different backgrounds or ethnicities.

This subsection has examined intergroup power theories on how people maintain social systems and/or seek social change. Special attention has been paid to

collective action research, as it may help the current research's examination of British Muslim women's experiences of collective power. The next section will examine feminist research on power.

4.1.5. Feminist research on power.

Previous non-feminist research on power has offered little insight into gender and power (Gergen, 2001; Howard & Hollander, 1997; Pratto & Walker, 2004). There seems to be a persistent pattern of gender blindness that has traditionally accompanied power theorisations (Rudman & Glick, 2012; Wilkinson, 1996). Yet gender (West & Zimmerman, 1987) is "a powerful ideological device" (p. 147) that produces, reproduces and legitimates the social order based on the category of sex. This omission reinforces structural power inequalities, where "the devalued genders have less power, prestige and economic rewards than the valued genders" (Lorber, 1994, p. 61).

Historically, women have been devalued and "deprived of the narratives, or the texts, plots, or examples, by which they might assume power over — take control of — their own lives" (Heilbrun, 1988, p. 17). Thus, it is argued that mainstream power theories have mostly explored male-dominant power forms and categories. The consequent understandings rooted in male-dominant meaning making may fail to recognise and explain women's experiences and forms of power.

Feminist psychological research has emphasised the need for examining power and its complex theorisation (Allen, 2005/2016; Griscom, 1992; Kitzinger, 1991a; Miller & Cummins, 1992). For example, Kitzinger (1991a) emphasised the need of feminist research to "deconstruct" available understandings of power, mainly male-based, and encouraged researchers "to construct our own theories of power and powerlessness in terms which are useful to us as feminists" (p. 114). Kitzinger also advocated for an understanding of power that it is inseparable from how individuals and the sense of selfhood are constructed, and that moves beyond domination, control and coercion.

This research, which involves careful attention to British Muslim women's experience, is feminist in nature through its attempt to advance how power in general, and these women's power relations in particular, have been theorised. Thus, the thesis is informed by and contributes to feminist political research (Kitzinger, 1991a; Reinharz, 1992; Wilkinson, 1996).

Foucault's work (1978, 1980, 1982) has motivated extensive feminist research (Allen, 2005/2016, 2011; Amigot & Pujal, 2009). For example, Allen (1998), following on from Foucault's relational approach, suggested a categorisation of *power over, to* and *with*. Thus, *power over* refers to dominant power that controls people/sources (e.g., authority); *power to* denotes the individual's capacity to act and influence others; and *power with* relates to act and influence collectively. This categorisation will be elaborated further at the end of this chapter (4.3.).

Similarly, another line of feminist enquiry focused on the psychology and internalisation of power constraints (Alcoff, 1994; Deveaux, 1994; Hartsock, 1990) is particularly pertinent for the current research. To illustrate this point, Amir-Moazami and Salvatore's (2003) research showed how British Muslim women with professional careers "often experience inferiority" (p. 66) in the family environment despite their acquired autonomy in society. The current thesis highlights the need to consider British Muslim women's perceptions and experiences in order to understand their power relations.

Foucault's work on resistance was also the point of departure for Abu-Lughod's (1990) unique exploration of Bedouin women. In her ethnographic examination of everyday subversions, she aimed to challenge the devaluation of "unconventional forms of noncollective, or at least nonorganized, resistance" (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 41). Furthermore, she claimed that "we should learn to read in various local and everyday resistances the existence of a range of specific strategies and structures of power. Attention to the forms of resistance in particular societies can help us become critical of partial or reductionist theories of power." (p. 53). This work is crucial for the current thesis, which aims to contribute to current

theorisations of power that might fail to understand British Muslim women's power relations.

Feminist literature (Bartky, 1990; Deveaux, 1994; Hartsock, 1990) has also criticised Foucault's work for his omission of gender and embodiment. For example, Bartky (1990) criticised Foucault's analysis of disciplinary practices for failing to account for gender, as these practices are more demanding on women than on men (e.g., dieting, make-up, waxing, reduced movement). Hartsock (1990) also suggested that "we need a theory of power that [not only] recognises that our practical daily activity contains an understanding of the world" but also "recognise[s] the difficulty of creating alternatives" (p. 172). This line of research is relevant to the thesis as it highlights the need to explore power in everyday life, rather than in laboratory settings, considering potential enablers and constraints.

Any examination of feminist power theory would be inconclusive without considering intersectional theory (Collins, 1990; Crenshaw, 1991; Shields, 2008), which originated from black feminist research. This theory explores how race, gender, class and other discourses intersect, creating a network of boundaries and oppression that constrains social agents. It recognises the interdependency of the different social identities and how each of them is loaded with different levels of oppression that intertwine with the others. For example, being Muslim and a woman will translate in qualitatively different experiences of social inequality depending on one's economic background (class), (dis)ability, ethnicity (white, Indian or Black), sexual orientation, and so on. This unique framework allows for moving beyond essentialised notions of Muslimness, Blackness or womanhood to explore power relations inequalities (Anthias, 2005).

This subsection has aimed to highlight how feminist research underpins the current research with questions around British Muslim women's power, considering their social context and their everyday lives. The following subsection will focus on cross-cultural research around power.

4.1.6. Culture and power.

Most power theories reviewed above focus on Western theorisations of power (Overbeck, 2010). However, it is one of the arguments of this thesis that power is not only context dependent but also culturally informed. Cultures inform what is socially desirable, legitimate and meaningful for a particular group, thus what is deemed powerful/powerless (Torelli & Shavitt, 2010). In this sense, research on British Muslim women's power needs to take into consideration the diversity of available social understandings of power to which these women may relate. In this sense, they might combine individualist perspectives prevalent in Western countries (Markus & Kitayama, 2010) with collectivistic ones rooted in Islam, which is a collective religion (Basabe & Ros, 2005; Cukur, De Guzman, & Carlo, 2004; Fischer et al., 2010). Thus, the examination of power will benefit from considering cross-cultural research on power.

Previous cross-cultural research has researched cultures and power by attending to different concepts of the self (Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 2010; Torelli & Shavitt, 2010; Zhong et al., 2006). For example, Markus and Kitayama (1991) described two divergent construals of the self — an independent and an interdependent — which differed in the role given to others towards self-definition. In this line, cultures with a more collective sense of self might be less interested in individual control (Fiske & Dépret, 1996). Thus, "when people perceive themselves as group members, what matters may be a sense of collective control over outcomes" (p. 56).

Similarly, research on leadership and culture (Hoogervorst et al., 2012; Ratcliff & Vescio, 2013) has shown that sacrifice is more pronounced in collectivistic cultures, as power is associated with social responsibility. Contrastingly, power in more individualistic cultures relates to self-interest opportunities and independent action (influence and entitlement) that tend to satisfy oneself. In addition, Zhong et al. (2006) found that people in Eastern cultures have more consideration for how one's own behaviour might affect others, which translates into self-restraint.

In the light of this line of research, it is expected that British Muslim women might combine traits of individualism/collectivism as a result of their diverse religious-cultural backgrounds, which may result in forms of power that escape Western scopes on the subject. Three anthropological works are crucial to illustrating this point: Abu-Lughod's (1986/2000, 1990) examination of forms of power of Bedouin women; Mahmood's (2001, 2005) research on pious Muslim women in Egypt; and Werbner's (1999, 2000) work on Muslim women in the UK diaspora. These works were highlighted earlier. Abu-Lughod's (1986/2000, 1990) examination illustrated how discrete cultures perceive power differently. She showed how Bedouin women sought autonomy, but pursued it through obedience. In contrast, Mahmood's (2005) analysis of pious Muslim women showed how these women didn't desire autonomy, but realised it through obedience to God.

These accounts are indicative of instances in which women engage in power relations that, to a Western gaze, might appear oppressive or backward. In fact, when women voluntarily adopt social practices which qualify as patriarchal, they are often accused of false consciousness (Jost, 2011; Hirschkind & Mahmood, 2002), reflecting narrow, binomial understandings of power in terms of subordination. Yet, as Mahmood (2001) signalled, "in order to be able to judge in a morally and politically informed way, even those practices we consider objectionable, it is important to take into consideration the desires, motivations, commitments and aspirations of the people to whom these practices are important." (p. 225). Only then we will begin to understand what that subordination means for women.

It has been the aim of this section to review how power has been theorised in social research and, in particular, in social psychology. Several aspects have been highlighted as informing this thesis, such as the Foucauldian relational approach, and the need to move beyond socio-cognitive and intergroup approaches to power. It has been advocated for a contextual, feminist and cultural approach to power that attends to participants' meanings and experiences. The next section will examine

notions of agency and empowerment as a means to research British Muslim women's power.

4.2. British Muslim Women's Power: Agency and Empowerment

Within social research, British Muslim women's power relations have been frequently addressed in terms of agency (Burke, 2012; Chapman, 2016a, 2016b) or empowerment (Ali, 2014; Rashid, 2014), as stated earlier in Chapter 2. Those notions will be critically reviewed in this section.

4.2.1. On agency.

Agency is a complex term (Madhok et al., 2013) that questions ontological and epistemological understandings of power as either produced by the social structure or internal to the individual (Spencer & Doull, 2015). Attempts to conceptualise agency have been the centre of Western/Eastern debates on individualism, communalism and other ideologies. Accordingly, agency has often been described following researchers' ideologies, values and frameworks, which can differ from their participants' ideologies and values. This has triggered in-depth debates and comparisons between West and East (or North/South) feminism (Atasoy, 2006). On the one hand, agency has been related to individuals' ability to make their own choices from different alternatives in different contexts (Gillespie, 2012). On the other hand, further examination of religious women, such as British Muslim women, has elucidated other forms of agency supported in their religious beliefs (Burke, 2012). Thus, two main approaches to agency are addressed in this section.

A Western approach to agency shares a common assumption of desired autonomy (Bracke, 2008). Within this approach, women are portrayed as active, rational subjects who desire self-realization and autonomy, while struggling with oppressive, dominant rules and institutions (Lovell, 2003). Here, agency is equated with the exercise of choice (Baker, 2008; Madhok et al., 2013). Choice is part of a "liberal ontology where agency — free exercise of behaviour — becomes the signifier

of female emancipation" (Salem, 2013, p. 3). But choices are never free, in the sense that they are never made outside of power structures or hegemonic systems and ideals. Choices are always culturally constructed and circumscribed to an ideological/social/personal level. Thus, individuals' choices are always constrained by contextual and socio-historical circumstances. Some choices are socially constructed/ perceived as desirable and emancipatory, while others are designated as oppressive (Salem, 2013) or "not choice." Despite social perceptions, anyone's choices, like those of British Muslim women, cannot be explored outside their contexts (Hirschmann, 1998; Hopkins, 2011b), otherwise one might risk losing the meanings and motivations behind their choices.

This conceptualisation of agency as choice has been singled out as the only one possible and desirable. As Zimmerman (2015) states: "Globalisation has produced a universal dominant discourse on women's rights that promotes Western values as being superior and desirable for all women" (p. 148). However, the current research argues that this approach might be unable to capture and explain other forms of women's agency (Mahmood, 2005) that might escape to this premise of autonomy, like religious women, and for several reasons.

First, this approach ignores the problem of "difference" (Abu-Lughod, 1991) — that is, the problem of assuming that every woman (disregarding their background, ethnicity, class, sexuality) seeks the same goals and that those goals are informed by the same ideologies. Second, it also seems to omit the availability of choice (Alcoff, 1994). In other words, by focusing only on the *act of choosing* it fails to consider the ability to *formulate choices* (Hirschmann, 1998, p. 361). Thus, women might mobilise "choice to demonstrate the volition and agency deemed appropriate to a post-feminist ethos" (Baker, 2010, p. 12). Yet at the same time this approach leaves unchallenged the social constraints or to what extent women participate in formulating the terms of those choices. Third, Western ideology seems to promote an ideal of "powerful women exercising control over their own lives and relationships" (Campbell & Mannell, 2016, p. 4). In doing so, it fails to attend to the

agency of those women who are immersed in constraining or coercive settings (e.g., domestic violence). These Western accounts of agency as free will and maximising self-interest neglect oppressive structures of material and discursive power (Wilson, 2008, p. 84).

Overall, this Western focus on agency and autonomy stems from the metanarrative of secularisation (Salem, 2013). But there is another approach not aligned with feminist secular-liberal conceptualisations of agency, which focuses on religious women's agency (Bracke, 2008; Burke, 2012; Korteweg, 2008; Salem, 2013). Here, agency is described as "the capacity to act informed by religiosity instead of agency as resistance, dominance and oppression" (Korteweg, 2008, p. 435). Thus, it moves beyond reductionist understandings that portray British Muslim women's agency as a false dichotomy, where they are either empowered or victimised, liberated or oppressed (Bilge, 2010; Mahmood, 2005).

This religious approach to agency takes into account the role that religion plays in their lives (Salem, 2013). For example, Mahmood (2005) analysed forms of agency on pious Muslim women in Egypt. She identified forms of agency based on modesty and obedience, where autonomy was not desired. In contrast, Abu-Lughod's (1986/2000) classic study of Arab Bedouin culture showed how autonomy and freedom were "the standard by which status is measured and social hierarchy determined" (p. 87). Yet honour was also central to women's agency and identity and was measured by obedience. Thus, if a woman aimed to raise her status in the hierarchy and be autonomous, she must obey. Finally, Jouili and Amir-Moazami (2006) showed how pious Muslim women in Germany and France acquired religious knowledge in an attempt to self-improve: "The aspired refashioning of the self can only be realized through obedience and acceptance of fulfilling one's duties, conceived of as a specific virtue of piety." (p. 635).

The latter examples of agency, which are rooted in obedience, may sound extraneous when examined with Western eyes. Within this religious approach, piety and fulfilment of one's duties (obedience) become a form of agency, central to the

formation of a pious subject that might differ/collide with other forms of subjectification (Foucault, 1982) such as Western understandings.

So far, two main lines of research around agency have been illustrated, one where choice and autonomy are central and the other where agency is rooted and informed in religious beliefs. As stated earlier, operating with agency challenges epistemological and ontological assumptions that may focus our attention on the individual rather than on the making of the social structure and processes of influence among groups (Dowding, 2012). Thus, in order to further examine British Muslim women's power, it will be argued that adopting a relational approach to power (in section 4.3.), applied through a phenomenological exploration of power relations (Chapter 5), might allow us to move beyond this individualised notion.

4.2.2. On empowerment.

Research on British Muslim women's power relations has also rotated around empowerment (Ali, 2014; Rashid, 2014). Empowerment has been both a central and contested concept in anti-oppressive and anti-racist feminist work since the late 1960s (Yuval-Davis, 1994). In terms of women's empowerment, narratives and social interventions are considered problematic (Ali, 2014; Pease, 2002; Syed, 2010; Yuval-Davis, 1994) as these tend to reify rather than challenge power relations.

Quite often, women's empowerment is instrumentalised or strategic in the achievement of other developmental goals (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Ali, 2014). For example, Ahmad (2017) and Rashid (2014) demonstrated that counter-terrorism policies, which were articulated in terms of empowerment, jeopardised the interests of the women they were meant to support. These policies tended to essentialise and homogenise communities, undermining women's interests (Bay-Cheng et al., 2006; Yuval-Davis, 1994).

In addition, Syed (2010) highlighted that Eurocentric paradigms continue to dominate social policy that challenges non-Western women's experiences. For example, Brown's (2008) study on Muslim women's participation in UK mosques

showed how women's activism was constricted by Western assumptions of empowerment.

Hence, for some researchers (Carr, 2003; Yuval-Davis, 1994) empowerment would only be possible when boundaries between the individual and the collective are transcended and when difference is acknowledged and addressed. A way to transcend these limitations (Carr, 2003) would be to promote dialogic processes of consciousness raising (Freire, 2005), where individuals can share understandings of power and oppression that emerge as collective knowledge.

In this section, it has been argued that researching only within notions of agency and empowerment might be insufficient to examine British Muslim women's power. The final section will elaborate on the relational approach of this current research.

4.3. A relational approach to British Muslim women's power

Power is not ideologically neutral, but shaped by political and theoretical interests that we, as researchers, bring into the study of power (Kitzinger, 1991b; Lukes, 2005, 1986; Said, 1978). Hence, as Lukes (2005) suggested, "how we think about power may serve to reproduce and reinforce power structures and relations, or alternatively it may challenge and subvert them (...)" (p. 63).

In this thesis, power is approached as a relation (Foucault, 1978; Guinote, 2008, 2017). Previous researchers (Allen, 1998, 2011; Yoder & Khan, 1992) have detailed a relational approach to power, adopting three main forms: *power over, power* to, and *power with* (explained earlier in section 4.1.5.). All these different power forms are considered here, following Lukes (2005), as versions of *power to*, which is wider than simply the power to act and to influence.

Drawing on empirical examples from research on British Muslim women, varying ways of *power to* will be illustrated. The forms presented below should be considered as examples, not as an exclusive, exhaustive list. In other words, different

forms of power relations can appear simultaneously in the same context, dependent on the multiple relations at stake.

First, in power relations, there is power to identify oneself, at an individual or group level, which is at stake in all relationships and in continuous negotiation. In this process, British Muslim women can accommodate given identifications, oppose them, avoid or resist them. For instance, Burlet and Reid's (1998) research showed evidence of how British Pakistani Muslim women defined themselves as peacemakers during the Bradford riots in June 1996. Not only did they represent themselves, they also criticised the current state of their representation within the community, which was mainly male-dominated. Paraphrasing the authors, "some women in the Pakistani Muslim community spoke out against the gendered proposals for future political representation in the city" (1998, p. 282). Similarly, Hopkins and Greenwood (2013) explored the veiling practices of female Muslim university students and found that the hijab was a source of self-identification towards other Muslims, as well as a signifier of their religion within society. Thus, participants were exerting power by self-identifying themselves in their own ways, using available social sources (e.g., veiling).

Second, another facet of *power to* is power to influence other people's behaviour or to persuade them. In the wider context of stigmatisation, Ryan (2011) examined how British Muslim women negotiated and resisted the collective prejudice. She found that women attempted to influence people's views by showing their goodness in their everyday lives. Similarly, Erel's (2016) work explored transnational citizenship and experiences of mothering of migrant Muslim women in England and Germany. The author highlighted the key role of mothers in identity transmission and the interactive process of sharing meanings. Mothers appeared crucial not only in conferring the cultural sources but also in influencing the future generations.

Third, emulating forms of *power over,* there is power to control, either towards others or to oneself. For example, research (Begum, 2008; Mohammad,

2013) on young British Asian Muslim girls' spatial practices showed how older women, in addition to men, controlled and monitored young women's usage of space. Power to control *oneself* can be exemplified both in Ramji's (2007) study, which showed how British Muslim women attempted to pursue their own careers, and in Brown's (2006) study, where women invested their efforts in learning more about their religion to gain religious knowledge and authority.

Fourth, power to create consensus follows the Arendtian perspective: "Power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert" (Arendt, 1969, p. 44). Thus, British Muslim women might perform power when they seek consensus within their families, communities or work places. For instance, empirical evidence (Amir-Moazami & Salvatore, 2003) suggests that young Muslim girls encouraged "their parents to reflect over the meanings and implications of religious practices" (p. 61) and to reconsider their assumptions. This scope might contravene other forms of power centred on resistance and opposition. These girls, rather than confronting their parents' views, sought to redefine their religion with their parents. This process led to "a rediscovery via redefinition of Muslim traditions and to shifts in terms of religious authority" (p. 61). Similarly, research on British Muslim women's activism to bring about social change (Joly & Wadia, 2017; Lewicki & O'Toole, 2017; Werbner, 1999) also falls into this category (reviewed earlier in section 4.2.2.4 and in Chapter 2).

Finally, the last power form discussed is power to obey, to adhere to certain values and beliefs, which prioritises a form of being that overcomes the individual level. This form of power has been previously addressed (in section 4.1.1.) as an explanation of agency from a non-secular perspective (Bilge, 2010; Burke, 2012). Some critics may argue that obedience is a form of submission, and that religious beliefs support, maintain and reinforce certain power structures as gender inequality. However, it is the argument here that women may also find ways of subverting them, through their engagement with the religious order (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Mahmood, 2005). Women's acceptance of a dominant cultural discourse doesn't mean

necessarily that they are subordinate to men (Mahmood, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 1993). Therefore, more attention needs to be paid to their struggles, experiences and to the meaning of this obedience.

Having illustrated different forms of power, it is important to bear in mind that individuals are not engaged in one single-sided form of power, but in several at once. So, in a given situation, individuals and groups can be both adhering and resisting simultaneously. For instance, Ramji's (2007) study on South Asian British Muslim women showed how they experienced double-sided situations when answering to self-demands, in contrast to family and community demands. Some participants were exerting power over themselves through their willingness to develop a career, while at the same time adhering to their family values. In the author's words, "These women faced a difficult negotiation: by standing up for their rights as women, they could appear to be disloyal to their religious community." (Ramji, 2007, p. 1185).

4.4. Conclusion of Chapter 4

This chapter has illustrated the power framework of this thesis, where power is considered relational, situated and culturally informed. First, it provided a detailed account on social psychology power theories, problematising some aspects while highlighting others that have the potential to support this research. Socio-cognitive theories were deemed insufficient for their neglect of identity, people's meanings and the fact that they are mainly laboratory based. However, useful insights on the behaviour of people in disadvantaged power positions, as British Muslim women might be, were identified. Identity-based theories, despite adopting a relational approach, were deemed inappropriate as they remain at the intergroup level. These theories also limit forms of power to social influence and persuasion. However, they contribute to this research by underscoring the importance of group formation and the social context to understand power dynamics. Theories of social dominance and system justification also remain at the intergroup level, but their approaches to false consciousness and social order contribute to the current work. Among the power

theories of social change, collective action was highlighted as it might help to examine how British Muslim women understand, experience and perform their collective identity and power. The last two subsections focused on feminist and cultural research, both of which are central to this research. First, it was argued that most power theories offer little attention to gender relations. Given that most power understandings are male-informed, they might fail to understand women's power forms. Thus, the current thesis has a crucial role to contribute to power theorisation from women's experience and understandings, like British Muslim women. Second, it was argued that power is culturally informed. The diverse religious-cultural background of these women might mean they understand and experience power in ways that combine Western and more individualistic ways with collective ones. In that sense, cross-cultural research has shed some light on understanding British Muslim women's power.

This chapter has also problematised notions of agency and empowerment adopted by previous research on British Muslim women's power relations, for neglecting the relational and structural aspects of power (Allen, 1998; Kitzinger, 1991a) and jeopardising women's interests, respectively. Finally, the relational conceptualisation of power in this thesis was operationalised in forms of *power to*, supported by current research on British Muslim women.

Chapter 5.

Methodology

(...) in order to see the world and grasp it as paradoxical,
we must break with our familiar acceptance of it
(Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. xiv)

5.0. Overview of Chapter 5

The present chapter will develop the methodological issues associated with the thesis. The chapter will begin with a discussion of the epistemological approach — i.e., critical realist — underpinning the current research. Then, it will argue for a phenomenological approach to power, as a means of investigating British Muslim women's power without imposing pre-existing dominant views and keeping these women's perceptions and meanings at the forefront.

The following section will elaborate on how feminist qualitative research informs the methodological approach. Then, the three-study design of the thesis and the data collection methodology will be elaborated. Regarding the data analysis, it will be advocated for a qualitative thematic analysis as the suitable method for the purpose of this thesis. In addition, a detailed account of how thematic analysis has been conducted in the empirical studies will be provided. The second part of the chapter will focus on power dynamics between researcher and researched, along with dilemmas of representation. It will provide a detailed self-reflection, highlighting how aspects of the researcher's identity may have shaped the research process.

5.1. Research Design

5.1.1. Epistemological foundations: critical realism.

Epistemology is preoccupied with the theory of knowledge. In other words, it is concerned about what and how we know (Coyle, 2016; Willig, 2012). There are

different epistemological approaches that range from naïve realist to radical realist (Madill et al., 2000; Willig, 2013). Differences across epistemology are interlinked with ontology, or the nature of reality (that is, the question of what is real).

This thesis adopts a *critical realist approach* (Bhaskar, 1979/2014), which originated as a scientific alternative paradigm to positivism and constructivism. Broadly speaking, positivism sustains that what is real (ontology) is what can be empirically known (epistemology); while constructionism "views reality as entirely constructed through and within human knowledge and discourse" (Fletcher, 2017, p. 182). In this respect, critical realism sustains the view that ontology is not reducible to epistemology.

According to Madill et al.'s (2000) epistemological continuum, this approach is closer to the realist end than the relativist. Realism assumes "that there are processes of a social and/or psychological nature which exist, and which can be identified" (Willig, 2013, p. 68) independently of the researchers' or participants' knowledge. Critical realism concurs with realism in its orientation towards discovery (Madill et al., 2000). However, realism has been problematised under labels of "naivety" (Willig, 2012) for its assumption that the data mirror the reality, without taking into consideration more complex relationships (Madill et al., 2000). Contrastingly, critical realism also assumes the data can tell us things about the "real" world, but not in a "self-evident unmediated fashion" (Willig, 2013, p. 70). This deeper interrogation of what is "real" and how this "real" is presented is the main endeavour of a critical realist approach. Hence, the role of the researcher is key in interpreting and providing further understanding of the phenomena.

Critical realists (Archer, 1995; Sayer, 2010) presuppose that reality is stratified into three layers, the empirical, the real and the actual, following Bhaskar's (1979/2014) ontology. The empirical layer refers to what we can experience through our senses. The actual layer is constituted by all events, regardless whether or not we can observe, experience or know about. The real layer comprises underlying structures and mechanisms that generate events. This ontology entails the view that

the world has more depth that human knowledge can capture or that we can experience (Hood, 2015; Parr, 2015).

Therefore, research informed by CR, like the current thesis, aims to explain social phenomena/events identifying potential mechanisms and structures capable of causing them, as well as the effects these may have in the other levels of reality. For example, research interested in understanding a particular lived experience (Hood, 2015), such anorexia, will also have to take into consideration social structures and processes (e.g., peer pressure) that might help to shape it, and which individual understandings may in turn support to maintain, reproduce or transform (Saukko, 2005).

In a similar fashion, adopting a critical realist perspective, the current research on British Muslim women' experiences of power, will examine not only how participants experience, perceive and give meaning to their everyday life power relations but will also situate them in the wider social context, where processes of social prejudice, misrecognition and misrepresentation are at stake. That is, to attend the structural relations and social psychological processes through which their meanings are produced.

More detail on how a critical realist perspective will inform this thesis will be explained in the following two sections; firstly, on how it integrates with a phenomenological approach, adopted to research power in this thesis; secondly, how it integrates with a feminist qualitative research method.

5.1.2. Phenomenological approach to power.

Power in this thesis is understood as a relational construct (Allen, 1998, 1999; Guinote, 2008, 2017; Reicher, 2016) that adopts multiple forms, as explained earlier in Chapter 4. However, to investigate British Muslim women's power experiences and understandings, an approach that would not impose pre-existent dominant views on power was required. Such an approach would need to be attentive to the power dynamics that appear when researching other social realities (Griffin, 1996; Kitzinger

& Wilkinson, 1997). For example, power dynamics that, through patterns of definition and categorisation of people's own experiences (Alcoff, 2003; O'Hanlon, 1988), tend to reproduce the same logics of oppression.

Adopting a phenomenological approach to power seemed a suitable methodology to keep these women's experiences and perceptions at the forefront, as I will explain below. Additionally, it will be illustrated how phenomenology and critical realism are complimentary (Budd, 2012) in supporting this research.

Phenomenology is a method of philosophical inquiry also adopted in qualitative research (Finlay, 2014; Langdridge, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). It aims to capture participants' subjective experience as it is perceived or understood by human consciousness. For example, phenomenological research may ask participants "to narrate actual experiences that they have lived through" (Holloway & Les Todres, 2003, p. 350).

Originally developed by Husserl (1970), phenomenology relates to the descriptive analysis of *phenomena*, "the way things and events appear to us in lived experience" (Borren, 2013, p. 233). Husserl's work, focusing on how things are perceived, meant a radical change with previous dualistic thinking (object-subject). One of his key features is *intentionality*, which refers to the fact that we are always conscious of something. It is precisely this relational connectedness between a person's consciousness and the world that is the object of phenomenological psychologists' enquiry (Langdridge, 2008; Moustakas, 1994; Vagle, 2018). In this respect, critical realism (Bhaskar, 1979/2014) also accords with this vision that human knowledge and awareness are limited, thus research requires careful exploration of social processes and structures that constitute those experiences.

Husserl's contribution was extended and reworked by Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Gadamer, Arendt and Sartre, among others. As a result, there was a shift towards the importance of situating people's experience and the way they see the world. In other words, it was highlighted that the world we experience is *interpreted*

— our world view structures the world we experience — and, at the same time, is *structured* by the influences upon us (Dahlberg & Dahlberg, 2019; Langdridge, 2008).

Thus, phenomenologists conceptualise the individual as "a conscious actor who actively constructs meanings" (Langdridge, 2008, p. 1128). Critical realism and phenomenology also connect in positing the intentionality of human action (Budd, 2012). Yet individuals cannot be separated from their contexts, which refer to participants' socio-politico-cultural environment, religious beliefs, ethnic and social background. Context is conceptualised here as structure and processes of social influence (Breakwell, 1986), explained in Chapter 3 (section 3.3). It is in between this structural social network and the processes of influence that individuals are embedded and required to make sense of their social worlds. This emphasis on the need to move beyond the participants' accounts (double hermeneutics) is also common with critical realism.

There is no single way of carrying out phenomenological research; rather, a plurality of approaches is required (Vagle, 2018). Three major research trends dominate: descriptive-oriented (Giorgi, 1992), interpretative-oriented (van Manen, 2014) and reflective lifeworld research (Dahlberg, 2006). Giorgi's (1992) descriptive-oriented approach follows Husserl's transcendental phenomenological philosophy and, without going beyond the data, is interested in describing "what is the world like for this participant?" (Willig, 2012, p. 12). By contrast, van Manen's (2014) approach not only describes the phenomena, but also steps outside the data and engages in interpretation, following Heidegger's hermeneutic. In this interpretative approach, the researcher is required not only to interpret participants' accounts but also to situate their experiences, reflecting on the social and economic structures (Willig, 2012). The last trend, represented by Dahlberg (2006), combines several approaches and keeps an open, reflective approach. Following Merleau-Ponty's (1962) philosophy, it emphasises that individuals cannot be separated from their social contexts.

The current research follows Finlay (2014), which suggests adopting a *phenomenological sensibility* and *attitude* rather than specific guidelines. This involves a constant questioning and reflection towards the research and the researchers' preconceptions and meaning. This engagement in reflective practice is standard practice for phenomenologists (Dahlberg, 2006; Finlay, 2012; King et al., 2008; Moustakas, 1994). It is a way to account for the inseparability between humans and our world, and the fact that researchers are also part of that world. Thus, researchers need to reflect on their own involvement and experience about the phenomena that they are aiming to explore (Finlay, 2008) — in this case, power. A detailed reflexive practice is offered in the last section of this chapter (5.3.).

Thus, this phenomenological examination of the British Muslim women's power considers not only participants' power experiences, their interpretations and social psychological processes involved, adopting identity process theory (IPT) but also how structural power relations and processes of influence among groups, examined through social representations theory (SRT) operate and inform their experiences.

Adopting a phenomenological approach, like any other, does not come free of potential limitations. One problematic aspect of phenomenology, as van Manen (1990) highlighted, is that researchers know too much. In other words, researchers' assumptions, expectations and knowledge of theories can potentially interfere or predispose them to certain interpretations even before they have captured the significance of the experience for participants. Thus, following Dahlberg (2006), this researcher will try to keep an open attitude towards the data by "bridling" (p. 16), that is, questioning her own preconceived notions of participants' power.

Potential critics might disagree with the idea of approaching power as experience and self-perception, in terms of being subjective or giving too much power to the participants to account for themselves. Those critics might have concerns that the research will miss the dominant narratives that stigmatise and profile British Muslim women. However, dominant narratives here will be relevant as

long as the participants consider them a limitation of their own power and/or a source of energy to mobilise themselves and promote social change. For example, a potential critic might refer to notions of false consciousness (Jost & Banaji, 2004; Meyerson, 1991), mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, which considers Muslim women as passive, accepting disadvantaged social positions and unaware of their oppression. In contrast, participants' accounts will be approached with "critical respect" (Gill, 2007a, p. 78) — that is, they will validate women's experiences while situating them in wider social contexts in a critical manner. In her study on media female workers' accounts of satisfaction and worth, Gill (2007a) found that participants were underpaid and seemed unaware of the structural differences towards their male colleagues. Rather than pointing to the unawareness of the participants and positioning them in a negative light, she focused on describing this structural dynamic, its complexities and contradictions. Similarly, this research will aim to support participants' own interests (Finch, 1984).

Overall, adopting a phenomenological approach to power will allow this thesis to:

- Capture how power is experienced by British Muslim women, in their own terms (Du Bois, 1983; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997), to create theory based on their actual experience and language.
- Examine these women's interpretations of the situation "as it is given in the participant's experience" (Finlay, 2014, p. 123), as well as their silences, exclusions (Gill, 2007a) and the "unsaid" (Finlay, 2014, p. 135) of their power experiences.
- Avoid imposing dominant understandings of power that could potentially undermine or misrepresent participants' own experiences.
- Study the relationship between British Muslim women's power relations, identity and systems of representation. Phenomenology (Finlay, 2014), in addition to IPT and SRT, acknowledge the agency of individuals in constructing their world and the importance of the social dynamics and contexts.

This section explained the phenomenological approach to power; the following section will cover the qualitative methodological approach of the thesis.

5.1.3. The use of feminist qualitative methods.

This section presents the feminist qualitative approach of the thesis and illustrates how this approach integrates with critical realism.

In this thesis, qualitative research has been preferred for its concern with meaning, subjectivity and experience (Lyons & Coyle, 2016; Willig, 2012). Researchers engaged in qualitative research might try to capture the quality and texture of experience and its implications (Willig, 2013). For example, how it feels to experience certain circumstances (e.g., unemployment or being the only member of a certain group — ethnic or gender — in a particular context, such as school or the workplace); and the implications of those experiences for participants and their wider social context. The qualitative paradigm does not seek to generalise its findings to general populations (Lyons & Coyle, 2016). Likewise, it does not aim to answer cause-and-effect relationships between variables, or to confirm hypotheses (Willig, 2012). However, it might be interested in participants' perceptions and attributions about cause and effect in relation to their experiences.

In particular, this thesis follows a feminist methodological framework (Edwards, 1990; Reinharz, 1992; Wilkinson, 1996). Feminist research is a "perspective" (Reinharz, 1992, p .241) which shares certain characteristics rather than a specific set of research methods. For example, Edwards (1990) has highlighted three aspects. First, research starts by approaching women's experiences and lives on their own terms. Second, "feminist research should not only be on women but *for women"* (p. 479), which involves breaking down the exploitative power of research and attending to the power dynamics within the research process. Third, it places the researcher within the research process, accounting for their decision making and their effects on the research. Feminist approaches are also characterised by its examination to "the significance of gender as an aspect of social life and research" (Scharff, 2009, p. 62)

In this fashion, this research focuses on British Muslim women's experiences of power on their own terms. It aims to contribute to previous research on power, which has disregarded gender. It considers the power dynamics within the current research as well as dilemmas of representation, as it will be shown in a detailed exercise of reflexivity following feminist researchers (Finch, 1984; McRobbie, 1982; Oakley, 1981, 2016) provided in section 5.3.

There are multiple feminist qualitative methods and methodologies (see Clarke & Braun, 2019, for a recent review; Reinharz, 1992). Nevertheless, feminist researchers have also demonstrated potential shortcomings entailed in qualitative methods research. For example, Kelly et al. (1992) showed how adopting qualitative methods and small-scales studies can involve problems of over-generalisation or poor-representation, by the illusion that baseline knowledge has been achieved. In a similar vein, Miner et al. (2012) have argued that adopting large-scale questionnaires may encourage participants to disclose information that they would have kept to themselves in a in interview setting, as Leung et al. (2019) have illustrated in their research on violence against women. Yet ongoing debates (Clarke & Braun, 2019) around the suitability of quantitative/qualitative methods show that there is no single prescribed method for feminist research. As Letherby (2003, p. 81) stresses, "it is not the use of a particular method or methods which characterise a research or project as feminist, but the way in which the methods are used". In this thesis, the methods adopted are media study and semi-structured interviews, as will be presented in the next section (5.1.4.) on data collection.

Critical realism underpins this research, as stated earlier (5.2.1.). This approach emphasises the constitutive role of meaning and language (Sayer, 1992) which aligns with feminist endeavour. However, conducting feminist research underpinned by critical realism also presents certain challenges (Parr, 2015). Like Parr (2015) stressed it can be difficult to marry a desire of hearing women's voices and valuing their knowledge with "a belief that some accounts of 'reality' are better than others" (p. 193). As Bhaskar (1979/2014) stated, reality cannot be equated with the theories that aim to explain it, likewise, there are theories that are more successful

and have more validity than others. Therefore, this perspective may seem at odds with an approach that aims to validate women's experiences. Critical realists in their pursue of understanding social phenomena (like power relations), sustain that participants' accounts may describe their experiences of reality; yet they may be unable to fully account for their actions nor be aware of their impact.

Critical realists share with feminists the tenet that "the researcher needs to go beyond the data to gain broader understanding" (p. 202). In accessing information that participants are unlikely to have (e.g., theory, data), researchers might be able to come with better equipped and adequate explanations and interpretations in producing reliable knowledge (Letherby, 2002; Sayer, 1992).

In this sense, feminist and critical researchers, come together in accepting that the study social phenomena entails a "double hermeneutics" (Parr, 2015, p. 202), where researchers interpret participants' interpretations. Equally, adopting qualitative methods is believed to help elucidate social processes and relationships that would be unlikely to be captured by quantitative methods (Parr, 2015).

The aim of this section has been to introduce the feminist qualitative approach of the thesis and to illustrate how it integrates a critical realist approach.

5.1.4. Three-study design and data collection.

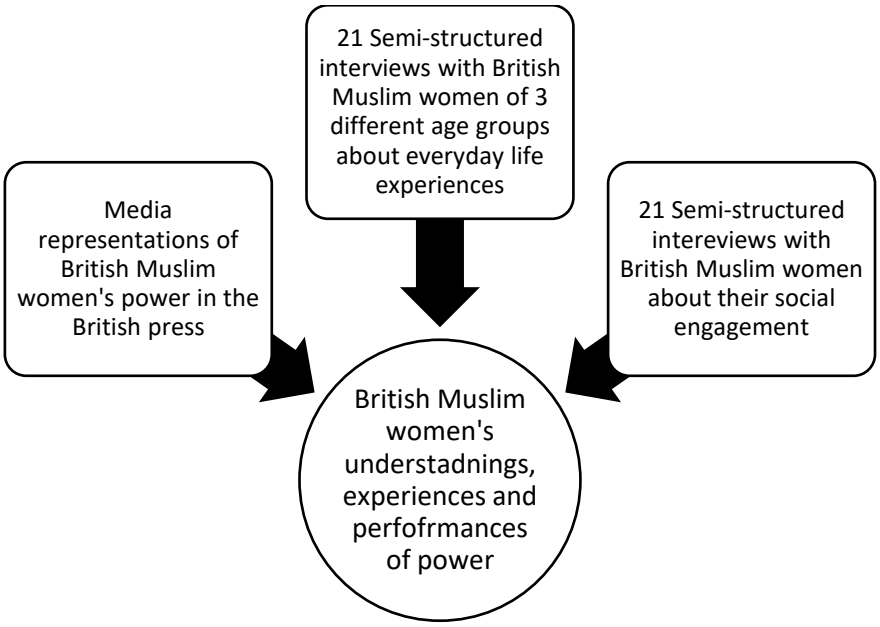
Research methodology (data collection and analysis) should be consistent with the objectives of the research (Breakwell et al., 2000). The aim of this research programme is to investigate British Muslim women's understandings, experiences and performances of power. The main objectives are to rethink power and increase social psychological understanding as well as to add to theoretical knowledge on the relationship between power, identity processes and systems of representation.

To examine the research questions (Chapter 1, section 1.3.) of this thesis, this research includes three studies. This design is based upon the methodological principle of triangulation (Denzin, 1978, 2015; Flick, 2002). Denzin (1978, 2015)

described four basic types of triangulation: (1) data triangulation, which involves time, space and persons; (2) investigator triangulation, which involves the use of different researchers; (3) theory triangulation, which consists of using more than one theoretical approach; (4) methodological triangulation, which involves using more than one method and may adopt within-method or between-method strategies.

The combination of different sources of data sustains the triangulation for this research. This thesis combines media data and two interview data sets – one from British Muslim women about their everyday lives and another from British Muslim women about their social participation – in order to achieve an in-depth understanding of their power relations by exploring different perspectives on the issue. Given that every study addresses slightly different research questions, a potential criticism could be that this thesis does not adhere to triangulation. Yet, it is my argument that every study contributes and brings different insights to the central research question of this thesis, how British Muslim women understand, experience and perform power. Thus, the three-studies design constitutes an effort to better understand their power relations by studying them from various angles.

Figure 1. Three-study design



The **first study (Chapter 6)** explores the social representations of power around British Muslim women in the British newspapers (national, local and ethno-religious sources). It focuses on media because it has a unique role in (re)producing systems of knowledge and (re)presentation of people, as well as meaning-making about the world and social practices (Wagner et al., 1999). Furthermore, it allows dominant groups to represent the world in certain ways (Saeed, 2007) In this sense, the press has a privileged position to (mis)represent minority groups (Cottle, 2000, 2006) such as Muslims. This study pays particular attention to the cognitive polyphasia of power, the issue of ambivalence and conflicting representations of power across the dominant and minority sources. Likewise, it examines processes of anchoring and objectification of majority and minority representations. This first study advances the thesis by examining the representational landscape around British Muslim women's power.

The **second study (Chapter 7)** examines British Muslim women's understandings, experiences and performances of power in their everyday lives (Chapter 7). It also investigates intergenerationality — that is, how power understandings, experiences and performances are similar/different across generations and how power relations are negotiated across different generations. To better capture participants' perceptions, beliefs, motivations, constraints and enhancers of power within varied social contexts a phenomenological approach to power is adopted (already described in section 5.1.2.). Langridge (2007) argued that phenomenological research allows to use multiple methods of data collection, such as interviews, written accounts (e.g., diaries) and participant observation. Seeking to explore British Muslim women's power experiences, different methods were considered (e.g., focus groups, semi-structured interviews, participatory research). For the purpose of data collection on this study, semi-structured interviews were preferred as it will be explained below.

A semi-structured interview (Morse & Richards, 2002) is a technique for generating qualitative data and involves open-ended questions that are prepared in advance and are intended to guide rather than to dictate the conversation.

Furthermore, individual interviews provide a unique opportunity to approach each individual and listen (McClelland, 2017) to their accounts and reflexivity. Likewise, they also provide enough space and flexibility for unexpected issues to appear (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This data collection method seemed suitable to capture these women's understandings, meanings of everyday power experiences, perceptions of power and the ways they perceive, sustain and/or challenge the current prejudice around their group.

Additionally, the interview is "essentially a technique or method for establishing or discovering that there are perspectives or viewpoints on events other than those of the person initiating the interview" (Farr, 1984, p. 182). In this respect, interviewing is a method adopted when the researcher seeks to understand the perspective of the interviewee without imposing previous understandings or their own perspectives upon the participant, like the current study. Moreover, semi-structured interviews enable to examine "*how* people think rather than *what* people think" (Andreouli, 2010, p.83, italics in the original). Thus, interviewing can capture the processes of identity construction, negotiation, contestation, (re)definition and polyphasia of social representations and contrast those with the findings of the media study.

At this stage, a potential reader might be wondering why this research did not choose unstructured interviews considering the phenomenological approach adopted. They would be concerned that in using semi-structured interviews I may focus on and/or privilege certain realms of British Muslim women's experience over others in *a priori* manner. Yet, the interview schedule is not prescriptive but designed to promote discussion and reflection about participants' power experiences. At all times, the focus was on their experience and the description they provide. For example, in this first interview study (Chapter 7), participants were asked to describe a recent situation that made them feel they had power or were powerful, and also a situation where they felt powerless. Participants were encouraged to relate to their personal, professional or recreational life. Then, based on their descriptions, questions about their experience (e.g., feelings, reactions) were posed. Additionally,

in the last section, other questions were raised to examine what factors made them feel they have power, their social expectations as well as their perceptions about powerful people (more detailed about the Interview schedule provided in section 7.3.2 and Appendix B6).

Like any other method, adopting semi-structured interviews has also disadvantages. For example, that those shed no light onto group interactions that constitute everyday talk (Howitt, 2019). In this respect, focus groups (Wilkinson, 1999) because of their interactive nature would be better suited to capture social interaction. Those were also considered to examine individuals' meanings, perceptions and social interaction, but it also presented two potential challenges: (a) the difficulty of arranging the focus groups, in terms of availability, time and space; and (b) the fact that some potential participants may not be comfortable sharing their accounts or participating with other women. The former refers to the difficulty of being able to coordinate different participants to agree to a certain time and place, which could potentially reduce the margin to accommodate to them individually (e.g., interviewing at their home) and which could potentially translate in lower participation.

It also needed to be considered that British Muslim women are an over-researched group (Joly & Wadia, 2017), which means that British Muslim women are constantly requested to participate in research and potentially "hard to reach" (Clark, 2008, p.956). With that in mind, any method requiring extensive commitment, investment of their time or effort, such as diaries or longitudinal design, was discouraged. Ideally, participant observation (Burgess, 1984) could have been the method to adopt, combining observation of participants' everyday life and interviews about their power experiences, meanings and interactions. However, given that I had no pre-established connection with any mosque/organisation, plus foreseeing the difficulties of recruiting participants (explained above), semi-structured interviews seemed to be the most appropriate method.

In conclusion, considering the available sources (e.g., time, money) with the potential challenges, as well as the aims of the study, the study semi-structured interviews appeared as the most suitable method for data collection. Thus, this study involves the data of semi-structured interviews around their everyday lives conducted with 21 British Muslim women of three age groups (18-20; 25-32; 38-51). It allows to capture participants' perceptions and experiences. Special attention was paid to participants' processes of contestation of available social representations around their group and how those impact their identities and power relations. This study marks an attempt to approach British Muslim women's power on their own terms.

The **third study (Chapter 8)** aims to examine and challenge the unexpected findings of the previous study. The previous study set out to examine British Muslim women's power under the premises that current social psychology theory may fail to fully understand them. It was argued that they may enact power in ways that escape Western and individualised understandings of power. However, most participants across groups mainly invoked individualised notions of power while barely related to their collective identity or power that could lead to change their social perception. Among other findings, it was also evidenced how participants engaged in multiple identity strategies, mainly individualised, to contest their negative social representation. During the discussion, it is argued that these prevalent individualised results might be part of an identity strategy to contest the negative stereotype.

In light of these findings, the last study is concerned with experiences, understandings and performances of collective power. In order to contrast the absence identified in previous participants' accounts, this study focused on British Muslim women's social participation. Therefore, this study advances the research questions of this thesis by showing how British Muslim women may understand collective power and in what instances they mobilise their collective identity and power and its implications.

Ideally, a participatory research method would have been preferred, combining observation and participation with interviews. Yet, considering several insights acquired from the previous study (low engagement to participate; the lack of response from mosques and organisations in the recruitment process; and having learnt that providing maximum flexibility to participants to attend to an interview, even using online platforms, was the most effective way to ensure participation while obtaining the data) helped me to decide in favour of semi-structured interviews. Additionally, semi-structed interviews had already proven successful in capturing participants' experiences, performances and understandings of power in the previous study. Therefore, for the purpose of data collection, semi-structured interviews were adopted.

This time around the questions revolved around their social participation and civic involvement. The application of this data collection method, as in the previous study, follows a similar rationale as the one described earlier. Participants were asked to describe their experience on a recent social event; first about any one they chose and later about a social event (e.g., local, national) where Muslims were central (e.g., British Muslim women's Westminster bridge demonstration after the terrorist attacks) to make their Muslim identity salient. Throughout their description, questions around their motivation, views, feelings and perceptions before, during and after taking part, and the impact of the event were raised (see 8.4.2. and Appendix C6, for more details on the interview schedule). However, the questions were merely prompts to encourage their reflection (for evidence of the interview schedule being used in this way, see Appendixes B7 and C7) as it was expected that participants would decide what aspects of their experience they wanted to focus on during their description.

This section has focused on the three-study design and data collection methods of the thesis. The following section will show the decision-making process behind choosing thematic analysis as the analytical approach.

5.1.5. Data analysis method: thematic analysis.

Within qualitative research, there is a huge diversity of methods (Clarke & Braun, 2019; Lyons & Coyle, 2016; Madill & Gough, 2008; Willig, 2013). Deciding what method to adopt for the data analysis of this thesis was not an easy task. As Clarke and Braun (2019) suggested, the process of choosing a methodological approach involves a careful consideration of the losses and gains.

Thematic analysis was chosen mainly for the theoretical and methodological flexibility (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013) that it offers. This decision was taken at earlier stages of the research to analyse the data of the media study and the first interview-study. As Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013) signalled, this method is more a *tool* than a method. According to them, it is accessible, less technological and offers more freedom than other qualitative approaches (such as interpretative phenomenological analysis or grounded theory) to choose the theoretical and epistemological position of the researcher. Not being theoretically bound, this methodology allowed for close exploration and organisation of the data, while at the same time retaining analytical and theoretical flexibility.

However, readers familiar with qualitative methodology may be wondering why, given the phenomenological approach to power, this thesis did not adopt IPA, which is committed to phenomenology (Eatough & Smith, 2017). As argued above, it was mainly a matter of retaining flexibility. Adopting IPA would also have presented some challenges. First, it is closer to a contextual constructionist epistemology (Madill et al., 2000), which collided with the critical-realist scope of the thesis. Second, IPA's idiographic mode of inquiry requires in-depth exploration of each individual's account of their experience (Smith, Harré & van Langenhove, 1995). In other words, it requires a two-stage interpretation process (or double hermeneutics), as participants try to make sense of their world and researchers try to make sense of participants' sense making. This detailed case-by-case approach tends to be applied in small sample sizes as it can become very time consuming (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Still, it could have been used for the interview studies, but it wouldn't have worked

for the media study. Hence, other methods like thematic analysis were preferred to ensure the openness needed at the time.

5.1.6. Using thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis was conducted in the three studies of this thesis, following the six phases detailed by Braun and Clark (2006, 2013). This process was not linear but recursive, going back and forth through the phases and the data, where codes aimed to be buoys in the ocean of words. The critical-realist epistemological position also informed the interpretative focus of the analysis. For illustrative purposes, the process of thematic analysis will now be detailed, followed by the first study on British media.

Phase I. Familiarisation of the data.

The analytic process began with selection of the data for the media study and preparing verbatim transcriptions of the audio-recorded interviews. I read the sources several times, scribbling down hard copies to familiarise myself with the data.

Phase 2. Generating initial codes.

Thematic analysis can focus on different levels — semantic or latent interpretative (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 13). At early stages of analysis, the focus was mainly on semantic/explicit levels of analysis, where I would mainly code literal content of the data. Examples of semantic codes included: “women are being lured” and “women are being radicalised”. The first coding attempts could be considered inductive, as I had not engaged much with the literature thus far. Familiarising myself with the literature helped me to move beyond the semantic level so that I was able to create latent codes. Latent codes are interpretative — that is, the codes move beyond what is being said, such as assumptions and ideological positions. Thus, reading I realised that the previous semantic codes reflected previous research (Brown, 2013; Rashid, 2016) that shows how women are considered objects of social

policy rather than agents. These findings allowed me to navigate into creating latent codes such as “women as passive agents”.

In this process of moving beyond the surface, I also started noting the absences or unsaid in the data set (Finlay, 2014; Gill, 2007a). For example, there was a huge debate about responsibility surrounding the ‘Jihadi Brides’ phenomenon, with families, police, schools and socio-politico institutions all involved. What was striking was the absence of accountability from the girls themselves. For these cases, I created a code signalling this absence: “R. lack of girls’ accountability”. The initial R would stand for what I called *reflective codes*, as they were not explicit in the data, nor latent, but invited future reflection about aspects of the data.

To facilitate a systematic and iterative process of coding, I used NVivo 10, the qualitative analysis software. During this process, I coded almost all data extracts under codes. Some codes had poor or minimal relation to the research question but were also indicative of the contexts mobilised or elements discussed, such as debates about the failure of multiculturalism. In so doing, I ensured a good knowledge of the data that allowed me to make observations in later stages, which I did not see at the time.

Overall, the coding phase was quite extensive, as I engaged in a reiterative process of going back and forth through the data. In order to avoid my own bias, I coded sources that aligned more with my own views at the end. For example, to keep an open mind to other newspapers’ perspectives and arguments, I coded my responses to my preferred newspaper (*The Guardian*) last. I did the same in the interview studies.

Theoretically, I followed a critical analysis, paying attention to implicit and explicit references to power as well as identity, social contexts and dynamics of representation. Given the commitment to SRT, I also revised the codes in search of anchoring and objectification processes around power, to examine patterns of consensus and conflict and identity positioning within the data set. In addition, following social psychological research (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006), I focused

my attention on differences between sources, attending to majority and minority representations.

Phase 3. Searching for themes.

To create potential themes across the data, I transferred all codes, more than 800, into an Excel file classified by media source. This helped with visual representation and allowed me to identify similarities and differences across the data set. Once I had identified potential themes in each source, I cross-referenced them across all sources. This permitted me to contrast patterns and examine if potential themes were present or absent, or portrayed in similar or different ways.

For example, a theme around British Muslim women being as "targeted as mothers", which was particularly extended in *The Daily Telegraph*, was also present in the other sources. This potential theme was relevant from an SRT perspective as it could be indicative of objectification and anchoring processes. However, when looking at the research question, a careful examination helped to identify more latent meanings/interpretations. Therefore, I asked questions such as: How does this process of representing British Muslim women as mothers relate to their power relations? What representations are excluded? What logics motivate/explain this process? What is the outcome? What is this representation allowing? I also considered previous literature, in which Muslim women were quite often portrayed and addressed as mothers (Brown, 2012; Werbner, 1999), which was linked to paternalistic stereotypes, passiveness and submission. This preliminary finding was not original to this data set. Looking at other codes and extracts, I realised that the representation of British Muslim women as mothers, combined with the assumptions of passiveness, allowed and supported another narrative of "telling women how to be agentic" (see table 1). This narrative was also present across the data, particularly in national and local papers. It became another potential theme of the data. Finally, I dismissed the previous theme and kept this more latent one.

Following this reiterative process, I ended up identifying several candidate themes and sub-themes based on the codes and extracts. Some themes were very clear while others needed more refinement.

Table 1. Latent theme and codes

How to be agentic (Dominant representations)
• women called to work • women called to speak out • women called to make "appropriate" choices • women called to integrate • women called to fight extremism • women called to reform Islam / redefine • women become role models

Phase 4: Reviewing themes.

At this stage, I had a first thematic structure supported by the different subthemes and codes, but it needed refinement. I reviewed the collated extracts for each theme within sources and considered if there was a consistent and coherent pattern. Given the commitment to SRT, the structure needed to reflect this theoretical approach. Hence, I needed to make sure that the names of the themes were clear.

It is worth stating here how time-consuming this task was. The process of coding and recoding seemed endless. I overcame this challenge by keeping in mind the research question, constantly writing and rewriting memos and reflections of the data and discussing it with my supervisors. Finally, I considered the validity of the individual themes to the data set and how they answered the original research question.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes.

Once I was satisfied with the thematic structure was satisfactory, I needed to properly define and further refine the selected themes and subthemes. I also chose extracts of every source (when possible) that captured different aspects of each subtheme from NVivo. With this selection, I aimed to provide clear and vivid illustrations of my points of discussion. Simultaneously, I was making notes and starting to write the story of each theme and subtheme. During this process, I realised that the three potential themes accounted for much of the data.

Phase 6: Producing the report.

During this phase, I developed the critical analysis of the themes with extracts, offering explanation and interpretation. The aim was to build an argumentative story that answered the research question, as it will be shown in the findings section of the study (Chapter 6).

While writing the report, I developed a clearer picture of the data analysis as a whole. I realised that the themes were fascinating. During the whole process I aimed to explain, illustrate and contextualise the analysis in relation to SRT as well as the research question. Furthermore, I aimed to provide extracts of all sources to show the consensus and discrepancy within the representational field regarding British Muslim women's power.

This section has served to illustrate how the thematic analysis has been conducted in the thesis. The following section will offer a reflexive exercise on the research process.

5.2. Reflexive practice in qualitative research.

Any research process involves power relations in interrelated dimensions (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1996). In qualitative research in general, and in feminist research in particular, the researcher is required to engage in an exercise of reflexivity (Edwards, 1990; Finlay, 2002; Langdridge, 2008; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). The

researcher explains the reasoning behind the research and reflects on how her identity affects the research project. As Clarke and Braun (2019) signalled, reflexivity is not very easy to achieve, yet it is very necessary given that most researchers are white and middle class. Reflexive practice in qualitative research will therefore be the theme of this section. First, I will reflect on the motivation to conduct this research. Then, I will reflect on the power dynamics between researcher and researched and the ethical concerns that arose during the interviews. Finally, I will address the dilemmas of representation that this project elucidated and a final reflection on becoming a researcher will also be provided.

5.2.1. The "why" factor.

This section aims to address the motivation and *raison d'être* of the thesis as a whole. It follows Clarke and Braun's (2019) suggestion to accompany any research with an overview of the biography of the researcher. Similarly, Reinharz (1992) proposed personal experience as the starting point of any feminist research. Thus, what follows are some biographical aspects that inform the research. (More biographical aspects will be discussed in the following section, where I will position myself as a researcher):

- **Family background of strong and powerful women.** I belong to a family of strong women and have seen both my grandmothers conduct whole family dynamics. Having survived the Spanish Civil War, they bravely challenged and overcame certain aspects of patriarchy, while reproducing others.
- **Inherited gender lens and a feminist conscious.** Being raised by a gynaecologist mother, it would be easy to guess that gender issues were strongly present at home. My mum belongs to the "angry" feminists; her critical views were sometimes imposed on us, rather than explained. Thus, growing up I sometimes found her "anger" against patriarchy, and sometimes men, rather confusing. Even during my history and education studies, I would always resist adopting a gender lens, and I would struggle to identify myself as a feminist. But it was when I found myself in another country, researching

other women and reading feminist research, that I realised that I am indeed a feminist, and that there are lots of ways of being one. Moreover, at some point, I also had to face my own inner contradictions and to come to terms with my identity as a woman and what it meant to me. It was a painful process to realise how women have been denied as social agents in history by the patriarchy. For example, it was hard to realise how, being a historian myself, I had never challenged the lack of women in the process of the democratic transition in Spain, or my own disinterest in the Suffragette movement — those troublemaking women. So I went (and, I guess, I am still going) through my own process of coming to terms with how patriarchy shapes and maintains social inequality and how it is inscribed in me.

- **Social psychologist mindset.** As a teacher interested in better supporting her students and in improving the education system, I enrolled in psychology. Originally, I was clinically oriented. Yet as soon as I discovered social psychology, I felt it aligned with my own way of thinking and approach to the social world. At my university and in Spain in general, clinical psychology was mainly cognitive-behavioural oriented. From my point of view, it detached the individual from the social and the context. In that sense, social psychology appeared as my place to grow.
- **Work experience.** After working as a secondary school teacher for several years, I ended up becoming more and more frustrated with the educational system, particularly with how it reproduced power dynamics of gender, race and class, while reinforcing social stereotypes, inequality and exclusion.
- **Previous track history of interest in and research on Islam and Muslim women.** At university, I studied intercultural relations in the Mediterranean area, focusing on Islam as a socio-politico-cultural system and examining the religious-political structure of Iran. The final dissertation for my Postgraduate on Humanitarian Law talked about the empowerment of Saharawi women in the refugee camps of Tindouf.
- **Zeitgeist and serendipity.** As already explained in the preface (Chapter 1), when I moved to London, I identified a narrative around women's

empowerment that promoted a white privileged path. At the same time, the Jihadi Brides were in the spotlight, with gendered representations that victimised and infantilised women. Both events motivated the line of questioning that led to this thesis.

5.2.2. Power dynamics between interviewer and interviewees.

Feminist researchers have reflected on their own research processes of women interviewing other women since the 1980s (Finch, 1984; McRobbie, 1982; Oakley, 1981, 2016). During this entire research, I have also been acutely aware of the insider/outsider dynamics (Widdicombe, 2015) and the concerns around representing "the other" (Lyons, 2016; Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996). These concerns increased during the design of the second study — an interview study about British Muslim women's understandings, experiences and performances. I was worried about what kind of impact my presence, especially in relation to the participants (Reinharz, 1992), could potentially have for the research and, more importantly, for the interviewees. Therefore, reflexivity and critical thought around power relations became "a constant checking" in Foucauldian terms (Foucault, 1982, p. 778).

In this subsection, I will first reflect on those aspects of my identity — such as my nationality, my (lack of) faith and my gender — that could motivate dynamics of insider/outsider (Mullings, 1999) in relation to the participants. That is within the interview process, there will be instances in which participants and I might share certain identity aspects, such as being a woman of similar age, while at the same time differ in others, such as religion or ethnicity. All those identity aspects and how I am perceived have the potential to impact the interview process and outcome. Therefore, it demands careful examination. I will then develop the dilemmas around my being white, middle-class, middle-aged and my relationship status. I will describe my approach towards the interview process as well as my relationship with the participants. Finally, I will highlight some elements about the process of the second interview study.

First, when thinking about the interview process, I reflected on my nationality and how it could pose different challenges and opportunities. For example, I was concerned that my accent and not being native to Britain could cause potential misunderstandings or impact how participants perceived my skills as a researcher or the quality of my work. In contrast, I was also aware that not being British granted me a unique position towards the participants. Hence, as Cotterill (1992, p. 596) suggested, I felt "respondents may feel more comfortable talking to 'a friendly stranger' because it allows them to exercise some control over the relationship". The difference in nationality also could provide a safe space, where participants reflected or criticised some aspects of their British culture that they may not have been able to discuss with someone who was British.

During interviews, I did not present myself as Spanish but rather, more specifically, from Barcelona. This was mainly because, as a left-leaning thinker, I do not empathise with some of the more commonly associated Spanish cultural values (e.g., bullfighting) — it can be a quite backward, even racist, culture sometimes. Thus, I have always found it easier to relate to my city, and not to my passport. My city elucidated discussions about tourism that, in a way, also set a positive mood for the interviews. For example, interviewees would comment on how much they were willing to visit Barcelona.

Second, my non-religious background concerned me. Even before starting the study, I was challenged by relatives, friends and colleagues about the purpose of researching Muslim women. There was almost a kind warning towards the difference (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996), almost as if I would not be able to properly research without being Muslim. Honestly, I had my doubts too. Even though I had studied Islam as culture and religion during my studies (BA History and Intercultural Relations) and had travelled to Morocco a couple of times, my face-to-face experience with Muslim women was reduced to my circle of friends, colleagues and students. In that sense, I felt uneasy about the fact that not being an "insider" (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1996) may mean missing something during the interviews or later in the research. I opted to solve this dilemma by adopting an ignorant but

respectful approach. Following Gill's (2007a) "critical respect", I also aimed to respectfully listen to the participants' accounts, encouraging co-reflection with the interviewees about their experiences and certain practices, and to ask when in doubt.

I kept telling myself that my knowledge about Islam or Muslims was not at stake, but my ability to listen to their own experiences was (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997). My concern was also inseparable from the context of social prejudice around Muslim women. I was almost afraid that participants would position me not only as an outgroup member, but also aligned with this prejudice. Even though it was a potential risk, I realised soon enough that my concern was playing against me and the research. Following Rose (1997), I realised that we cannot be fully aware of our positionalities, since we don't know how those might come across during the research, nor how participants might interpret them or be influenced by them. This dilemma inspired me to approach participants as experts of their own lives, their religion and culture, what Harding (1987) called "knowers" (p. 25).

Third, I also considered my position as a woman and how it could potentially drive movements of sameness and difference (Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1996, 1997) within the interview process. Many feminists have supported the women-to-women approach to interview, believing it facilitates women's discussion to better reflect women's interests (Finch, 1984; Hurtado & Stewart, 1997; Oakley, 1981). A number of feminist researchers (Archer, 2002; Cotterill, 1992; Edwards, 1990) have pointed out that this approach does not guarantee the production of a non-oppressive research, particularly because other power differences might have been left unchallenged, such as race, class or cultural differences. For example, Oguntokun (1998) described, sharing race might not guarantee a shared experience, as other group identities or participants' traumatic backgrounds might prevail in their experience. In light of the opinion that no strategy seems to be able to challenge power differentials, reflexivity and recognition of interviewer's/interviewees' subjectivities are agreed as the only alternative (Edwards, 1990).

Regarding other aspects such as race and ethnicity, I was probably blinded by my own condition as a white woman and I might not have considered it enough as I did some of the previous identities detailed above. Until I came to the UK, I don't think that I was ever aware of the real dimension of white privilege. Here, I am talking about experience, not knowledge. Until then, I knew I was white and living in a cosmopolitan city, so I thought I was aware of my own biases (Langdridge, 2008) and the dynamics of racism. But it wasn't until I settled in a real multicultural society such as London, where ethnicity/race is constantly mobilised (e.g., job applications), that the dimension of race and ethnicity became evident to me. Back home, being part of the white dominant group in Catalonia, issues of ethnicity are only mobilised when marking the difference (e.g., gipsy ethnicity). During the interviews, I asked about participants' ethnicity in the demographics section. I interviewed participants of multiple backgrounds. Yet, looking back, it might seem that I neglected it. In my view, ethnicity was approached as any other difference, like their religious background, a difference that demanded to be considered but not essentialised.

Another concern while designing the research was class. In fact, I considered introducing questions around class in the descriptive section. Yet previous research (Williams, 2009) has shown the complexity of operationalising social class and how participants' answers are not always consistent with objective criteria and may adopt "subjective" indicators (p. 44). For example, low-income women may feel that their education, how they were brought up are more indicative of their social class than their current income. That being said, I was not able to find any satisfactory categorisation at the time. Regarding my own class, I was aware that positioning myself as part of the academia would potentially mobilise hierarchical relations and assumptions of privilege. However, being a self-funded student working as a teacher and in a continuous precarious economic state, I thought it was important to highlight my conditions of "self-funded" and "teacher" in the advertising process. I guess it was my way to challenge the privilege I had encountered within academia, where some scholars' privileged experiences seemed to have left them blind to real-life experiences (e.g., to make ends meet). This positioning elucidated some patterns of

sameness with some participants who also positioned themselves as students and/or researchers; while others related to me as workers in the social sector. Overall, the sample was mainly middle class and educated to at least degree level. Therefore, the hierarchical difference in terms of education was reduced.

Finally, my age (37/38), my relationship status (fluctuating throughout both sets of studies) and sexuality (heterosexual) were not disclosed. However, both appeared in some interviews and motivated some moments of "connection" (Hurd & McIntyre, 1996). This was particularly with the participants in their 30s, while talking about their concerns about marriage and starting a family, or the challenge of finding the right partner.

Overall, despite being mindful of the differences with my potential participants, I felt that I was able to position myself alongside them in a number of ways that would help the interview process, promoting trust and honesty (Oakley, 1981). Thus, I decided to approach the interview process as a friendly encounter, where I would have a relaxed discussion (Finch, 1984) with participants as experts of their lives. For example, during the interviews, there were barely any questions on the subject of participants' religion (Methodologies in Chapters 7 and 8 offer more information on the schedule). We wanted potential participants to be able to decide what identity was salient for them at every stage, and to allow them to present themselves accordingly. I was aware that when omitting questions regarding religion, participants' gender roles or even the role of patriarchy in their lives, there could be a potential risk of missing insights on those topics. Yet this aligned with approaching participants on their own terms, where they could mobilise the instances of power that were more relevant to them in their own way. In addition, given the social context, I didn't want the participants to feel targeted or make them feel uncomfortable in any way.

When I began the interviews, all my fears dispelled as I realised it was my own fears of potential offense that were blurring the process. After exchanging emails and consent, I would start the interviews by presenting myself and the research and

reassuring them about the confidentiality and anonymisation of their accounts. Most participants engaged actively with the interviews and all seemed happy and enthusiastic (Finch, 1984) to take part in the study and eager to clarify their answers. As some of the participants openly admitted, they were half curious, half flattered by the fact that someone, particularly a foreigner, would want to know more about them. In some cases, I was asked questions about my motivations or agenda behind the research by participants who were initially reluctant or dubious about my intentions. Yet soon enough they engaged in open discussions. These reactions contrasted with those of several participants whose trust was manifest from the beginning, by appearing without the hijab in online interviews. These women would ask me about my whereabouts to check on potential male appearances. Once I assured them that I was alone in the privacy of my room, they would happily continue. This was a huge indicator of participants' trust (Finch, 1984) in me as a female researcher. This access given/granted to their private lives can only be imagined in a women-to-women interview (Finch, 1984). That is, that during the interviews there seemed to be a process of identification as women, where participants would show a high level of trust in me simply because I was another woman.

The interviews became a relaxed dialog between the participants and me, a space in which we would co-construct knowledge. The interview schedule helped me balance power relations by getting participants to choose the experiences they wanted to relate to. In this manner, I would ask questions related to the examples given following their own pace. In some instances, the interview became a reciprocally educative encounter (Lather, 1988), whereby participants would teach me about their understandings of religion and culture, while I would share some aspects I had learnt during my research.

Some feminists alerted me to the potential exploitative nature (Finch, 1984) of adopting a friendly approach. But I would argue that it was precisely this approach — based on self-investment, trust and honesty — that gave me the courage to dare to face participants and interfere in their lives, and the humbleness and respect to

ask them questions about their experiences. This approach also motivated some internal dilemmas, especially when I felt that my identity as a researcher collided with my values as a human. For example, to what extent should I keep asking about a sensitive topic? Or should I leave a participant's account unchallenged? With this came emotion. To what extent should I empathise with the participants? Or should I remain as objective as possible? Deutsch (2004) also encountered such dilemmas. I challenged notions of objectivity, and soon enough I concluded that my top priorities were my participants' wellbeing and making sure our encounters were good experiences, much more important than the data itself. Hence, I decided to follow what previous feminist researchers had pointed towards: that "the process of research is of as much of importance as the outcome" (Campbell & Wasco, 2000, p. 783).

With that in mind, I would present myself as authentic as possible, which implied sharing personal information. This decision was motivated by a wish to comfort or accompany the participant, rather than utilise any sympathy to subtract information, at least not in a conscious manner. For example, sometimes I realised that I had interests in common with a participant, so off record we ended up talking for half an hour more about, say, poetry. Other participants turned out to be basketball players like myself, and we ended up talking about that. Regarding more sensitive information, one participant disclosed how she felt very powerless during her parents' divorce. She became very distressed. I suggested we stop the interview, but she wanted to continue. I then insisted that we take a break.

This modus operandi may have been effective after all, because many participants recounted the interviews as an unexpected joyful experience and, in fact, many recommended it to other friends or relatives. In fact, I was also told several times that I was not the "typical" researcher and that I was "easy to talk to". In some instances, participants disclosed very sensitive information (e.g., about abusive relationships or forced marriages), so much that I would double check with participants if they wanted to disclose it and insist on the fact that they could change topic at any point, have a break or stop the interview altogether. None did. My

suggestion didn't aim to silence their experiences, but to reassure them that they didn't have to disclose something they were not comfortable with or they would later regret (Cotterill, 1992; Oakley, 2016). In fact, I was sometimes left touched or undone by participants' experiences. These experiences were not functional or operational, nor could they be faked. It was also very gratifying to hear that participants enjoyed the interview. During the first study, several participants explained at the end of their interview how it had become a reflective exercise that made them realise their own power in ways they hadn't previously considered.

Concerning participants' motivations, some explained their willingness to contribute to enrich knowledge about British Muslim women. A few others were also sympathetic, as they had conducted research themselves at some point in their lives and knew how difficult it was to find participants. Some also expressed that taking part in the study was an opportunity to be heard and to represent Islam.

Personally, I think that during the process of interviewing I was not only finding myself within research but also developing my identity as a researcher. Thus, I believe there was a notable difference between my first interviews and the ones that followed, as well as between the first interview study and the second one. Besides the obvious increase in confidence due to practice, there was also an improvement in my ability to properly "listen", to genuinely engage with participants, but mostly an improvement in our exchange of views in a co-constructed manner. At the beginning, I was more focused on the gap between us, in self-assessing myself, but gradually I managed to focus more on the connection. Similarly, I also moved from a less neutral position (Rapley, 2001) and invested myself more, always in a respectful manner.

In this section, I have positioned myself within the research. In the following section, I will address some dilemmas of representation encountered in this research.

5.2.3. Dilemmas of representation.

While writing and presenting the analysis, issues of representation appeared. I was very aware of the mechanics of power and how my approach to the data could potentially reproduce the same power inequalities that this research aims to overcome (Lukes, 2005). As O'Hanlon (1988) argued, one of the ultimate forms of oppression of the subaltern is categorizing and defining their forms of resistance. Similarly, Griffin (1996, p. 189) stated that all research "representing the other" involves "the power to recount my own stories of participants' experiences". In simple words, the researcher holds the power to select, reject, structure and interpret the data (Letherby, 2003).

Looking back, I was persuaded by a naïve thought that, by interviewing British Muslim women, I was giving them a voice (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997), in the sense of approaching a group that was socially marginalised. This problematic view was soon challenged after the first interviews, when it became evident that these women didn't need me or anyone else and that they already had their own voices and spoke loud and clear. My task was to represent their accounts in a fair manner, honouring their trust. I tried to avoid falling into what Finch (1984) called "betrayal" (p. 85) — that is, undermining participants' interests when talking about certain issues. For example, some accounts could potentially be interpreted as examples of participants' oppression, slipping into accounts of false consciousness, as described earlier (5.2.2.). Yet this logic implies that there is a true consciousness of which the researcher it is aware and the participant is not.

But then how could I engage in a critical manner with the participants' accounts while legitimising their experience (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997)? I resolved to raise the moral dilemmas that I observed in the analysis, to situate their accounts in the wider context (Finch, 1984; Gill, 2007a; Mahmood, 2001). I also resolutely followed Mahmood (2005, p. 225) "to take into consideration the desires, motivations, commitments and aspirations of the people to whom these (religious) practices are important".

This process of interpretation involved an exercise of courage and responsibility, as many other feminists (Rich, 1977; Willig, 2012) have pointed towards. it involved the courage to interpret (Psychology's Feminist Voices, 2012) and the responsibility to trust myself (Morse, 1997).

5.2.4. On becoming a researcher.

"A woman must have money and a
room of her own if she is to write fiction."
Virginia Woolf, 1929 (1945, p. 6)

In this section, I also want to take a moment to realise what I have been through, to assess what this thesis has given me personally and as a researcher, exploring questions on power, gender and identity. These five years walking with all these women's voices in my mind have mainly helped me find my own. Dealing with questions on power and identity on a daily basis has demanded that I question and cross-examine my own assumptions and beliefs. Entangled in a constant exercise of interrogation and development of critical thinking, the hardest part has been to be able to speak out. Like my participants, to find ways to assert my voice, to convey my ideas and, more importantly, to take my mind and ideas seriously, following Rich (1977).

Having achieved different degrees while mostly working full time, I think I can safely say that nothing has been as demanding as this PhD. Besides the difficulties of being self-funded, this has also been a physically, emotionally and intellectually draining experience. Physically, I have done some hard things in my life, such as open-water swimming, running marathons and hiking high into the mountains. Yet the thesis has forced me to learn to pace myself, to get back on the horse when I felt I was failing massively, or I was too tired for it. Emotionally and intellectually, the hardship has been about being my own boss (despite the support and wise guidance of my supervisors); after all, a PhD is about ownership. The hardest bit has been to learn to think with myself, to take myself seriously, to follow my own paths. So this thesis has given me the opportunity to finally find a room of my own, in celebration

of the master Virginia Woolf (1929/1945), to be comfortable in my own mind with my own world view. In other words, to find my voice, to tame my mind, to face my worst fears and demons of not knowing and getting lost, as well as to raise to my own expectations, to burn them and to build them again. Ultimately, to find my inner power, which is not a strength after all, but compassion and humbleness, the courage of finishing one day saying "well, I tried" and waking up the next morning and getting back to work. But this experience has also taught me like Lorde (2017), that my silence would not protect me, that I needed to speak up, to find my truth, to allow myself to finish this journey, as no one else could do it for me.

5.3. Conclusion of Chapter 5

This chapter has described the methodological framework of the thesis. First, the epistemological commitment with critical realism was explained. Then, it was argued for a phenomenological approach as a means to capture British Muslim women's power, in their own terms; that is, paying attention to their power experiences, meanings and perceptions, rather than imposing pre-existent understandings of power. This approach was also compatible with the identity framework (IPT/SRT, explained in Chapter 3) to examine the relationship between these participants' power, identity and systems of representation.

The chapter has also discussed how feminist qualitative methods inform this thesis. It also elaborated the three-study research design and the data collection methodology of the thesis. Then, it was argued that thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006, 2013) provided the theoretical and analytical flexibility that the thesis required, consistent with the earlier stages of the research when the researcher made the decision. Focusing on the first study on British media, a detailed account was provided to illustrate how this type of analysis has been conducted. The final part of the chapter offered an exercise on reflexivity, around the power dynamics between researcher and researched and the dilemmas of representation involved in this thesis.

Chapter 6.

Social Representations of British Muslim Women's Power:

A Media Analysis

"re-presentation carries the possibilities of the hybridity and polyphasia of meaning, and so demands dialogue, debate, and sometimes resistance in the ideological construction of reality." (Howarth, 2006, p. 79)

6.1. Background

As discussed in Chapter 2, British Muslim women are represented in public policies and the media as: powerless, passive, oppressed by men and their communities, in need of rescue and a social problem that needs solving (Ahmad, 2006; Brown, 2013; Martini, 2018; Poole, 2002; Poole & Richardson, 2006; Rashid, 2014, 2016). It was argued that these representations belong to a wider geopolitical context of the West, where Muslims and Muslim women are under scrutiny and perceived as a threat to liberal values (Amer & Howarth, 2018; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b).

Extensive previous research has addressed media representations of Muslims in the UK (Amer & Howarth, 2018; Baker, Gabrielatos & McKenzie, 2013; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b; Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2004a; Meer et al., 2010; Moore, Mason & Lewis, 2008; Poole, 2002; Poole & Richardson, 2006; Richardson, 2001, 2004; Saeed, 2007; Samad, 1998). However, less scholarly attention has primarily been paid to representations of British Muslim women in the media, with a few exceptions (Al-Hejin, 2015; Khiabany & Williamson, 2008; Samad, 1998).

When considering British Muslim women, previous media studies have mainly concentrated on the veil (Al-Hejin, 2015; Meer et al., 2010; Khiabany & Williamson, 2008) with a focus on different veiling practices and interpretations. As stated earlier (Chapter 2), the veil has become a contested signifier (Dwyer, 1999, 2000) of national and cultural identities in the multicultural British context. Sometimes, through the frame of imposition or radicalisation, it is interpreted as an object of oppression (Baker et al., 2013). In other instances, it has become a symbol, politically and religiously informed, that challenges Islamophobia and shows modernisation (Meer et al., 2010). The veil has also been approached through a rights-based discourse, in terms of choice, where women can choose what they want to wear (Brown, 2006; Šeta, 2016). But there is an argument that research that only focuses on the veil has the potential to reproduce a monolithic representation (Samad, 1998) — that is, the perception of Muslim women as mainly a religious grouping. This neglects other crucial aspects of their lives, such as their economic, political and ethnic backgrounds, as well as education, work and values.

Some research (Brown, 2006; Poole, 2002) suggests that debates around British Muslim women's dress code and certain religio-cultural practices, such as gender segregation, have also been framed in terms of rights and freedoms. In such debates, these women's agency has been questioned (Poole, 2002), as elaborated in Chapter 3. However, agency is a mainly individualistic notion that, when applied from a Western perspective, tends to neglect the social context and the meanings of those social practices for the people involved (as argued previously in Chapter 4).

The role of the British press in spreading and reinforcing dominant narratives that stigmatise, exclude and marginalise British Muslim women (Al-Hejin, 2015; Martini, 2018; Samad, 1998) is well established. However, less is known about alternative narratives around them — that is, minority representations of these women and their power relations. As stated earlier, British Muslim women tend to be spoken on behalf of, or silenced (Martini, 2018) or marginalised as significant actors (Poole, 2002) in the media. Therefore, the aim of this first study is to explore how British Muslim women's power is represented in British newspapers, by

examining national, local and ethno-religious sources. In so doing, the aim is to capture dominant and minority media representations that make up the media landscape around British Muslim women's power.

For this study, social representations theory (SRT) (Moscovici, 1976/2008, 1988) — discussed in Chapter 3 — is preferred as the social psychology theory, which allows for a careful exploration of complex social issues presented in the media, such as power. For example, Moscovici himself (1976/2008) studied social representations of psychoanalysis in the French media. However, it should be borne in mind that research adopting an SRT approach towards media representations is limited (Amer & Howarth, 2018).

This study focuses on newspapers' reporting of British Muslim women's power because news media has a unique role in producing systems of knowledge and (re)presentation of people, as well as meaning-making about the world and social practices (Wagner et al., 1999). News media is never neutral. It allows dominant groups to represent the world in certain ways (Saeed, 2007) and to reproduce hegemonic representations that help them to maintain the status quo (Poole, 2002).

Hegemonic representations are more extensively distributed and informative of ideological perspectives (Moscovici, 1988). These representations need to be questioned and "must be viewed in the context of an opposition or struggle between groups" (Moscovici, 1988, p. 221). In contrast, groups with less access to sources, like British Muslim women, may be spoken on behalf of or have their voices unheard (Amir-Moazami & Salvatore, 2003; Richardson, 2001). In this sense, the press has a privileged position to (mis)represent minority groups (Cottle, 2000, 2006) such as Muslims. Thus, any news media analysis needs constant questioning of "what and who gets represented, who and what regularly and routinely gets left out; and how things, people, events, relationships are represented" (Hall, 1986, p. 9).

In this fashion, the current study aims to explore the polyphasic nature of social representations (Wagner et al., 2000) in the media. That is, "the plurality of

representational fields, where differing, and at times conflicting, styles of thinking, meanings and practices co-exist in the same individual, institution, group or community" (Renedo & Jovchelovitch, 2007, p. 783). In the British media, it is expected that dominant and hegemonic media representations of these women's power may coexist, contrast and conflict with minority representations. In addition, it investigates processes of anchoring, objectification and group difference, as well as the potential purposes and implications behind those processes.

The study draws on articles from seven different sources that include national, local and ethno-religious newspapers across two key time periods. Newspaper articles related to the two key periods were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). One period (March 2015) covered the so-called Jihadi Brides phenomenon; the other (mid-January to mid-February 2016) covered the public call by ex-PM David Cameron to British Muslim women to learn English to help tackle extremism, and its aftermath. These periods were selected as instances when social representations of British Muslim women and their power where collectively (re)negotiated and challenged.

Finally, the study seeks to contribute to the overall research question of the thesis in three different ways. First, by examining the dynamics of social representations around British Muslim women's power, which may influence, delimit, encourage or hinder their experiences of power. Second, by identifying the social representations that they may use to position and to identify themselves within power relations (Breakwell, 2010; Moscovici, 1988). Third, by investigating processes of redefinition in the representation of British Muslim women and their power, which may be indicative of social change. In that sense, the news media holds a unique position in not only confirming people's beliefs, but also effectively redefining and (re)presenting new meanings and alternatives (Wagner et al., 1999), changing people's perceptions of social norms and acceptance of other groups (Klein & Licata, 2003; Paluck, 2009).

6.2. Method

This section will develop the methodology of the study. First, it will describe the data, elaborating the rationale behind the selection of sources and the time frames. Then, it will explain how the selection of articles was conducted. Finally, it will address the thematic analysis of the data, which was already detailed previously in Chapter 5.

6.2.1. Data.

The study draws on 170 newspaper articles collected from national (*The Sun*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*), local (Bradford *Telegraph & Argus* and *Birmingham Mail*) and ethno-religious newspapers (the *Muslim News*, *Eastern Eye* and *Asian Sunday*) during two time periods. All articles included in the dataset were relevant towards providing insights around the representation of British Muslim women and their power. The criterion used for analytic inclusion was that British Muslim women needed to be at the centre of the article, spoken about or referred to.

6.2.1.1. Source selection.

The aim of this study was to capture the representational landscape around British Muslim women's power. For that purpose, I selected different national, local and ethno-religious sources. This selection was deemed to enable the examination of not only dominant representations (from media targeting the general public) but also minority representations (from media targeting Muslims and minority groups) of British Muslim women's power.

Thus, I chose three mainstream national newspapers (*The Sun*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*) based on their political orientations as well as circulation rates (see Appendix A, Table 8). I expected the national sources to provide dominant representations, as these newspapers target the general public.

I also selected two local newspapers (Bradford's *Telegraph & Argus* and *Birmingham Mail*) from areas with a comparatively high Muslim population. Following the Muslim Council of Britain's 2011 Census report (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015, p. 29), I found out about constituencies in which the Muslim population was more than 20%. I focused on the top six constituencies (Birmingham, Hodge Hill; Bradford West; Birmingham, Hall Green; East Ham; Bradford East; and Blackburn), all of which had more than 36% Muslim population (see Appendix A, Table 9 for details). Then, I searched for the local press of those areas and selected the two with the highest circulation rates (see Appendix A, Table 10). It was expected that these local sources, given the high population of Muslims, would potentially target Muslims as well as general public. Therefore, these sources would potentially provide dominant and minority representations, as well as processes of reproduction, redefinition and contestation of available dominant representations.

Lastly, I also selected three ethno-religious newspapers (*Asian Sunday, The Muslim News* and *Eastern Eye*) based on circulation rates, age of the publication and frequency of publication (see Appendix A, Table 11). I expected these sources, whose main target readership are Muslims and ethnic minorities, to provide minority representations as well as to illustrate processes of maintenance/contestation of dominant representations.

The following table (Table 2) shows a detailed selection of the newspapers for this study.

Table 2.

Selection of newspapers for the study (national, local and ethno-religious)

Newspaper	Publication day	Circulation*
The Sun	Daily	1,978,702
The Daily Telegraph	Daily	494,675
The Guardian	Daily	185,429
Bradford Telegraph & Argus	Mon-Sat	18,906
	Mon-Thu,	31,331
Birmingham Mail	Sat / Friday	67,759
Asian Sunday	Sunday (Weekly)	30,000 Bradford
		20,000 London
The Muslim News	Monthly / online	140000
Eastern Eye	Weekly / online	200,000

*Circulation numbers from 2015, see Appendix A (Tables 8, 9 &10)

6.2.1.2. Time frames selection.

In order to sample media representations of British Muslim women's power, I collected articles every day for a month in two consecutive years, 2015 and 2016. The choice of months was contextually opportunistic. As stated earlier, the first period captured the debate around the so-called Jihadi Brides' phenomenon during March 2015. This period elucidated debates mostly around counter-extremism and security. To ensure a more diverse representation, in issues and contexts, I found convenient to add another period. The statement in early January 2016 from David Cameron, encouraging Muslim women to learn English to help tackle extremism, produced a unique scenario where British Muslim women became the focus of socio-politico debates (Hughes, 2016). Thus, I selected data from mid-January through February 2016.

Overall, the selection criterion primed quantity and diversity of articles, to ensure multiple and diverse media representations.

6.2.2. Procedure.

I accessed all sources through their online databases and archives (see Appendix A, for a List of webpages 12), except for *The Sun* and *Eastern Eye*, which were accessed through the UK Newsstand database, currently ProQuest European Newsstream. I conducted the data search using the search tools of every source webpage, typing in the following keywords: “British” “Islam” “Muslim”, “Islam”, “women”, “females”. Some search tools were more developed than others. Thus, to maximise the search and to ensure that no articles were lost, I also conducted a second search using Google, which allows advanced search tools (e.g., Boolean) including the aforementioned keywords. For example:

British Muslim women 2016 AND January OR February OR March OR mosque OR daughters OR mothers OR females OR leader site: www.asiansunday.co.uk

The criterion for analytic inclusion was that British Muslim women needed to be at the centre of the article, spoken about or referred to. A total of 170 articles were collected. The distribution of the sources is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3.

Distribution of sources by period

Broadsheet	Articles per source	
	P1. March 2015	P2. Jan-Feb 2016
The Sun	13	14
The Guardian	24	18
The Daily Telegraph	11	18
Birmingham Mail	14	6
Telegraph & Argos	14	7
Muslim News	2	9
Asian Sunday	3	6
Eastern Eye	5	6
Total (*N* = 170)	86	84

6.2.3. Data analysis.

As explained in Chapter 5, thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006, 2013) guided the analytical process. This approach was chosen for two main reasons. First, given the earlier stages of my research, when this study was designed, thematic analysis offered a theoretical and methodological flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2013) that was deemed most appropriate to examine representation. Second, thematic analysis has proven successful in previous research on social representations in the media (Jaspal & Nerlich, 2014, 2016), which provided guidance for the current media analysis. A detailed account on how the thematic analysis was conducted was provided earlier in section 5.2.5. of the Methodology chapter.

6.3. Findings

6.3.1. Summary of findings.

In this section, a summary of the results of the analysis will be outlined. Following this, a more detailed examination and description of the different themes, along with illustrative quotes, will be provided. The aim of the analysis is to identify media representations around British Muslim women's power, paying particular attention to its content and contexts, to processes of objectification and anchoring, as well as patterns of reification, redefinition and contestation across sources. The analysis is split into three themes as shown in the following table 4.

Table 4. *Final thematic structure*

Codes	Subthemes	Themes
Choosing to veil / to work	6.3.2.1. Consensus across sources	6.3.2. Power represented as "making choices"
Neoliberal understanding		
To be housewives as valid choice		
Choosing oppression	6.3.2.2. Conflicting interpretations: questioning their choices	
Women as making inappropriate choices		
(implicit) choosing not to integrate		
Subjugated to men	6.3.3.1. Dominant representation: women facing barriers towards integration	6.3.3. Power anchored in barriers
Oppressed by religion and community		
Assumptions of submissive and lack of agency		
Misrepresentation public debates	6.3.3.2. Beyond the dominant representation: minority representations of barriers	
Instrumentalised for political agendas		
Marginalisation of women /sexism		

Voicing out	6.3.4.1. British Muslim women speaking their minds	6.3.4. Contesting and redefining the negative representation: British Muslim women as active social agents
Representing themselves		
Arguing back ex PM statements		
Achieving (awards) / Role models	6.3.4.2. Celebrating British Muslim women's success and their ongoing contribution	
Contributing to society		
Active social agents		

The first theme (6.3.2. Power represented as "making choices") deals with a predominant social representation of power objectified in making choices. It attempts to demonstrate the consensus across the different sources around this objectification (6.3.2.1. Consensus across sources). In addition, it reveals the conflicting interpretation existing around British Muslim women's choices (6.3.2.2. Conflicting interpretations of their power — questioning their choices). Thus, some choices are anchored in positive terms, as appropriate, linked with rights and nationalism (being British is being free to choose) and in negative terms, as incomprehensible or inappropriate. These conflicting interpretations reveal a certain moral order, where choices are quite often explained through the claim of cultural differences and how multiculturalism has failed to integrate certain communities, like Muslims.

The second theme focuses on a trend identified in the dominant media representation of British Muslim women, which portrays their power as anchored in barriers (6.3.3. Power anchored in barriers). This representation is developed into two subthemes. The first subtheme (6.3.3.1. Dominant representation: women facing barriers towards integration) illustrates dominant representations of barriers (e.g., the veil, gender segregation) and how they contribute to the portrayal of these women as lacking agency and as victims. The second subtheme (6.3.3.2. Contesting dominant assumptions) shows minority representations of this anchoring of power in barriers, which contests dominant assumptions around what barriers Muslim women may face (e.g., misinformation, marginalisation from decision-making positions).

The third theme (6.3.4. Contesting and redefining the negative representation: British Muslim women as active social agents) captures a minority process of disputation and reformulation of these women's dominant representation. It is developed in two subthemes. The first one (6.3.4.1. Speaking out their views) reveals a pattern in the data where women appear speaking out and contesting claims around them. The second subtheme (6.3.4.2. Celebrating their success and ongoing contribution) illustrates another strategy adopted by minority sources, covering these women's achievements and their contribution to society. This representation is mainly anchored in success. It will be argued that this depiction, despite challenging the dominant representation, is also narrow and reductionist as it misses the voices of uneducated or non-professional women, reproducing the stereotype around them while raising questions around class and privilege.

6.3.2. Power represented as "making choices".

Within SRT, abstract knowledge such as power is adapted into everyday knowledge through the processes of objectification and anchoring (Duveen & Moscovici, 2000; Moscovici, 1976/2008), explained earlier in Chapter 3. Objectification makes the unfamiliar known by transforming it into something that is concrete. This first theme shows a common pattern across all sources, where British Muslim women's power was represented and objectified as "making choices" or the "ability to make choices". This theme also captures the dynamics of consensus and conflict within this representation. The first subtheme illustrates consensus (Howarth, 2006; Rose et al., 1995), which is the starting point that also allows inconsistency and ambivalence, captured in the second subtheme. A closer look into the consensus across sources showed conflicting interpretations within this representation of power as making choices.

6.3.2.1. Consensus across sources.

This subtheme shows a pattern of consensus found in all sources around the social representation of power as making choices. Consensus here refers to a shared representation across sources — "common ground" (Rose et al., 1995, p. 3). Most sources, except for *Eastern Eye*, shared this representation. Yet this is not to say that all sources shared the same views of this representation of power or were mobilised in the same ways, as will be shown in the next subtheme.

The representation of power as making choices was mobilised in different contexts, such as women's dress code, education, gender segregation, joining ISIS (Islamic State). Similarly, all issues related to work — either choosing to become a stay-at-home mother or (re)entering the labour market — were represented with narratives around choice, like veiling.

The following extracts illustrate this spread pattern of representing British Muslim women's power as making choices, particularly in relation to veiling practices. For example, the first extract describes a writer's encounter with a woman who wore the niqab (full face and body veil) during a mosque open day, when mosques open their doors to the local community.

Extract 1. Asian Sunday, 15/02/2016 by Allison Bellamy

> *"I also spoke to a woman wearing a niqab, with only a tiny slit showing her beautiful eyes. She assured me it was her choice to wear it and without prompting said that 'no man had forced her to put it on'; she said she had only been wearing it for a few months. I felt glad it was her own choice and would have liked to talk to her for longer about her life."*

In this extract, the writer and interviewee seem to share this representation of power as making choices. There is a consensus around the fact that the woman wearing a niqab is not oppressed, in so far as "it was her choice" and not enforced by a man. However, it is interesting to highlight that this woman's assertion of power, despite it being through a choice of her own making, seems to require a justification

to be validated. In other words, it conveys a sense that veiled women need to establish their autonomy, by stating their freedom of choice, in order for them to be considered agentic. This trend towards questioning women's choices or them having to prove their autonomy will be addressed in the following subtheme.

Objectifying power as making choices was also found in the analysis in the context of these women's education, careers and their access to the labour market. For example, the two following extracts demonstrate this representation of women's choices regarding their careers. Both extracts belong to articles that were contesting ex-PM David Cameron's statements around Muslim women (Hughes, 2016). In mid-January 2016, Mr Cameron called on migrant Muslim women to learn English in order to contribute to society, as they were "economically inactive", and to prevent their children from becoming radicalised. His statements were criticised for targeting Muslim women and seeking a misguided anti-extremist agenda, rooted in an unsupported correlation between English language skills and radicalisation. Rather than advancing these women's interests, the debate mainly served to undermine (British) Muslim women, who found their English skills, lifestyle and integration questioned. The following extracts show how power was frequently objectified as making choices to discuss these women's careers and employment in the data.

Extract 2. Muslim News, 19/01/2016 by Aasiya Versi

<u>I love my chosen vocation – I'm a stay-at-home mother and proud of it.</u>

My mother stayed at home when I was growing up and my husband's mother did the same. Both of us wanted the same for Nabeelah [their daughter] and couldn't imagine it any other way. I empathise with mothers who need to go back to work due to financial or other reasons; it must be a very difficult juggle. However, I find it hard to swallow when my peers feel that staying at home is the easier option.

Extract 3. The Guardian, 18/01/2016 by Deborah Orr

(…) Cameron's rhetoric doesn't just upset Muslim women. It's a bit anti-woman in general. It's annoying hearing women declared "economically inactive" because they run homes and bring up children. Working at bringing up a family, rather than earning money, is a valid choice, whether you can speak English or not.

The first extract depicts the account of a Muslim mother who advocates for her choice to be a stay-at-home mother, following her family tradition and values. It also shows how, despite being her choice, she acknowledges other options available. Of interest to this research is the fact that this extract illustrates a pattern of having to account for and/or justify one's choice to prove autonomy, already highlighted earlier. The second extract also relates to and stands up for Muslim women's choices. It reprobates Cameron's categorisation of Muslim women as "economically inactive" and accuses his rhetoric of being "anti-woman". This rhetoric seems to be part of a patriarchal and capitalistic view that does not consider the economic contribution and work of women who stay at home. In addition, it is interesting how this extract problematises the social validity of certain choices, like "earning money", while others are undervalued, like "bringing up a family". (The conflicting interpretations around Muslim women's choices will be further addressed in the next subtheme). These two extracts have been cited to illustrate a consensus around how women's choices are represented as their power in relation to the context of their professional careers, in most sources (national, local and ethno-religious).

Within this same context, British Muslim women's attempts to learn English and integrate were also constructed as a matter of choice across most sources. See the following extract:

Extract 4. Bradford Telegraph & Argus, 18/01/2016 by Sara Khan

(…) being able to converse in English is more than just about economic independence; it impacts the quality of one's entire life and also a woman's agency in being able to make her own choices. It is, one could argue, a basic

human right (…) I have not ever come across any Muslim woman living in the UK who does not want to learn English.

The extract refers to migrant Muslim women in the UK and emphasises the notion of choice. Learning the language is linked with the ability to make one's own choices. Furthermore, it is portrayed as a basic human right and in terms of autonomy. Note how it introduces the idea that all women want to learn but there might be something stopping them. This notion of barriers will be described in the following theme.

The depiction of power as making choices, as elaborated in this theme, was consensual across ethno-religious, local and national sources. As a representation, which so often appeared in the analysis, it is important because it highlights the active role of women in the making and definition of their life choices ("agency"). It is a representation that is rooted in British core values that emphasise autonomy and freedom of choice. Yet it is also very individualised. It has the potential of missing the social context around those choices, its availability (what other options the person might have) and the meanings attached to those choices for the individual at stake.

Despite the consensus described above, the following subtheme will illustrate conflicting perspectives around the content of these women's choices. In other words, how some of these women's choices were portrayed as powerful in the data, while others as indicative of their oppression or lack of power.

6.3.2.2. Conflicting interpretations of British Muslim women's power — questioning their choices.

This subtheme captures differences between the content of British Muslim women's choices and the interpretative framework found in the analysis. As previously mentioned, this representation of power belongs to a Western narrative that emphasises freedom of choice and autonomy. But for British Muslim women, they were represented in most national and local newspapers as: a) not being able to make their own choices because they are oppressed or denied choices by their

community, religion and male counterparts; or b) making the wrong choices (e.g., joining ISIS), which are not appropriate or compatible with the British way of life. In some sources, these assumptions and questioning of their choices were also disputed, as it will be shown.

Practices of veiling were constructed in terms of choice. Thus, when British Muslim women choose to wear the veil, particularly the niqab, there seems to always be a clash with British social values. In several national and local sources, their choices were anchored in relation to values. Accordingly, these were deemed value-acceptable or value-violating within British liberal values. The following extract illustrates this logic:

Extract 5. The Sun, 19/01/2016 by Craig Woodhouse

They could also be stopped from donning them in schools and during border checks.

But he [*Cameron] insisted he would not give the go-ahead to a French-style policy that would see a total ban on wearing a veil in public. Speaking to BBC Radio 4 yesterday, he added: "When you're coming into contact with an institution, or you're in court*, or if you need to be able to see someone's face at the border, then I will always back the authority and institution that have put in place proper and sensible rules (...)"

It can be seen how women who fully veil are expected to follow "proper and sensible rules" when in contact with an institution. This portrayal implies a requirement of adaptation to a certain social order. It is not the purpose here to discuss the rights or wrongs of veiling practices, but to highlight the limits of this representation of power as making choices, underpinned by values, integration and security demands. Thus, when choosing to wear full-body/face veils within this framework, such a choice becomes an impossible or no choice. Furthermore, it is instrumentalised to demonstrate their lack of power — under assumptions of oppression — where no other readings are available, such as seeing their devotion and commitment to their religion as an assertion of their power. This narrow

dominant representation allows for the questioning of not only their choices but also their power, legitimising certain choices above others, as well as legitimising dominant systems of knowledge and representation of powerful groups over others (Howarth, 2002) such as Muslims.

During the analysis, a process of contestation of these dominant narratives as oppressive and posing a threat to liberal values was also identified. The assumption that British Muslim women are victimised through being poor and uneducated was challenged by minority representations, mainly found in national and local sources. For example, the following extract illustrates another perspective, by arguing that women making those choices (e.g., full veil or gender segregation) are actually "educated professional women" who simply don't follow the prescribed social norm. Thus, it advocates for women "just making a different choice".

Extract 6. The Birmingham Mail, 9 March 2016 by Shabana Mahmood

"The majority of the examples I see of Muslim women who dress with a full veil or who socialise in a segregated setting are educated professional women – just making a different choice to the one Cameron wants them to. So, the real question I would ask the prime minister is this: how comfortable is he with accepting the genuine choices of women, educated and literate, when they don't fit with his world view? (…)

Which is ironic because the absolute core to me of the British Values that David Cameron is so fond of is our ability in this country to celebrate and promote diversity. Different lives and different ways of living. As a British Muslim I am free to choose the kind of job I want, what I want to wear, I'm free to abstain from alcohol and pork, free to practice my faith; free in essence to be the person that I am."

This extract captures perfectly the conflict surrounding the media representation of British Muslim women's choices. It depicts the process of how different groups construct different realities (Breakwell, 1986) of what might be meaningful and considered as a possible choice. It contests the power of dominant

groups in limiting these women's choices. To do so, David Cameron (and, by extension, dominant groups) is challenged on "accepting the genuine choices of women" when they "don't fit with his world view". Particularly compelling is the reference of "fit(ness)" of their choices, as it emphasises the pattern of exclusion of British Muslim women's choices for not fitting with British social norms and values (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b). Yet it illustrates the paradox around these women's choices; how, despite being British and having the freedom to choose, their choices are limited.

Another context that offered several examples of this line of questioning around women's choices was the so-called Jihadi Brides' phenomenon. While very few ethno-religious articles covered this issue, in most national and local newspapers, these young women were depicted as deciding to join ISIS. Within the representation of power as making choices, it could be said they were exercising their freedom of choice. However, as was found in the analysis, their choices seemed to be only socially accepted when socially understandable. Otherwise, they seemed to fall into irrationality (Martini, 2018), invalidating their freedom of choice and, therefore, their power. See the following extract:

Extract 7. The Guardian, 14/01/2016, by Melanie Smith

> *These British females – including Londoners, Glaswegians, Bradfordians and Mancunians – often chose to give up doting families, careers and first-class educations in pursuit of a life that will likely entail watching routine public killings, marriage to any fighter deemed fit for them, and living in constant fear of death from airstrikes. For the overwhelming majority of people, the decision these women are making – to put themselves and their children in such danger – seems utterly incomprehensible.*

Women are depicted as "choosing to give up" their British lives to join ISIS. Note that it is not the purpose here to elaborate on whether their choices are right or wrong, but to highlight the social boundaries of this representation of power as

making choices. Despite the dominant social representation of passivity and oppression around these women (Martini, 2018), when they are portrayed as making choices (indicative of power) they are then disqualified within the British values framework by virtue of being incompatible with it.

Overall, the extracts of this theme give evidence of an extended practice and consensus in representing British Muslim women's power as making choices and the conflicting interpretations around them. A pattern of questioning their choices was found, which deemed them unacceptable, incomprehensible or no choice at all. The following theme will develop another process of anchoring these women's power in barriers.

6.3.3. Power anchored in barriers.

If the previous theme showed how British Muslim women's power was objectified in the media through their making choices, the current theme will illustrate another pattern of anchoring power in barriers identified in the analysis. Within SRT, "anchoring" (Duveen & Moscovici, 2000; Moscovici, 1976/2008) refers to another process of ascribing meaning to unfamiliar phenomena. This process involves making the unfamiliar familiar, integrating it into existent values, norms and worldviews. In this way, it ensures continuity with existent ideas and reduces the threat that these phenomena might pose.

The first subtheme that follows presents this process of anchoring British Muslim women's power in barriers (e.g., veil, gender segregation, male control) that were recurrent in the data analysis. Anchoring facilitates the portrayal of these women as victims, under assumptions of oppression and powerlessness, insofar as those barriers prevent them from properly integrating into British society. The anchoring in barriers is problematised as it denies women's agency and the possibility that they may be making their own choices and being agentic in their own ways. The second subtheme further explores this anchoring by focusing on minority representations of barriers, which differ from the dominant ones.

6.3.3.1. Dominant representation: women facing barriers towards integration.

The analysis revealed a widespread pattern in national and local news sources of representation of British Muslim women's power as anchored in barriers that constrained them. For example, the veil in its multiple forms represented the ultimate barrier that excludes them from society. Other constraining obstacles identified were: male control, gender segregation, lack of English language skills and isolation.

Ultimately, this anchoring of power in barriers sustained a portrayal of these women as lacking power in their lives, prevented from governing their own lives and properly integrating into British society. In so doing, these women appeared as victims of their oppressive communities and religion, in need of help and rescue. However, by the same token, this depiction also nullified the possibility of perceiving these women as social agents who might be actually making their own choices. The following extract illustrates this representation of power anchored in barriers, identified in national and local newspapers.

Extract 8. The Sun, 11/01/2016

Lack of a common language is a major barrier to integration, as is the face veil, which physically distances a Muslim woman from wider society. (...)

Britain, like other Western European countries, has generally accommodated Muslim demands, the latest example being the change to exam schedules during Ramadan. But this means there has been little need for Muslims to integrate into an increasingly irreligious, mainstream society.

The extract clearly highlights lack of English and the face veil as barriers to these women's integration. The reference to physical distance seems to denote the exclusion of these women. In addition, an intergroup rhetoric around the integration of Islamic culture and Muslim people in Western countries is also mobilised. Britain and Western countries are described as so "accommodating" to Muslims' "demands"

as to leave little need for them to integrate. The above extract is indicative of a pattern sometimes identified in the analysis, whereby issues surrounding the (lack of) integration of British Muslim women are used to criticise the wider socio-political dynamics around UK policies of ethnic minority integration as a whole, which favour multiculturalism. Thus, women are portrayed as victims and merely used to advance elite groups' interests rather than their own.

Another barrier associated with British Muslim women's power, mainly identified in some national and local newspapers, was men's control and authority over their wives and daughters. Women were sometimes represented as oppressed by their male-dominated communities, which constrained their actions and choices.

Extract 9. Daily Telegraph, 18/01/2016, by Sarah Khan

> *I have seen how some men deliberately deny wives, daughters and daughters-in-law from learning the English language; where language has often been used as a weapon of control. Such women are less likely to seek help from police or other agencies that can protect women against domestic violence, for example. Of course, there are many migrant men who have fully encouraged their daughter's education and independence; one of those men being my father.*

The above extract clearly illustrates the narrative, recurrent in non-ethno-religious sources, of migrant Muslim men limiting the freedom and action of women in their families. Men appear as barriers to their wives' and daughters' power, their obstruction of language learning a "weapon of control".

In a similar vein, lack of English language skills and employment were portrayed as major barriers to British Muslim women's power:

Extract 10. The Daily Telegraph, 18/01/2016, by James Kirkup

> *Some British Muslim women don't speak English and even more don't have jobs. That's not a scandal because it breeds extremism. (...) It's a scandal because it leaves those women poorer and sicker and denied the chance to*

compete and make the most of themselves. Unable to become doctors and lawyers and bankers and politicians – if that is what they want (…) Too many Muslim women today are trapped.

Once more, there are echoes here of the anchoring of power as barriers towards integration. The extract conveys the assumption that British Muslim women, who do not speak English and do not work, are automatically "trapped" and "denied" of opportunities. It highlights the idea that everyone must pursue a career, which is a very Westernised ideal. Later in the article, it acknowledges their volition, "if that is what they want", preserving their freedom of choice. The question here is: What happens if this is not what they want? This reductionistic depiction not only victimises women but rules out the option of them wanting to become stay-at-home mothers to raise their children, as a way of "making the most of themselves".

Lastly, another issue that was portrayed in national and local news sources as another major barrier to the integration of Muslim women was gender segregation. It often appeared alongside honour crimes, forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM). Those practices were portrayed as being exclusively Islamic rather than as wider cultural practices. For example, in some Asian countries gender segregation is standard social practice. Gender segregation appeared mostly during analysis as a threat to British values (Amer & Howarth, 2018), undermining women and reinforcing extremism. Interestingly, however, there was a remarkable absence of women's voices in most of those articles, like in the following extract:

Extract 11. The Daily Telegraph, 19/01/2016, by Radhika Sanghani

<u>Gender segregation: The truth about Muslim women 'forced' to sit away from men</u>

The Telegraph understands that as part of plans to stop British Muslims from being radicalised, Tory ministers will ban women from sitting separately from men during meetings in public buildings.

It comes after concerns that certain Muslim organisations are enforcing gender segregation. There have been high-profile cases of this, such

as last year when Asian men and women were found sitting separately at a rally attended by senior Labour politicians. It is also known to be an ongoing issue at various universities throughout the UK.

Here, gender segregation is portrayed as an "enforced" practice on women in public spaces. This representation seems to reproduce assumptions of these women as passive and oppressed, which objectifies them. In addition, gender segregation is approached with suspicion and as a threat to British society. Such a depiction only gives rise to "concerns" among the public and justifies counter-terrorism policies. This type of coverage, exemplified above by *The Daily Telegraph*'s quote, also seems to reproduce a construction of British values and culture as superior and more civilised to that of Islam (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b), underpinned by the way Muslim men treat women. Women's views were barely represented in the articles from which the aforementioned extracts were taken. This absence reinforces their objectification and victimisation. In other words, it reifies the practice of speaking on their behalf rather than approaching them as social agents who can also voice their views, and who might actually support and promote gender segregation.

Overall, this subtheme has displayed how British Muslim women's power is anchored in barriers to that power and their integration. It has revealed how their representation victimises them, instrumentalises them for political purposes and, more importantly, is based on assumptions and stereotypes that deny women's agency and excludes them as agents of their own lives.

The following subtheme captures the contestation of this anchoring by minority representations, where different barriers are highlighted beyond the dominant narrative.

6.3.3.2. Beyond the dominant representation: minority representations of barriers.

This subtheme reveals minority representations of the anchoring of power in barriers. It also illustrates a process of contestation of dominant assumptions around

British Muslim women and their barriers. In among the minority representations, mostly identified in ethno-religious and local media sources, the following barriers were found: Muslims being used and instrumentalised for political purposes; the misinformation of spread by the ruling elite and the media about Muslims and their problematic views; the marginalisation of women from decision-making positions within the community and politics; and Islamophobia, social deprivation and economic cuts that affect Muslim communities. Many of these barriers differ from and contest dominant depictions presented in the previous subtheme.

A common pattern found was to report the instrumentalisation and targeting of British Muslims for political purposes, particularly Muslim women, as a barrier. This was identified in ethno-religious sources but also in some local and national newspapers. The following extract from the Editorial of *Muslim News* (March 2015), which denounced the political and mediatic treatment of Muslims, is symptomatic of this pattern.

Extract 12. The Muslim News, 25/03/2015, Editorial

> *For the past 15 years, successive governments have been waging a virtual witch-hunt against Muslims, increasingly seeing the entire community as an apparent security threat and enacting endless laws. Islam itself has come under scrutiny as if claiming the religion was flawed. (...) There is so much disinformation – whether it is the idea that Muslims do not respect universal British values when poll-after-poll shows they do, (...) or whether it is that Muslims are unable to speak English, when only 6% struggle to speak the language according to the Muslim Council of Britain's 'Muslims in Britain' report. Facts do not prevent politicians and the media peddling out these dangerous views about Muslims.*

The extract reports the "disinformation" around Muslims and how, despite evidence that challenges stereotypical views, politicians and the media keep reproducing "dangerous views" about Muslims. Note how it denounces the social pressure experienced by British Muslims due to the political and mediatic

representation that continuously targets them. In addition, it contests dominant views, which are rooted in stereotypes, and alerts of their negative consequences for Muslims (e.g., Islamophobia, exclusion).

The most prominent example of this disinformation was the framing of Cameron's statements around British Muslim women, connecting lack of English to extremism, which the thesis addressed earlier (section 6.3.2.1.). His statements were criticised in all sources, except for *The Sun*, for targeting Muslims and for his misconceptions. The following extracts exemplify this contestation of Cameron's statements in different ways.

Extract 13. The Daily Telegraph, 19/01/2016, by Myriam Francois-Cerrah

These are the policies of an isolated elite, ignorant of the actual problems faced by people in the real world yet bewitched by a phantasmagorical reimagining of themselves as purveyors of an egalitarian, feminist agenda. (…) You don't assist marginalised women by criminalising them.

Extract 14. Eastern Eye, 22/01/2016, by Imran Choudhury

Seema Malhotra, Labour MP for Feltham and Heston, told Eastern Eye (...) "I think this policy idea was very short sighted. I think it was a mistake," she said. "We have seen people who are very well educated who have become radicalised. This really pinpoints and targets Muslim women in a very unfair way. We have to be really proud of the contribution they make. So often we see even those who don't speak English, like my grandmother, and what they do to give their children, their grandchildren, every chance to push for sometimes the opportunities they didn't have."

Extract 15. Asian Sunday, 1/02/2016 by Alison Bellamy

<u>Britain's First Female Muslim head teacher is 'shocked and saddened' by Prime Minister's words</u>

"People do need to learn English but I am angry at the links David Cameron made to radicalisation, deportation and how he targeted Muslim women." (...)

It is claimed that the new English language classes and tests are aimed at helping women like the 38,000 Muslim females who said in the last census that they don't speak English at all, and the 190,000 who said they speak it badly. In the 2011 census, 846,000 UK women identified as Muslim, meaning the 38,000 who said they spoke no English represent just 4.5 per cent of the total. In reality, more than 95 per cent of British Muslim women do speak English.

In the first extract (13), a female Muslim journalist problematises the "ignorance" and lack of contact the ruling elite has with people in the "real world", which makes them unaware of their problems. It denounces the policies around British Muslim women, which seem to advance politicians' interests rather than the women themselves by linking them with extremism ("criminalising them"). Note how the notion of an "elite" also serves to point at the differences between Muslims and non-Muslims in terms of privilege, class and economy. Economically speaking, "46 per cent of Muslims live in the most deprived 10 per cent of the country", as was stated in the same article (Francois-Cerrah, 19/01/2016, *The Daily Telegraph*). Thus, it reports that the differences are not only cultural and religious, but also strongly economic.

The second extract (14) from *Eastern Eye* also questions the "short-sighted" policy of linking radicalisation and women's lack of English. Interestingly, it contests this negative representation by acknowledging the contribution of first-generation migrant Muslim women, who raised their children without speaking English, ensuring they would have the "opportunities" they did not have. The third extract (15), from *Asian Sunday*, challenged the ex-PM's claims by capturing the reaction of Britain's first female Muslim head teacher. She was reported to be "angry" at the targeting of Muslim women by extremism policies and their threatening of deportation. This source, like others, disputed claims linking language and extremism by

contextualising the statistics provided around Muslim women who do not speak English in the UK, who represent only less than 4.5%.

The extracts above give evidence to how minority representations debunk the misguided statement of the ex-PM and the dominant views in the media surrounding British Muslim women. They do so in different and creative ways, highlighting these women's lack of contact and economic differences, acknowledging their societal contribution and contextualising the data.

Another huge barrier reported by ethno-religious and local sources, as well as *The Guardian*, was the marginalisation of British Muslim women from decision-making positions in political parties and mosques. Coverage was mostly in regard to two stories: the male-only board of trustees at Birmingham Central Mosque; and the practice of blocking Muslim women within the Labour Party:

Extract 16. Birmingham Mail, 3/02/2016, by Jeanette Odham

<u>MP tells Central Mosque trustees to 'consider positions' and hold elections to allow women to sit on board</u>

The leading Muslim politician [MP Khalid Mahmood] said it was time for *women and young people to serve on the board of the publicly funded charity, posts currently filled by 39 men. (…) The MP said: "Women are being marginalised, they should not be marginalised, we have got to live in the current now, we can't live in the past. You cannot carry on isolating women like this, because they have a role to play." (…) He said he believed there was an "over representation" within the region and across the country who are sexist.*

Extract 17. Eastern Eye, 19/02/2016, by Reena Kumar

The head of a Muslim women's charity [Shaista Gohir, the Muslim Women's Network UK (MWNUK)] has been inundated with reports of corrupt practices by Asian men in Labour, following her damning letter last week to party leader Jeremy Corbyn about "systematic misogyny" within the organisation. (...). "These corrupt practices that these men are involved in do

not just involve blocking Muslim women. (...) As this is an open secret and has been going on for decades, we can only assume that the Labour party has been complicit at the highest levels. How do men who do not want Muslim women to be empowered or have a voice remain in power unless the Labour Party allows it?"

The first extract (16) denounces the marginalisation of Muslim women from mosques' committees. It is exemplified by Birmingham Central Mosque, where the board comprises "39 males", even though it is a "publicly funded charity". According to the article, the mosque hasn't held elections since 1980, despite it being required "to allow women and young people onto the board of trustees". This phenomenon is reported to be common practice across all mosques in the UK. According to the article's sources, the lack of Muslim women in positions of power within mosques mean that women who suffer domestic abuse or are threatened under cultural practices (e.g., forced marriages or FGM), or who want a divorce, risk being unheard or misguided by male-dominated committees.

The second extract (17) also criticises institutional sexism, but within political parties. It reports on a longstanding practice of Asian men who block British Muslim women accessing political positions within the Labour Party. The article was published in the wake of Shaista Gohir's call for people who had suffered or witnessed practices of corruption to contact her. According to the data, a "systematic misogyny" was identified that has prevented willing women to run for years by threatening them or running smear campaigns against them. The article would go on to highlight the fact that leaders of the Labour Party were aware of these practices and yet hadn't stopped them.

Both extracts above serve to demonstrate how sexism within public institutions that marginalise British Muslim women was represented by minority news sources as another barrier to British Muslim women's power. This barrier around sexism is interesting because it contrasts with the assumptions around Muslim men as the constraining force, highlighted earlier. Yet here the reported

sexism is ascribed to the public and institutional level within the British system, which includes Muslim and non-Muslim men.

Lastly, another minority representation of barriers was the economic deprivation of most Muslim communities in the UK. This was identified occasionally in the analysis. It mainly highlighted the lack of opportunities of Muslims and the exclusion that they suffer.

Extract 18. The Daily Telegraph, 27/01/2016, by James Kirkup

Muslims are on average more likely to live in poor housing, in poor areas, to have worse health, to be economically inactive and when they do work to do so in lower-skilled, lower-paid occupations. (...) And they are liable to face abuse and prejudice and discrimination that non-Muslims do not.

These are all bad things, differences that we should not tolerate. (…) This is their country too, and they should be able to enjoy all the freedom and opportunity it offers. They are us.

This extract provides a description of British Muslims mainly typified by social deprivation, in housing, employment and health, as well as through suffering abuse and discrimination. Rather than calling Muslims to integrate, there is a rhetorical shift that serves to denounce a complicit tolerance of their deprivation ("all bad things, differences we should not tolerate"). Interestingly, it changes the rhetoric of *intolerance*, normally attributed to Muslims towards non-Muslims, which seems to call for social responsibility. Later, it develops this narrative of inclusion and similarity, acknowledging Muslims as British citizens ("their country too") who deserve the same freedom of opportunities that the country offers to other members of the populace.

Overall, this theme has captured another process in the representation of British Muslim women's power as anchored in barriers. First, dominant representations of this anchoring were described. Second, minority representations of barriers were presented as a counter to the dominant narratives. The following

theme, and final one in this chapter analysis, will focus on the process of redefinition and contestation of the representation of British Muslim women lacking power, and the strategies mobilised for that purpose.

6.3.4. Contesting and redefining the negative representation: British Muslim women as active social agents.

In this last theme, the dominant media representation of British Muslim women as oppressed, constrained and lacking agency, as unveiled in the analysis, is contested and redefined. Focusing on minority representations, a contrasting trend was found, in which these women were depicted as active social agents. Two main strategies adopted by the sourced newspapers were identified: portraying British Muslim women in terms of speaking out about themselves and Islam; and celebrating their success, longstanding contribution and diversity. These alternative representations of British Muslim women's power seemed to be anchored in success, presenting them as high achievers and influencers. In that sense, they clearly differ from and challenge the dominant social representation of these women. However, as it will be argued, they are also very narrow and exclusive representations of these women, excluding non-professional and non-graduated women, reifying the stereotype around them. In this respect, they raise questions around issues of class, privilege and individualisation.

6.3.4.1. British Muslim women speaking their minds.

The first strategy of contestation identified involves the coverage of these women, speaking out their opinions, representing themselves and their religion. This pattern was very frequent in all sources. The following extract illustrates this prevalent pattern of speaking out against dominant negative representations of British Muslim women, promoted by the ex PM Cameron's claims (see section 6.3.2.1.).

Extract 19. Birmingham Mail, 19/01/2016 by Shabana Mahmood

I hate to break it to David Cameron. We Muslims don't spend half as much time thinking about him as he does about us. We're a bit busy getting on with our basically ordinary lives, going to work, picking up the kids from school, being excited about Star Wars.

In this extract, Shabana Mahmood, a female British Muslim Labour MP, challenges Cameron's claims by mobilising an intergroup rhetoric ("we" Muslims versus "them" ruling elite) that portrays Muslims as normal people doing normal things ("busy getting on with our basically ordinary lives" or excited about "Star Wars"). Note how it seems to seek commonality and inclusion, activating a broader social category of "ordinary" people. The extract is illustrative of a process of contesting attempts of differentiation characteristic of dominant narratives, by positioning Muslims as similar to white British people and, importantly, normal (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b; Ryan, 2011).

Other interesting aspects of this process of British Muslim women speaking out include its extended coverage, tone and style. All sources from the popular press, except for *The Sun*, published articles written by British Muslim women, in which they would express their opinions and concerns. The above extract was direct in its tone and used sarcasm ("I hate to break it to David Cameron"). The following extract captures the frustration of a Muslim journalist on being spoken about and ruled on behalf.

Extract 20. The Guardian, 19/01/2016, by Remona Aly

<u>David Cameron needs to look beyond the veil</u>

I feel frustrated that we can't move beyond the broken record that is the veil debate. For the women who wear face veils, that frustration runs deeper; it's a struggle not to feel like an outsider in your own country and it's infuriating to be told to integrate at the same time.

The journalist describes the frustration that Muslim women, like her, feel at being continuously put in the spotlight — "the broken record" of the veil and integration. She describes the impossible position they're placed in by narratives that are constructed around them as outsiders, refusing to integrate by wearing the veil, despite being British ("own country"). It is a position that is the result of dominant narratives of exclusion, rather than inclusion. This extract serves to highlight how these women express themselves in critical ways that are indicative of their agency and power to speak up.

The process of Muslim women speaking out and schooling British society on Islam was further encapsulated in a social phenomenon on Twitter started by British Muslim women. Over 30,000 Muslim women of all ages took to Twitter to criticise David Cameron for his statements, suggesting they were *"*traditionally submissive*"* (*Muslim News*, 26 February 2016). Using the hashtag *#TraditionallySubmissive* and adopting a sense of humour, women uploaded pictures of themselves holding posters on which they had written their achievements, in response to the ex-PM's claims that linked the lack of English of Muslim women with extremism (see section 6.3.3.1).

Extract 21. Muslim News, 26/02/2016 by Nadine Osman

<u>Over 30,000 Muslim women school Cameron on submissiveness</u>

(...) Dr Sukaina Hirji, a GP, who on January 23, used her Facebook page to call for a "Twitter storm". The focus for many who took part in promoting the hashtag was languages, with many speaking five or more. Fiza Aslam, a mother of three and grandmother of ten who has worked in the NHS for 22 years, tweeted: "Muslim women are not a problem that need solving," adding that she's fluent in "five languages and English."

As Twitter became inundated with images of Muslim women engaged in archery, martial arts, TV and radio presenting, or publicizing academic and professional achievements from multiple degrees to being teachers of English, the hashtag quickly started to trend in Canada and the US.

[Shelina Zahra] Janmohamed tweeted a photo of her presenting on radio which she captioned, "Hey look! Here's me on @BBCRadio4 voicing my own opinion. By myself. On my own. In English #TraditionallySubmissive".

In this extract, Muslim women are depicted as "schooling" the ex-PM on "submissiveness". Note how they present themselves in relation to the languages they speak, their education, jobs and careers, aspects that illustrate their successes and achievements. Interestingly, motherhood was also included and emphasised in their depiction of success. Another critical element is the mobilisation of political content, such as "Muslim women are not a problem that need solving". This statement, as well as others identified during the analysis, seems to convey their exhaustion from the continuous targeting and stereotypical portrayal by the government and the media.

A striking aspect of this social media phenomenon was its poor coverage in the British popular press. Back in 2016, Twitter had 15 million active users in the UK of which more than 65% were under the age of 34 (Knight, 2016). On 23rd January of that year, thousands of women appeared on the site contesting their negative representation in creative ways, almost showing off their agency. Their hashtag went viral and they became a *trending* topic — in fact, their protest was the most spoken about issue worldwide on Twitter on that day. Strikingly, despite its magnitude, this social phenomenon was covered in only three sources: *The Guardian, The Daily Mail* and the *Muslim News*. This lack of coverage seems to be indicative of how dominant groups might silence certain stories, determining what needs to be reported to advance their own interests (Howarth, 2006, 2011).

This subtheme has illustrated a process of contestation of the dominant negative representation of British Muslim women, by them speaking out. The following subtheme will focus on a different strategy, celebrating their success and contribution to society.

6.3.4.2. Celebrating British Muslim women's success and their ongoing contribution.

The analysis unfolded a recurrent theme of celebrating Muslim women for their success and contribution to British society, especially prevalent in the three ethno-religious sources. This pattern seemed to contravene dominant representations of these women as lacking power or not being active.

For example, *Muslim News* (29 January 2016) published a detailed account of some of the 15 Muslims (6 women), among the 1,181 people from across the country, that were awarded in the Queen's New Year Honours list. The Muslim women selected were representative of diverse fields, from a specialist in renewable energy to a community worker. *Muslim News* also organises and reports on its own Awards for Excellence, with nominees selected by its readership. Members of the Muslim community are rewarded for being "exemplars of good practice, excellence — our role models" (*Muslim News*, 26 February 2016). On reading the articles, it was remarkable to bear witness to the diversity of the women shortlisted, which included: an international artist; a community developer; charity workers; an educator; an interfaith worker; a journalist; a DJ, station manager and community researcher; a kickboxing athlete; and a philanthropist. The detailed descriptions of the recipients highlighted their achievements and contribution to society. One such description follows:

Extract 22. Muslim News, 26/02/2016

*A keen philanthropist**,** Fatemah Manji **is** always found immersed in a charitable venture. At the age of 12, she took part in a sponsored abseil down a 100-foot building, in order to raise money for St. Luke's Hospice. (...) She singlehandedly raised £1200 for The Salaam Centre project – a new, modern, state-of-the-art community centre scheduled to replace the one she currently attends. Fatemah also gives up her weekends in order to tutor GCSE-level Chemistry to students from various backgrounds living in the local area. Fatemah has been practising Tae Kwon Do since the age of 10, and in April*

2015, achieved her black belt. She works part time at a Kumon education centre, while also pushing to complete the Kumon Mathematics programme herself.

The extract exemplifies how Muslim women were portrayed in those articles: socially engaged from an early age, organising charity events and raising money for the community, succeeding in their education and careers. In the case of Fatemah, she is depicted as a successful student who also works teaching maths and "gives her weekends" to teach children from different backgrounds. Also highlighted is her remarkable achievement of becoming a black belt in Tae Kwon Do at such a young age. Other portrayals celebrate women for their social engagement, outstanding success, and commitment and contribution to the community. These accounts intensely contrast with the dominant representation of women as oppressed and lacking agency.

Within this pattern of contestation, these women's power seems to be anchored in success. Notions of success and achievement were widespread across the ethno-religious sources. For example, in the *Eastern Eye*, as part of its celebration of International Women's Day on 8th March, it reported on 20 successful and inspirational women "from around the world" and how they "made it happen: our stories of success" (*Eastern Eye*, 6 March 2015). Within this list, no references to their faiths were described and no nationalities were provided. The only other qualifying factor was their Asian background. However, among those selected, four were known British Muslim women: a women's rights activist, a businesswoman, a barrister and a football agent. Similarly, *The Asian Sunday* covered women's awards ceremonies like the "unsung female heroes honoured at the Fourth Annual Bradford Inspirational Women Awards" (*The Asian Sunday*, 30 March 2015), celebrating "Our top most influential Asian women in Britain" (*The Asian Sunday*, 29 February 2016). This newspaper included the nominees' faith, such as Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, "the first female Muslim to attend cabinet", or Bushra Nasir, "the first Muslim female head teacher". The purpose here is to highlight how these women were represented

regarding their successes and achievements, which offers a distinctly contrasting representation of British Muslim women.

Extract 23. Asian Sunday 29/02/2016, by Alison Bellamy

Adeeba Malik MBE. Pakistan-born Malik is the deputy chief executive of Bradford-based QED Foundation (...) Adeeba Malik works with ethnic minorities to eradicate poverty, disadvantage and discrimination. The former teacher was awarded the CBE last year by the Queen for her services as a British Muslim woman. She was also awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to ethnic minority businesses. She has held many positions, board-level appointments including British Waterways, Yorkshire Forward and the Advisory Board on Naturalisation and Immigration. (...) In 2005 she was appointed Chair of the National Ethnic Minority Business Forum and became a commissioner for the Women and Work Commission.

This is a clear example of a British Muslim woman's success being represented in the media, albeit at the local level. Note how her roles on different boards and commissions are also signalled.

Several articles acknowledging British Muslim women's success were also found in national sources. However, these articles seemed to construct the women's success within a narrative of exceptionality. In so doing, they seemed to reify the stereotype around other women who might not follow their same paths. For example, *The Daily Telegraph* (Sanghani, 11 March 2015) covered the story of the "Hip Hop Hijabis: Meet the Muslim Women Who Rap in Headscarves":

Extract 24. The Daily Telegraph, 11/03/2015, by Radhika Sanghani

(...) They combine spoken word, hip hop and poetry for their music and - in their own words - they "rap hard." But they're also Muslim women who pray five times a day, don't drink, and always wear hijabs.

The women are the first to admit this makes their chosen career rather unusual – in fact they're widely known as one of the first well-known female

Muslim hip hop duos. (...) - she explains that most people look at the pair of them and never assume they'll rap. "They think we'll do some poetry, or sing, or be really soft. But I used to rap really hard, and I think it was because of these stereotypes."

The extract illustrates how these female rappers are portrayed as uncommon, challenging social assumptions of what is expected from veiled women. Note how the notion of "choice" is again mobilised regarding their "unusual" career. They are depicted as the exception. In so doing, it seems to differentiate them from other Muslim women rather than depict them in a way that would normalise their choices and careers.

Similarly, the following extract, which is part of an article written by Shelina Janmohamed — a self-identified and visible Muslim woman and vice-president of an advertising company — also captures a narrative of differentiation surrounding certain Muslim women.

Extract 25. The Guardian, 28/01/2016 by Shelina Janmohamed

I'm Muslim, female, wear a headscarf – and, believe it or not, I work in advertising

Muslims can feel stifled in an industry that doesn't appear to value their voices. It's time advertising embraced diverse talent to better reflect society. (…) After all, Muslims in the UK make up nearly 5% of the population (...) I'm an unconventional individual in the communications industry. Muslim, female and wearing a headscarf. This wasn't the career I started in or even planned for. (…) I'm just one of many examples of non-traditional talent being brought in to give new perspectives and expertise.

The author presents herself as something rare, a "non-traditional talent", a "Muslim, female and wearing a headscarf" working in advertising. This extract is interesting because it allows for multiple readings. For example, it suggests a narrative of exceptionality, in which she is "unconventional". It also illustrates a lack

of ethnic diversity within creative industries. It suggests that Muslim voices are not "valued" and that her employment is a change towards increasing diversity. A more exhaustive reading presents the author as not only "non-traditional talent" but also "just one of many". These references could be indicative of modesty, one of Islam's higher morals, as well as collective identity. In this respect, the author seems to argue that there are many other talented British Muslim women from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The extract points towards a pattern of increasing British Muslim women's presence in the media so that they can represent themselves in an agentic way, supported by their successful careers, and speak out and become role models. However, in highlighting her own uniqueness, differentiated from other British Muslim women, there is a risk that this only reproduces the stereotype around them.

All the extracts in this subsection have been cited to illustrate a consensus within minority media representations that contest the dominant negative representations of these women, by portraying them as successful and celebrating their contribution to society. These representations are mainly anchored in success. The emphasis on success has ambivalent implications. On the one hand, it contests their negative representation, depicting British Muslim women as social agents who rule their lives and succeed. On the other hand, it is a very narrow and exclusive representation that omits the voices of uneducated and non-professional women, promoting a neoliberal narrative that prioritises autonomy and success. Furthermore, it raises questions around the class, potential privileges and opportunities of these women.

Finally, when looking within the wider media representations of these women's power, the findings suggest some strains of social change that might challenge dominant representations. However, as argued above, any emphasis on success is still a very restrictive and narrow frame of representation. Additionally, it seems to reproduce in some way the dominant social representation of power as making choices, discussed in the first theme, where only certain choices (e.g., pursuing a career and achieving) are considered powerful and celebrated.

6.4. Discussion

6.4.1. Summary.

This analysis revealed three major themes central to social representation of British Muslim women's power. The first theme revolved around the consensus and conflicting objectification of power as making choices. The second theme captured a process of anchoring power in barriers, which differed between dominant and minority representations. The last theme showed a process of contestation of dominant representations around British Muslim women as lacking power and oppressed, by minority representations that depicted them as active social agents. Two main strategies were identified: portraying women speaking out, and celebrating their success and contribution. Alternative positive representations may open the door for social change for these women. However, it was argued that any representation anchored in success is still a very narrow and exclusive one, which poses the risk of reifying the stereotypes around non-professional and non-educated British Muslim women.

6.4.2. The contrasting and polyphasic nature of social representations of British Muslim women's power.

The use of social representations theory (SRT) was effective to examine the representational landscape around British Muslim women's in the British press. This theoretical framework served to analyse representations of power by focusing on dynamics of conflict and consensus.

The analysis firstly revealed a consensus (Howarth, 2006; Rose et al., 1995) across all the data set, in objectifying power as "making choices". This representation of power belongs to the neoliberal machinery that focuses on individuals' choices and abilities (Gill, 2007a; Gillespie, 2012; Madhok et al., 2013). The notion of making choices relates to a very individualised conceptualisation of power — i.e., agency — as discussed in Chapter 4 (section 4.2.1.). Despite the common practice in research of addressing Muslim women's power with this notion of agency, as explained in

Chapter 2, agency is deemed problematic. It is a term that tends to be equated with the promotion of autonomy and Western values, which might neglect differences between women (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Burke, 2012). That is, women from different backgrounds, religions and cultures might pursue different goals and hold different values (Mahmood, 2005) that may not necessarily be synonymous with autonomy. More importantly, this individualised approach to power tends to fail to consider women's ability to formulate those choices (Hirschmann, 1998) and the availability of choice at all (Alcoff, 1994) in a given context. It raises questions about the role of women in the formulation of their choices and what other alternatives they may have. Thus, the approach is problematised for neglecting the social context of those choices and, more importantly, structural power relations that might intertwine, restricting their choices (Reicher, 2016).

Despite the consensus around power as making choices, conflicting interpretations around British Muslim women's choices were also illustrated. Their choices appeared to be assessed against dominant systems of knowledge, which deemed certain choices as indicative of their agency and power, when adhering to British values; other choices were deemed "no choices" or indicative of their oppression and lack of power when they did not follow the normative values. Furthermore, some of the choices of British Muslim women were constructed as posing a threat to British values, and this was consistent with previous research (Amer & Howarth, 2018; Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010b).

This questioning around Muslim women's choices is part of a wider socio-political debate on the integration of Muslims in the West, where women tend to be instrumental to political agendas rather than pursuing their interests (Joly & Wadia, 2017; Rashid, 2018). Furthermore, questioning women's choices is not exclusive to Muslim women. Previous research (Baker, 2008; Braun, 2009; Griffin et al., 2009) has shown a gendered social practice that demands women to justify their choices, which is underpinned by patriarchal views and assists in undermining women's interests and agendas. These findings resonate with Baker's work (2010) on post-feminist accountability in young women. To quote the author, "While young women's

aspirations may reflect the continuation of historically and culturally imposed limits, they are obliged to articulate and account for these in a postfeminist framework of presumed equality and personal choice" (Baker, 2010, p. 13). In other words, women need to demonstrate volition and agency that fits into a post-feminist ethos, justifying their choices using neoliberal accountability.

Another finding of this study was the anchoring of British Muslim women's power in barriers. This theme demonstrated divergent representations of those barriers between dominant and minority groups in the press (Howarth, 2002, 2006). The dominant non-Muslim representation depicted the veil, gender segregation, lack of language skills and employment, and male control as barriers to these women's power. This representation portrayed these women as lacking agency and encourage notions of victimisation. It is consistent with previous research that shows how dominant depictions that victimised these women justified social intervention (Abu-Lughod, 2002; Ahmad, 2017; Golnaraghi & Mills, 2012) and were at the centre of counter-terrorism policies (Brown, 2013; Rashid, 2014).

Contrastingly, the analysis also revealed strong differences in minority representations of this anchoring of power in barriers. Such publications as *Eastern Eye*, *Muslim News* and *Asian Sunday,* as well as some journalists in local and national newspapers, pointed at the misinformation and targeting of Muslims; the marginalisation of women from decision-making processes, such as in mosque committees and political parties; Islamophobia and economic deprivation. These findings resonate with Hopkins and Blackwood's (2011) research, which highlighted how others' assumptions (dominant groups) about people's religious identity (British Muslim women) can affect and limit those people's abilities to act and to speak. In this case, dominant assumptions about British Muslim women's barriers become another barrier to these women's power, by portraying them in stereotypical and constraining ways, and failing to take into consideration the real barriers they experience.

In the analysis, a pattern of resistance and contestation within minority representations was also identified. Dominant social representations of British Muslim women's power, such as their lacking agency, were resisted. Instead, British Muslim women were re-presented as active social agents, in two different ways. First, they were portrayed with a voice, speaking out to express their views on their gender and Islam. Second, they were celebrated for their success and achievements. Both strategies seemed to aim to delegitimise, redefine and debunk the dominant representations around these women as oppressed, lacking power and unemployed. Within this contestation, power seemed to be anchored in success. In this respect, it was argued that such a depiction follows neoliberal logic and Western values of autonomy and self-realisation (Gill, 2007a; Peters, 2001; Rottenberg, 2014).

These minority representations offered an alternative to the dominant views, by portraying women succeeding, achieving and contributing. Not only do they suggest a process of contestation and delegitimisation of the dominant views (Howarth, 2006, 2011), they also show a process of transformation; afterall, social representations are "also susceptible to change and transformation" (Duveen, 2007, p. 545). Thus, stereotypical dominant representations were being challenged by alternative ones. This finding suggests the possibility of social change (Klein & Licata, 2003) around the representation of British Muslim women.

Yet within these alternative minority representations, it was argued, there lies a narrow and exclusive representation; that enhancing the success and achievements of a select band of British Muslim women has the potential to exclude non-educated and non-professional women, reifying the stereotype around them. In other words, equating power with success might lead to consider non-educated and non-professional women as powerless.

Overall, these findings denoted that representations of power are polyphasic (Jovchelovitch, 2007; Wagner et al., 2000). The polyphasic nature of social representations (as explained in Chapter 3) refers here to the co-existence of discrepant and opposite representations of these women's power: as lacking agency

and powerless, or as agentic and successful; and similarly, where certain choices are indicative of power and others of the lack of it.

The findings also suggest that opposing representations shed light on processes of influence between different groups who seek to influence each other (Breakwell, 2010; Moscovici & Lage, 1978; Rose et al., 1995). The analysis showed how the processes of objectification and anchoring of these women's power followed available values and norms, which indicated attempts to ensure continuity with existent ideas, as well as resistance of and transformation to others.

6.4.3. Limitations and future research.

This study provides a useful analysis of the social representational field around British Muslim women's power. It benefits from the use of the British press to identify social representations of these women's power, contexts and processes of contestation and redefinition. However, the study also has some limitations.

First, it did not include social media in the data set. Several attempts were made to try to engage with available data in social media, by adding Facebook or Twitter as sources. However, due to the nature of this study (the first of this thesis), its aim (to examine social representations of power as a starting point before further exploring women's understanding and experiences of power through interviews), and the technical and analytical challenges posed, it was decided not to include social media.

Second, no research was found on the impact of minority sources or demographics on readership. Therefore, the female readership of those sources is uncertain. Future research could consider incorporating data from British Muslim publications like *SISTERS Magazine*, an exclusive female publication, *British Muslim Magazine* or *The Black Muslim Times*, to assist in capturing minority representations.

Third, selection of the data was conducted over two periods as explained in the methodology section (6.2.). Had I selected a longer period, this would have possibly allowed to identify more changes in their representation.

Nevertheless, the data generated from the press was rich and allowed me to identify patterns in both dominant and minority representations, as well as processes of objectification and anchoring, when trying to make sense of these women's power.

This study contributes to the body of literature on British Muslim women and the social psychology of power as it provides a useful analysis of the representations of British Muslim women's power. It shows processes of objectification and anchoring of power, as well as processes of contestation and resistance of dominant representations through the minority alternatives offered.

6.5. Conclusion of Chapter 6

This study set out to investigate the representational landscape on how British Muslim women's power was represented in the British press, adopting social representations theory (Moscovici, 1976/2008, 1988). The study makes two key theoretical points:

- **Social representations are dilemmatic and polyphasic** — The study suggests that social representations of British Muslim women's power are objectified in making choices and anchored in barriers. However, careful examination of those processes showed differences between dominant and minority representations. This finding suggests that British Muslim women's power may be described by British press as ambivalent, depending on the system of representation adopted.
- **Social representations impact people's identity and power** — The study suggests that the dominant system of representation was strongly criticised and contested by minority sources, portraying the success and achievements of these women. It was also shown how misguided assumptions around these women's power and barriers were deemed as the real barrier to their power by minority sources.

Chapter 7.

A Qualitative Investigation into How British Muslim Women Experience, Understand and Perform Power

"My argument (. . .) has been that we should learn to read in various local and everyday resistances the existence of a range of specific strategies and structures of power. Attention to the forms of resistance in particular societies can help us become critical of partial or reductionist theories of power." (Abu Lughod, 1990, p. 53)

7.1. Introduction

Possibly more than any other group, British Muslim women have been portrayed as passive, lacking in power and oppressed, as discussed in Chapter 2. These women are singled out by socio-political public discourses and academic research, both of which question their modes of being, agency and citizenship (Chapman, 2016a; Jouili, 2015; Ryan, 2011), all the while being the visible target of Islamophobic attacks (Šeta, 2016; Kallis, 2018). They are homogenously constructed as a group that is passive, submissive and oppressed by their religion and communities (Dwyer, 2000; Gillian-Ray, 2010; Hopkins, 2011a; Ramji, 2007). This stereotype is rooted in patriarchal ideologies and sustained by policies (Rashid, 2014) that de-legitimise their power (Pratto & Pitpitan, 2008).

A dominant social representation of British Muslim women as lacking agency or making the wrong choices due to their oppression, in contrast to minority representations that enhance their success and achievements, was illustrated in the previous study (Chapter 6). Within these contrasting findings, a prevalent social representation of their power as being equated with choice was identified. This

perception resonated with individualistic understandings of power that, by focusing on agency, neglect the social context and structural systems of inequality embedded in it.

The purpose of the current study is to examine how British Muslim women themselves understand, experience and assert their power. Building on previous work on Muslim women's power relations (Abu-Lughod, 2000; Mahmood, 2005; Madhok et al., 2013), I argued in Chapter 4 that the dominant representation of their power might in fact be evidence of how their experience and understanding of power escapes Western theories on the subject, which neglect gender (Pratto & Walker, 2004). In addition, I showed how previous scholarly attention has mostly verged on agency and empowerment. Yet those were deemed individualistic approaches that neglect the social context by focusing on the individual.

This study engages with a long tradition of social and political psychologists researching on power, its operation and its impact on everyday lives (Billig, 1995; Kitzinger, 1991a, 1991b; Pratto, 2016; Reicher, 2016), as explained in Chapter 4. In this thesis, power is understood as a relational construct (Guinote, 2008, 2017; Reicher, 2016). An elaboration of this approach, provided earlier (Chapter 4, section 4.5), drew on literature about British Muslim women.

However, given the aim of this study is to capture how these women understand, perceive and perform power, a phenomenological approach to power, as elaborated in Chapter 5, will be adopted. With this approach, I will attempt to overcome the power dynamics existent in researching other realities, which tend to reproduce the same logics of oppression through patterns of definition and categorisation of other people's own experiences (Alcoff, 2003; O'Hanlon, 1988; Yuval-Davis et al., 2017). That is, I will aim to avoid imposing dominant understandings of participants' power relations, which tend to assume that autonomy or independence are always desired (Abu-Lughod, 1990, Mahmood, 2005; Markus & Kitayama, 2010). For that purpose, I will focus on women's identities, experiences, desires, meanings, motivations, enablers and constraints of power

(Breakwell, 1986; Dowding, 2008; Hartsock, 1990; Hopkins et al., 2007b; Joly, 2017; Mahmood, 2001, 2005). In the same way, an understanding of their power relations cannot be achieved without attending to the social contexts in which power relations are generated (Coyle & Lyons, 2011; Hopkins & Reicher, 2011; Reicher, 2004). Contexts here refer to their cultural environment, their religious beliefs, their ethnic and social background, the social structures and the social processes of influence (Breakwell, 1986). Examining participants' social contexts aims to identify what is powerful for this particular group, which might differ from what may be considered powerful for other groups. Thus, I will also examine how these women navigate and contest the social prejudice around their group, paying attention to their own meaning making as well as to the unsaid (Finlay, 2014) — their silences and absences in their accounts. As Butler pointed out "the omissions in discourse also 'say' something about what is and is not sayable within any given discourse" (Butler, 2006, p. 533).

Adopting a phenomenological approach, like any other, does not come free of potential limitations. Some critics might assume that I just intend to listen and reproduce participants' accounts in a descriptive manner, without any scrutiny. Yet it is the aim here to not only capture their experiences but also "locate them in a wider context" (Gill, 2007a, p. 77). That is, to examine the contexts that inform those experiences and performances of power, the power structures and ideologies at stake, as well as the systems of representation that inform, constrain and facilitate those women's power relations. Hence, adopting a phenomenological approach does not mean *not* engaging with the participants' accounts in a critical manner. It means adopting an orientation of critical respect (Gill, 2007a), situating their accounts, raising questions around them, focusing on the context, while preserving these women's interests (Finch, 1984; Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 1997).

Within social psychology, previous research has shown how young British Muslim women engaged in identity performance to minimise identity threat (Jaspal & Coyle, 2009; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Hopkins et al., 2007b). Hopkins &

Greenwood (2013) examined how visibly young Muslim women negotiated their gender and national identities through their performance of their religious identity. Participants presented themselves strategically resisting and negotiating available systems of representation.

Any serious examination of power relations needs to consider individuals' identity and systems of identity representation. As discussed in Chapter 3, who we are and how we are perceived informs what we can or cannot do, our desires and motivations. Drawing on extensive work that explored British Muslim's identity construction and power relations (Amer et al., 2015; Blackwood et al., 2013; Chapman, 2016a, 2016b, Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002; Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011b), as elaborated in Chapters 2 and 3, this study will also examine how British Muslim women's power and identity interplay. For this purpose, identity will be approached combining identity process theory (IPT) (Breakwell, 1986, 2010; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014) and social representations theory (SRT) (Duveen, 1993; Moscovici, 1988, 2001). Social representations inform the content of identity and individuals use social representations to identify themselves, by adhering to and contesting them, as explained in Chapter 3.

Within this examination of British Muslim women's power, this study also aims to investigate similarities and differences of power experiences and understandings across generations. British Muslim women may share social representations, despite individual differences, that are central to their group objectives and definition. Yet it is argued that different generations (Augoustinos, 1991; Breakwell, 1993) may have been exposed to different social representations of power, which may inform their experiences of power in different ways, despite sharing the same collective identity. However, most literature on British and European Muslim women from multiple social disciplines (Dwyer, 2000; Jouili, 2015; see Chapter 2 for a critical review) has focused on young women (Gilliat-Ray, 2010). It is my argument that focusing on younger generations offers a partial understanding of British Muslim women's experiences. By investigating power from the perspective

of women from different generations, this study seeks to address a gap in the literature. Thus, the study will examine not only how power understandings and experiences may differ and continue across generations, but also how women of different generations construct their identity and how they contest the stereotype. For that purpose, women of three age groups will be interviewed.

7.2. Research Questions

The main aim of the current qualitative study was to investigate participants' accounts regarding the following research questions:

- How do British Muslim women understand and assert power in their everyday lives?
    - What narratives do they draw on to shape their power?
    - What instances do they use? With what purpose?
    - What enables and constrains their power?
- How do British Muslim women experience and perceive their own power relations?
    - What instances give them a sense of being powerful/powerless?
    - What contexts are related to their power experiences?
    - What do these accounts and instances of power do for them?
    - How do they perceive their own power?
    - What are the effects of their perception?
- How does identity performance impact and influence their power relations?
    - How do they present themselves?
    - How do they perceive themselves regarding their power relations in the wider society?
- In what ways are understandings, experiences and performance of power similar/different across groups?
    - How are these areas similar/different between age groups?

- How are power relations negotiated in terms of intergenerationality?
- How is the current stereotype surrounding their group as a whole (i.e., British Muslim women) contested across subgroups?
- What are the effects/impacts of it?

7.3. Method

In this section, I will first explore the requirements to participate, the recruitment strategy and the sample. I will then develop the interview schedule and the procedure of the interviews. Finally, I will discuss the analytical approach adopted. All relevant materials of the study (participant information sheet, consent form, debriefing sheet, advert, faculty ethics approval, interview schedule and a sample transcript) can be found in Appendix B. A reflective exercise on researcher-researched dynamics and ethical dilemmas considered in the study was already presented in the Methodology chapter (section 5.3.).

This study and all the documents related to participants, as the interview schedule, were assessed by the Faculty Research Ethics Committee of Kingston University London, which conveyed a favourable opinion on the 9th of February of 2016 (151610, see the letter in Appendix B5).

7.3.1. Participants.

The data for this study was collected from 21 semi-structured interviews conducted with British Muslim women from three different age groups. In this subsection, I will develop the requirements established to participate in the study, the recruitment process, the sample, the interview schedule and the interview procedure.

7.3.1.1. Requirements.

The study aimed to recruit British women who identified as Muslims from three age groups: 16-20, 25-30 and older than 35 years old. To ensure maximum participation, "British identity" was described as being born and raised in the UK and having attended primary school in the UK. This broad approach to Britishness was aimed at ensuring the participation of older women — that is, first- and second-generation British Muslim women who might have been born elsewhere but lived most of their lives in England. Regarding their Muslim identity, they needed to identify as Muslims irregardless of their level of religiosity or observance.

The rationale behind the age groups was twofold. First, the aim was to explore power relations and intergenerationality. A broader age range would assist in answering how different age groups make sense and experience their power relations in their everyday lives, which was one of the research questions of the study. Recruiting participants from three different age groups would allow for the examination of differences and similarities in their power experiences. Second, as discussed in the literature chapters (Chapter 2 & 3), most research conducted on and with British Muslim women has fixated on younger women (Dwyer, 1999, 2000; Begum, 2008; Jaspal & Coyle, 2009; Hopkins, 2013; Hutnik & Street, 2010) with some exceptions, such as Brown (2006, 2008). Another substantial line of research has approached Muslims as a group and community, disregarding gender and age (Abbas & Siddique, 2012; Ahmad & Evergeti, 2010; Hopkins, 2011a; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011). Therefore, by recruiting women of different ages, this study aimed to address a gap in the literature about power experiences of older women (20+) identified.

7.3.1.2. Recruitment.

To avoid priming participants' answers on power, the interviews were introduced to the participants as a study interested in their everyday life experiences. The study was given an accessible title: "Everyday Experience of Women Living in England". There were no open references to power in the title or the body of the

study. It was felt that any reference to power could discourage potential participants due to its (negative) associations (e.g., power with politicians) and the complexity of the term (e.g., participants feeling unqualified to talk about power).

Participants were recruited through snowballing, approaching them directly and advertising on Twitter. The researcher contacted Muslim colleagues and friends, several mosques and Muslim associations. Despite initial interest, in some cases it became difficult to follow up leads. Two mosques were particularly supportive and recruited several participants on behalf of the study.

Social media, particularly Twitter, rendered a very successful source for recruiting participants. Surprisingly, half of the participants volunteered themselves on Twitter. A small leaflet was designed to advertise the study (see Appendix B4). I used my personal account to post the research and asked other researchers and friends to spread the word. I also searched profiles of Muslim organisations, associations and Muslim women to endorse my research. Once potential participants showed interest in the study, I emailed them the information participation sheet (IPS) and consent form (CS) and answered any questions they had (both the IPS and CS can be found in Appendix B). The recruitment process and the interviews took place between February and April 2016.

7.3.1.3. The sample.

Twenty-one interviewees were recruited and interviewed, fulfilling the three age groups. No participants below 18 years old were found and only one was outside of the middle group range (32, when the maximum was 30). Therefore, a small adjustment was made in the age categories to accommodate all available participants. The resultant groups were bracketed young (18-20), middle (25-32) and older (+37). Following the recruiting criteria, all participants had been born in England and/or had studied in primary schools in England (see the demographic characteristics of the sample presented in Table 5 below). All of them identified as Muslim. However, as expected, their levels of religious observance varied (from very

religious to not at all religious). The participants were also ethnically diverse, with one third having Pakistani background, and almost another third being Black-African. In the sample, almost all participants were university graduates or students, except for some Level 3 diplomats. While all the younger interviewees either worked part-time or volunteered, almost all other participants were employed, except for one unemployed and one housewife, who both volunteered. Lastly, regarding their relationship status, all the younger participants (18-20) were single. Among the middle and older groups, more than half were single, three were married, one had a partner and two were divorced/separated.

The sample did not aim to be representative of the whole population, however, particular effort was made to ensure diversity among the interviewees whenever possible. When compared to a sample of the Muslim population at large, it was very peculiar in some ways. Mostly, there were strong differences concerning relationship status and employment. According to the 2011 Census report by the Muslim Council of Britain (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015), the number of married women among the interviewees would be less than expected for British Muslim women (53% were married and with children). Regarding employment, almost all the women interviewed were employed and had graduated, or were full-time students, at the time of the interview. This proportion seemed to align with the overall female British population (51%), rather than Muslim women, whose rate of employment was 28% (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015).

Table 5. *Demographic characteristics of the participants*

Pseudonym	Age	Interviews	Ethnicity	Education	Occupation	Relationship	Children	Religious
Jaiden	18	In-person	Black African	A level	Student/Volunteer	Single	-	Very religious
Madhuri	18	In-person	Black African	A level	Student/Retail Assistant	Single	-	Quite religious
Sadie	18	In-person	Black African	College	Student/Volunteer	Single	-	Quite religious
Farah	19	In-person	Asian Pakistani	A level	Student/Volunteer	Single	-	Quite religious
Sophia	19	In-person	Asian Pakistani	A level	Student/Volunteer	Single	-	Quite religious
Sana	19	In-person	Black African	Level 3	Student/Volunteer	Single	-	Not very religious
Channah	20	In-person	Mixed Asian African	Degree	Student/Tutor	Single	-	Not very religious
Yasmeen	25	Online	Asian Pakistani	Degree	Doctor	Single	-	Very religious
Iesha	25	Online	African Asian	Degree	Banking Assistant	Single	-	“Moderate”
Oriana	26	In-person	Asian Bangladeshi	Masters	Manager Health Care	Single	-	Very religious
Zara	26	Online	Asian Indian	Degree	Communication Officer	Single	-	Quite religious
Marie	29	In-person	Asian Indian	Degree	Unemployed	Divorced	1	Very religious
Aisha	30	Online	Asian Pakistani	PhD	Researcher	Single	-	Not very religious
Leena	32	In-person	Asian Pakistani	PhD	Teacher	Partner	-	Quite religious
Iris	38	In-person	Asian Indian	Master	Journalist	Single	-	Very religious
Ema	38	Online	Asian Indian	Degree	Doctor	Single	-	Quite religious
Khadi	42	Online	Asian Pakistani	PGDegree	Carer	Divorced	2	Quite religious
Veeda	42	Online	Asian Pakistani	Degree	IT Training Consultant	Married	-	Not at all religious
Halima	43	In-person	Asian Pakistani	Diploma	Housewife/Volunteer	Married	3	Quite religious
Adiva	44	Online	Asian Pakistani	Degree	Director of Organisation	Single	-	Not at all religious
Nawal	51	Online	Mixed Asian African	Degree	Education Therapist	Married	3	Quite religious

7.3.2. Interview schedule.

The interview schedule was developed by the researcher and her supervisors, taking into consideration the research questions and the theoretical framework. A female Muslim PhD student also acted as a "key informant" in the development of the interview guide. The interview schedule was not intended to be prescriptive but to act as a guide, where prompts served to motivate answers from the participants. A copy of the interview schedule can be found in Appendix B6.

In writing the questions, a phenomenological approach to power was adopted, where interviewer and co-inquirer engage in a dialogue through questions and answers promoting mutual reflection. This approach aimed to assist in capturing participants' meanings and understandings of power, which may fail to be captured by mainstream Westernised theories of power, as argued in Chapters 4 and 5. Therefore, this approach sought to motivate direct descriptions of power experiences in the participants' everyday lives. During the interviews, participants were encouraged to choose what aspects of their lives they wanted to talk about, and the researcher shaped the conversation posing questions regarding power relations around the scenarios provided by participants. The ultimate goal was to promote a discussion and reflection of the interviewees' understandings and experiences of power.

Before the interview, candidates were asked some questions for demographic purposes (see Appendix B6), regarding their age, ethnicity (to specify from a given list), education (highest degree), occupation, relationship status, children and level of religiosity (very religious; quite religious; not very religious; or not at all religious).

At the start of each interview, participants were asked questions about where they live and if they liked living there, as well as about a recent experience that had made them feel happy. These questions were intended to relax the interviewees and to create confidence. Then, they were asked about a recent experience that made them feel like they had power or were powerful. Participants were encouraged to

provide examples from their personal, professional or recreational life. While they were explaining their chosen example, the researcher posed other connected questions about different aspects of the experience, such as their feelings, reactions, frequency and people involved in the situation. A further question aimed to explore what factors would make them feel they had power. Another question centred on the importance of having power or feeling powerful and motivated them to reflect on the underlying reasons. In the next section of the interview, participants were encouraged to reflect on the opposite, about situations when they didn't have power and also about situations when they didn't mind not having power. In the final section, participants were asked about expectations from other people, such as if they thought that their relatives, other women in their community, or work colleagues expected them to have power or to be powerful. Lastly, they were asked to think about and describe the most powerful person in their lives and in society.

7.3.3. Interview procedure.

I provided all interviewees with a Participant Information Sheet, which explained the study as well as their rights to withdraw at any point of the interview. Once they agreed to participate, I pursued consent with them. At the beginning of the interview, I emphasised confidentiality, anonymity and their right to withdraw at any point without explanation. Furthermore, I emphasised the fact they could choose what they wanted to discuss and that they could change the topic or avoid talking about anything with which they did not feel comfortable during the course of the interview. Additionally, I repeated to them the aim of the study, which was: to understand what things people consider when they go about their everyday lives; both when they deal with the simple tasks of day-to-day living and with other situations/issues that they consider to be important.

The interviews were conducted in different settings (e.g., bar, mosque). The younger group interviews were all face to face — at their university or mosque. The other women were interviewed either face to face or online using Skype or FaceTime. More than half of the older group interviews (9 out of 14) were conducted online due

to participants' geographical locations and time constraints. The remaining ones were conducted at their home, in cafés, in the mosque or at their university. Each interview lasted between 40 minutes and one hour. With permission obtained, the conversations were audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

7.3.4. Analytic strategy.

The data of this study was analysed using qualitative thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013). This method was already adopted in the previous study to analyse the British press data. It was considered useful for the current study because it helped maintain the theoretical and methodological flexibility for further studies, while following up with the previous one.

The analytical process was conducted in a similar way as described in the Methodology chapter (section 5.2.5.). Yet, given that this study aimed to compare the three different groups as three different data sets, which added into the analytical complexity, some aspects need to be elaborated.

I began the analysis by reading and rereading the data of each group separately. I first scrutinised the oldest group, then the middle group and finally the younger one. The reason for approaching them independently was to be able to preserve the findings of each group, so that later I was able to identify intergenerational similarities and differences across the groups. To ensure systematisation, I used NVivo, which also helped me to keep a record of my reflective process in different memos.

As explained above, for the purpose of the study a phenomenological approach was adopted in order to examine participants' accounts of power. Hence, the data was also approached phenomenologically — that is, with open eyes looking for meanings, perceptions, desires, motivations of participants around power, rather than only seeking instances that matched pre-existent theories of power and agency. In this fashion, I coded all elements that related to participants' understandings, perceptions and experiences of their power, as well as enhancers and constraints.

After I had conducted this initial exploratory coding, I worked on the elaboration of the relational approach to power, addressed earlier in Chapter 4 (section 4.3.). In so doing, it allowed me to go back to the data and create theory-driven codes. That is, I coded those instances that seemed to reproduce or link with forms of power to (Allen, 1998).

The development of themes proceeded through an iterative process of reading and rereading the data while coding, led by the research questions presented above. As a result, I developed a thematic structure for each group (see Appendix B, tables 13, 14 and 15). Then, I proceeded to write the analysis for each group independently. This translated into a lot of work and a set of findings that was way beyond the wordcount permitted. Despite the amount of work, this was the only foreseeable way of conducting the intergenerational analysis. In fact, at the time of the analysis, no other comparative qualitative study was found that could help to assist in this analytical process. Thus, only when the findings of each group were solid and a narrative around them established, did I feel ready to conduct the intergenerational analysis.

The intergenerational analysis was led by the four research questions of the study. I searched for continuities and inconsistencies across groups, their effects and implications, and considered different interpretations. There were aspects that were very easy to identify. For example, there were themes that were repeated across the groups, such as how participants' power relations were religiously informed. That by itself showed a thematic continuity across groups, despite presenting some nuances. In other instances, some themes like "success" were only prevalent in one group — the middle group. Contrastingly, there were other aspects that required more work; for example, how to address themes and contexts throughout the groups without neglecting individual differences. Given my commitment with IPT (Breakwell, 1986, 1992) I was determined to keep the balance. For example, family relations were perceived as playing a major role in participants' experiences of power in all groups. Yet, for some participants within each group, family members were perceived as a

source of support or a constraint. This descriptive theme pointed me towards another theme around interdependency, how their power assertions were not only enabled or constrained by their families but also oriented towards others. When viewing all participants regardless of age, the data suggested that ethnicity also seemed to be related to these perceptions. In this fashion, I engaged in a process in which I was knitting continuities and discontinuities across the data and throughout the whole sample.

This process was very time-consuming and extenuating, and it took about two years altogether, in which time I revisited and reworked the same data analysis three times, while working on other aspects of the thesis. Yet it provided me with unique gains. As an early researcher, it gave me the unique opportunity to see how my understanding of the data, the literature and what I was aiming to do were evolving. In a way, I became the witness of my own research-thinking-like development, through notebooks, memos and notes in margins. As a feminist-to-be, it also allowed me to face and question my own understandings of power and gender, as explained earlier (Chapter 5). During the analysis, I developed a clearer understanding of my own feminist standing point (Alcoff, 2003; De Lauretis, 1986, Kitzinger, 1991a).

7.4. Findings

In this section, I will develop five themes identified in the intergenerational analysis, considering all the research questions of this study.

1. Individualised, yet collective-oriented, understandings and assertions of power.
2. Power as religiously informed.
3. Interdependent forms of power: power within family dynamics.
4. Perceptions of their own power: self-efficacy.
5. Asserting identity: Contesting the stereotype.

7.4.1. Individualised, yet collective-oriented, understandings and assertions of power.

Participants mainly mobilised individual understandings of power as personal power (agency), which emphasised autonomy, control, making their own choices and voicing them out. These individualised accounts seemed to be contextualised in interdependent relationships, in which helping other people and having an impact on other people's lives were crucial aspects of their power. In this sense, interviewees seemed to understand power in mainly individualistic ways, which suggested autonomy, while their actions were predominantly oriented towards others, which suggested interdependency. The current theme will be devoted to illustrating these prevalent individual understandings of power. A subsequent theme (7.4.2.) will then describe how Islam may be underpinning these actions of helping and serving others. The trend around interdependency will be examined in a third theme (7.4.3.).

Individualised power assertions were widespread across the data yet varied across and within groups. The emphasis on the importance of being economically independent was emphasised by several participants in each group. For example, Adiva explained how she perceived power as being able to make her own choices and, more importantly, being economically independent.

> *Adiva: So, I have power because I can choose the food that I eat, I can pay for the restaurant food. (…) I have power over my own life and the decisions that I make.*
>
> *I: How important is that for you?*
>
> *A: That's very important to me because I'm independent, I live on my own, I have my own house, my own car, my own job. Those sorts of things are very, very important to me.*
>
> *A: (…) When I was younger, when I didn't have a job, when I was a student and I had very little money. I think the money has given me a lot of freedom and power and control in my own life because when you're*

dependent on other people then your power and your influence in your own life is limited.

Adiva related to power as independence — providing for herself, controlling her life and making her own decisions. She explicitly referred to money as the source of power, control and freedom. She perceived money as the enabler of her independence. Adiva also stated that being dependent on other people limited her power. Her recount about dependency and independence links with her upbringing. Like many participants, she perceived her upbringing as key to developing her power, as will be shown in another subtheme (7.4.3.).

Most interviewees were consistent in mobilising notions of choice and voicing them out. Interestingly, several older participants related to making choices like getting married at an early age in order to become independent from their families, while most in the middle and younger groups stated that they were choosing to develop themselves first (e.g., education). In this sense, there seemed to be a change across generations. See below how Halima constructs being a housewife as her choice. Despite being qualified and available for work, she chose to be economically dependent.

Halima: I am very content not working and not having financial power. My husband works, he is the bread winner, he pays the mortgage, he pays the bills. I could choose to work and be financially more powerful or independent. But I don't feel the need to do that because I felt when I had the children that they needed me more and it was more important for me to be there for them. So, I have chosen not to work, that maybe later on in time I could… (...)

But I am sacrificing something to stay at home for my children… I am living with less resources, less income. I think I am making the harder choice. (...)Lots of friends have said to me: Why don't you work when you can? (...) Well, I can go to work and then when I come home, I will be too tired for my family.

Halima explained how she was choosing to be a stay-at-home mother, while her husband was the main provider. Her choice and family structure could be construed as following the normative gender role, which establishes mothers as housewives and men as breadwinners. Yet Halima was mobilising notions of choice to assert her power. In this way she seemed to enhance her self-esteem as well as self-efficacy. She also asserted power by resisting the social pressure of friends encouraging her to work. In addition, she reflected on the implications of her choice, how she was "sacrificing" more income, material things and her own career. This notion of sacrifice might be informed by her religious values that prescribe being of service to others (as will further be addressed in the next subtheme 7.4.2).

Within the younger group, participants strongly mobilised notions of choice around their education, dress code and following their religion. In this manner, they presented themselves as asserting their power in their lives, particularly in regard to their education, which was considered paramount. For instance, Farah stated it was her choice to study and to pursue a degree:

> *Farah: I am choosing, definitely because I'm choosing to do A levels. That's my choice completely, choosing to do a degree is my choice. Everything. Obviously, the universities and stuff, they give you a timetable, lectures. After that, obviously, it will be my choice.*

Farah conveyed how, through her current studies and following up with university, she was choosing "everything". She also stated how she will have a job after graduating. In her recount, she seemed to be also stating her self-esteem and self-efficacy.

In a similar vein, young participants expressed their desire to pursue a career, rather than get married. To do so, they mobilised *possible selves* in future scenarios, where they pictured themselves as working and having families, and *feared selves,* scenarios in which their power could be constrained.

Sadie: I'm not studying because my mum is telling me to go to school; I'm studying because I want to be someone. So, if someone comes and tells me: "I will not marry you unless you stop going to university or stop going to college." I wasn't going to college for you in the first place, so what makes you think that I'll marry someone who will get in the way of my education?

In the extract above, Sadie provided a scenario around a potential marriage. Note how she presented herself as asserting her personal power and prioritising her education, voicing out her views and contesting a potential constraint.

All younger participants, as well as some in the middle group, stood up for their education and development. In so doing, they might be asserting their self-esteem, continuity and self-efficacy. This emphasis on their education and careers was found in almost all participant groups. One reading of their shared perception could be that they were reproducing neoliberal trends of power that emphasise self-development, autonomy and individualism. Another reading, as will be explained in the next theme (7.4.2.), is that their Islamist values could be underpinning their drive to be their best selves.

As stated, participants in the middle group (aged 25-32) also equated power with autonomy. Their power assertions mainly related to their jobs, families and networks of support. They highlighted notions of control, expressing themselves and succeeding in their careers. For example, they enhanced the aspect of power as control, either being in control of the situation or themselves and their lives. Leena describes this perception of power:

Leena: For me, power is a sense of just being able to control the situation. It's not necessarily what I want the situation to be, but I feel like I still have control over it. It's a fine line. It's a very fine line, but I think that would probably be an example, or if I'm in a situation where I don't have control over it and decisions are being made without my say, then that's a situation where I feel that I don't have any power.

For Leena, power related to being able to control the situation and make her own decisions. She also pointed out that in situations where "decisions" were being made on her behalf, she did not have any power. This perception was occurrent in the data. Note how she acknowledges how she might not have power in defining the situation, yet power is being able to control it. This pattern appeared in other interviews, which referred to not having a choice about having to deal with a certain situation (e.g., sickness of a relative), yet power would manifest in a person's ability to control that situation.

Another aspect to highlight from among the middle group participants was their emphasis on self-expression. Several participants related to how having the confidence to assert themselves played a key role in their power. Yasmeen's extract illustrates this pattern:

> *Yasmeen: You feel empowered within your own self. I think … to be able to self-identify and almost self-express who you are as a person is incredibly important for anybody.*
>
> *(...) I think, definitely, when you are given the choice to be able to make your own decisions rather than somebody limiting the choices that you have, I think what makes you feel powerful is the ability to say what you want. So freedom of speech.*

Yasmeen emphasised that need of "feeling empowered" shared by other participants. For many of them, power related to being able to express themselves, having the confidence to identify and discuss ideas without feeling constrained. In this respect, they seemed to be suggesting how self-esteem and self-efficacy played a crucial role in their power relations.

A striking aspect of the middle group was that most participants mobilised notions of success as a proxy for power. Success was not only presented as a goal, but also as part of their identity. Participants related to their achievements, to providing for themselves and the importance of having an impact and bringing

change in other people's lives. In this sense, participants presented themselves as successful women through their jobs and careers. They emphasised their skills, their dedication and hard work. For example, Oriana explained how her success was a constant in her academic and work life, based on her own self-belief, her religion and her personal attributes.

> *Oriana: I've enjoyed quite a lot of academic success and I'm doing well at work as well. For me, power and success were wrapped up together, so when I felt powerless, that's when I lost success, and that was back a few years ago when I was going through quite a difficult time in my life, where I was having a lot of personal problems in my life. I was very unhappy as a result and because I was unhappy, I was unable to do my best in my work and in my studies.*

Oriana described success as a constant in her life, in her studies and career. This focus on success was very occurrent in middle group accounts. All were working in jobs of their choice. All highlighted their commitment to self-development, which, as suggested earlier, might be motivated by neoliberalism and/or their religious beliefs, as will be discussed in the next theme (7.4.2.).

This self-depiction as successful achievers is particularly interesting as it seems to be reproducing some of the findings of the previous study (Chapter 6), where minority sources portrayed British Muslim women highlighting their success. Back then it was argued that this representation could be a strategy to contest and redefine the negative representation around these women. Similarly, participants from the middle group could have been adopting the same strategy, as will be discussed further (7.4.5).

So far, it has been shown how participants mainly related to individualised notions of power. Yet, as stated at the beginning of this theme, those mainly individualistic narratives coexisted with a collective orientation in the form of having an impact and helping other people's lives. For participants, this was a major form of

power. In the data, participants stressed the importance of helping and inspiring others, working with and for their communities, and taking care of their families. Such assertions of power suggest forms of collective power, or *power with*. Power as having an impact on people's lives was seen as an opportunity to bring change in their communities. Channah, for example, worked as a private tutor for girls in her community; while others volunteered and/or worked in their local mosques or charities. In the following extract, Channah explains how she had become a role model for younger girls who aimed to study at top universities.

> *Channah: The students that I tutor, obviously, come from a similar ethnic minority background to me. They probably think, oh, it's an unattainable goal to maybe get into a prestigious university or something like that. I suppose in that sense, I don't think they look up to you, but they kind of use you as an inspiration… Yeah. They use you as, like, a help. So you know if they need help for applying to something, in that sense you kind of feel a bit powerful because you're maybe helping someone who needs help to get to another level.*

Channah described how she enjoys teaching and supporting younger girls to be able to apply for top-ranked universities, like she did. In so doing, she seemed to engage in a collective effort to promote social change in her community, challenging the negative stereotypes that surround her ethno-religious group, from the ingroup (e.g., prioritising marriage instead of education) and outgroup (e.g., oppressed).

One last aspect around power understandings will be highlighted in this section. It concerns time and conveys an understanding of power as part of the personal development. Several participants from the middle group and, particularly, the older group expressed how they had developed ways to assert themselves over the years. Thus, participants explained that it had taken them time to identify their goals, to be able to assert themselves, to speak out and enact their decisions. It seemed to have happened as a result of a developmental process. For example, Leena recounted how she had learnt over the years how she needed to step up for

herself and voice out what she wanted, contravening the values with which she was raised.

> *Leena: It's a weird situation because I think, generally, we've always been raised to act in a particular way, be polite, almost to a certain extent conformist, which is fine to a certain level, but then there comes a situation where you then have to say, "Okay, yes, I'm being polite, I don't rock the boat, but don't feel like you can take advantage of me." I think looking back, that's something that I've learnt. So if you're thinking about this idea of power, we're thinking about situations where you'll change it. I think I've learned that you can't always get what you want by being polite and sitting back.*

Leena described how she had changed and adopted her own ways to assert herself in order to achieve her goals. Most interviewees seemed to suggest a process of self-development that led them to place themselves and their goals at the centre of their lives. In this manner, they seemed to suggest that power also involved a development process. This temporal dimension could refer to a process of them finding their own voice, their own way to assert themselves, which would relate to a process of developing their own efficacy. Thus, several participants recounted how their ability to voice out and say "No" started quite late in their lives. For instance, Khadi, one of the older participants, expressed having acquired a new approach: *"I feel I have the right to speak up for myself."* This process of power realisation also connects with participants' upbringings, which will be discussed in a later section (7.4.3.).

Overall, the consensus around individual understandings of power was an unanticipated finding. Given the religious backgrounds and beliefs of participants, it was expected that interviewees would mobilise collective as well as individual instances of power. Interestingly, these individualised notions reflect similar findings in the preceding study on British media representations of British Muslim women's power. Previously, a dominant social representation of "power as making choices" was identified, where women were portrayed as making autonomous decisions

(Chapter 6). In this regard, participants of the current study also mobilised notions of choice and speaking out for themselves. Another link can be established between participants' identity presentations as agents on their own terms and the findings of the previous study. During the interviews, most participants showed an awareness and understanding of their (mis)representation as a group. Almost all related to representations of British Muslim women as passive and lacking. In the light of the dominant negative representation, the women interviewed presented themselves as agents on their own terms, which could be seen as them engaging in a collective strategy of contestation of their misrepresentation, as will be discussed further in the third theme (7.4.5.).

The current theme has shown how, in the interviews, individualised assertions coexisted with a collective orientation of power. Surprisingly, collective power was evoked in very few instances (only through being part of a mosque or a student union). With Islam being a collectivist religion, it was expected that participants would mobilise more collective assertions of power, as will be explained in the discussion.

The next theme will show how power was informed by participants' religion.

7.4.2. Power is religiously informed.

The current theme will present how these young women's assertions and experiences of power were predominantly informed by their religion. Almost all interviewees identified as active observants of their religion (see sample description in section 7.3.1.3 of Method). Religion was mobilised as part of their identity, as a source of power as well as the ethical and moral code that informed their behaviour, social practices and power relations. No significant differences were found across groups.

Several participants perceived their religion as a source of power. They expressed how they felt empowered by their religion, not only as a source of support, but also as a source of rights. For example, many younger participants related to how

their right to study was supported by Islam. Sadie expressed: "*There's no way in the religion that can stop a Muslim woman from studying. So she can fall back to the source* [Qur'an] *and present it for example."* Similarly, Iris, a journalist from the older group, described how her religion has given her so many rights, freedoms and how she feels empowered by it.

> *Iris: I feel that my faith empowers me. I like to challenge what people actually think Islam is about, because for me, Islam gives me so many freedoms and so many rights and so I feel empowered by my faith. I don't feel limited by it. I don't feel restricted by it so this to me is very personal but also, it's in the public eye. It always is a public relationship.*

Iris explained how her religion is a source of right and freedom. She addressed the negative social representation that depicts Islam as oppressive, particularly constraining women. She seemed to be contesting this representation by detailing her own experience. Like many other participants, Iris was very aware of the social prejudice around her group and how their negotiation of their religious identity was always in the "public eye". In this respect, she could also have been trying to change social views, by influencing the researcher and the study. How participants asserted their power by contesting the stereotype will be the focus of the last theme (7.4.5.).

However, a few participants also related to Islam as a constraint. Their experiences seemed to be more related to how Islam had been wrapped in regressive cultural practices. This perception is demonstrated by the following extract, in which Khadi explained how her forced marriage had nothing to do with her religion. Khadi described how she was forced into marriage as a teenager abroad by members of her family. She recounted feeling powerless and how she complied, despite not wanting to get married. Finally, she ended up reporting the case to authorities. Looking back, she wished she had spoken up for herself sooner.

> *Khadi: Imagine the marriage in Pakistan. I felt helpless, so I went along with it. (…) For example, when my uncle wanted me to marry someone from*

abroad and bring him over. I didn't want to do that when I went over in the middle of my finals. Then my passport was taken from me and I was told you have to marry this person. If I didn't, I wouldn't get back, so what do I do? I'm stuck in the middle of nowhere, I know nobody, no one is going to help me. So, the best thing to do is to sign the papers just to get the passport and come back to my country. When I came back, it wasn't a consensual marriage; it was just a paper at that point. Back here, I informed the authorities of what happened and that this man shouldn't be allowed to come to this country as my husband because it is not… it was a forced thing (…). I knew my religion…and I knew my religion didn't accept that. So, I still carried on with my studies. I finished my degree, carried on for a couple of more years…

Khadi detailed how she was forced to marry someone in Pakistan against her will and how she complied. Note how she mobilises her knowledge of her religion, which helped her to assert her power and to stand up against the marriage, as she knew that Islam did not support it. In this respect, Khadi, like many other participants, separated backward social practices from Islam. However, a few participants also related to their religious values and particularly the headscarf as diminishing their confidence.

Another interesting aspect of how Islam impacted these women's power was evident in several participants believing that their power was ultimately a result of God's will. A few in each group expressed how, despite ruling their own lives and making their own decisions, it was all dependent on God. For example, Emma, who was a doctor from the older group, viewed herself as a "deliverer" of God's will. She explained her perception of not having power, declining her own agency in favour of God as an agent.

Ema: We don't have the power to change what happens to them [patients], but I think that comes because of my fate. We are the agents of what is meant to happen, but we don't make those things happen ourselves. (...) I am the deliverer of whatever care God wants me to provide or enables

me to provide, I suppose. (...) Yeah, but it's not power. You are a deliverer, you are the channel rather than the source.

I: You are the channel of the power of God?

E: Yes. That makes it sound like I'm some kind of faith healer, I'm really not. I'm quite a scientific person but, at the end of the day, everything that happens does so because he wills it.

Ema's extract demonstrates this perception that power ultimately belongs to the divine. See how she describes her power as part of God's plan ("fate") and herself as an agent of God. Note how, when I repeated her own words, she reflected on how she could be perceived ("faith healer") and contested this perception by defining herself as a "quite a scientific person" and emphasising divine's agency. Similarly, Channah of the younger group, also perceived that her success and achievement was a result of God's will.

Channah: To me, it's more like, I'm only in the position I am because of God; it wasn't my doing. If they think I'm powerful it doesn't really affect me. Or me getting into that university, yeah, it was my effort, but it only happened because God wanted it to happen.

The extract shows how some interviewees, like Channah, related to God as the ultimate source of power. In this sense, she acknowledged the efforts and hard work of women like her, as agents, while asserting that it is God's plan that they are able to be who they are and do what they do. This is a strong example of how their identity informs their power.

Several participants also expressed how religious virtues, such as humbleness and modesty, informed their power performances. For instance, Khadi, an older participant who had several certificates and had worked most of her life in companies undertaking high managerial roles, explained it.

Khadi: I never let anyone know who I am or what I have achieved. I am never… you know, how people brag about what they have achieved. I normally walk through this life without knowing, I don't let anyone know. I don't like to brag it, something I have done for myself. I rather prefer to remain humble, because there is always so much more that you can achieve.

I: Do you think humbleness is because of the way you have been taught or because of how you are?

K: Maybe it is how I am and now how I want to be. It is part of my religion as well, that teaches us to be humble and not be proud.

The extract reveals how Khadi's religious values of meekness and humbleness informed her performance of power. She stated how Islam taught her to be humble about her achievements. Several participants referred to performing these Islamic values as well as wearing the headscarf. Looking at her performance, Khadi might appear to some people as passive and lacking power, that her religion constrains her performance. Yet focusing on her own perception and Islamic values, she is in fact asserting power on her own terms, informed by her religious values. In this manner, women like Khadi seemed to combine notions of autonomy and self-realisation with a modest and pious tone.

In a similar vein, some participants explained how they asserted power by following their religious values. These instances can be (mis)interpreted as examples of their lack of power in the eyes of non-Muslims. Yet, as will be shown, these instances are actually indicative of power within the terms of participants' values. For example, Farah explained how she followed her religious moral values in her leisure and dress code, despite available social alternatives.

Farah: The thing is, I know there's certain — obviously through my religion and stuff like that — there's certain things that as a Muslim girl, woman, you're not supposed to do.

I: Can you give me an example?

F: Okay, so loads of people I know that go out really late or at night until like 3 o'clock, 4 o'clock in the morning, partying and stuff like that. For me, I would rather go out and be home at 9, 10 or whatever and then be in a situation where I feel safe. (...) I would want to know I'll be home by this time and stuff like that.

Farah seems to convey how her behaviour and preferences are her own, despite being informed by her religion. For an external reader, the fact that she does not engage with typical social practices (e.g., staying out late) like other girls might be indicative of her oppression. However, when attending to her own understandings of power, she is in fact asserting her own power by resisting the social pressure and making her own choices following her faith. In addition, her account could be contesting the stereotype of women being oppressed by their religion by constructing her decision as a matter of choice. This kind of power assertion can be read in terms of the individual internalising her oppression to the point where she is now oblivious to how her religion constrains her life (e.g., false consciousness). However, it is argued here that it is in fact indicative of certain degrees of power, as well as another kind of agency, informed by her religious beliefs.

One final aspect of participants' religious beliefs may help in understanding their focus on self-development, success and achievement, especially in the middle group. As explained earlier, their power assertions could be read as part of a neoliberal machinery, where the subjects need to develop themselves, like self-entrepreneurs, through continuous training and development as well as autonomy. However, as Marie highlighted, this presentation and identity performance also fits with Islamic beliefs of continuous improvement.

Marie: I think that I've become a better person, or I'm trying to become a better person. Obviously, we make mistakes, and then we learn from that, and I think that it's just an ongoing cycle, and we have to just change ourselves and make ourselves better people. That's why we have to follow the guidance

that we're given in the Qur'an, (...) we just, I think, we're trying to better ourselves in every aspect.

Marie describes this aim of self-development shared by participants and how it is part of their faith, which prescribes trying to do your best and be your best possible self.

In this theme, it has been shown how participants' power performances were informed by their religious beliefs. They expressed how they felt empowered by their religion, as well as how power ultimately belongs to God. It has also been unveiled how, by engaging in their religious values, participants performed power. Finally, it was illustrated how participants' focus on success and development could also be informed by their religion.

The following theme will display how participants' power performances also suggested trends of interdependency, by examining family dynamics.

7.4.3. Interdependent forms of power: power within family dynamics.

This theme will illustrate how, despite individualistic power assertions suggestive of autonomy and independence (shown in the first theme — 7.4.1.), participants' accounts also conveyed a sense of interdependence. This interdependency was mainly framed around family dynamics, where religious and ethno-cultural values seemed to intertwine, informing power relations. As will be displayed in this theme, participants negotiated their power relations in a way that sometimes may appear independent and, at other times, interdependent. Accordingly, the theme captures the process of identity presentation and construction that includes autonomy and interdependency.

The interdependency motif manifested itself differently in every group. While older participants (38-51) reflected on how their upbringings supported or constrained them, those in the middle group (25-32) reflected on the impact of family

expectations on their power relations, while the younger ones (18-20) portrayed themselves as being independently dependent.

Within the older participants' data, accounts of support and control coexisted in their upbringings. All participants were raised as Muslims, yet ethnic and cultural interpretations of their religion were signalled as the source of constraint. In some cases, they described their relatives as enablers of their power, sometimes as constrainers, and sometimes both at the same time. In the sample, three participants spoke of supportive upbringings despite facing economic struggles. The other four spoke of being raised with restrictions, with decisions taken for them, and controlled by their parents. Participants of Pakistani background described their upbringings as restrictive, in contrast with those of Indian and mixed background who described their upbringings as supporting and encouraging power. Thus, Pakistani participants explained an urge to find a job, get married and study, as ways to gain independence and power. For example, Veeda defined her childhood as very restrictive. She described how her brothers were allowed and encouraged to do various activities prohibited to both her and her sister.

> *Veeda: My sister and myself, we both encourage each other to say no and not accept things and speak up. My brothers, their relationship with my parents is completely different. They're boys so it was completely different from ...*
>
> *I: What do you mean they are boys?*
>
> *V: In a Pakistani Muslim household, the boys are treated very differently. Their expectations are different. We were expected to go to school and come back and stay in the house, and not do any outside activity. They were allowed to do a lot of things which we never did. They went on trips. They went and played outside; they had friends outside they went to see. They went to the park. They went camping. They went on holidays. We weren't allowed to do any of that. My brothers would not have felt the way we felt.*

Veeda described how, despite the constraints, she found a source of mutual support in her sister. Note how she refers to herself and her sister using passive voice ("We weren't allowed"), in contrast to the active voice regarding the brothers and all their freedom. This language seems to imply that their agency was denied by her parents, because they were females.

Conversely, Iris, of Indian background, expressed how her life of achievements were due to the trust and support of her family. She recounted being treated the same as her other siblings, both male and female. She felt empowered by her family who supported her decisions.

> *Iris: I don't see it as something oppressive because in my own family upbringing, my parents were very family-oriented. That didn't restrict me from doing anything. They would trust me; they said "we trust you" just as long as you be safe as possible. That, for me, is empowering, because when you really put too many restrictions on belief, they rebel. (…) I rebelled in a way I suppose because I didn't want to wear headscarf at all. Because they allowed me to do what I wanted. They gave me a solid foundation growing up. I have a brother and a sister, and we all had the same freedoms.*

Iris emphasised how she was trusted and supported by her parents. She felt "empowered" by them, who allowed her to make her own decisions, like during the period when she stopped wearing the hijab. She also mentioned how all her siblings, despite gender, enjoyed the "same freedoms". In this manner, she seemed to be dissipating any potential assumption around the fact that, because she was a woman, she could have had less freedom and opportunities than her male siblings, like Veeda above.

Interviewees from the middle group spoke of family expectations enabling and constraining their power. For example, many participants described how their parents encouraged them to do a degree as a means to succeed. Others told of how they were expected to adopt Muslim values and behave accordingly, or to follow

cultural practices and prescribed gender norms, which sometimes challenged their power. For example, Oriana, of Bangladeshi background, recounted how she was expected to learn to do the housework and to get married, as well as to succeed in her studies.

> *Oriana: I did not have power in my family, and if I did, the power I had was to make my parents look good with my successes, so they looked good in society because I was doing well in school.* (...) *Inside the house, I was still the girl, not the boy. I was still* [someone] *who doesn't know how to do house work, so my power and successes outside did not triumph over the expectations of an Asian girl and what is success to an Asian family.*
>
> *I'm successful from a Western perspective, maybe even from an Islamic perspective, but I'm not successful from an Asian perspective, which is why I would describe myself as having more Islamic and Western principles rather than Asian.*

Oriana explained how, despite being very successful academically, at home she did not fit the mould of what was expected from an "Asian" girl — to do the house work properly. She emphasised how gender differences limited her expectations and power. Oriana had previously explained that she adopted Islam at an early age. She seemed to align herself with a neoliberal understanding of success, rooted in her religious beliefs, which gave her a sense of self-esteem, self-efficacy and distinctiveness in contrast to her own family's somewhat backward cultural values. Success and religion had helped her to redefine her position, reinterpreting her constrained identity as an Asian girl in an Asian family. Thus, she perceived she was powerful from a Western and Islamic perspective, yet not from her family cultural perspective. This extract also offers a unique depiction on how power can be culturally informed.

For middle-group interviewees, age was also mobilised within family dynamics as a proxy for power. Thus, older daughters explained how they were responsible and accountable for their younger siblings and were considered a source

of advice by their parents. Yasmeen stated that she was a "sounding board" for her parents. Aisha, also an eldest child, was expected to achieve a university degree as well as take care of her younger sisters. Her story was different because she had been raised by her grandparents, instead of her parents. Her account exemplifies how family expectations operated as both enabler and constraint. Aisha provided an exceptional example of how her grandad, also an academic, motivated her to believe she could become whatever she wanted.

> *Aisha: I grew up with very different values to the other girls around me, who were brought up to believe that they were going to get married when they were 18 and have a family. Whereas my granddad was like, "You're going to go to university, and you're going to do a PhD." I was brought up to be the most powerful person I could be. In fact, my granddad said I could lead the world if I wanted to.*
>
> *(...) A lot of Pakistani girls, they're brought up to be like, "Oh, when you get older, you need to marry a doctor or a lawyer." My granddad said to me, "No, when you're older, you're going to be the doctor or the lawyer." You're not going to marry one; you're going to be one.*

Aisha was expected to achieve her own career, contravening traditional gender roles. Her story might elicit her sense of distinctiveness and self-esteem compared to other girls in her community, from whom she felt alienated. Aisha had, in fact, achieved her PhD at the time of interview and was a successful researcher. Yet she also explained how she had moved back home and was currently the main carer in her family, because of certain members suffering from health conditions. Her account serves to illustrate how, despite her independency, family matters overrode her freedom of choice.

The role of family was strongly salient in the younger group. All of them were still living in the family household. These participants presented themselves as autonomous and making their own choices, while also seeking and pending their parents' approval. A few participants educated the interviewer about parenting

according to Islam and how important respect was to their parents and to seek agreement. Jaiden explained the importance of mothers in Islam and how she wouldn't do anything intentionally to upset her own mother.

> *Jaiden: Loving your mother three times according to the Qur'an. Mother is a high role in Islam (…) Because if my mum says no, don't do this, I will really doubt doing it. I just feel like ... my mum for a lot of reasons because, even in Islam, we're told: love Allah, love the prophet and then love your mum three times, three times before you love anyone else in this universe. The fact that she has such a high figure…*
>
> *I: Even before your dad as well?*
>
> *J: Yeah.*

In the extract, Jaiden described how her behaviour and choices were conditioned by her mother's guidance following her faith. Interestingly, most younger participants and those in the middle group pinpointed their mothers as the most powerful people in their lives. Broadly, participants justified their answer in three ways, which sometimes coexisted in some accounts. First, mothers were acknowledged for their influence and authority over them, as well as a source of support and advice. Second, they emphasised their qualities, as both centre and manager of the family ("anchor", "glue of the family", "nurturer" and "the boss"). Third, mothers were praised for their strength, overcoming all sorts of challenges and barriers (as migrants, raising the family, providing, etc.). While many praised their mothers for their support, they admired them for what they had been able to achieve. Their strength related to their own journeys as individuals to hopefully one day build a family of their own, as well as their commitment and dedication to overcome any circumstance. A few participants spoke of their mothers' divorce, becoming single parents and providers of large families. Others related to their mothers' backgrounds as migrants and the struggles they had to overcome. Iesha, from the middle group, explained how her mother was a very important source of

advice in her family and community due to her immense knowledge. She described how she raised her siblings and her in a deprived environment.

> *Iesha: Everyone goes to her for advice, not just me* (...) *she knows so much, and she's got so much patience.* (...) *I honestly think she's the one that keeps everyone together, and in that sense, it gives her power because she's so on top of everything. She'll keep in contact with everyone; she'll make sure we meet up for dinner.* (...) *When we were younger, we all went to museums and we had good cultural education and considering the area that we grew up in, it's such a bad neighbourhood, all the people that were in my year at school are dead, in prison, got pregnant, never went past school and the three of us went to university* (...) *It's all because of my mom, it gives her power because she's your go-to person. She's the glue. She's like the head of the family.*

Iesha offered a detailed account about why she considered her mother the most powerful person. She specified how she was the 'go-to person', the 'glue' and the 'head of the family'. Her mother had also managed to raise her children, all of whom were graduates. Similar attributes were found in other participants' descriptions of their mothers, how they were their main reference. Note how Iesha describes her family as exceptional in the area where she grew up. Her description might work in enhancing her self-esteem and distinctiveness. Additionally, it might reinforce the idea that the sample of this study is quite unique, in terms of education, as argued in the Method section (7.3.).

The pattern observed around the mother as the most powerful person in many interview participants' lives is a striking finding that allows for different interpretations. On one hand, it could be a result of how mothers are celebrated by Islam. This would be consistent with how participants' understandings of power are religiously informed. On the other hand, this pattern could be evidencing the lack of role models for participants who, in the absence of others, perceive their mother as both the most powerful person and their utmost role model.

Within the younger group, participants presented themselves as making choices particularly around their studies, as shown in the first theme (7.4.1.). But they also provided examples of when they would assert their power by prioritising other issues, like in Farah's account.

> *Farah: I'm going to go back to last week, okay? On the weekend I had to revise for my exam but my mom, something happened with our family up north and she [mum] had to go see our brother. She was like, "You have to come." I couldn't stay home, and she was like, "You have to come." That's where I, you know, put my revision stuff behind me and I was, like, for my mom I will go. It's important for her, sort of thing. […]*
>
> *That's why I prioritise it because it makes me feel better about myself as a person. […] It makes me feel better about myself because I know that I'm doing something for someone else. Not necessarily powerful. I'm only powerful because I got to choose the decision, but otherwise at the end of it I will always do something for someone else.*

It is noticeable how Farah positions her parents and her religion as having power over her. This participant seemed to bend her personal agency in favour of her parents and religion, which at the same time seemed to enhance her self-esteem. This resonates with another kind of agency, where she is choosing to put her parents and her religion first, over her own responsibilities and needs. In so doing, she refers to herself as being the agent of choice, which suggests interdependence. Yet she did not seem to have much of a choice. This account of agency and assertion of power could be read as a form of dependency under Western individualistic readings of power, where her prioritising of others negates her own autonomy. But if we adopt Farah's interpretative framework, she is asserting her power following her own beliefs. This power assertion also connects with collectivistic performances of power, where the collective gain is prioritised over the individual. Islam is a collectivistic religion. Hence, once more, it is illustrated how power assertions need to be read within their own contexts of meaning making and performance.

Under this theme, the nuances of these women's power experiences have been analysed, where individualism coexisted with interdependency. The next theme will reveal participants' perceptions of their own power.

7.4.4. Perceptions of their own power: self-efficacy.

Perceptions about one's power are key to understanding power relations. Hence, how participants perceived themselves would directly inform what outcomes they perceived as possible and achievable. In the data, the relationship between them being agentic and feeling powerful or perceiving themselves as powerful was not a straightforward one. Most participants presented themselves as agentic and performing power in individualised ways. Yet many struggled with the word itself, particularly the older ones; relating power to themselves or perceiving themselves as powerful, despite occupying positions of power in their jobs.

Farah, one of the younger participants, claimed that everyone has personal power, which connects with agency. She specifically related to the right to choose.

> *Farah: I think everyone has their own personal power. Because everyone has the right to choose and do what they want to do and be the person they want to be. Then that gives them power. Each individual, they have power over what they choose to do and choose to be. They should have a say in everything. Yeah, that's why I think everyone has power. To an extent. Some people have more power, some people don't have more power but then that's obviously, you know, really… That's more like social factors, I think.*
>
> *I: Yeah, but when you say this idea of choosing or having a say, what happens if you have a say and no one listens?*
>
> *F: Then you still have the power to make people listen. You can speak to different people and find people that agree with what you think. Because I'm pretty sure there's someone that would agree with your opinion and stuff like that.*

This extract illustrates the prevalent perception of power as an individual matter. It recognises some power differences, but when confronted, Farah persisted with focusing on the individual responsibility to address the situation. This predominant perception seems to be informed by neoliberal narratives that enhance individualism. But a neoliberal approach has been deemed very problematic as it seems to deny/neglect structural constraints.

Despite this widespread individualistic perception and how it was collectively oriented, a few participants also mobilised accounts of collective power, either by participating at university or engaging with their mosques, as already illustrated (7.4.1.). Nevertheless, only one participant perceived that she was more powerful in a group than individually.

> *Channah: I used to be part of a youth group when I was younger, and I feel like a youth group can be powerful. Even at university, we have our Student Union, and I feel like that's powerful because you can always lobby for things and get involved. I realised that, when I came to university, how much of a voice you have, how much of a difference you can actually make, in terms of lobbying and things like that.*
>
> *I: Even more, for instance, at an individual level, you mean?*
>
> *Ch: Yeah. I feel like we can all be powerful…Yeah. I feel like, as a group, like a unified group, your voice is louder.*

Channah described how she felt being part of a group gave her a bigger voice and the ability to have a bigger impact to change things. This was the only account identified of this kind. The absence of collective perceptions of power is a noticeable finding, which might connect with participants' awareness of the social prejudice around their group, insofar as participants felt agentic individually but lacking power as group.

Several participants, particularly older ones, also related to personal power, yet they struggled to perceive themselves as powerful. Nawal, from the older group,

described being in a managerial position but not feeling powerful or able to identify herself as such.

> *Nawal: That's really hard. I don't feel powerful. I manage a team at work, so I am quite powerful. I am the lead for this department, so I manage a team at work too.* (...) *I don't feel it, I don't think I feel it, that's the problem. (…) I don't think I care about being powerful. I think it's more important for me to know what I'm talking about, to have that knowledge to try and get that across, to be good, to be respected. To do good is important.*

Nawal problematised her own perception of power. Later, she stated how she was interested in knowledge, in doing good, and respect. One plausible explanation of her perception could be the role of religion, as shown earlier (7.4.2). For some participants, their observance of their religion (e.g., humbleness) may have collided with experiencing feelings of power, reserved only to the divine God almighty. This can be illustrated by a previous extract (7.4.2.), in which Ema related to power as ruling her own life and having a powerful position as a doctor, yet she perceived everything was a result of God almighty.

This perception of having agency (personal power) to rule one's life but feeling a lack of power was also recounted by Adiva. Like Nawal, she occupied a job position of authority as a director of an organisation. Earlier, it was shown how she related to power as being independent and providing for herself (theme 7.4.1.). Yet in the following extract, she reflects on her perception of the word "power", its automatic connection with power over someone else, and how she doesn't feel she has power.

> *Adiva: Even the word makes me feel uncomfortable, because you always associate it with politicians and crooked people, and bankers, and all of that. I don't associate a word "powerful" with me at all. (…) Power is such a funny word.*
>
> *I: Why?*

A: Because power makes me think about one person having control over another person. (…) My job is I'm the director in the organization. You could say that means I have lots of responsibility within the organization and I don't think I have lots of power. Never. I don't think I would ever feel like I was powerful.

I: Why is that?

A: I think some of that is my personality, but also some of that is the reality of inequality and discrimination and all of those things that exist within British society and the world. A Muslim, Asian, woman, you know, all of that means you are not going to be in a position of power."

Adiva identifies with Nawal in not feeling powerful and struggling with the word itself, which is negatively perceived. Her extract provides another explanation of why interviewees perceived themselves as agentic but not powerful. Participants, particularly older ones, were very aware of the unequal power dynamics within society, especially regarding the prejudice and discrimination around their group. In fact, they highlighted how other people's perceptions about their identity was a limitation of their power assertion. Misrecognition and attributed identities were mobilised as a strong limiting factor of their power (e.g., misrecognition as the cleaner). Therefore, their awareness seemed to translate into them perceiving themselves as agents individually, but lacking power as a group due to how their collective identities (e.g., Asian, Muslim, woman) intertwined. For instance, many participants perceived that women had less power in general. Thus, an agentic presentation could also be seen as an identity strategy to contest the stereotype, as will be addressed further in the final theme (7.4.5.).

Some participants also perceived their religious and ethnic identities as restricting their power. For instance, Veeda, who was raised as Muslim and had gradually stopped practicing, described her Muslimness as part of a broader cultural and ethnic identity ("brown skin"). In the following extract, she discusses how her ethnic, religious and economic background determined her opportunities and power.

Veeda: I've got a degree, and I work, and I've worked since I've left, but I just wish I had a greater understanding of the complex situation. If I had a better education, I could have got a better degree, gone to a better school, I think that ... I am a Pakistani Muslim woman who was brought up in a very working-class area in a very working-class household. The opportunities for me were very minimal. The fact that I went and did a degree was a huge thing and it opened so many doors, but if I was a white man, middle-class or upper-class, my opportunities would have been greater (…) That's how I think I associate power with being able to make decisions and live the way you want to do without bending over for other people all the time.

For Veeda, the power constraints she experienced were strongly connected with her identity. In other words, her multiple collective identities (religious, culture, class, gender, ethnicity) seemed to intersect, constraining her power. Therefore, she pointed at class as another crucial factor of intergroup power dynamics, as well as gender and ethnicity. She exemplifies the perception of the unequal power relations by pointing at the privilege of white middle-aged, middle-class men.

In the middle group, interviewees presented themselves as high achievers, succeeding and achieving their desired outcomes. In this respect, they perceived they had power, mainly personal power. Interestingly, among the power limitations, besides Islamophobia and attributed identities, they pointed at themselves as the ones who were diminishing their power through feelings of doubt and lack of confidence. They also suggested that acquiring their power was a matter of time — years — as already introduced (7.4.1).

Lastly, the younger women seemed to perceive themselves as powerful through making their own choices and claiming their education and future careers. They were very vocal in describing their future goals of graduating, working and becoming mothers. They mobilised their religion as the source that guaranteed their power (7.4.2.). Yet they were very aware of their power limitations, like the negative

prejudice around their group and Islamophobia. Sana described her perception of her power, paying special attention to her gender.

> *Sana: When it's something more personal, like my dress, my education, stuff like that is a no-go zone for me. You have no influence whatsoever. That's my personal things to deal with. Suggestions about appearance and education? No, not at all. I will dress how I want to dress, I will study what I want to study. I feel those two personal things as humans, especially females, we need to take control of, because a lot of times it's seen as "you should study this, you should study that." I need to study what I want to study, because you're not going to be in the classroom with me, at the end of the day, you're not going to be at work with me. I've met people who men have pushed them to get married, and they're like, "If I want you to study this, I want you to do this, I want you to do that." I can't see someone dictating that type of thing to me, because I feel why would you, why would you feel the need to? You should have faith in the other person to decide what's better for themselves.*

Sana reflected on her power as being personal (agency), which concerns only her. She described her own will to choose her dress code, which follows her religion, as well as her studies. She strongly opposed the idea of someone else having control and taking her decisions on her behalf. In so doing, she presented herself as an agent making her choices independently. She also mobilised a collective identity, as women, to call for young women to "take control of" their lives, their dress code and their studies. In this manner, she seemed to be contesting the stereotype around her group, of women as passive and oppressed by their husbands, as well as resisting the social practice of getting married at a young age, as some of her friends had done. With her presentation she might also be enhancing her distinctiveness, increasing her self-esteem.

An interesting aspect of younger participants' accounts was that they perceived that their communities, and particularly men in their communities, were very supportive of their power. For example, Sadie, in a question about the

expectations that men in her community might hold about her power, expressed being "*encouraged"* and *"empower[ed]"* by her community.

> *Sadie: They would also try to encourage us* [women] *to be powerful, especially… like, I work in an environment where we are from the same religion, so they and our religion empower women. The men here would tell us more about the women in Islam and how they were empowered.*

Sadie emphasised how her religion and her community empowered her. Participants in other groups also related to counting on men's support. Yet this pattern was very frequent in young participants' accounts, which suggests two different interpretations. First, participants could have been engaging in a collective contestation of the stereotype around women, as oppressed by their religion and their communities. Second, the young age of participants might have made them less aware of the power inequalities between men and women, as illustrated above by Veeda.

This theme illustrated participants' perceptions of their own power. They perceived their power mainly in personal terms (agency), which was not necessarily translated into feelings of power, particularly for older participants. They seemed to perceive that they lacked power, which could be somewhat informed by their religion, as well as related to their awareness of the discrimination around their group. Participants from the younger and middle-age groups were also very aware of the negative prejudice around them as Muslim women living in Britain, yet they mostly felt they had the power to assert themselves. Interestingly, there was an absence of collective perceptions of power in the data.

7.4.5. Asserting identity: Contesting the stereotype.

This last theme captures how participants across groups asserted their power through identity performance. Most participants described instances when they experienced attributed identities (e.g., misrecognition), mostly in wider society by non-Muslim people (e.g., work colleagues) but sometimes also within their families

or communities (e.g., exclusion). Attributed identities are particularly important in power relations because they might deprive or promote women's power. For instance, in a given situation, it may appear on the surface that a woman has no power because of the position that has been allocated to her by others. But, as will be shown, how that woman manages such situations actually reflects certain degrees of power.

This section will outline four main strategies identified across groups in different ways: shifting their identity; self-differentiating; representing their social identity and influencing other people's views; and promoting social change.

7.4.5.1. Shifting identity.

Identity shifting was adopted by participants in all age groups. Yet for analytical purposes, different extracts from the same young participant have been selected. This selection aims to illustrate how participants would strategically shift their identities depending on the context (Breakwell, 1986), which was indicative of certain degrees of power. It also demonstrates how participants' assertions of power were context dependent.

Sana is the youngest of a six-children family of divorced parents. At the time of interview, she was studying and also working at her mosque. Of her sisters, she was the only one to wear the hijab. In the following extract, she describes how she performs her religious identity, despite being excluded by her sisters.

> *Sana: Me and my sisters always get into awkward conflicts about my headscarf. They're always saying you make us look bad because you wear it and all of that. I'm each to their own. I don't judge you for wearing it or not wearing it. That's just your business. That's between you and God. That's got nothing to do with me. If you want to wear it, wear it, if you don't, I don't care, it doesn't affect me.* (...) *Yeah, they like crop tops and like their skirts, and I'm just like, no, I can't really wear that. I do like that stuff, when I go to female*

parties, I wear that kind of stuff. In day-to-day life, I'm more like abaya's, skirts, blouses, just a bit more covered up than them.

Sana's choice of Islamic-appropriate clothes and headscarf, in line with her religious faith, was made in spite of her sisters' criticism. Note how she reclaims her individuality, rather than group identity, when she states that it is everyone's choice ("business"). She expressed not being affected by their decision to not wear the headscarf. She asserted her power by performing her religious identity, despite being excluded as a result. In withdrawing herself and standing up for her religious beliefs, she protected her self-esteem and sense of continuity, irrespective of any negative effects on her well-being (Breakwell, 1986).

The following extract shows another instance when Sana presents herself strategically, when she is with her mixed group of friends, shifting her identity. She describes how she consciously adapted herself, complying with boys' commands ("*I do take the back seat"*) to preserve their masculinity. Though it may appear she is compliant with the situation, she still finds her own strategies to assert her ways.

Sana: I feel like, when it's just the girls, I'm quite a strong person, but when there's guys involved, guys see themselves as the alpha males sometimes. (…) Whereas I don't mind asking for directions, I don't feel like it's a weakness, I feel okay, let's ask for directions. These men are like no, we can't ask for directions, I'm just, "What do you mean, we're lost." The clever thing to do is to ask someone who looks like they're local and ask for directions. Whereas the guys are just, "No, we're not asking for directions". I am like: "You're dumb, literally! Ask some local."

(…) Then in that circumstance, I might take a back seat. The amount of times I've literally gone into a corner shop and, when I was pretending to buy something and pay, I'm like "Okay quickly, where's the nearest train station?" The guy will be, "Oh, it's down here." Then, I'm like: "Guys, I think it's this way."

My friends then say: "Are you insane?" and I am like: "I'm not walking round for an hour." I do it secretly, because I feel it's better to not hurt their feelings.

With her friends, Sana described how she would shift her identity performance by "taking the back seat", complying with traditional gender roles, where men are in charge. Compliance, according to Breakwell (1986), is an interpersonal strategy to deal with identity threat, characterised by "living up to what you perceive to be the expectations of other people" (p. 123). Her compliance can be read as a sign of her passiveness. Or it can also be read as a self-conscious tactic and a mastery of her social skills that allows her to gain social acceptance by her group of friends, while at the same time preserving her own will. In this respect, how she navigates gendered relationships can also be indicative of how she asserts her power.

The following extract depicts a different scenario, when Sana was verbally abused on a bus by an old lady, while the other passengers remained silent. Finally, the bus driver intervened and ordered Sana to leave the bus, taking the side of the older lady.

Sana: I was on the bus and I was getting verbally assaulted by this lady. She was an elderly lady, and I have this rule, if you're old I'm not going to say anything to you I'm going to be quiet. (...) This elderly lady was calling me a terrorist and all those kinds of words. Just not very nice names, and I don't know, this lady ...I didn't say anything, she's an old lady, like literally she's a frail old lady so I thought I'm not going to say anything to her, she's elderly. Then I had enough at one point, and I was, "You don't know me, stop speaking, stop speaking, stop speaking." Then this other lady got involved like, "How dare you speak to her like that." (…) and I got really pissed off.

Then the bus driver came out and I thought the bus driver was going to be impartial. He was, "Get off the bus, I've heard you this whole you time." I was like "Are you crazy?" and I was so angry, but I got off the bus because I thought I'm not going to make a commotion, there's no point, I don't have energy for this.

In this context, Sana first tried to comply and remained silent, despite being abused, out of respect for older people, following her religious values. This resonates with Ryan's (2011) research on how Muslim women negotiated collective stigma by showing goodness. As the abuse went on, she changed strategy and rebelled, engaging in negativism (Breakwell, 1986). This tactic involves facing the abuser and challenging them. Negativism, though, can have both positive effects (increasing self-esteem by defending oneself) and negative ones (exclusion, lack of social validation). Note how Sana asserted her personal identity ("you don't know me"), perhaps in an attempt to be seen beyond her religious identity. Overall, Sana seemed to be trying to differentiate and contest herself from this attributed identity of Muslims as terrorists, first quietly (complying) and then openly (contesting it). After the bus driver's intervention, she gave up and exited the bus.

In the above scenario, Sana seemed to be caught up in what Breakwell called a "double-bind situation" (1986, p. 127). When she tried to comply with the threat, she experienced social rejection, as she did when she rebelled. This example indicates the inner logic of compliance, where the individual adopts a set of rules that the threatened person has not established. The alternative would be engaging in social change. Sana subsequently attempted to file a complaint with Transport for London (TFL), but she deemed this unsuccessful.

These extracts from Sana's interview serve to exemplify how participants of all groups adopt identity shifting in different contexts to assert their power.

7.4.5.2. Self-differentiating and passing.

Another two strategies identified in the data, referenced by some participants in each age cohort, were self-differentiation and passing, as a means to contest and change the negative prejudice around their group. Self-differentiation was especially adopted by several young and middle-age interviewees, who differentiated themselves from the other women in their communities. In their view, they were different because they were focusing on their careers and succeeding. Contrastingly,

other women in their communities were following, or had followed, traditional roles and cultural practices, marrying and starting families at a young age. Here's Zara from the middle group.

> *Zara: Perhaps I'm a non-typical kind of British Muslim woman, who has been able to assert myself in a number of different scenarios whether that be professionally, personally, or in the Muslim community work. (...) I think it's the fact that people have grown up in the Asian subcontinent or Africa or wherever, where there have been very patriarchal societies. And it's kind of a way to label, where the male was the bread winner and the woman was the homemaker. And that's worked for so long. So that's what's been fitted through, where it's seen as typical gender roles. (...) Whereas I think now that people who are second- and third-generation migrants, who have grown up in the UK, their thinking line is developing and expanding. You no longer conform to those gender roles, where you have women who can be the bread winners and you can have men who are the homemakers.*

Zara described herself as a "non-typical" British Muslim woman, because she was working and "asserts" herself. Like many other women of the sample, she was not married and was devoted to developing herself and her career. Note how she described a pattern of social transformation around gender roles through generations, where second- and third-generation Muslim women were perceived as not "conform(ing)" and becoming the "bread winners" like her. This perception was shared by several participants.

Self-differentiation might help these participants to increase their self-esteem and distinctiveness, as well as sense of continuity and efficacy around their personal identity. However, in so doing, they were also contributing to the reproduction of the stereotype around their group, over the other women who might not work or make the same choices they do.

In a similar fashion, it was shown how Aisha and Oriana self-differentiated, particularly from women in their communities with the same ethnic background. Aisha, as described earlier (theme 7.4.3.), stated how her *desired self* of having a career differed from the other girls in her Pakistani community. Oriana self-differentiated by adopting a new religious identity that empowers women (as described in subtheme 7.4.2) to escape the strong patriarchal ideological hold of her culture and the women in her community. In this respect, the data suggests that participants adopted self-differentiation to distance themselves from a cultural understanding of their religion, informed by participants' ethnicities (e.g., Pakistani or Bangladesh), rather than differentiating themselves from their religion. In other words, their sense of collective identity as Muslims seemed to be strongly moderated by their ethnic background.

Passing is a strategy that refers to "the process of gaining access to a group or social category (sexual, racial, political, economic or religious) by camouflaging one's groups origins" (Breakwell, 1986, p. 116). A few participants related to adopting this strategy, like Iesha from the middle group who worked in finance at the time. As she explained, this was mainly a white male dominant environment. She described how she "put on a white face" to work there.

> *Iesha: When I'm at work, I put on a white face, and it's a thing that ethnic minorities in South London might say, when you basically go to work and pretend to be white so that you fit in with everyone else. My personality is hard to keep contained, so I tend to be myself in most places, but at work, I'm the most toned-down version of myself, and it's more because my personality might not fit into the workplace. It's not very worky; it's not a very professional personality. It's more of like a fun …*
>
> *I: But you also said that you're really good at work, and you had this good feedback...*
>
> *Ie: Yeah, okay, so I do really well at work, I get a lot of good feedback, and I get a lot of recognition awards, but when it comes to things like bonuses,*

pay rises, end-of-year performance reviews, I seem to be lagging behind other people with no good justification as to why, and even when I've challenged it, they could never provide sufficient evidence for why. It's hard working in finance.

Iesha explained how she shifts her identity ("toned-down"*)* to the most-white version of herself in order to fit in. Though her job allowed her to live independently, her success might come at high expense. She explained how, despite not wearing the hijab, her ethnic identity (brown skin) might act as a hindrance in her career, despite her hard work. She felt she was being discriminated against, not being promoted or given bonuses. Her adaptation of her personality and behaviour contrasts with how she described herself outside of work as having "*a very strong personality. I have a lot of confidence; I'm very loud. I'm very energetic, and I guess that it gives … because I'm so out there, again, that gives me power because I'm not afraid in social situations that other people are afraid of."* Note how she also shifts her identity, camouflaging herself at work. But adopting this strategy also had negative implications. In Iesha's words: "*It kind of, like, digs into your sense of worth when you're at work, so you acknowledge how you lag behind the other white people that work there, so I don't necessarily feel powerful at work most of the time."* In this sense, passing may give her access to another group, yet it has a strong impact on her sense of self-worth, self-efficacy and therefore self-esteem. It also translates into feelings of lack of power.

7.4.5.3. Representing their social identity: Influencing other people's views.

This strategy was also identified across the data, particularly among participants in the older and middle groups. They consciously engaged in processes of representation of their collective identity as a means to influence and challenge the social prejudice around them as Muslim women. For example, Nawal from the older group expressed how being the only Muslim educational therapist in her area put her in a position where she could challenge other people's views. She also

recounted how she was once misrecognised as the “cleaner”, when she first started working in a day centre.

> *Nawal: When I first started working (...) I went to a day centre and staff at reception thought I was a cleaner. There was no perception that I would be a professional. (...) It's kind of hard. This is my third job so whenever I got a new place of work, people are a bit wary of you initially because they don't know what you're going to be like, especially your male colleagues don't know if you're just kind of normal or not. It takes them quite a long time to get over that. (...) Because I think the perception that a Muslim woman may be oppressed…*
>
> *It's nice to be able to surprise people and knock back their expectations or their kind of ideas about what a woman should be or not be. Do you know what I mean? It's kind of nice when that happens.*

Nawal described how she enjoyed “knocking back” people’s, particularly men’s, “expectations” around Muslim women. She perceived that, through her work, she also had the chance to represent British Muslim women, contesting misconceptions (“what should be or not be”) around oppression. Yet she also had faced misrecognition, which was “hard”. This duty of representation in spaces where they might be the only Muslim in the room suggests that, for participants, maintaining a positive collective identity may entail personal costs, despite it enhancing their collective self-esteem and efficacy. This translates into another experience recounted by several participants, who claimed that they felt they had to prove themselves as integrated, as part of the “normal” population. Thus, it seemed to translate into a demand of social effort from their side. As Nawal stated: “*I think I have to try harder, I do. I think I have to try harder for sure than maybe my colleagues.”*

The motif of representativeness could also be behind the reason why several participants volunteered for this study. Taking part in the interview could be

perceived as an opportunity to influence social views around Islam and Muslims. Oriana's account from the middle group illustrates this perception.

> *Oriana: So, I just want to use this opportunity to explain how even the wider media is very quick to jump on Islam to blame it for some of the treacherous stories you see on this earth, the headlines, from honour killings to domestic violence. I just want to say that it was Islam that helped me take … take me out of these situations, so yeah, that's my disclaimer.*

Oriana made clear how she wanted to "use the opportunity" of being interviewed to challenge misconceptions and the negative media representation of Islam. Furthermore, she recounted that it had been precisely her religion that had helped her to prevent and navigate negative situations. This extract shows how participants, by taking part in the study, could also have been strategically trying to change the social prejudice by influencing the researcher and the outcome of the study. In this way, this could be indicative of a collective strategy to change the negative characteristics associated with Muslims and Islam.

7.4.5.4. Promoting social change within and outside their communities.

The final strategy identified in the data sees participants engaging both individually and collectively to bring about change in their communities and to improve Muslims' negative social representation. Many interviewees engaged individually through, for example, writing or teaching and collectively by being active members of their local mosque. While almost all young participants were actively involved in their mosques, where they developed different roles to contribute, others were teaching younger girls to assist them in achieving the same goals as they had (e.g., applying for and gaining acceptance into top universities). Within the middle group, several interviewees were actively engaged with the mosque, while others seemed to be working at bringing about social change through their own individual success (as illustrated earlier, 7.4.1.). Within the older group, participants seemed to be engaging individually, through mosques or organisations, in improving the

collective. Khadi, for example, had developed her career in corporate, but now was devoted to improving her community and to change gender bias by coaching girls in different sports and teaching them about Islam as a religion that supports them.

> *Khadi: So, in this way we have an Asian woman taking care of* [coaching sports]*, they* [parents] *will allow the girls to come. I want to make a difference to the community. To make something to give back. I've lived my life, you know, I have seen the results. (…)*
>
> *I teach at home. I teach my faith, which is Islam. I teach in English to young girls. And I am inspiring them to not be afraid, to embrace their religion and to help themselves to be free. It is not restrictive, it is not stopping you from doing anything, you know. (...) And sometimes in our religion, when we were younger, you had to do it, religion was blah blah blah… There was no love for religion, some people my age, it was seen as forced.*

Khadi described how she was determined to "make a difference" in two ways. First, she referred to how she coached young Asian women. In so doing, she wanted to ensure that girls, by having her as a female coach, would be allowed by their parents to keep on training when they got older. She also explained that she taught the Qur'an to young girls to show how it can help them, empower and support them (*"to help themselves to be free").* In this respect, Khadi seemed to be working towards changing in-group traditional gender roles, as well as certain teachings of the Qur'an that constrain women's choices.

While Khadi engaged individually in a collective effort to improve her community, other participants engaged collectively with the people in their mosques, in ways that seemed to equate with group action (Breakwell, 1986). This allowed them to change characteristics associated with their social identity. For instance, Marie from the middle group worked as a volunteer for the radio at her mosque. She felt that working in radio represented an opportunity to influence people about the

real meaning of Islam and to challenge the current negative views and misconceptions about Islam and Muslims.

> *Marie: I think we have the opportunity to perhaps, yes, influence views, and we can change views, in terms of preaching about the true Islam. In terms of religion, people have the wrong idea about our religion, that it's violent, and that's not the case. It's a peaceful religion. It's all about peace, I think, in that term.*

Marie, like other participants, felt that engaging with her mosque allowed her to challenge negative characteristics related to Islam, and promote the positive aspects of it as a religion of peace, to broader audiences. This helped to contribute to her community.

Another aspect identified within the older group needs to be noted. Several participants, all pious Muslims, recounted a shared perception of how, despite making their own life choices, they had not always put themselves first. This interdependent aspect of the data has already been described in a previous subtheme (7.4.3.). Yet for these participants, taking opportunities later in life was perceived as a way to bring about change. For example, Nawal went to university in her forties to pursue a degree, while Khadi trained herself to become a coach. With age, they perceived they had gradually let go of other people's expectations and learnt to put themselves first. In so doing, for some participants, the ultimate form of power was having self-confidence, believing in themselves and taking opportunities.

One final aspect to highlight is that most participants adopted individual identity strategies to assert their power. For example, many shifted their identities depending on the context, or self-differentiated from other members of their community. This pattern of individualisation is consistent with their power understandings identified across the data (as shown in the first theme 7.4.1.). However, considering participants' religious backgrounds, the lack of references to a collective identity or to contesting the stereotype as a collective was an unexpected

finding. As was discussed, adopting individual strategies (e.g., self-differentiation) — despite enhancing self-esteem, efficacy and continuity — also has the potential to reinforce the stereotype around other Muslim women. This strategic presentation could also be read as a form of collective identity presentation aimed at challenging and transforming the stereotype around British Muslim women. In this sense, the collective presentation as agentic women could also be contesting and trying to change the current social representation of British Muslim women lacking agency, identified in the media study (Chapter 6). Hence, participants' attempts at representing themselves as agents of their own lives, making their own choices, and contesting the stereotype individually would be consistent with findings of the previous study on media, where minority sources portrayed women in terms of success and achievement, which was particularly salient in the middle group.

The previous extracts demonstrated how participants contested the stereotype around their group and their attributed identities by performing their identities in multiple ways. It is argued here that all strategies adopted were indicative of certain degrees of power. Likewise, each strategy adopted had a different impact on the principles of their identities, such as continuity, self-esteem, distinctiveness and self-efficacy. Additionally, it has been shown how power is cultural and context dependent and how it needs to be interpreted within the same value system. Depending on the social framework adopted, most power assertions could be potentially read as disempowering or indicative of oppression. Let's remember the case of Sana, abused on a bus, who would be caught up in impossible situations, like many other participants, where any attempt to contest would translate into social rejection. This is important because it demonstrates one of the main arguments of this study, that in order to engage and understand any power assertion, it needs to be examined with the same logic that created it.

This analysis has examined differences and similarities across groups answering the four research questions. The following section will discuss these findings.

7.5. Discussion

The present study was designed to examine British Muslim women's power relations in their everyday lives and adopted a phenomenological approach to power (developed in Chapter 5). Twenty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with women of three age groups. Four main research questions guided the study, and these will be addressed in this discussion:

- How do British Muslim women understand and assert power in their everyday lives?
- How do British Muslim women experience and perceive their own power relations?
- How does identity performance impact and influence their power relations?
- In what ways are understandings, experiences and performances of power similar/different across groups?

The phenomenological approach adopted, asking them to describe everyday life experiences, showed how participants mainly mobilised individualised accounts of power and emphasised notions of choice, control and autonomy. Furthermore, it showed differences among the age groups in terms of the notions and language participants used. While participants in both the youngest group (18-20) and oldest group (38-51) related to speaking out and making their own choices, those in the middle group (25-32) also highlighted notions of control and success. Additionally, the phenomenological approach also unveiled a common desire there seemed to be not so much to gain power — understood as power over others — across all participants, but to assert themselves in their own ways and support others. Interviewees mainly understood power in personal terms as related to their education, careers, partners, religious practices and life choices.

These individualistic accounts seem to accord with post-feminist trends (Gill, 2007b; McRobbie, 2008) that highlight autonomy, control and neoliberal ideology

(Larner, 2000; McNay, 2009; Peters, 2001; Rottenberg, 2014; Scharff, 2015). Neoliberalism withstands a market and economic logic that stresses privatisation, self-development and autonomy (Rottenberg, 2014). Similarly, neoliberalism constructs the self as an entrepreneurial actor (Rottenberg, 2014), as a business (Gershon, 2011, p. 539) or as an enterprise (McNay, 2009). Neoliberal ideology can be very problematic. McNay (2009) stated: "The orchestration of individual existence as enterprise atomizes our understanding of social relations, eroding collective values and intersubjective bonds of duty and care at all levels of society" (McNay, 2009, p. 64). Under neoliberalism logic, women are expected to responsibly self-manage and take charge of every aspect of their lives, mobilising notions of self-interest and/or choice. Unsurprisingly, these individualistic notions seem to reproduce the findings of the previous media study, where choice was prevalent in British media representations of power. This finding suggests that participants' would have been mobilising available social representations to describe power (Breakwell, 2010).

However, considering the phenomenological approach adopted, it is important to avoid imposing dominant understandings of power and to consider that participants' accounts around self-improvement and self-development could also be informed by their religious values. As Marie claimed, religion had motivated them "to better ourselves in all aspects". In this respect, many participants' power was informed by their religious beliefs, with some exceptions. Islam was particularly emphasised as a source of empowerment, identity and guidance of their lives, behaviour and social relations, consistent with previous research (Brown, 2006; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005; Woodhead, 2007, 2011). Contrastingly, a few participants also portrayed their religion as a constraint on their power relations, mainly due to cultural misinterpretations. This idea is extensively supported by previous research (Dwyer, 2000; Joly & Wadia, 2017; Nyhagen, 2015).

Another discovery of adopting a phenomenological approach to research their power was to illustrate how Islam informed participants' agency in ways that reproduced Western secular notions of agency (Madhok et al., 2013; Wilson, 2008),

such as autonomy, control and independence, while incorporating their religious ethics (Burke, 2012; Korteweg, 2008; Salem, 2013). In so doing, several interviewees of each group perceived themselves as agents of their lives but dependent on God's will, the almighty agent. For example, some of them related to being autonomous in making their choices while at the same time prioritising significant others (e.g., family) and their religion over themselves. Interviewees asserted their agency in ways that sometimes might not have appeared as agentic to an outsider, yet they were in fact asserting their power following their religious values. Similarly, as Mahmood (2005) pointed out, those instances do not necessarily indicate oppression, nor did participants perceive them as negative experiences. As shown in the analysis, performing agency in this way enhanced participants' self-esteem, continuity and distinctiveness (Breakwell, 1986). In this respect the adoption of a phenomenological approach — asking them to describe instances in their everyday lives when they felt powerful/powerless or that they had/had not power, or instance in which they felt they did not have power but it did not matter — enabled to show how participants understand their power in their own terms, beyond Western understandings.

Despite the prevalent individualistic understanding of power, the phenomenological approach also captured a collective orientation found across all groups. Many participants highlighted power as having an impact on other people's lives and helping others, especially in the younger and older groups. This finding suggests their actions sought personal as well as collective benefit. Most participants emphasised how their personal power (agency) was oriented towards helping and having an impact on others in a pro-social manner (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin & Schroeder, 2005). This orientation towards others allows for different, non-exclusive explanations. First, following participants understandings and experiences of their religion, it could be a result of the basic predicaments of Islam as a collectivistic religion (Basabe & Ros, 2005; Cukur, De Guzman, & Carlo, 2004; Fischer et al., 2010), which requires Muslims to serve and help others, prioritising the collective gains over the individual. This orientation towards others seem to translate into a sense of duty ("da'wah"), which has also been identified in previous research on European Muslim

women (Erel, 2016; Jouili, 2015). For example, in Jouili's (2015) research of German and French Muslim women, participants highlighted the centrality of doing common good for their modes of being, which went beyond individual interests. Second, it could be a result of gender socialisation that prescribes women as the main carers in their community. As Day (2013) argued, based on her research (Day, 2005) on Baptist women's prayer groups and Strhan's (2013) research on Christian women, this sense of duty towards others is not exclusive to religious women, but ultimately to women, which emphasises the structural inequality in the "ethics of care" (Gillian, 1982, in Day, 2013, p. 117) in society. Thus, the phenomenological approach illustrated how women looked after their families and communities, following their religious beliefs and also as part of their role as women.

Another aspect showed in the analysis was how participants' assertions of power combined autonomy and interdependency (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995; Utz, 2004; Zhong et al., 2006). That is, in some contexts they asserted their power as independence from others (e.g., education) and in other contexts, they asserted their power interdependently (e.g., prioritising others). While older interviewees reflected on how their upbringings supported and/or constrained them, those in the middle group reflected on the impact of their respective family's expectations, and the younger ones presented themselves as being independently dependent. In this respect the phenomenological approach, where participants related to different contexts of their lives (personal, professional or recreational) unveiled how their power relations were context situated. These findings coincide with previous literature (Abbas, 2003; Amir-Moazami & Salvatore, 2003; Dwyer, 1999; Ramji, 2007) which has shown how negotiations of power in the family are complex. For instance, Ramji (2007), in her study on gender and religion dynamics in identity articulation with South Asian British Muslim women, accounted how women experienced double-sided situations when answering to family and community demands. "These women faced a difficult negotiation: by standing up for their rights as women, they could appear to be disloyal to their religious community." (Ramji, 2007, p. 1185). In a similar fashion, the women interviewed had to find ways to

balance their sense of agency as well as their self-esteem and belonging. Overall, their agency seemed to strongly rely on others (e.g., family), suggesting interdependency (Kitayama & Uchida, 2005).

These contrasting findings between independency (self-interest) and interdependency (collective orientation) captured through the phenomenological approach support the argument that power is culturally informed. Cross-cultural research on power and the self — endorsing different concepts of the self (individualistic or interdependent) and shaping different power relations (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999; Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 2010; Torelli & Shavitt, 2010; Zhong et al., 2006) — might assist in understanding these findings.

The findings suggest that a combination of Islamic and Western cultural influences may have moderated participants' power. Thus, they combined independent actions seeking self-satisfaction, associated with Western cultures (Singelis et al., 1995; Zhong et al., 2006), with interdependent actions, conceptualised around responsibility and having consideration of how one's behaviour might affect others associated with Islam, which is considered a collectivistic culture (Basabe & Ros, 2005; Cukur, De Guzman, & Carlo, 2004; Fischer et al., 2010). Hence, traits of both kinds were in confluence in participants' accounts, depending on what aspect of their identity (e.g., national, ethnic or religious) would be salient in a particular instance. In addition, the phenomenological approach showed how asserting power independently or interdependently served different identity purposes of self-esteem, distinctiveness, continuity and uniqueness (Breakwell, 1986).

The phenomenological approach also captured participants' perceptions of their own power. All participants perceived they had agency to assert themselves individually (e.g., life choices) and presented themselves in agentic ways. Contrastingly, for several older participants, their perceptions of having personal power did not necessarily translate into them feeling powerful or having power. Despite holding positions of power and speaking out for themselves, these participants struggled to perceive themselves as powerful. Considering participants'

experiences, two possible explanations are entertained. Such feelings may have been motivated by their religious beliefs, which prescribed them to be modest and meek, as shown in the analysis. Thus, they would acknowledge their agency, while reserving power to the divine. Alternatively, those accounts could be showing their awareness of their disadvantaged position within society as a group. All participants recounted experiences of misrecognition and social prejudice, which seemed to reinforce a lack of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997), a lack of belief that they could bring about change collectively. Interestingly, this perception did not stop them from actively engaging in attempts to transform the stereotype in varied ways, which actually were indicative of active and successful attempts at social influence.

Participants from the middle and younger age groups seemed to strongly rely on their personal power and felt better equipped to influence dominant views. Younger participants expressed vividly how they were able to assert themselves regarding their education and their jobs, while many middle-group participants mobilised notions of success and achievement in their studies and jobs as a proxy for power. Most of the women in these groups expressed their desire to be mothers and have a family, but they were committed to finishing their education and establishing careers first. Some of the older participants presented themselves as role models who, by taking opportunities, had succeeded in different ways, not only as mothers but also developing their careers or becoming autonomous. The analysis suggested that participants were engaging in a process of redefinition of success for Muslim women, which escaped the traditional patriarchal Islamic view that reduced success to motherhood (El Saadawi, 1982; Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2016). In so doing, they were asserting power collectively and challenging social representations. Interestingly, their emphasis on success seemed to reproduce the findings of the previous media study (Chapter 6), where minority sources challenged the popular media stereotype of British Muslim women and redefined them by underscoring their success and achievements. Likewise, the phenomenological approach to power showed how participants seemed to adopt this available minority representation to contest this stereotype.

Overall, participants' awareness of their own (personal) power connects with perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982, 1997). Self-efficacy relates to one's belief in one's ability to deal with one's environment to achieve one's goals (Ozer & Bandura, 1990). In the case of this study, the specificity of the sample may be one explanation for interviewees' focus on individual (personal power). As stated, most participants seemed to be middle class. Previous research (Kraus et al., 2011) that has approached class as culture identified that class correlates with self-interest positively, that is, participants of higher class focus away of the context, prioritising their self-interest. Another explanation, following Ozer and Bandura (1990), is that participants' strong sense of self-efficacy could operate to diminish the perceived threat and vulnerability in social environments. In this respect, all participants expressed awareness of the prejudice around their group, and recounted negative experiences (e.g., Islamophobia, racism). Therefore, in asserting themselves individually, they could have been contesting the negative representation around their group, which will be elaborated later.

Older participants' accounts also suggested a developmental process involved in their power. They explained that it had taken them many years to be able to assert themselves on their own terms. This finding is important because it suggests that asserting one's power might involve a developmental process, that asserting power is learnt over time. Bandura (1982) also highlighted that "self-development of efficaciousness requires mastery of knowledge and skills that can be attained only through long hours of arduous work. This often necessitates sacrificing many immediate rewards" (p. 142). This process seems to be part of older participants' identity development across the life-span (Breakwell, 1986), where their actions aim to enhance their self-esteem, distinctiveness, continuity and self-efficacy.

Adopting a phenomenological approach to examine their power not only showed their interpretations and experiences but also their silences around power. A substantial finding across all groups was the noticeable absence of references to collective identity and forms of power. Why? Was it a result of the questions posed

or the particular sample? Or did participants feel they were not able to speak on behalf of other women? Or was it a result of their awareness of the disadvantaged position of British Muslim women in society? As stated earlier, all participants were aware of the stereotype around their group and had experienced abusive, racist and/or Islamophobic encounters. The potential explanation sustained here is that, given their awareness of their disadvantaged position as a group within society, participants presented themselves in agentic and individualised ways in a collective exercise to contest the negative representation. However, as will be argued later, employing individual strategies may have helped to protect their individual identities (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Breakwell, 1986) or, alternately, have operated in devaluing their collective identity.

Another remarkable finding of exploring power through a phenomenological approach was that, for almost all young and middle group participants and for some of the older ones, their mother was identified as the most powerful person in their lives. This finding was indicative of the centrality of mothers in Islam (El Saadawi, 1982; Gilliat-Ray, 2012), as expressed by some participants, where mothers are considered the first and most influential educators (Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2016). Participants' descriptions of their mothers partly followed essentialised motherly attributes that celebrate love, strength, dedication and sacrifice, as well as their central role in unifying the family, which resembled constructions of mothers as guarantors of collective identity (Gilliat Ray, 2012). In this sense, a potential reader could interpret that participants were reproducing patriarchal readings of womanhood that idealise motherhood (Brown, 2013), which is still constructed as the exclusive route to success and self-fulfilment for women (Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2016). An alternative explanation, following Cheruvallil-Contractor (2016), would be that these British Muslim women were looking at their mothers as their main role model, which would be part of this process, already identified, of redefinition of British Muslim women's success.

The phenomenological approach also highlighted a predictable finding around participants' awareness of the current stereotype around their group as a faith (and sometimes ethnic) minority, along with recounted experiences of misrecognition, exclusion, abuse and Islamophobic attacks. Participants perceived that other people's perceptions and attributions of their identities limited their power, as already identified in the previous media study (Chapter 6). This is important because, as research has shown (Blackwood et al., 2013; Chapman, 2016b; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Kallis, 2018), not being recognised or denied respect by colleagues or fellow citizens has a major negative impact on one's psychological and physiological wellbeing, diminishing self-worth and increasing a sense of powerlessness (Smith, Allen & Danley, 2007). Their accounts were also consistent with German and French Muslim women interviewed in Jouili's research (2015), who were constantly aware, in discourse and behaviour, of their position as a stigmatised minority, always considering the "gaze of the dominant Other" (Jouili, 2015, p. 195).

The phenomenological approach adopted also allowed to capture four different identity strategies adopted by participants to negotiate and overcome those situations, and the (mis)representation: shifting their identity, passing and self-differentiating, representing their identity and promoting social change.

First. Identify shifting (Breakwell, 1986) was adopted by several participants of each group. They shifted their identities depending on the context to assert their power, sometimes resisting, sometimes complying or subverting depending on the situation, or engaging with different strategies at the same time. In so doing, they were strategically asserting their power in ways that enhanced their identity principles (e.g., self-esteem). It was also shown that, given the prejudice around them, participants were at continual risk of being caught up in a "double-bind situation" (Breakwell, 1986), where any attempt of asserting their power, by either resisting or complying, could potentially produce social rejection due to the dominant stereotypes.

Second. The second strategy describes processes of “passing” and “self-differentiating” (Breakwell, 1986). These strategies were mainly identified in participants from the middle and younger groups. While passing refers to hiding the origins of one’s group to gain access to a social category, self-differentiating refers to differentiating oneself from other members of the group. Both individual strategies might be aimed at improving one’s own personal status and self-esteem, yet they might at the same time risk the welfare of the group (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998). For example, a participant explained how she adopted passing as a strategy to work in a finance environment, which granted her status and the distinctiveness of a privileged social group. But she also explained how, as a result, her self-esteem, self-efficacy and belonging were affected. Similarly, participants self-differentiated themselves as the exception in their communities for pursuing an education and career. This trend was particularly present in young and middle-age groups. It was an identity performance that might have allowed them to gain self-esteem, distinctiveness and efficacy (Breakwell, 1986). But it may also have contributed to reinforcing the stereotype that British Muslim women are oppressed and passive, with some exceptions like the interviewees. This pattern could also be due to the singularity of the sample, where most participants were middle class and highly educated, thus omitting women with less advantageous or different backgrounds.

Self-differentiation through achievement and success could also be interpreted as a strategy to challenge the current negative stereotype, where participants engaged in an active redefinition of the categories related to their group (Breakwell, 1986). Note that British Muslim women are considered to have the highest rate of unemployment in the country (WEC, 2016) and face multiple penalties (Cheung, 2014; Khattab, 2016) when trying to access the labour market. Their efforts and commitment to achieve can be read as an intergroup coping strategy (Breakwell, 1986). Achievement and success have inherent positive social value that might act as a counterweight to the negative stereotype of the overall group. This finding exemplifies how participants adopted available representations to identify and position themselves in contestation of the stereotype (Breakwell, 2010).

Third. Representing their social identity and influencing other people's views was identified as a strategy to contest their social prejudice. Several participants in the older and middle groups expressed how they felt the need to represent their collective identity in intergroup contact. They perceived that the representations available from social institutions and public discourses were insufficient. In this respect, they resisted and contested social expectations. In so doing, they were personalising their social representation (Breakwell, 2001), which is also indicative of power. This strategy could be part of their religious duty of representing Islam through *da'wah*, which refers to representing Islam (Jouili, 2015; Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002). Thus, participants recounted how they were very aware of and strategic about presenting themselves, particularly in those instances where they were the minority, in attempt to contest the stereotype and to transform the characteristics associated with their social group (Breakwell, 1986; Fiske, 1993; Hopkins et al., 2007b; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Klein & Azzi, 2001). In so doing, they would not only enhance their self-esteem and self-efficacy (Breakwell, 1986), but also try to influence how the larger Muslim community was perceived and treated, increasing their collective self-esteem.

Fourth. Participants engaged in a process of contestation of their negative representation by promoting social change within and outside their communities. Some participants in each group recounted individual and/or collective engagement to improve their communities and wider society. Some spoke of how they wanted to help other Muslim women challenge cultural and backward interpretations of Islam and to ensure they gained opportunities for development, beyond traditional gender roles. In this sense, participants were actively promoting social change.

These identity strategies identified to contest the stereotype were mainly individualised (Breakwell, 1986; Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998). As illustrated, participants relied on their families and friends for support. But their accounts in regard to contestation were predominantly individualised. Again, the phenomenological approach enabled to identify an absence around collective

identity strategies. This finding contravenes previous research (Fischer et al., 2010, p. 369) that established that "due to their religious identity, Muslims are predominantly inclined to choose collective coping strategies over personal ones". This could be part of a strategic identity presentation that would help them to contest the stereotype, or it could illustrate a shared perception of a lack of collective efficacy.

The analysis showed a prevalent identity presentation of participants as autonomous agents, following their religion, which could be read as an attempt to influence the researcher views, perceived as a member of the outgroup. Thus, participants would have been positioned as representatives of their group (Hopkins et al., 2007b; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013) by the effects of the interview, thus performing their identities in ways that contested the stereotype around their group, which was indicative of power. In so doing, they may have been attempting to change characteristics associated with the negative social category (Breakwell, 1986). This is not to say that participants were lying or deceiving during the interviews; rather, they may have emphasised certain aspects of their identities instead of others, and perceived the interview-study as an opportunity to communicate about their religion and its true meanings, presenting themselves in opposition to the stereotype, acting as a group representative (Hopkins et al., 2007b). With this in mind, the study contributes to previous research on identity performance and expression of strategies adopted by minority group members to contest an outgroup representation of themselves (Barreto et al., 2003; Hopkins et al., 2007b; Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007).

Finally, adopting a phenomenological approach has proven successful in encouraging participants' reflections about their power experiences and capturing their own meanings and interpretations. More importantly, it has helped to illustrate the central argument that power is contextual and culturally specific (Lukes, 2005; Mahmood, 2005; Reicher, 2004). Thus, this approach has allowed for the careful examination of participants' power experiences without imposing dominant understandings of power that could potentially undermine or misrepresent them.

Furthermore, it has shown how their identities interplay in their everyday lives in the current social context of prejudice.

7.6. Limitations of the Study

As with all studies, a number of limitations need to be acknowledged. These limitations concern mainly the theoretical framework (power approach), the particularity of the sample, the interview procedure, researcher characteristics, the analytical approach adopted, and its findings.

First, the study focused on everyday experiences and performances of power by British Muslim women and in so doing adopted a phenomenological approach to power. As argued during the analysis, some of the participants' assertions of power could potentially be read as forms of passivity or oppression. Potential critics of the study could argue that this approach leaves unchallenged their oppression, which might be understood as *false consciousness* (Bilge, 2010; Hirschkind, & Mahmood, 2002; Wagner et al., 2012). But, as has been shown in the analysis, different instances of their power assertions (e.g., modesty, sacrifice, interdependence) could be misinterpreted as passivity or lacking agency, when in fact — considering participants' system of values and perspectives (Abu Lughod, 1990; Mahmood, 2005) — they were indicative of power.

Second, the sample of this study did not represent the broader trends of British Muslim women in terms of employment, education or relationship status, as was discussed in the Method section (7.3.). Participants were recruited based on their identification in terms of nationality, religion, gender and age group. Recruiting interviewees of a group that has in recent years been targeted by research and public debates was not an easy task. Therefore, anyone who volunteered and conformed with the criteria was interviewed. This system resulted in a quite diverse sample, ethnically speaking, but it was not balanced, as most women were employed and degree educated. Some aspects were left unaddressed. For example, it disregarded what kind of denominations of Islam were followed by participants. Similarly, details

of class or economic background were not requested, but it was soon apparent that most participants were middle class, with only some participants of working-class background. Class seemed to play a crucial role in determining their perceptions of personal power. Given the intergenerational focus of this study, another limitation could be participants' categorisation into groups. In the study, an age criterion was used to recruit participants as a way to establish generations. Yet no descriptive information was requested in regard to their generation in terms of migration waves. During the interviews, some participants identified as daughters of migrant parents (first generation), while others explained that one or both parents had already been born in the UK (second generation), which seemed to also impact their power relations. It became apparent that this information would have augmented understandings of how participants' identities interplayed in the context of acculturation and multiculturalism influences on their power relations. In other words, it would have aided understanding of which instances they perceived themselves as part of a majority or minority, and how their identification of their ethnic background intertwined with their other identities.

Third, regarding the interview schedule, it needs to be considered that participants' individualised accounts could have been an effect of the questions posed. The researcher wonders if questions and interviews were conducted in such a way that made participants speak from an individual rather than collective identification. Or, if it was an effect of the freedom of choice given in the interviews, where they could pick their own examples of power.

Fourth, in terms of the interview process, potential limitations include the decision to conduct online interviews and the researcher's own individual characteristics. Almost half of the interviews were conducted online through video-call software (Skype, WhatsApp and FaceTime) and the others were face to face. Previous research has addressed advantages and disadvantages of conducting research via different media, over the phone or using online technologies (Hanna, 2012; Irvine, Drew, & Sainsbury, 2013; Janghorban, Roudsari, & Taghipour, 2014;

Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Sullivan, 2012). For example, Irvine et al. (2013) argued against telephone for its lack of visual contact. However, online video calls allow for visual and verbal interaction almost on a par with face to face (Sullivan, 2012). In fact, it is argued here that this option helped to ensure participation in different ways. It allowed those who lived far or could not meet at the university due to work and personal schedules to participate. Some interviewees also expressed how they felt more relaxed and able to discuss sensitive information in their own homes. This is consistent with previous research on internet technology as a medium for interview, which showed how, in addition to its economical and accessibility advantages, it provided a "safe location" for participants (Hanna, 2012, p. 241). How safe the women interviewed felt is evidenced by several of them appearing without their hijabs, which was read as an example of trust and confidence. However, interviewing online also came with difficulties, such as poor or lost connection during the interviews. In some cases, this jeopardised participants' train of thought or forced the researcher to ask for repetition or clarification.

A fifth potential limitation of the interview process might lie in the researcher's own identity in relation to participants. As was addressed in the methodology (Chapter 5), the researcher was positioned as an outgroup member (as scholar, as non-Muslim, as non-British) by interviewees. Therefore, as was found, some participants perceived the interview as an opportunity to influence the research and challenge and transform the negative stereotype around their group.

Sixth, in terms of analytical approach, thematic analysis allowed the researcher to approach the data in a flexible way, addressing the complexity of each group and across groups. For analytical purposes, every group was examined independently and then a comparative analysis across groups was offered. This process was very time consuming for the researcher, but it did provide detailed evidence of the specificities of each group, which later on allowed for the tracing of similarities and differences across groups. Here, the researcher could not find any other way to overcome the protracted process, as it was a required step for future

comparison. Furthermore, at the time of the study, no qualitative studies that had also conducted group comparisons were found.

This subsection has described and discussed the potential limitations of the study. The next section will provide recommendations for future research.

7.7. Future Research

As a result of this study, several fruitful avenues can be considered for future research. The findings suggest a prevailing individualised understanding of power. Future research could examine how British Muslim women understand, assert and perform power in collective ways and in what instances do they mobilise one or the other.

Their individual assertions of power seemed to be mostly collective orientated, as participants emphasised investing their power to help others and have an impact on their lives, besides asserting themselves. Future research could examine how solidarity is understood and enacted by British Muslim women and its effects.

The study also drew on cross-cultural research to discuss how different constructions of the self informed their power relations. It was argued that participants' collective identities (e.g., Muslim, ethnicity, gender) were underpinning their sense of duty and collective orientation. But the examination of the impact of participants' ethnicity and class was limited in this study. Previous sociological research has provided evidence about specific groups of Muslim women, like British South Asian by Dwyer (2000) and Abbas (2003), Bangladeshi by Begum (2008) and Pakistani by Mohammad (2013). Future social psychological work could explore in further detail how class and ethnicity inform participants' power relations, investigating patterns of similarities and differences.

Another thread identified was how participants mainly engaged in individual identity strategies to challenge the social prejudice around their group. Yet it was argued that, by presenting themselves as active and strategically contesting their

stereotype, this was indicative of a collective effort. These findings raise questions about these women's collective action, and in what instances do they mobilise their collective identity. In other words, if mainly individual accounts of power were mobilised, how would Muslim women resist and contest as a group? How would they perceive their power as a group and their collective efficacy? Thus, future research could examine in what instances British Muslim women engage in individual or collective identity strategies.

Concerning the particularities of each group, some findings could motivate future research. For example, the thread of interdependency was emphasised in the younger and older groups. Hence, future investigation could examine power negotiations within families, not attending to the role of Islam as parenting (as examined by Franceschelli & O'Brien, 2014) but examining family dynamics and relationships and ethnicity.

Regarding the older groups, the study identified a perception of power as a developmental process, which required time. Future research would benefit from examining power assertions across a life span and to explore whether power understandings vary over years.

The findings also suggested that emotions (e.g., modesty) played a critical role for several participants. Emotion and the rhetoric of self-control (Lutz, 1996) was mobilised as an enabler (e.g., confidence) and sometimes as a constraint of their power by several interviewees. Thus, future research could examine how British Muslim women understand and experience emotions, such as shame, confidence, pride and humbleness, and how their emotions impact on their power relations.

This study also explored how power is negotiated across generations. The findings suggested a consensus in identifying mothers as the most powerful people in many participants' lives. This was interpreted in two ways: the result of participants' faith, which meant they considered the mother a prominent figure; and also indicative of the idealisation of motherhood for Muslim women and the lack of

role models for these women (Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2016). Future research could explore British Muslim women's role models, which would help to increase understandings of womanhood and their aspirations.

Regarding the methodology, several recommendations will now be offered. First, the study adopted a feminist approach and focused only on women's experiences. Future research should explore whether the findings are consistent with other women, as well as with British Muslim men, to have a better understanding of the intersectionality of gender and power relations. Second, during the recruitment process, more information about class and socio-economic background could be requested. This would allow for the examination of how class informs power. Thus, patterns of similarity and difference about enabling and constraining factors of power, as well as strategies of contestation of the stereotype, could be explored. Third, regarding the analytical approach, further research could investigate whether the findings are supported through another methodology. For example, a quantitative approach could explore whether the findings generalise across the population. Similarly, power assertions and identity strategies could be tested for significance. Finally, further examination of the enablers and constraints of British Muslim women's power would increase understandings on the impact of structural power relations and how social policy could better support their agendas.

This section has discussed future venues of academic work. The next section will highlight the contribution of this study.

7.8. Socio-Political Implications

In addition to the provision of some direction for future research, this study has made three major contributions to the social psychology of power and to the power understandings of British Muslim women.

First, participants mainly invoked individualised accounts of power that resonated with neoliberal narratives despite their collective orientation (e.g., helping others). It was argued that their identity presentation was part of a collective effort

to contest the stereotype. This study contributes to previous work on British Muslim women's identity construction and performance (Barreto et al., 2003; Hopkins et al., 2007b; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2013; Klein & Azzi, 2001; Klein et al. 2007), as well as to understand how these women negotiate everyday intergroup contact (Dixon et al., 2005; Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2006; Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011b).

Second, the study explored the intergenerationality of power experiences across three different age groups (18-20; 25-32; and 37-51). In this manner, it contributes to an understanding of how power experiences differ and continue across generations. In addition, it addresses the gap identified in the literature (Gilliat-Ray, 2010; Joly & Wadia, 2017) mainly focused on young women, by providing understandings on older women.

Finally, the phenomenological approach to power provides an original contribution to social psychology theories of power. This approach has proven successful in encouraging participants' reflections about their power experiences and capturing their own meanings and interpretations. More importantly, it has helped to illustrate the central argument that power is contextual and culturally specific (Lukes, 2005; Mahmood, 2005; Reicher, 2004). Thus, this approach has allowed for the careful examination of participants' power experiences and how their identities interplay in their everyday lives in the current social context of prejudice.

7.9. Conclusion of Chapter 7

This study set out to investigate how British Muslim women understood, experienced and performed power in their everyday lives, examining three different age groups. Its key contributions are as follows:

- The phenomenological approach adopted was successful in illustrating how these women assert their power in ways that make sense to them, challenging the stereotype around their group in diverse ways.
- The findings of this study advance the general argument of the overall thesis: that

power is contextualised and culture specific (Lukes, 2005; Mahmood, 2005; Torelli & Shavitt, 2010).

- It has been demonstrated that participants' assertions of power cannot be understood without attending to the system of meanings attached to them and their contexts (Hopkins, 2011b; Mahmood, 2005; Reicher, 2004).
- Participants presented themselves as agentic and enacting power autonomously, seeking collective good following their religious beliefs. They asserted power in both independent and interdependent ways (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 2010), following their Western and religious values and depending on the context.
- Consistent with previous studies (Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Hopkins et al., 2007b), the participants of the current studies may have been positioned by the interview effects as representatives of their group, where they actively portrayed themselves in ways that contested the stereotype around their group.
- In so doing, participants would be personalising their social representation, which is a process of "establishing and protecting identity" (Breakwell, 2001, p. 273).

- Their shared presentation as active agents would be strategical, in a concerted effort to represent Islam and Muslims positively during the interviews, contributing to previous research on minority identity performance (Barreto et al., 2003; Klein & Azzi, 2001; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013).

Chapter 8.

Qualitative Study on British Muslim Women's Social Participation and Civic Engagement: Exploring Collective Power

"Serve God and associate none with Him. Show kindness to parents and kindred, to orphans and to the destitute, to near and distant neighbours, to those that keep company with you, to the traveller in need, and to the slaves you own. God does not love arrogant and boastful men, who are themselves"

The women - Al-nisā' (The Koran, 4:36)

8.1. Introduction

The previous study of this thesis explored British Muslim women's understandings, experiences and performances of power through an examination of three different age groups. The study adopted a phenomenological approach to power to capture participants' meanings and understandings, which mainstream Westernised theories of power may fail to capture. However, in the analysis, I did not come up with fundamental different accounts of power. But I did identify a prevailing understanding of power as related to autonomy. This autonomy adopted different forms such as control of one's own affairs, making individual choices and making an impact. Participants, when talking about their everyday life experiences, mainly related to personal power, informed by their religious beliefs. However, they barely invoked their group identity and/or power. The analysis also showed a trend towards participants' preference for individual strategies to contest the prevailing stereotype. Evidence of how British Muslim women asserted power by shifting their identities,

passing, complying, achieving and self-differentiating from other British Muslim women was also found.

In view of these results, I raised several questions and explored potential interpretations. Why did these women refer to individual accounts of power? Were their accounts an effect of the questions posed in the interviews? Were the questions presented in such a way that made them speak from an individual standpoint? Or was an effect of the freedom of choice given during the interviews, where they could choose their own examples from their experiences of power? Considering the characteristics of the sample, with participants being mainly educated and employed, could it be that they had spoken from a position as workers, which made them talk about achievement, employment and self-development? Or that education and employment success may have given them a sense of being different from their group?

An alternative interpretation of these findings would be that the interviews were an opportunity to challenge the stereotype that surrounds these women as a group and to change their representation. Thus, they asserted their power by presenting themselves in agentic ways in order to influence the interviewer's views and the outcome of the study. If so, I wondered: why did they mainly adopt individualistic forms of power to challenge the stereotype surrounding their group? Why did they not contest it collectively, as members of a group? This lack of collective accounts was a substantial finding in the study of power. As a result, more questions arose: Why did they not mobilise collective forms of power? Why were very few notions of collective identity mobilised? Was it again a consequence of the kind of questions posed (such as "Could you tell me about a situation when you felt you were powerful or felt you had power?") or did the participants feel they were in no position to speak on behalf of others? And, if that was the case, why? Finally, this thread led me to enquire about British Muslim women's collective power.

Scholarly literature has drawn its attention to British Muslim women's social participation and collective power, offering thorough sociological and political

examinations of civic engagement and political activism (Joly & Wadia, 2017; Lewicki & O'Toole, 2017; Wadia, 2015; Werbner, 1999) as well as every-day citizenship (Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2012; Nyhagen, 2015). For example, Lewicki & O'Toole (2017) researched Muslim women activists from Bristol and identified two main themes: their mobilisation in response to violence against women and FGM; and efforts to renegotiate more inclusive mosques. Lewicki & O'Toole's research also revealed that activists' identification and networks of support surpassed the local and national level and were entrenched at a transnational scale. These findings resonate with Werbner's (1998, 1999, 2000) classic examination of the diasporic social movement of pious Muslim women, Al Masoom, in 1990s Manchester, who fought to gain their autonomous voice. A group of 15 British Pakistani Muslim women campaigned for human rights violations and stood in direct contrast to the monopoly of male-dominated diasporic communities (Werbner, 1999). These mainly pious Muslim women created Al Masoom under the perception of Islam as an "egalitarian religion that guarantees women's rights" (Werbner, 1999; p. 320). They started with charity work for people in need in Pakistan. They faced strong opposition by local Pakistani men. As a response, they intensified their transnational activism and organised marches against the violations occurring in Bosnia and Kashmir at the time (Werbner, 1998). In addition, they sought governmental support that resulted in the issue of Kashmir being raised in parliament and legitimised by three MPs.

Despite British Muslim women's social participation receiving some scholarly attention, Joly and Wadia (2017) denounced a longstanding pattern in social research, where the Muslim male has been taken as "the standard model of individual and collective action within and outside Muslim communities" (p. 1). According to these authors, research on multiculturalism has neglected women's experiences and adopted the male experience as representative of the whole community. To illustrate this point, let's focus on the analysis of the politicisation of Muslim identity by Modood (2006, 2010), which is commonly mobilised in social research. Modood (2006, 2010) signals the Rushdie Affair as the beginning of a Muslim politicised identity. The Rushdie Affair refers to the international-scale events

that followed the publication of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in 1988. The book was considered offensive by Islamic fundamentalists, like the Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran, who issued a *fatwa* (ruling in Islamic law) ordering to kill Rushdie. Muslims in the UK and around the world held protests against the offensive publication, demanding its ban. As a result, Muslim communities faced the opposing challenges of fundamentalism and freedom of expression. Thus, "the public imagination was alerted to the presence of minorities who subscribed not solely to a national identity or a south Asian regionalism (...) but to a potentially universal Muslim identity" (Meer et al., 2010, p. 85). According to Modood (2010), Muslim identity then became a key potential minority identity acknowledged by everyone and particularly by all Muslims, who could now claim for recognition and civic inclusion. This depiction is well established within scholarly literature, yet it was mainly men who took part in the protests, with very few exceptions (Sahgal & Yuval-Davis, 1992). The above portrayal of the politicisation of Muslims in Britain illustrates how women's experiences and gender relations have been neglected by policies and research (Beckett & Macey, 2001; Joly & Wadia, 2017).

As already examined in Chapters 2 and 3, within social and political psychology, research has mainly revolved around political activism (Hopkins & Kahani-Hopkins, 2004a, 2004b), identification and identity construction (Hopkins, 2011a, 2011b; Hopkins et al., 2007b; Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002, 2006) within Muslim communities. With some notable exceptions (Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011a, 2011b), little research has exclusively focused on British Muslim women's social participation. Therefore, this chapter sets off to address the gap in research on British Muslim women's understandings, experiences and performances of collective power.

8.2. The Current Study

Departing from the findings of the previous study (Chapter 7), the current study aims to examine how British Muslim women understand, experience and

perform collective power and how they collectively contest the climate of social prejudice around their group (Kallis, 2018).

Adopting a qualitative approach, the study will provide insights into the collective experiences and social psychological processes of power relations of British Muslim women, by focusing on their understandings, motivations, enhancers, constraints and perceptions of their collective power.

8.2.1. Power conceptualisation.

Following the theoretical approach of this thesis (Chapter 4), power is considered relational (Foucault, 1982; Guinote, 2017; Guinote & Vescio, 2010; Reicher, 2016). The current study will explore forms of collective power. As described in Chapter 4 (section 4.3), collective power is understood as power to resist as a group, to collectively influence other people's behaviour, to collectively identify themselves among others. Collective power also refers to power that emanates from belonging to a group or having a certain membership (e.g., British or Muslim). For example, in some instances, being a member of a particular group will give people access to sources and privileges that will be denied to others.

To capture participants' understandings of power, a phenomenological approach to power will be adopted, previously described in Chapter 5 and already applied in the study 2 (Chapter 7). In addition, the current study will be framed in terms of social participation and community life, and this will be addressed further in the method section (8.4.). It is assumed that examining British Muslim women's social engagement will tell us about their collective power experiences, their perceptions and the different contexts at stake.

Given the phenomenological approach, special attention will be paid to the subjectivity of power. Following Drury, Evripidou and van Zomeren's research (2014), "Subjective power is an essential dimension of identity (…) this means that collective action requires not only a definition of who 'we' are but also an understanding of

what ‘we’ can do” (p. 28). Thus, this investigation of collective power will focus on individuals’ identity, beliefs and perceptions of their power as a group.

8.2.2. Identity approach.

In keeping with the identity framework that informs the overall thesis (Chapter 3), the current study combines social representations theory (SRT) (Duveen, 1993; Moscovici, 1988, 2001) and identity process theory (IPT) (Breakwell, 1986, 2001, 2010; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014;). However, most of the research on social participation and intergroup dynamics has been rooted in social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) — see Drury et al., (2014) for a review. SIT has mainly been applied to scrutinise individuals’ engagement under a single collective identity, such as gender, nationality or as activists. This single identity approach has been criticised (Greenwood, 2012) for missing the intersection of individual identities. In this sense, intersectionality has been proved as an alternative approach, examining how participants’ multiple identities intersect in motivating their participation (Curtin, Kende & Kende, 2016; Hopkins et al., 2006; Louis, Amiot, Thomas & Blackwood, 2016).

SRT/IPT approach has been adopted here for several reasons. First, IPT does not distinguish between social and personal identity, integrating micro, macro and meso levels of human interdependency, as explained earlier in Chapter 3. Thus, it provides the flexibility to zoom in and out of participants’ collective power experiences without losing the complexity and dynamism of their identities and the social context. Second, combining IPT and SRT allows for the examination of the dynamic relationship between the social context and individuals’ identity and power. As stated in Chapter 3, social representations (SRs) inform the content and value of identity (Breakwell, 1986, 2010) and individuals use SRs to identify and position themselves. Third, SRT/IPT also assists in exploring how the context and SRs shape identity principles, informing power. For example, participants may contest and reify SRs in an attempt to gain self-esteem and continuity. Finally, this approach is also

pertinent because it considers individuals and groups as active agents in the construction of SRs (Breakwell, 2010).

8.3. Research Questions

The main aim of the current qualitative study is to investigate participants' accounts regarding:

- How British Muslim women understand, experience and enact collective power:
    - In what instances do they mobilise collective power?
    - What are their motivations to engage in collective power?
    - What kind of accounts are mobilised, and in what contexts?
    - How do they perceive their own power?
    - What are the effects of their perception?
    - What are the social psychological processes involved in collective power?
- How identity performance impacts on and is influenced by collective power relations:
    - How do they present themselves?
    - How do they perceive themselves regarding their power relations in the wider society?
    - How do they contest collectively the current prejudice around their group?

8.4. Method

This section will begin by describing the sample and recruitment strategy, as well as its implications. Then, the interview schedule and procedure for the interviews will be explained. In the final section will discuss the analytical approach adopted. All relevant materials of the study (advert, participant information sheet, consent form, debriefing sheet, faculty ethics approval, interview schedule and a sample transcript) can be found in Appendix C.

8.4.1. Participants.

The data for this study was collected by 21 semi-structured interviews conducted with British Muslim women. The selection criteria for participants were that they should be either born in England or have studied at a British primary school and identify as Muslim.

The title of the study was "British Muslim Women's Experiences of Community Life". This approach aimed to operate as a proxy to explore British Muslim women's collective power dynamics. Participants' identity (as British Muslim women) was also clearly referenced, with aim of making their group identity salient. In this respect, the intent was to capture their understandings and experiences of power in relation to this particular collective identity, among the multiple other identities they may have held.

Originally, I considered the possibility of selecting activists, but this was deemed problematic. The notion of activism itself provoked questions around its meaning and who identifies as an activist. For example, activism has been previously defined as "everyday actions by individuals that foster new social networks and power dynamics" (Martin, Hanson & Geraldine, 2007, p. 79). However, non-academic people might have different views around what qualifies as activism (e.g., protests, campaigning). Previous research into women has shown how they do not always identify as activists, despite being long-time committed activists (Andrews, 1991; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995a, 1995b; Louis et al., 2016). In advertising the study, calling for activists would entail the risk of discouraging potential participants who might see their involvement different to mainstream activism (e.g., feminist social protesters). Therefore, to avoid excluding anyone's experiences, no references to activism were used in the call for participants. Instead, the study was advertised in relation to community experiences and social engagement.

The recruitment strategy combined purposive and snowball sampling from Muslim associations and social networks, such as mosques and Muslim women's

networks. Several British Muslim women, already known by the researcher through professional or social connections, were invited to participate and to act as "gatekeepers" for subsequent recruitment. A small advert was designed to summarise the study (see Appendix C4). I also tried to select the same participants of the previous study. However, only one volunteered. The others were unavailable at the time or did not respond to the invitation.

The sample involved the selection of 21 British Muslim women (20 to 50 years old). The study did not aim to be representative of the population at large; however, particular effort was made to ensure diversity among the interviewees whenever possible. Participants were drawn from different Muslim backgrounds (Sunni, Shia, Ahmadi and two Sunni converts) and different ethnic backgrounds (e.g., British-Somalian, British-White, British-Pakistani), while variations were sought in terms of relationship status and employment situations. The sample was predominantly educated, as all participants were either studying or already graduates.

When comparing this sample with the UK Muslim population at large (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015), there are clear differences in terms of employment and education (the demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 6 below). Regarding employment, almost all women interviewed were employed, while according to the report of Muslim Council of Britain's report based on 2011 Census, only 28% of Muslim women were in employment (The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015).

Regarding social participation, as was expected, very few identified as activists. Interestingly, half of the participants were leaders of (or had led) organisations or occupied roles in social organisations at the time of interview. Other interviewees' accounts and social involvement qualified as "activism", despite them having no direct relation with any social organisation.

Table 6. *Demographic characteristics of interview participants*

Pseudonym	Age	Interview	Ethnicity	Education	Occupation	Relationship	Children	Religious
Ameena	26	Online	Asian Pakistani	PGCSE	Teacher	Married	1	Quite religious
Batool	41	Online	Asian Pakistani	BA	Teacher assistant	Married	5	Very religious
Baheera	29	In-person	Black African Somali	BA	Media editor	Married	1	Quite religious
Dhuha	34	In-person	Mixed Asian African	Masters	Entrepreneur	Single	-	Quite religious
Zainab	46	Online	Asian Pakistani	BSc	Pharmacist	Married	2	Very religious
Fareeha	29	In-person	White English	Masters	Communic. officer	Married	-	Quite religious
Rukan	20	In-person	Black African Eritrean	BA	Full-time student	Single	-	Quite religious
Haleema	30	Online	Asian Pakistani	BA	Writer	Single	-	Not very religious
Inaya	26	Online	African Tunisian	Masters	Media producer	Single	-	Quite religious
Jala	49	Online	Asian Pakistani	PG	Community officer	Married	3	Quite religious
Khalida	43	Online	Asian Bangladeshi	PG	Public servant	Married	-	Quite religious
Lamya	22	Online	Asian Pakistani	Masters	Student /Tutor	Single	-	Quite religious
Majeeda	28	Online	Black African Arab	Masters	Self-employed	Single	-	Quite religious
Muna	23	Online	Asian Pakistani	Masters	Self-employed	Single	-	Very religious
Nadira	24	In-person	Arab	Masters	HR	Single	-	Very religious
Najat	50	Online	Asian Pakistani	Masters	Civil servant	Married	3	Quite religious
Rasha	46	In-person	White English	GCSE	Charity director	Married	4	Quite religious
Thanaa	44	Online	Asian Pakistani	BA	Social org. officer	Married	1	Very religious
Wafa	57	Online	Asian Pakistani	PG	Teacher	Divorced	-	Very religious
Yusraa	24	In-person	Asian Pakistani	Masters	Student	Married	1	Quite religious
Amal	30	In-person	Arab	Masters	Journalist	Single	-	Quite religious

8.4.2. Interview schedule.

The interview guide was developed with consideration for the research questions, the theoretical framework and previous studies of female activists (Gulbrandsen & Walsh, 2012; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995b). A female Muslim PhD student also acted as a "key informant" in the development of the interview guide. Through a series of meetings with my supervisors, we elaborated and revised interview questions to produce a final guide that we believed could generate data to address the research questions in depth.

Before the interviews, participants were asked some demographic questions (see Appendix C6), like in the previous interview study. Participants were then asked questions about their everyday lives, experiences and perspectives, with questions about power woven into these broader contextualising questions.

The interview comprised three main sections. In the first section, participants were asked to talk about their participation in a social event of their choice in the last six months. Questions about their motivations, agents involved (e.g., other women, the mosque), their views, feelings and perceptions both during and after taking part, and the impact of the event, were raised (see Appendix C6 for full interview schedule). The next section followed a similar pattern. This time, they were asked to talk about events that were specific to them as Muslims, which sought to make their Muslim identity more salient. Some events were suggested to participants at a local level (e.g., campaigning for their local hospital or fundraising for their mosque), national (e.g., the London terrorist attacks or the Grenfell Tower fire) and global (e.g., the Syrian refugee crisis). The third and final section of the interview included questions about their views on British Muslim women's engagement, obstacles and enhancers, available narratives (e.g., media representation) and future paths.

The interview schedule was designed to act as a guide for the interviewer, identifying the issues to be covered and suggesting wordings for questions. It was not

intended to be used as a qualitative questionnaire, in which all questions are posed to every participant in the same way. Instead, it was meant to guide and focus the conversation with each participant to ensure that relevant data that could answer the study's research question was obtained. If a participant adequately addressed the issues covered by several interview questions on the guide in one speaking turn, the other questions on those issues were not asked. Hence, a selective approach was adopted.

8.4.3. Interview procedure.

Participants were asked to sign and return a consent form (Appendix C2) before the interview. They were reminded about the possibility to opt out of the research at any time, from the point at which they volunteered and were interviewed up until one week after participating in the study.

One-third of the interviews were conducted face to face in places of their choosing, like cafes and universities. The remainder were held online to adapt to participants' schedules or location, using different platforms (e.g., Skype). A discussion about online and face-to-face interviews was provided earlier (Chapter 7, section 7.6.). Interviews took between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours.

8.4.4. Method of analysis.

The analytical method followed thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). The analytical process was conducted in a similar fashion to the one described in Chapter 5 (section 5.2.5.). Interviews were transcribed by the researcher and coded using NVivo. After familiarising myself with the data, the codes were organised into initial themes. These initial themes were reviewed with a consideration for existent literature, as well as discussed with the supervisors. The thematic structure was refined and organised into two broader themes and several subthemes, as will be presented in the next section.

8.5. Findings

This analysis identified two main themes:

Table 7. *Thematic structure*

Sense of achievement	8.5.1.1. Coming together and bringing change	8.5.1. Understandings of collective power
Empowered/validated		
It gives me hope/reassurance		
Role modelling	8.5.1.2. Engaging individually to improve the collective	
Helping one person at a time		
To support others		
It's not about how good Muslim you are	8.5.1.3. Collective power is religiously informed: claiming for a social and inclusive understanding of religion	
Not only charity, social involvement too		
Everything I do		
People don't know us	8.5.2.1. Redefining their collective identity	8.5.2. Performing collective power: contesting their misrepresentation and building a politicised identity
Questioning agenda behind it		
Intergenerational differences		
The mosque used to be a social hub	8.5.2.2. Empowering themselves and creating spaces	
Empowering ourselves in our own terms		
Creating platforms to express ourselves		
Duty to come out of the bubble	8.5.2.3. Reaching out and promoting solidarity	
Get to know your neighbour		
Influence other people's views		

8.5.1. Understandings of collective power.

This theme focuses on the understandings of collective power identified in the analysis. Three main subthemes were identified when discussing collective power. First, participants related to collective power as coming together with other people

and bringing change either in society or in themselves. Second, participants also perceived their individual engagement (e.g., role modelling) as part of a collective effort to pursue social justice and improve their group, which was also understood as part of their collective power. Third, most participants expressed that their Muslim background and Islamic beliefs underpinned their social engagement and collective power. They contested individualised understandings of their religion, sustained by many mosques, for its neglect of the social aspect of Islam and the marginalisation of women. These three subthemes will be presented as:

- Coming together and bringing change (8.5.1.1)
- Engaging individually to improve the collective (8.5.1.2.)
- Collective power is religiously informed: Claiming for an inclusive and social understanding of religion (8.5.1.3.).

This first theme will also assist in understanding the difference between collective and individual power. Thus, it will shed new light on the findings of the previous study (Chapter 7)

8.5.1.1. Coming together and bringing change.

For most participants, collective power involved coming together and organising themselves to pursue social change. Participants gave evidence of their multiple and diverse engagement; for example, organising social gatherings for Muslim women, taking part in social protests, volunteering and fundraising and/or organising encounters with other members of society. Yet participants barely engaged with the notion of power, as was found in the previous study (Chapter 7). They mostly discussed their experiences of collective power in terms of their capacity to bring about social justice and make an impact.

This notion of impact is illustrated in the following extract. It captures Lamya's experience of taking part in the Westminster Bridge demonstration against terrorist attacks. On the 26th of March 2017, around 40 Muslim women dressed in blue and

held hands in silence for five minutes. The image of the bridge full of Muslim women making a stand for peace was in the public eye for days, through social media and the news. Lamya was hugely impressed by the impact of the event. For her, as for many participants, having social impact (e.g., influencing other people's views) was indicative of their power.

> *Lamya: At that moment, I belonged as a woman, and I also belonged as a citizen of the country. I also belonged in the fear as well as the coming together of everyone in response to this [terrorist attack]. I belonged in the peace that we were creating after something horrific that happened. There's that whole feeling of belonging, which I think is really important. (...) The next day that felt quite empowering, which I keep going back to, is the idea of how big this, like the news became. (...) I didn't realize how much of an effect and impact it would have and I didn't even see anything. It was just pictures of me, pictures. Yeah. (...) I tweeted about it and I instagrammed it from my, um, from the student account. (...) and then they retweeted us, Women's March actually tweeted us. So that was really nice, the fact that I felt again like this whole 'coming together' business, that the 'us versus them' mentality was breaking down.*

Lamya was describing her experience of "coming together" as a response to the terrorist attacks and the major impact the event had. She felt she and the other Muslim women were successful in making themselves heard (even though in silence), which helped to reduce discriminatory barriers and to bring people together. Note how she exemplifies her perception through the endorsement of other social movements, like Women's March, which had spread out its demonstration on social media. In the extract, Lamya also highlights that her participation triggered a sense of belonging and made her feel empowered. This motif of belonging is very important for identity, as it relates to the need to feel close and be accepted by people who matter to us. It also speaks about social cohesion and inclusion, the importance of

feeling united and part of the group. Lamya refers to a feeling of belonging at different levels — as a woman, as a Muslim and as a citizen.

The analysis also showed a recurrent trend around social inclusion and belonging, particularly within society. In this respect, if being excluded links with feelings of powerlessness, likewise for participants experiencing instances in which they felt included or asserted their power publicly seemed to increase their self-esteem and efficacy. Lamya conveyed a positivity about herself and British Muslim women, suggestive of self-esteem. As will be shown, self-esteem was another thread in the analysis, which operated not only as a motivator for future actions, but also as an outcome of their participation. In a similar vein, Lamya also stated that she felt empowered as a result of her participation. Several other participants recounted how they felt empowered, motivated and were experiencing positive change in themselves and seeing it in other women as a result of their social engagement. They seemed to be describing processes of gaining individual and collective efficacy and self-esteem. Efficacy is understood here as the belief in one's own ability, or group's ability, to pursue collective goals and to achieve in specific situations (Bandura, 1997). Efficacy is central to power, insofar as lacking efficacy leads to feelings of powerlessness, while having efficacy motivates people to pursue their goals. Lastly, the extract above serves to illustrate how some participants enacted collective power by coming together and representing themselves, challenging the social representation of their group as passive and lacking agency (as depicted in the media study in Chapter 6) and influencing other people's views.

Another example of this perception of collective power bringing about collective change and making the world more inclusive can be seen in the case of the FIBA headgear ban. After the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) outlawed the hijab in women's basketball, female Muslim players campaigned against the ruling. Two interviewees recounted their experience in this campaign. Using social media, they helped to organise events, such as conferences and basketball games in different countries (Turkey, Sudan, Sweden), and spread awareness to other Muslim

players from around the world. The repercussion was massive. By May 2017, FIBA (2017) approved a rule change to allow players to wear religious headwear during competition. This achievement was also illustrative of how members of a minority group, in some countries like the UK, can come together transnationally to assert their collective power, forcing dominant groups to change their ruling. Taking part in this campaign changed participants' perceptions of their potential, as Nadira claimed: "*If we can do this, we can do anything*".

The following extract captures Majeeda's views on how her perceptions of what Muslim women could achieve by coming together, which again exemplifies the increase in participants' political collective efficacy.

> *Majeeda: Um, I wouldn't say I had power, but I was heard. I struggled. Yeah, always had like, people were willing to listen to what I had to say. They were willing to accept my story, uh, kind of embrace my journey, like be part of the journey as well because we wouldn't have been able to do it. Had people not wanted to write about the story, cover the story or share the posts that we were posting. Like as a collective. So yeah. But with social media is because it's like it's a different story every week. (...) Like I never thought about it until quite recently. It's such a huge thing to kind of suddenly be like, okay, FIBA, you're literally the governing body of the whole of basketball in the whole entire world. But you know. Hello? Yeah. Can you just like change the law?*
>
> *Interviewer: It sounds like a really powerful thing...*
>
> *Majeeda: There is that element, in the sense that we felt like we achieved something. We changed the course of history. (...) we're moving towards a worldwide sport that is more inclusive...*

Majeeda deflects the idea of having power but acknowledges the power of the collective (the players as well as the audience, "people who were willing to listen" to their stories). Note how she relates to impact ("I was heard") and achievement

("we changed the course of history") and declines power. She also recounts her perception of the key role of social media, shared by many participants. Social media was mainly perceived as a platform on which to be heard and gain support, as well as a tool to facilitate social movements and overcome power dynamics, as will be presented in another subtheme (8.5.2.2.). Note also how Majeeda mobilises rhetorical questions that seem to mimic a dialogue only possible on social media — between FIBA, a broad and dominant institution, and them, a small minority. During the interview, she reiterated the idea of "making history" and making the world more inclusive for future generations. Thus, the extract above also illustrates a sense of achievement that feeds into this shared theme of building collective efficacy, enacting collective power by coming together and changing the status quo. Interestingly, she did not refer to herself as an activist like many other participants, but as a Muslim. For participants like Majeeda, their social involvement was part of their identity as Muslims, which will be addressed later (subtheme 8.5.1.3).

Contrastingly, several participants also shared a perception that this coming together would not achieve social change or have any real impact (e.g., demonstrations for the Grenfell Tower victims or Syrian refugees). Yet they recounted having experienced changes within themselves, as a result of their participation, that helped them nurture hope or validate and confirm their own views. Such accounts seem to denote how coming together also helped them to (re)gain feelings of hope, collective self-esteem, belonging and worth as British Muslim women. For example, Muna related to gaining a sense of individual and collective validation as a result of participating in some events. She explained how for her, coming together with other likeminded creative Muslim women, of mainly black ethnic background, gave her a sense of power and of being validated.

> *Muna: So, for me, that feeling of togetherness is more based on who you are politically, where I am, because you know, (...) Say, for example, I did another great event. It was about female Muslim creatives, it was the exhibition they were having in London... the closing night, so they had a few*

poems, but it was like everybody in that room was mostly Muslim, most people were people of colour, most people were women and just the feeling in that room was, like, we are all on the same page; it was quite a radical space, quite a useful space, and I think that made me feel, like... yeah, this is a 'we', this is a collective (...) this is about validation and this is just about speaking to the audience and them and me saying 'I see you, you see me' and we were allowed to exist how we do.

Muna described a feeling of togetherness with similar people (black Muslim women) with similar interests (creative and political) who "are on the same page", coming together to perform their art. This gave her a sense of unity (shared "we") and enhanced her self-esteem (being "seen"). This need for being seen and heard appeared in several interviews, particularly in those of younger participants who seemed to root for being included, accepted and their experiences normalised as part of British society. In so doing, they seem to be asserting their collective identity. This linked with their need for creating spaces in which they could come together as British Muslim women to share their experiences, which will be the focus of another subtheme (8.5.2.2.).

In a similar vein, Khalida explained how taking part in demonstrations helped her to regain her motivation.

Khalida: The reason why I take part, and it's funny because, as quite a few Muslim people actually say, 'what's the point of taking part in demonstrations?' Because it doesn't change anything. I look at the big picture. Yeah, you're right, it may not change a national policy or all foreign policy or international anything, but when all this nastiness is going on in the world… For me personally, it reminds me that there are lots of other decent people. And that gives me the power to carry on because, actually, you could get really depressed because of how everyone hates Muslims and everyone is terrible. And then when you're stood side by side with a woman from Kenya, with an

atheist, with, you know, a female vicar (...) it's so powerful. And I take a lot of that personal, which helps me heal and helps me get the energy to carry on. Um, so that's why I participate, actually, because I think it's our small way of saying draw a line in the sand and saying, you know, this is not okay.

Khalida describes that participating in demonstrations serves as a reminder that there are "lots of other decent people" who, like her, are not only showing their opposition ("draw a line") to terrorism but also their solidarity. For Khalida, standing in solidarity with other people increases the collective self-esteem and efficacy, as well as her own. For other participants, taking part in demonstrations was not perceived as powerful; in fact, quite the opposite. They felt relatively powerless, but still it was something they needed to do. Overall, coming together to express shared values as Muslims can be considered to be indicative of collective power — the power to represent themselves as members of a group (more on intergroup dynamics will be provided in subtheme 8.5.2.3.).

In light of the previous two extracts, it can be argued that participants, like Khalida and Muna found, in their coming together, ways to achieve social change and tackle social injustice, and ways to assert and enhance their sense of collective self-esteem, continuity (e.g., peaceful people), their unity, through standing together with Muslims and non-Muslims and collective efficacy

This subtheme demonstrated how participants understood collective power as coming together to bring about change within society and within themselves. The following subtheme will show how participants also related to collective power as engaging individually to improve the collective.

8.5.1.2. Engaging individually to improve the collective.

Participants also described their involvement in what might appear as individual actions, like role modelling or giving one-to-one support. This subtheme captures how these actions were part of their individual contribution to a collective

project of pursuing social justice, prescribed by Islam, and to contest prejudice, which can be considered to be indicative of collective power.

The analysis indicated that the perception of taking individual actions as part of a collective effort to improve communities and to help others was very common. A strong thread revolved around role modelling. Role modelling was perceived as a way to contest the negative stereotype around their group and to help other women gain confidence and develop. Several participants perceived themselves as being able to inspire other women and younger generations. Thus, many worked hard to create opportunities for other people and for future generations, opportunities they themselves had missed when growing up. For instance, Majeeda stated that her motivation to campaign against the FIBA ban was: "Because I think when I was growing up, I, you know, I watched quite a bit of sports on TV and I never saw a woman that looked like me in terms of a Muslim wearing a hijab (...) So I felt that it was my opportunity to open that door for the new generation." Similarly, Jala explained her experience as a role model, which was also framed around opportunity.

> *Jala: I continued doing it because I know that I can be a real good role model because, particularly with my age [49], we were probably some of the first sort of Asians, particularly within our own community who went to further education and worked (...) particularly the women of my generation never went out to work, never went to higher education.(...) We have sort of been those examples that other people have looked to and said, well, actually if they can do it, why can't we? (...) I wouldn't use the word power, but (...) It gives me I think the opportunity to be able to help others, to do something good as well. Yep. I am that person that can be a role model.*

Jala described herself and her sister as among the few women in her Asian community who pursued a career. She offered a very confident account of her capacity to inspire others. She self-differentiated from other women, which may have enhanced her self-esteem and self-efficacy. Interestingly, Jala, like many other

participants, was very active in providing opportunities for other women to develop themselves (this motif will be described further in subtheme 8.5.2.2.). This drive appeared frequently in the analysis. Participants expressed how engaging in role modelling helped to create opportunities for other women (to build collective efficacy) and to contest the prejudice around their group. In this respect, participants' individual engagement as role models can be read as indicative of collective power, in bringing change.

Most participants who identified as role models considered themselves lucky and privileged for the support they had received. Contrastingly, only one participant, Baheera (a media editor of Somalian background), stated that women's social participation was a matter of personal choice. All the others pointed at restrictive contexts and reduced opportunities as being the real problems that needed to be addressed. Baheera's account contrasted with the rest of the data because of her emphasis on individual choice.

> *Baheera: I would think that some women bring their culture with them. Proportionally, not all British Muslim women have the motivation to bring change outside. Unfortunately, some of them are raised to have the ultimate goal of marrying, having kids, being housewives and all of that, and that is quite negative. I just don't really understand what they come from. I know its cultural and I understand that this culture is rooted in their life from back home. But I feel like it's very negative. (...) There are people who grew up here, second-generation Muslims, who grew up in the British context, and they are nurses, doctors, engineers, everywhere... They're independent young girls too, so there are these and there are those. But your 'instincts' for community aren't very related to how you grow up or anything. It's your sense of, either you want to give, or you don't care and that is not related to how you were raised...*

Baheera portrayed herself and her sister as role models, examples of success, who have challenged the high rate of unemployment for their ethnic group. She perceived social participation and involvement as a matter of choice and not related to women's backgrounds or social contexts. Her account on "independent" women seems to reproduce the dominant narrative of active/non-active Muslim women identified in the media study (Chapter 6). Her emphasis on choice seems to refer to autonomy and is rather individualistic. This was a striking finding that reproduced some of the findings of the previous study, where participants mainly mobilised individual accounts of power (Chapter 7). By mobilising choice, Baheera could be trying to present herself in a positive way, as well as to contest the stereotype. Interestingly, her account was unique within the in terms of drawing connections between the current and previous study, as will be discussed at the end of this subtheme.

The next extract by Amal provides a unique explanation of individual and collective power. Amal was a highly politicised participant who claimed that British Muslim women have been instrumentalised by the government for their own securitisation agendas, which undermined and prejudiced the women's social movement. Her extract serves to illustrate how individual actions were not perceived as individual power per se, but as part of a collective effort, and therefore part of British Muslim women's collective power.

> *Amal: We hold the power to speak up. We hold the power to take action. We hold the power to say, to go and change the status quo (...) as an individual, and obviously that power is only strengthened when it is collective, and I think that I find it really difficult and people have reinforced this obsession around leadership and championing because it is very individual. It's very like focused on the individual, as though the individual can be Superwoman and the Muslim woman can become Superwoman and just by herself. Like I pray to God you never have to do it on your own. (...) I think particularly the active British Muslim women typically fighting on the*

questions of Islamophobia and against the setback to the welfare state, against the privatization of education. (...) Exactly why are all of them trying to create and build movement to try to organize on a mass level? None of them are calling process for themselves. You know what I mean?

Amal began by asserting British Muslim women's power, both individually and collectively. She stated that British Muslim women are organising themselves not for individual purposes but as part of a collective process of building social movement for social justice. She denounced individualised readings that focused on women's leadership. These readings remove women from their contexts and do not take into consideration their networks of support. For her, collective power is in all these individual efforts by "active British Muslim women" engaged in multiple settings who seek to change the status quo.

Participants also reflected on how their individual helping of others not only brought about change in these people's lives but also in themselves (e.g., feeling empowered). Dhuha, for example, was involved in many things. She was an entrepreneur, a school governor and a volunteer in different organisations. She recounted:

Dhuha: I guess what I do feel is maybe empowered, like; in a way I feel like I can make a change in a bunch of things. So, you know, with all of those examples it's like: if I didn't feel like I could make a difference I wouldn't do it. (...) And that may be a small change, but still one person I know they didn't have dinner before I did something, or a school has a slightly better direction, and it's a bit more well run, like these kinds of good things. So, I do feel like I can make a difference.

For Dhuha here, like other interviewees, making a difference in other people's lives motivated her involvement. She explains how seeing the impact of her involvement increased her beliefs in her ability to change things. So for her, helping

one person at a time motivated her to continue doing it. Thus, it can be seen how self-efficacy and self-esteem were both drivers and outcomes of her actions.

Another aspect that became evident in the analysis was that most participants perceived themselves as able to bring about change, not only individually but also collectively. As stated earlier, this perception denotes individual and collective efficacy. This perception is crucial here because it contests dominant representations of British Muslim women as lacking power, as shown in the media study (Chapter 6). In this respect, most of the women interviewed seemed actively committed to reducing prejudice around their group. In this subtheme, thus, participants presented themselves as social agents of change and helping others to develop themselves.

The previous extracts portrayed an understanding of power that might at first appear as quite individualistic to an outside reader. However, participants understood their role modelling and individual involvement as part of a collective effort to improve their communities and to bring about social change. In other words, participants perceived their actions as part of their duty as Muslims to contribute to society and to help others, which will be addressed in the following subtheme (8.5.1.3.). In so doing, their engagement also gave them a sense of continuity, along with and collective and personal self-esteem and efficacy.

8.5.1.3. Collective power is religiously informed: claiming for a social and inclusive understanding of religion.

This subtheme reveals how participants' social and inclusive understandings of their religion underpinned their collective power. Most participants perceived that their interpretation of Islam, which promotes social engagement and social justice, was at the heart of their actions. Likewise, they strongly criticised individualistic and literal interpretations of their religion, which mostly focus on the ritualistic aspects (e.g., prayer, fasting) while neglecting the social involvement. Furthermore, many participants denounced the systematic marginalisation of women sustained by many

male-dominated mosques and communities. Participants' accounts showed a collective process of contestation and resistance towards established religious practices, as well as a process of redefinition by (re)claiming their own religious interpretations and spaces to come together. Thus, this conjoint effort can also be considered to be indicative of collective power. (The aspect of creating spaces to come together as Muslim women will be discussed in another subtheme, 8.5.2.2.).

Many participants vividly advocated for a social and inclusive understanding of religion. For them, their religion revolved around two main things: their relationship with God and their social responsibility as humans. Notions of social responsibility and being of service to others were perceived as motivators of their social engagement.

> *Najat: The aim and the intention for me and for Muslims who are practicing is that you're doing it because the intention is you are pleasing your Creator. Because we believe that we were put on this earth to serve God, but God doesn't mean that you are praying all the time. This is the issue that some people don't understand, that service to God isn't that you're reading your prayers or reading the Qur'an all the time. No, that isn't. The purpose is to serve humanity and through the service of humanity is where the biggest challenge lies.*

This extract gives evidence of a shared perception of Islam as an identified social religion. For many participants, their religion prescribed that they be helpful, promote social justice, improve their Muslim community and contribute to society. Participants frequently invoked this motif of being of service, as participants also did in the previous interview study (Chapter 7). Several participants explained that, whatever their skills (e.g., knowledge) may be, these were meant to be used to help others. In addition, many participants like Najat voiced a strong criticism of individualised teachings of religion that are only concerned with "*praying all the time*". They contested literal and individualised interpretations of religion which

contravene Islamic moral values. As Wafa stated: "*Fundamental principles of Islam, like compassion towards fellow people, respect... they break them, you know, in, in being very literal.*" Participants believed that these interpretations disregarded the social duty of religion ("*to serve humanity*", Najat above), as they were only focused on observation and self-fulfilment. Their attempts to redefine their religion can also be regarded to be indicative of their collective power.

Some participants also stressed how these individualised practices were mainly adopted and sustained by men, and how male-dominated mosques were key to reproducing them. Regarding their perception of the role of mosques, several participants described their mosques as welcoming spaces that promoted involvement. But these were the exception, rather than the rule. Most participants perceived mosques as unwelcoming social institutions that had disregarded their social duty to bring the Muslim community together by excluding women and families. Their criticism was supported by Qur'anic representations of the mosque.

> *Khalida: So, mosques up till now have been places where people go on and pray and they do the ritualistic bits of the religion. In the Prophet's time, it was the centre of society, the centre of politics, of life, of community, and we need to return to that. And the issues of women being involved or welcoming; these mosques are not welcoming spaces. And I say this to my husband and to my male relatives a lot, that "actually we deny women community", so if women aren't welcome in these mosques and we're not also helping as a Muslim community, it's family structures that are changing...*

In the extract, Khalida reported a shared perception that mosques sustained individualised worship, failed to offer social inclusion and excluded women. She reclaimed the mosque of "the *Prophet's time*", when everyone was welcome, not only men. It is interesting to note how she mobilised the collective "we", which seems to appeal to a collective responsibility and fault of all Muslims for allowing this exclusion to take place and for not challenging the situation. Most participants were

not compliant or acceptant of this exclusion. Some older participants, however, recounted how they grew up following the standard practices that established that men prayed at the mosque and women at home. They reflected on how they complied with the system. "*It is something I have grown up with (...) that I have never questioned*", Jala explained. Their exclusion wasn't perceived as such, but rather normalised and shared with their female friends and acquaintances. In this sense, the analysis suggested a social change, with women who used to comply with the system now resisting and contesting their marginalisation. A following subtheme (8.5.2.2.) will develop further the marginalisation of Muslim women and will present how it was contested by participants.

Moreover, many participants perceived that their involvement and pursuit of social justice was inherent in being Muslim; it was part of their Islamic duties. This perception would explain why several participants did not perceive themselves or identify as activists, but merely as Muslims.

> *Yusraa: I think, to me, everything I do interacts with Islam, because for me it is my duty towards my daughter, making sure she is brought up in a good society. That is a religious duty. But also I think reaching out to others is an Islamic duty um... Similarly, having discussions and awareness about the wider society, that is also an Islamic duty. So, I do think it is rooted in religion...*

As Yusraa explained, for her, everything she does is informed by her religion, as her duty as a mother and, ultimately, her duty as a Muslim. Her religion is at the core of her identity. It seems to convey how it gives her a sense of continuity, self-esteem, self-efficacy and distinctiveness. Note the emphasis on "reaching out to others" and being aware of "wider society", which highlight how, according to participants like Yusraa, Islam prescribes social involvement. The dynamics of contact and how participants engage with wider society will be the focus of another subtheme (8.5.2.3.). For many participants like Yusraa, their social involvement was motivated by their understandings of what it meant to be Muslim. But this is not to

say that they always wanted to be represented by Islam or perceived as Muslim, as will be addressed in another subtheme (8.5.2.1.). In this respect, some participants challenged singled-out depictions for undermining their actions and perpetuating the stereotype around their group.

As part of their Islamic duties, several participants also talked about their obligation to represent Islam and the Muslim community in all aspects of their lives. In the following extract, Majeeda details this duty of representation, particularly in social encounters with other people who might be non-Muslim.

> *Majeeda: You need to venture out into these places (...) da'wah is kind of how to bring people into Islam, which is... we don't hear a lot about it… how you basically represent the religion. (...) when you go out into the world it's actually a good opportunity for a Muslim girl or Muslim boy to enter a place where there's not a lot of other Muslims, where they can actually show the true characters and the values of a proper Muslim path...*

"Da'wah" is particularly interesting as it encourages Majeeda's and other participants' engagement. It was mobilised as a source of motivation and strength, a reminder of their duty and their power to engage in any situation. This notion of representation is particularly important to the study. It suggests that, for some participants, taking part in the study would also be part of their duty to represent Islam and Muslims; as Khalida stated, "the need to represent the alternative". Other subthemes (8.5.2.1. and 8.5.2.3.) will dwell further on issues of representation and contestation.

This subtheme has illustrated how religion informs participants' understandings and experiences of collective power. This finding is consistent with the previous interview study (Chapter 7), where it was identified that participants' power relations were informed by their religion. The originality here is how participants held strong critical views around certain established practices of Islam

and engaged in a redefinition process of their religion. In this respect, the analysis demonstrated how participants enacted power in ways to show collective self-esteem, continuity and efficacy (e.g., what it means to be a good Muslim). Furthermore, it demonstrated how their religious beliefs motivated them to bring about social change and pursue social justice not only for their communities but also for the wider society.

8.5.2. Performing collective power: contesting their misrepresentation and building a politicised collective identity.

This second theme illustrates how participants contested the social representation of their group, their marginalisation and social prejudice through performing collective power. In addition, it will be argued that the analysis suggested a process of building a politicised identity. The first subtheme (8.5.2.1. Redefining their collective identity) will focus on how interviewees contested their negative social representation by (re)defining their collective identity. Several strategies will be illustrated as part of this process of identity construction, which also can be read to be indicative of their collective power. The second subtheme (8.5.2.2. Empowering themselves and creating spaces) will depict a process of contestation around the marginalisation of women within Muslim communities, particularly targeting mosques. It will show how participants engaged in processes of self-empowerment on their own terms, which were indicative of a process of building collective efficacy. The third subtheme (8.5.2.3. Reaching out and promoting solidarity) will illustrate how participants also enacted their collective power by coming together with the wider society, seeking and promoting social contact. Several participants perceived this wider engagement as an attempt to influence their representation and change social views. Additionally, it will show two different views around how Muslims should represent themselves, particularly after so-called Islamic terrorist events, revealed in the analysis.

8.5.2.1. Redefining their collective identity.

Across all interviews, there was a wide consensus around the misrepresentation of British Muslim women in the media and in public debates. The collective process to contest their misrepresentation and to assert their collective identity, identified in the analysis, will be the focus of this subtheme.

Participants contested their misrepresentation in different ways: refusing available (mis)representations and offering alternative ones, self-differentiating themselves, representing themselves, questioning the purpose of their misrepresentation, mobilising over-reaching inclusive categories (e.g., as humans), and sometimes downplaying their Muslim identity in relation to their other social memberships. Such strategies are indicative of these women's social creativity in performing their collective identity. (Re)defining their collective identity can also be considered to be indicative of their collective power. As will be shown, participants performed their collective power in ways that helped them to increase their collective self-esteem, continuity, distinctiveness and efficacy.

Many participants denounced and refused their media representation, which was ill-informed and biased. They pointed at the general public's lack of knowledge about their everyday contribution to British society. Jala's words in the following extract illustrate this strategy.

> *Jala: We are just these non-people who actually don't even exist within our communities, but people don't know us, people don't know how much input we put into our communities. But in the media, we are these women in black with their faces covered with no opinion. (...) I think Muslim women have been the pillars of communities for a very long time, and we just saw that through a very tragic event* [Grenfell tower].

Jala contests the generalised media representation of Muslim women as "non-people". She highlights the lack of knowledge ("people don't know") about their

lives and offers a different representation of women as “pillars” of their communities. This extract was related to a discussion around the Grenfell Tower and the media coverage of the tragedy. The media had focused on Muslim women organising collections and donations and taking part in the demonstrations. Like many other participants, Jala emphasised that Muslim women’s contribution was the norm, not the exception, which challenged misguided media representations. She claimed the involvement of British Muslim women was a way to enhance their collective self-esteem, to highlight their continuity (“for a very long time”) as well as their collective efficacy.

Some participants also contested their representation by collectively differentiating themselves and their social networks from the media representation. They emphasised how the media only focused on the disempowered and poor women, excluding other women, like them, who were active, working and succeeding. In their reflections, they examined the patterns of exclusion and inclusion, mobilising notions of active/non-active women and empowered/oppressed.

> *Wafa: I think that, um, a lot of the agenda, a lot of the narrative, is about poor, oppressed, disempowered Muslim women. And there are those, there are definitely those, but there's a lack of acknowledgement of the fact that, you know, there are lots of Muslim women who are very empowered who are achieving things. (...) But, you know, you go to your supermarket and you see us, you know, visibly Muslim women on the tills, you know, in many hospitals, doctors‘ surgeries, etc. There are Muslim women who are teachers, um, in, in all of nearly all walks of life there are... drivers... these are the visible and the, you know, I think sports women are now coming to the fore as well. (...) So I have a concern that, you know, the narrative continues to be that everybody is oppressed (...)*

Wafa's extract illustrates the critical view of the persistent narrative around Muslim women characterised in terms of oppression. Like some other participants, Wafa was keen to differentiate both herself and other British Muslim women who are visibly active and working ("empowered") from the usual media representation of them as "disempowered". This differentiation presented a positive collective identity. Her process of contestation, portraying herself and others as agentic and active, clearly connects with the findings of the media study. However, it should be noted that earlier in the thesis (Chapter 6, section 6.3.4.), a pattern was identified in minority sources of British Muslim women being represented as successful and agentic. It was argued then, which applies here too, that this attempt to redefine their collective identity through employment and success is a narrow representation, which only reinforces the stereotype around other Muslim women ("oppressed and poor") and alienates them.

Another identified strategy that the participants used to enhance their collective self-esteem and distinctiveness was to speak out and to question the agenda behind current systems of representation. The analysis suggested a shared perception that younger women, influenced and enabled by social media, were becoming more outspoken and leading this process of contestation. Many participants perceived a generational change, with younger generations pushing back against the whole status quo.

> *Haleema: I think actually in Britain, or at least I live in England anyway, Muslim women are becoming, I think more outspoken, more willing to put themselves out there, wanting to be heard and tired of being put in boxes of the subservient, silent Muslim women who only speak when their husbands tell them to. They are like "I may wear a hijab, but I'm still me. I'm still a person and I will still say what I want to say um". I feel like this activism has really encouraged young Muslim women to speak out and like look after themselves and other people. And I think that scares a lot of people, because* (...) *the more people listen to us, then people realize that we're actually just humans like*

everyone else. They were like, well, who's the enemy then? Who are we supposed to be scared off if it's not them? So, it's an interesting place to be.

The extract illustrates this shared perception of social change, where younger women are changing the narrative around them and speaking for themselves. Haleema, who was 26 years old, described this process of deconstruction of the negative representation ("silent" and "enemy") by younger women. She stated how this process destabilises public views that sustain division and fear. Note how she mobilised collective identities that promoted sameness with other people (e.g., women, humans). This could be interpreted as another strategy to contest their prejudice, which enhanced their self-esteem and sense of belonging.

A striking aspect of the analysis was the fact that several women, despite their dissatisfaction and frustration with the negative social representation around their group, seemed to be willing to engage in this process of contestation ("it's an interesting place to be"). Some of them expressed their enjoyment and positive feelings about it, in ways that spoke of their confidence and collective efficacy to stand up for themselves.

In a similar vein of claiming their own representation, several participants opposed being spoken for by politicians and other people. They strongly advocated for representing themselves and their experiences ("*we will tell you who we are*", Rukan). One participant questioned the category of "Muslim woman" itself and questioned issues of equality and feminism.

Rasha: I think there's an issue around the whole kind of gender equality movement, which is the stuff that we're talking about. Muslim women need to be in that space and we need to be recognized as having our own voice. (...) Everything that's bad in the world, we get to pay for it. Everyone speaks for us. Muslim men, Trump, Cameron, everyone (...) There's no such thing as the Muslim woman. What is that? um so we need to find our voices ourselves and

tell our own stories. (...) cause we can speak for ourselves, "thank you very much! We don't need you to save us". To save the poor Muslim women, "we are fine!". We have got our issues, but I think our issues as women are not any different to other women. ... actual issues are decided in board rooms, government and in factories. Look at our parliament and look at the numbers. I mean less than ... for some of us it is common, what happens is that the feminist movement is very much often discriminatory against Muslim women and Muslim women need to dwell on that.

Rasha, like other participants, strongly rejected dominant groups speaking on her behalf (mainly men in power positions). She also criticised the homogenisation of addressing British Muslim women as a single category, which deprives them of their own different experiences. She reframed the discussion within the current Western equality movement, where women worldwide are speaking their minds and claiming their experiences. Thus, she adopted the higher group identity of "women", which helps to construct Muslim women's problems (e.g., gender gap) as common to any other women. However, she was the only participant who expressed a claim that the feminist movement discriminates against Muslim women. Rasha called for women to come together and speak out, which was quite frequent in the analysis. Many participants perceived that it was about time they spoke out ("own voice"). This shared perception denotes, as described earlier, that most participants believed in not only their individual but also collective ability to change things, or at least were willing to engage in the process to do so.

The last strategy adopted by participants to contest their representation was to downplay their Muslim identity. Several participants condemned media representations, which celebrated Muslim women's actions and involvement by singling out their Muslim identity. They claimed they wanted to be "*part of the narrative, not the narrative*" (Inaya). They argued that these depictions around exceptionality undermined their achievements and reinforced the stereotype around their group. Similarly, some participants recounted situations in everyday life where

they wanted to be recognised for their roles or jobs, not because they were Muslims. For example, Jala, who was a school governor, said her involvement had more to do with being a mother than being a Muslim. Similarly, Khalida wanted to be recognised for her professionalism as a civil servant, not as a Muslim.

> *Khalida: This is why I keep saying I'm not doing what I'm doing because I'm Muslim. And that falls when you celebrate my success. It shouldn't be because I am a Muslim woman; it should be because, basically, I'm a good public servant.*

Khalida's extract exemplifies how some participants resisted being celebrated by their collective, often Muslim, identity, some contexts like the workplace. Instead, they wanted to be acknowledged for their professionalism and hard work. Such accounts suggested that this type of depiction threatened their sense of continuity as professionals and dedicated people. Participants felt that to celebrate their successes as Muslims undermined their contribution and excluded them from the norm (e.g., as part of being British or successful employees). They expressed that this misrepresentation sustained patterns of otherisation that alienated them and their experiences. They felt misrecognised and misrepresented, which generated negative feelings in the participants, mainly anger and frustration.

The extract above is another example of some of the ways, presented in this subtheme, on how participants asserted their collective power in resisting and (re)defining their representation and to claim for their social inclusion. This subtheme also showed a shared positive perception of their collective identity (e.g., contributors), as well as different strategies adopted to contest their negative representation. The following subtheme will focus on how participants asserted their power by coming together and building collective efficacy.

8.5.2.2. Empowering themselves and creating spaces.

This subtheme provides a more in-depth exploration of the interview participants' awareness of their exclusion, and their need for creating and having spaces to come together and express themselves. It is a need that suggests a process of building collective efficacy, of these British Muslim women realising and raising awareness of what they are capable of together.

Most of the participants had been supporting and empowering themselves and other women over the years. Yet several pointed to a gradual change led by younger generations of women who, fuelled by social media and the access to equality debates, were more confident in challenging the status quo. The analysis revealed several strategies of empowerment, such as coming together to express themselves, engaging in social media to create new spaces, and expressing their views. These strategies were indicative of different ways of contesting the status quo, indicative of their power and how they were building collective efficacy.

The exclusion of women from mosques was a common theme among many participants' accounts. This motif around women's marginalisation was not new, already introduced (8.5.1.3) when discussing their views around religion and male-dominated mosques and communities. Perhaps the novelty was their gradual realisation of the structural inequality and the drive of some participants to challenge the current state of affairs. According to them, women were not allowed in some mosques under arguments of lack of space and safety concerns. In the ones that they were welcomed, they had to enter using a separate door, their facilities were less good, and their needs as women (e.g., interests and concerns) were not met. It is important to remark that a few participants also provided accounts of inclusive mosques. For example, a Shia participant highlighted this difference in terms of sects:

> *Zainab: Yeah, because I know a couple of Sunni friends at work and they don't go to regular mosques the way we do, they don't. It's more a man's*

thing, like the men goes to mosque, the men go to pray, and the women are at home, but I've not got into in-depth conversations with them. But no, in our community we do not face any of these issues. We are all very active. The women have a voice, we have a female chair and a male chair, lady of the mosque. We have our views, we have meetings. Um, yeah, we have a female treasurer and a male treasurer.

Zainab described how both men and women are welcomed and "have a voice" within her mosque. Note how she traces a pattern of differentiation between Shia and Sunni mosques, where the latter are male-oriented. Her description clearly favours her community and Shia women, to whom she refers as "very active" and having a voice. However, this positive collective differentiation might help her to assert Shia Muslim traditions — enhancing her collective self-esteem and distinctiveness — at the expense of reinforcing the stigma around other Muslim women.

Most participants expressed awareness of and discontent over how many Muslim male-dominated communities excluded women from decision-making positions. Several seemed confident and committed to change this state of affairs. After all, many participants have been working on improving and helping others most of their lives. Their claims and desire to change were vigorously clear. For example, Jala, who grew up being excluded from the mosque, expressed: "*What I would like to do is to be more involved in the running and the management of the mosque, but it's all men*". Yet participants did not seem to have a strategy or means to effect change in this area. Some interviewees challenged the male-dominated committees. A few also questioned the fitness of the imams and the staff for being underqualified and inexperienced at dealing with social needs, particularly women's needs. In contrast, some participants acknowledged how some mosques were making an effort to provide spaces for women. However, for some interviewees, being given spaces did not seem enough to change the situation. All in all, the analysis showed that most

participants were aware of the need for change, and to do required Muslim women to come together, organise themselves and define their goals, as will be explained.

The analysis frequently uncovered a perception among participants that British Muslim women lack spaces in which to express themselves. This deficit was not only relative to mosques but also lacking in formal spaces (such as the political arena and in management). In considering this deficit, some participants advocated for leading the change themselves, instead of waiting for other people (e.g., men) to give those spaces to them. They advocated for building their own spaces. As Amal explained:

> *Amal: I have mothers come up to me saying our house has been raided by MI5, they're trying to recruit my son. Another one talking about: "Did you hear what's been happening to a series of international Muslim, Malaysian students having the hijabs?" You know, all these things will come out in that space. And then the desire to do something about it. And so, this double oppression* [by government policies and male-dominated communities] *means that we have less and less spaces to do it. And yet you still see that we are the main ones leading on these questions. At times, people want to be, like, forget about the men, like I can't deal with the men, let's just do it ourselves, because they feel like they've been doing it for themselves by themselves for so long...*

The extract illustrates the concerns of Muslim women (over government policies around radicalisation and the Muslim international community) and their drive to tackle them. Equally, it depicts the perception around lack of spaces where they can get together to discuss them. It points at government policies (such as Prevent) and male-dominated communities as constraints on women's mobilisation and spaces. Furthermore, this extract represents the view held by some participants that women need to organise themselves, despite men, like they have been doing for many years, to bring about social change. As stated earlier, Muslim men, particularly

the ones ruling mosques, were considered unaware and not interested in women's issues (e.g., domestic violence or women's health) by several participants.

The previous extract also traces links with a popular aspect of Muslim communities — gender segregation. This notion appeared in the analysis, particularly around media coverage and how it is used in the misrepresentation of Muslims. Some interviewees considered gender segregation as normal, linked with tradition more than religion. Some were supportive of gender segregation, while others argued that it was unnecessary as long as one observed modesty. It is not the purpose here to describe participants' views on segregation, but rather to examine if there might be a link with the shared belief that "women's only" spaces were needed for British Muslim women to come together, to reflect, to express and to organise themselves. However, the analysis also revealed how this perception was neither framed in terms of religious practices nor modesty, but instead in terms of how they felt the need for spaces of their own to experience and discuss collectively as women. This preference for coming together as women speaks of how women find their own ways of empowering themselves. Adopting an intergroup dynamics approach to Muslim communities, it could be read as women, the minority, seeking their own ways to subvert the unequal situation (male-dominated spaces) by gathering among themselves.

Another central aspect of the analysis was that all participants talked about the importance of social support and how they had cultivated networks of solidarity for years, through friendship, their homes and organisations. For example, Wafa recounted how she and her friends set up a helpline for Muslims 30 years ago and how they have supported each other since then. Similarly, Thanaa described how her involvement has always linked her to a group of friends from university. As she explained: "*We went to university together too. So, two Sunni Muslims, two Shia Muslims and two Ahmadi Muslims (...) we're all constantly saying, oh, I am doing this charity, can you help? And we support each other.*"

Many participants also relayed their experiences of taking part in or organising events for women. The overreaching purpose of these groups was mainly to bring women together, to express themselves and to develop themselves by giving each other opportunities to get involved. For example, Yusraa talked about her attendance at a "coffee morning", a social gathering for women organised by her mosque.

> *Yusraa: And I think this morning, they genuinely just came to get to know who is there, but also kind of to talk about current affairs, like what is going on in Syria, in Palestine... there is a lot of political talk. And it was interesting to see from my perspective that there are actually mothers the age of 40, 50 and grannies. They are very critical, very opinionated and they just don't have the platform to voice their views (...) the great thing about it was, you know, you could tell they were so passionate about what they were doing. They set up a WhatsApp group and up until right now they are constantly messaging, getting to know each other, and every day there is a new person added.*

Yusraa described how women of different ages came together to socialise. She was surprised by attendees' passion in their critical views and their level of political awareness. Note how Yusraa's experience changed her perception, increasing her positive feelings around the group (collective self-esteem) and her collective efficacy (e.g., organising themselves through WhatsApp). This extract is one of many examples provided by participants of women coming together in spaces where they could freely express themselves. It also serves to highlight another shared perception around the lack of platforms for women to voice their views. This was identified as a huge obstacle to women's participation by many interviewees, though lack of physical spaces could be overcome by the formation of online communities through WhatsApp and social media, which offered an alternative platform.

Engaging in social media was perceived as a very productive source that provided a much-needed space. Interviewees explained how they used their online platforms to raise awareness about particular issues, to engage in daily social debates and express their views. Overall, participants considered social media and online groups as key factors in the development of their individual and collective goals, as well as to maintain networks of solidarity and support. In other words, social media was considered a key enhancer of power. As described in the previous subtheme, social media was generally perceived as the main domain of younger generations. In this respect, the following extract illustrates this perception that social media provided younger women with the support to find their voices and to make themselves heard.

> *Rasha: I think there is definitely a new confidence or new... conversation. It's interesting because some of it will be coming from younger women, women younger than me who are just becoming adults and coming in the world and realizing "wait a minute, this is not fair" ...and Muslim women, of course, are not immune to what is happening over the world [such as] #metoo and, if they go into all that stuff, even coming into their own community spaces for example, thinking "Hang on a minute," this isn't right! Why? Why are you making me feel like I am second class?*

Rasha described a shared perception of social change by several participants, where younger women had a "new confidence" and access to sources (e.g., equality movements) through social media. Thus, they were gaining a political awareness that made them better equipped to challenge the status quo in ways that had not been available for women of older generations, as discussed earlier (8.5.2.1.). Note how she clearly depicts the exclusion of Muslim women by referring to the attributed identity as "second class". This trend of speaking out and supporting each other in social media associated with younger women was perceived by several participants as continuing the long tradition of work of previous generations of mobilising and empowering women.

Some participants, particularly those working within women's organisations, emphasised the need for women to be supported to find their own agency, through the creation of development opportunities. The underlying belief was that this support allows them to provide for themselves and contribute to their Muslim and non-Muslim communities. For example, Wafa explained how she had dedicated her career to supporting women and her approach to community engagement came under the moto of "*Changing our community one person's life at the time".* Similarly, Najat talked about creating opportunities for women to acquire new skills through her work in the community centre. In this sense, helping other women to find their own agenda and their power was also perceived as another way to improve their communities and to contest social inequality (e.g., sexism).

> *Najat: Through education, information through maybe encouraging them to come out and be involved. (...) I want people to develop their skills. So, one of the ladies who was our secretary, she would never, ever have done anything like that, but I'm supporting her. How do you take minutes? How do you do an agenda? These are all skills that will come in handy and useful in the future. So those are the various volunteering opportunities that we have. This is what I mean by empower. Upscaling about giving confidence to women.*

Najat described how a process of empowerment runs parallel with a process of involvement for women in a community centre. She explained how, in her experience, women's involvement can start with very small things and how it is through a gradual process, in which women regulate their own involvement and take on small challenges, that they can realise their power. This extract also confirms the shared perception that social involvement translates into both collective and individual efficacy, discussed earlier (subtheme 8.5.1.3.).

Najat's extract is also illustrative of an extended belief identified in the analysis that Muslim women need to engage in their own ways. As another participant, Khalida, stated: "*Let's just take people where they are*". This statement

summarises the perception that, in order to help and support these women, they need to be at the centre of that process. In this respect, many participants openly contested notions of empowerment promoted by the government and top-down processes of involvement. They favoured bottom-up ones that supported women in terms of their definition of their own needs. A collective effort to speak out against current social policies focused on empowering British Muslim women was found in the analysis.

> *Wafa: So, you know, when people in power and people from the outside say we want to empower, their agenda is different from us grassroots people being involved in our community, helping and supporting and working with women who are, who have felt, not in a position to make any changes or made to feel that they are helpless because of the type of education they've received. And it's not by telling but by helping and supporting.*

Wafa's account illustrates how several participants perceived this difference between "grassroots people being involved" who support women in their development in contrast to "people from the outside", which refers to authorities that, in wanting to empower women, are just seeking to further their own political interests rather than those of the women.

The above extracts display a process in which participants were actively engaging and supporting other women. Many of them had been helping to empower other women for years. As stated earlier, the novelty seemed to be in their awareness, a shared perception of the need to come together as women, to create more spaces where they could express themselves, to discuss how to improve and change their communities, social inequality and empower themselves. This process speaks of a collective experience of building collective efficacy and increasing collective identity, rather than individual ones, which is indicative of collective power.

The following subtheme will address experiences of coming together with society, reaching out and seeking to reduce prejudice.

8.5.2.3. Reaching out and promoting solidarity.

In this subtheme, processes of how participants constructed and negotiated their collective identity will be discussed, with special attention paid to intergroup relations. Many interviewees advocated for coming together as a way to contest prejudice, which involved promoting solidarity and reaching out. Participants related to all sorts of events, from everyday encounters to special events (e.g., a vigil for a terrorist attack). Several participants perceived these events as opportunities to enact their collective power by influencing other people's views. Lastly, different views will be shown on how participants negotiate their representation, particularly around so-called Islamic terrorism.

Most participants perceived a need for British Muslim women to come together and get socially involved, particularly given the current climate of prejudice. This perception was in part motivated by their faith and a desire for social participation to pursue justice and represent Islam. For example, the following same story was recounted by three participants to illustrate the importance of Islam when reaching out and getting socially involved.

> *Thanaa: A very very good man was in his house, in his village, and he never used to go out of his house. He was in his house, praying and doing everything he was meant to. And he was a very good Muslim, but all around him, the village and other villagers were going through all sorts... It is just a metaphorical story and then the angel said to God: "What will we do with this village? Look, shall we destroy this village? Because all these vices and the people are doing such a bad thing... and what should we do? Should we destroy the village?... But we'll save that man who has been living a good life by himself in his house" and God said: "No! Destroy that house first, because*

he hasn't helped all these other people around him. He knows what's right and wrong, and yet he hasn't helped the people who needed the help." So that shows how important it is to not just stay in your house and be isolated.

This story helped these participants explain how religious teachings encouraged Muslims to support each other, which was more important than following rituals ("praying"). For many participants, being a good Muslim was understood as having a social duty of service and involvement, not an individualised one. This duty to get socially involved was frequently invoked by participants, not only related to Muslim communities, but also to the wider society. The moral responsibility to reach out ("not just stay in your house") also links with a shared perception that many Muslim communities and mosques had isolated themselves or had been absent. Thus, many participants referred to this key need as Muslims to open up and "get out of their bubble" (Ameena). This is important because it shows how participants were asserting collective power by identifying themselves in particular ways, as well as by challenging the attributed identities around them (e.g., isolated).

Many participants also remarked on the importance of organising inclusive events to promote contact, where non-Muslims could get to know Muslims, to reduce prejudice. Many were actively organising or participating in street markets and fundraising for English charities, open days at mosques, interfaith events, and leisure events. Those examples are indicative of the diversity in their everyday engagement. Yet some participants expressed how crucial it was for Muslims to organise and take part in non-Muslim events. In fact, a few of them stated that Muslims needed to "integrate" more.

Baheera: I think they should come out more of the Muslim community bubble and be more integrated with the non-Muslims.

Interviewer: When you say integrate, what do you mean?

Baheera: Like now working, I feel like I belong to not only the Muslim community, like my colleagues are all non-Muslims...I socialise with them, Christmas parties and all that. (...) Instead of staying in your own bubble.

I think "Yes, working in your own community is really good" and strengthen the relationship between individuals, Muslim individuals. But I think it would help more, you know, to do events for everyone and invite non-Muslim speakers (...)get to know your neighbour, your colleague more... I think that is what we need right now.

Baheera's perception was shared by a few participants who believed this was the way to contest the social stereotype. For them, change would happen by coming together as a society rather than staying within their communities. It is interesting how they adopted the narrative of "integration" prominent in dominant representations, as discussed in a previous study (Chapter 6). Mobilising these claims for integration was a way for these participants to differentiate themselves from other Muslim women, enhancing their self-esteem and efficacy. However, this identity presentation reinforces the stereotype around other Muslim women with different realities, who might fail, do not want or not be able to "integrate".

Furthermore, taking part in social events was also perceived as an opportunity for many participants to represent themselves. This is important as they perceived these events as an opportunity to influence other people's views. The following extract illustrates Khalida's experience of coming together as a society in the "Great get together" in memory of Joe Cox. This was one of the many events organised around the country where people from different communities got together to eat and pray. Khalida was one of the organisers of the event in her city, which coincided with the end of Ramadan.

Khalida: So that evening, I think it was about 10 o'clock now, I stood back and I just thought this is amazing, you know, we've got hundreds of people here. Uh, we also did a congregational prayer in the park, but we also

invited other people who may want to come to pray, and to sit near us as well, you know, um, and it just felt quite magical because people just went and did it or the people observed for the first time what prayer looks like in practice, because they just hear about us on the news. It was quite magical actually because it was our way of saying to ourselves and the world we are okay, we've got this, you know, we can live together, we can stand side by side, we can pray together, we can eat together. And those who worked on it were also from different backgrounds. We can work on something challenging together as well, which was really nice.

The extract demonstrates how, for many participants like Khalida, an important aspect of coming together with the wider society was the opportunity to change social perceptions, by showing that "we can live together...we can work together". Notice how she refers to "our way", how such events allowed Muslims to present themselves to the wider community ("because they just hear about us on the news"). These events were perceived as spaces of contestation of the negative representation. Another interesting element of this extract is the identity shift from an "us" as Muslims to a "we" as society, which denotes the recurrent motif of inclusion identified in the analysis. The extract suggests a shared sense of building collective efficacy, not only as Muslims but as society. Note how the repetition of "we can" seems to have an affirmative power and seeks to reinforce the belief in people's ability to come together as members of society, to achieve collective goals, to live together in peace, despite their differences. This belief was also shared by some other participants, particularly the older ones. Finally, Khalida's account, like many others, conveys a sense of achievement and satisfaction, which increases her self-esteem, sense of belonging and continuity individually and collectively. Continuity here refers to maintaining a sense of endurance with what it means to be Muslim and to be part of society.

In a similar vein, interviewees shared an extended perception that it was their moral responsibility as Muslims to "*get out there and mixing with society because*

there's so much good that you could do by getting out there" (Thanaa). However, there seems to be two main views on the roles that Muslims should adopt within society, particularly when so-called Islamic terrorist attacks happen.

On the one hand, several participants thought that Muslims should be involved and promote contact, but they did not have to adopt an apologetic tone or condemn the attacks.

> *Rasha: I feel like, before 9/11 happened, we were going in the right direction in this country (...) Then 9/11 happened, just everything just went upside down. And all of a sudden, straightaway, from then to now, if everything is viewed through the lens of terrorism, in a way I don't have to apologise for what terrorists do, it's not my job. To reach out more, to join people together, to be like a bridge between people.... that stuff is, I think, a role that Muslims can play. (...) we've been reaching out and I'm bringing people in. I think it's just about us inviting people into our mosques, because in a way it's an easy way; it's nice and that's exactly what the mosque should be doing. But we need to go out as well, into other people's places. We need to do work with people, we need to clean our streets together. We need to cook food for the homeless together. We need to organize the food banks together. We need to be doing that stuff, together, which seems so obvious. But up to now, Muslims have been a bit absent in that stuff ...*

Like some other interviewees, Rasha called for social solidarity as a response to the divisive climate to bring people together. It is also noticeable how she shifts collective identities, "we" as Muslims and "we" as society, almost indistinctively. As discussed earlier (8.5.2.1.), mobilising higher collective identities was a strategy used by participants to contest their representations. Rasha also refers to the Islamic duty of Muslims to reach out (being "bridges") and to enter into "other people's places". In so doing, the extract seems to convey this shared sense of collective efficacy and esteem.

Rasha's extract also serves to illustrate a pattern of resistance towards social expectations and trends where Muslims seem to be expected to condemn so-called Islamic terrorist attacks. Some participants expressed their resistance to engage in apologies or movements of condemnation on social media or public performances. For example, Yusraa questioned how Christians were not expected to condemn Christian fundamentalists for their religiously motivated attacks, like the Finsbury Park Mosque incident or the Kentucky shooting. For these interviewees, to participate in trends of collective apology or condemnation felt like reifying the narratives, where they would appear as somehow responsible for being Muslims.

> *Majeeda: I don't go on my social media accounts and condemn such attacks because I feel like, the moment that I do, it means that I'm playing to the whole 'I'm so sorry but it wasn't me.' Like, it actually wasn't me. Like why you are blaming my whole religion?*

This extract conveys the frustration shared by some participants when expected to apologise or speak for terrorists. Notice how she refuses to "play" along with the attributed and expected identity. Majeeda refuses to be singled out as a Muslim in the contexts of terrorism, by disengaging herself. Interestingly, her disengagement could be interpreted as part of her passiveness as Muslim, within the social dominant misrepresentation of Muslim women. Yet, as the extract reveals some participants by disengaging themselves, were in fact, resisting social expectations. Combined, these individualised actions present a specific collective identity, detached from terrorism, which can also be considered to be indicative of collective power.

On the other hand, several participants felt that they had to engage socially to show Muslims' opposition to terrorism and to promote solidarity. These participants felt they had to present "*the alternative Muslim, to what is portrayed to the media*" (Khalida). For some, it was perceived as a part of their Islamic duty of

representation (discussed earlier in 8.5.2.1.). For instance, Batool described her attendance at a vigil for the terrorist attacks organised by the council of her town:

> *Batool: We went in solidarity for a prayer there, with our community, and it is sad that these things are happening. But then it is important that we show that British stand with British Muslim women and men. You know we want to stand in solidarity with everybody else. We are against the actual violence, which has nothing to do with Islam.*

Batool remarked on the importance of their presence as Muslims to stand together with non-Muslims in opposition to the attacks, as part of society. Like other participants, she sustained this need "to stand in solidarity" with others. It is interesting to point out how such a stance is also constructed as an opportunity to represent Muslims, Islam and its values ("against actual violence"). Several participants perceived solidarity events as opportunities to contest Muslims' representation, to assert their collective power by influencing other people's views. Thus, this extract also illustrates a shared perception that collective power also comes from a wider group not just Muslims or Muslim women.

This subtheme has captured how participants asserted their collective power, contesting the social prejudice around Muslims, by coming together with and as society.

8.6. Summary

The analysis revealed that participants understood collective power as bringing about change collectively, in society and in themselves. Their individual engagement towards improving their communities was also considered as part of a collective effort to improve their communities. For most participants, their power was informed by their religion. In particular, they strongly supported a social understanding of their religion, which motivated them to pursue social justice, to contribute to society, and to represent Islam and Muslims. A process of contestation

of individualised and literal reading of religion, sustained by most mosques, which marginalised women and neglected the social aspect of Islam, was also found.

The analysis also demonstrated how participants contested the negative social representation by (re)defining their collective identity in different ways. Similarly, it illustrated how participants, by coming together, supporting each other and empowering themselves, were building collective efficacy. Lastly, it also showed how participants also asserted their power by reaching out and attempting to influence other people's views around Muslims. The analysis found a process of building a politicised identity, where participants were gradually becoming more aware of the need to represent themselves to fight their misrepresentation and exclusion motivated by social prejudice and male-dominated communities.

8.7. Discussion

The present study was designed to examine British Muslim women's experiences and understandings of collective power in light of the results of the previous study where an absence around their understandings and experiences of collective power was identified. A phenomenological approach to power was adopted to better capture how power is experienced by British Muslim women in their own terms and avoid imposing dominant understandings of power, as it was already done in the previous study of this thesis and it was developed in Chapter 5.

Through a phenomenological approach to power, asking them to describe their social involvement in a recent event, showed that participants mainly understood collective power as coming together and bringing about social change in society and within themselves. For example, taking part in the campaign against the FIBA ban not only ended up being a success, but also increased participants' perception of collective self-esteem and collective efficacy. Similarly, several women expressed how their participation in events that may not have any real impact (e.g., demonstrations) helped them to increase their sense of belonging, to express their

values or made them feel empowered. Previous research has already shown how social participation might enhance identity principles (Breakwell, 1986; Curtin et al., 2016; Vignoles et al., 2006), reaffirm identity (Simon, Trötschel & Dähne, 2008) and even help develop new identities altogether (Drury & Reicher, 2000).

Exploring their power experiences evoked a key finding, how British Muslim women's understanding of power was bringing about those changes and, at the same time, motivated by those changes. In so doing, it helped them represent themselves on their own terms and made them feel included, legitimated and empowered. Even their individual contributions, such as role modelling, were perceived as part of a collective effort to bring about change within themselves and their communities. This understanding of collective power resonates with Arendt's (1969), which described power as "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert" (p. 44), as well as notions of empowerment (Drury et al., 2014; Yuval-Davis, 1994; Werbner, 1999).

Furthermore, the phenomenological approach unveiled a remarkable finding, how most participants' actions were informed by a social understanding of religion. Sometimes they would explicitly refer to it while describing their participation, others when enquired about the role Islam played in their participation. The previous study had already shown how power was informed by their religious beliefs. Yet, the current study not only reinforced that finding but also revealed how Islam was perceived by participants as mainly a social-oriented religion that pursued social justice and solidarity. In this respect, many participants recounted having a long tradition of engagement and being involved in multiple actions informed by their religion. Their emphasis on the social aspect of Islam is crucial for understanding the ways in which they perceived and asserted power. Power seemed to be understood and experienced as largely collectively oriented, with these women favouring interdependent and collective forms of power, rather than individualistic ones.

Asking participants to describe their social involvement as well as their motivation to participate allowed the research to capture participants' accounts in

their own terms of how being Muslim was about being of service, supporting others, representing their religion and the Muslim community, and being socially involved, not only within their immediate communities but within wider society. For them, their involvement and pursuit of social justice was inherent in being Muslim. A few related to the notion of "da'wah", their obligation as Muslims to represent Islam and Muslim communities, which seemed to work as a reminder of their duty as well as their power to engage in any situation.

Most participants strongly resisted and contested individual and literal practices— practices they perceived as being sustained by male-dominated mosques, and primarily concerned with worship and donating money, while neglecting the social aspect of religion. In this respect, participants seemed to engage in a process of redefinition of Islam and (re)claim its social nature. With few exceptions, interviewees signalled how the mosques were failing at being the social hub to bring communities together and how they were capital in the exclusion of women and families. In resisting individualistic practices and emphasising the social nature of Islam, they seemed to be also engaging in a process of identity affirmation (Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007), enhancing ingroup distinctiveness (Breakwell, 1986) as a way to present themselves strategically and contest their marginalisation within their communities.

This prevalent understanding of power as collectively oriented favouring interdependent and collective forms of power identified may help to reassess the findings of the previous study (Chapter 7). It allows to reconsider ways in which participants may have experienced and perceived their collective power, as individual engagement for collective goals. Similarly, it supports the interpretation that participants' mobilisation of individual accounts of power was a collective strategy to contest the social prejudice around their group. It also reinforces the assessment that power is mainly perceived as interdependent, as for most participants their actions were collectively oriented. Therefore, it demonstrates that power is culturally

informed by showing that the prevalent understanding of power is that of a collective effort to help others and to make an impact, following their Islamic faith.

Another finding that sprang from the adoption of a phenomenological approach concerned the participants' awareness of the dominant negative social representation around their group, throughout their description of their participation and particularly when enquired about how they thought their experience was reflected the general public views of British Muslim women. Similarly, most participants claimed British Muslim women had been deprived of their socio-political representation by their communities and the wider society. Nevertheless, they also explained that many women were and had been actively building networks of support, bringing about social change, helping and empowering others and improving their local communities. The phenomenological approach showed how this notion of support was informed by Islam and perceived as part of their duty and responsibility as Muslims.

Furthermore, participants hold the perception that younger women were becoming more outspoken, claiming their representation, their goals and their rights not only within society but also within many of the Muslim communities, which was also indicative of social change. Considering their awareness of their shared grievances (e.g., lack of representation), their social involvement, motivations and perception of their collective identity, these findings suggest that the British Muslim women interviewed seemed to be performing and developing a politicised collective identity (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). That is, that most of the participants' social engagement in political action was on behalf of their group as British Muslim women. Developing a political collective identity matters because it is crucial to motivate collective action and social change. For example, collective civil rights action, feminism and LGBT+ movements have challenged discrimination and prejudice. This notion is different from merely sharing a collective identity because its emphasis is on power and the awareness of the struggle for power between groups. In the case

of British Muslim women, it is a struggle to represent themselves on their own terms and to achieve their collective goals.

Adopting a phenomenological approach to power also enabled to explore the relationship between their power, their identity and the available systems of representation. In this respect, asking them to explain a recent event they had got involved and then another one (e.g., national, local) where Muslims had been at the centre, in order to make their Muslim identity salient, showed how participants asserted their collective power, contesting their negative social representation and exclusion, in three main ways: redefining and affirming their collective identity by adopting different strategies; coming together to bring about change to themselves and their communities; and reaching out and coming together as one society. These three ways will now be discussed.

Firstly, participants seemed to engage in a process of (re)definition and reaffirmation of their collective identity as agents of social change. Participants described their engagement with many other women in multiple types of social action, from women's groups to vigils to international campaigns. This diversity contributes to previous research on women's social action (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995a; Lewicki & O'Toole, 2017). Participants' awareness of their own representative deprivation seemed to motivate them to represent themselves (van Zomeren et al., 2012). Thus, they adopted different identity strategies, such as refusing available representations and presenting themselves as active and social agents ("pillars of their communities"), questioning the agenda of their misrepresentation, mobilising more inclusive categories (e.g., humans or women), speaking out, self-differentiating themselves from other women, and downplaying their Muslim identity through their identity presentation. Some of these strategies like self-differentiation or relating to overreaching categories to contest the stereotype (e.g., humans) are consistent with previous research on British Muslims (Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002; Ryan, 2011) and collective action (Drury et al., 2003). All these strategies are indicative of how participants asserted their collective power, redefining their identity. Likewise, they

helped them to increase their collective efficacy, esteem, distinctiveness and continuity (Breakwell, 1986, 2014).

This identity redefinition can be read as part of a minority group contesting the stereotype, but also asserting their power (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Breakwell, 1986, 2014). In a similar vein, as identified in the previous studies (Chapters 6 & 7), in many instances participants presented British Muslim women and themselves in agentic ways, as “active women”, “working” and “achieving”. It has already been argued (Chapters 6 & 7) that this depiction, despite seeking to challenge their social representation, also reified the stereotype around other women who might not work or be educated. Some participants related to their groups of reference, with whom they shared not only a collective identity but also similar views (e.g., social orientation). This finding supports recent research that shows how identification with opinion-based groups predicts social action (Hartley et al., 2016; McGarty et al, 2009). It also has links with issues of class and might be a result of the particular sample. As stated, most participants were highly educated and employed. This finding reinforces the importance of examining British Muslim women’s power by adopting an intersectional identity approach (Greenwood, 2012; Hopkins, Kahani-Hopkins & Reicher, 2006) that pays attention to class and ethnicity. In addition, it alerts of the need to examine participants’ boundaries of their collective identities, as it might be reproducing the same patterns of exclusion that they are trying to challenge.

Within this first strategy to contest the negative stereotype by engaging in processes of identity construction, two more findings will now be elaborated. The first is how some participants resisted being represented by a single category (as British Muslim women), especially in terms of success. They perceived that such a portrayal excluded them from the social norm, by tokenising them in ways that lessened their achievements and success, and, accordingly, their collective and individual self-esteem and efficacy. This collective contestation of their negative social representation and their claim for inclusion was also indicative of power

(Breakwell, 2001). This finding links with the findings of the first study (Chapter 6), where it was identified that minority sources celebrated British Muslim women's success and achievements. Yet participants stated that they wanted their Muslimness to be part of the narrative, not the narrative. The second finding is that, despite their multiple social involvements, only a few participants — younger ones — related to activism or being an activist. For example, older participants defined themselves through what they did, which resonates with Andrew's (1991) longstanding political activist research. A potential interpretation could be that, for participants, their involvement was part of their identity as Muslims, "to be is to do and to do is to be" (Simon, 2009, p. 223). Hence, what would qualify as activism for participants was not a different category but an essential part of being Muslim and it informed their enactment of collective identity.

Secondly, another trend unveiled that British Muslim women were contesting their exclusion and representations by coming together to bring about change to themselves and their communities. Participants seemed to be undergoing their own processes of realisation of how they, and other British Muslim women, were and had been marginalised by their communities and deprived of their own social representation. This realisation seemed to be motivating a process of consciousness raising and social change (Breakwell, 1986; Wright, 2010). Most women advocated for the need to change the current status quo, in which sexism, misogyny and regressive cultural understandings were constraining their social participation.

Participants were actively creating or taking part in events for women of all sorts. A common theme found in most accounts was support — how they had supported each other over the years and had the will to support and empower themselves, despite the different nature of their engagements and motivations (e.g., businesswomen's groups or social gatherings at the mosque). This theme of support was articulated as part of their Islamic beliefs and what it meant for participants to be a Muslims. In this respect, the phenomenological approach unveiled a shared perception of the lack of spaces for women to come together, both in mosques and

in public and formal arenas, was also identified. Thus, some participants, similar to those in the Lewicki and O'Toole (2017) study, advocated for creating those spaces themselves. Participants appeared to be recruiting and organising themselves to build networks of support. Their awareness of the need to bring people into the process to change communities speaks of a collective experience, rather than an individual one. They followed bottom-up processes, respectful of individuals' own processes of involvement and development. This approach was perceived as totally opposing the one adopted by the government, which promotes top-down empowerment. Adopting Simon and Oakes' (2006) identity-based approach to power, this will to involve other women can be interpreted as a process of gaining social power by recruiting other Muslim women's agency, in an attempt to improve the conditions of the group.

These women's encounters and groups seemed to work as "consciousness-raising groups" (Breakwell, 1986, p. 133), "which are essentially in the business of revising the social representations of a social position which the individual may have learnt previously". That is, they seemed to come together to share their experiences, express themselves and create new connections. In this respect, the analysis suggested that participants were not only building collective efficacy (Bandura, 1982, 1997, 2000) but the basis of a politicised collective identity (Alberici & Milesi, 2016; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Thomas & Louis, 2014). Discussing their concerns, politics and individual ideas with others helped them transform subjective perceptions into socially validated ones, organise themselves and define their goals and how to achieve them.

The phenomenological approach enabled to show how, for example, the preference of "women only" coming together was not framed in terms of gender segregation or religious modesty, despite occasional cases. Following participants' interpretations of those instances, it seemed to connect more with a need for them to express themselves and have spaces in which to do so. This finding resonates with intergroup relations research (Dixon et al., 2005), which demonstrated how minority

groups (here, British Muslim women) organise themselves in their own ways to face unequal situations without dominant groups (Muslim men and the non-Muslim wider society). Thus, the finding could be evoking Durrheim and Dixon's (2018) work, which advocated for addressing and respecting disadvantaged groups' perceptions of contact, even if it appears from an outsider standpoint, a form of self-exclusion, as it is the only means of equal power relations.

Asking participants to describe their participation in social events also showed how social media was identified as a vital enhancer of women's power. All participants related to examples of how it facilitated their involvement and how it had helped to raise their political awareness (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002; Jost et al., 2018), such as organising collections and women's groups through WhatsApp or Facebook or raising awareness on Twitter. Social media was conceptualised as a space that allowed British Muslim women to express themselves, given the scarcity of spaces and communities of support. Previous research (Curtin & McGarty, 2016) argued that online participation precedes physical participation. In this respect, the current study contributes to this line of research by showing how, for participants, social media played an important role alongside physical involvement. For participants, their engagement was inseparable from their social relations and support, as identified in Joly & Wadia (2017). It motivated and ensured their participation in communities online and offline. For participants, their sense of community and support also increased their collective efficacy (Bandura, 2000). Thus, they felt confident in their capacity to influence society through both their online and offline social participation. Regarding obstacles, participants pointed at misogyny and sexism experienced at multiple levels and in multiple contexts, as well as social exclusion and prejudice, and attributed identities and expectations, which intertwined, limited and obstructed their social involvement and power. These findings are consistent with previous research (Becker & Wright, 2011; Joly & Wadia, 2017; Nyhagen, 2015;).

Thirdly, the last trend around these women contesting their social prejudice saw them reach out and come together as one society. Many interviewees perceived it was very important to engage socially with the wider society, and not only with their Muslim communities. Mostly, they perceived their involvement with non-Muslims as an opportunity to reduce the prejudice around their group (e.g., street markets or one-to-one interaction), to promote citizenship and cooperation and to build collective efficacy (Bandura, 1982) as society. Thus, they seemed to engage in solidarity processes, following Islamic beliefs, that they believed facilitated the generalisation of positive attitudes around their group as a whole, changing dominant views. Their engagement in these processes of social influence is also indicative of their collective power (Turner, 2005).

Furthermore, participants constructed their need to reach out and get socially involved in terms of religious moral obligation. Previous research has also presented how Muslims engage in processes of representation of their faith and culture in the intergroup dynamic (Alberici & Milesi, 2016; Hopkins et al., 2007b; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002; Kinnvall & Nesbitt-Larking, 2011b; Ryan, 2011). However, the novelty in the current study was participants' emphasis on the proactive attitude towards the representation process, which was divided. Some participants were resistant to engage in apologetic movements, particularly after terrorist attacks, when people and especially Muslims are expected to condemn such events. They felt their role was to reach out, promote dialogue and build bridges. Others, meanwhile, perceived that, as Muslims, they had to represent the alternative and condemn the events. They felt they needed to represent the goodness of Muslims and Islam as a religion of peace. These findings also support previous research on prejudice (Dixon et al., 2016; Wright & Baray, 2012) about the likelihood of disadvantaged individuals to challenge an unfair system. While the participants of the first type were more encouraged to challenge the unfair system, the second type seemed more inclined to avoid any kind of conflict.

In conclusion, adopting a phenomenological approach to power depicted how British Muslim women experienced power as collectively oriented, developing civic and political consciousness (Breakwell, 1986; Greenwood, 2008; Wright, 2010) and capacity for active citizenship (Werbner, 2000). It also showed how these women were gradually becoming more aware of their exclusion and misrepresentation, but more importantly, how they were developing a politicised collective identity (Simon & Klandermans, 2001) and building their collective efficacy (Bandura, 2000). The phenomenological approach also unveiled how they asserted their collective power by identifying themselves as capable of bringing change in themselves and their communities, by representing themselves and by seeking to influence other people's views. In this way, they seemed to be actively gaining social power and legitimising their voices as part of the public arena (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Spears et al., 2010). Ultimately, this study showed a process of social change, motivated from within where British Muslim women continue and increase this pattern of empowering themselves and bringing change in their communities.

8.8. Limitations of the study

In this study, like in the previous one, a phenomenological approach to power was adopted. The focus was on everyday social participation and civic engagement by British Muslim women. It provided a unique approach to everyday life experiences of intergroup relations (Dixon et al., 2005). However, as explained earlier (Chapter 5), potential critics may consider that this approach gives to much freedom to participants to account themselves as well as their subjectivities, neglecting the social context.

Another potential limitation relates to the study's sample. Even though the study did not aim to be representative, participants were highly educated and employed, as described in the Method section (8.4.). Thus, the study fails to represent women with different backgrounds, such as the uneducated or unemployed.

As discussed in the previous study, and in the Chapter 5: Methodology, another limitation might lie in the interview process, particularly in the researcher's own identity and characteristics in relation to participants (Barreto et al., 2003; Klein & Azzi, 2001). This may have impacted their responses, as they may have positioned me as an outgroup member (as scholar, as non-Muslim, and as non-British).

8.9. Future research

This study focused only on women's experiences, adopting a feminist approach. Yet future research could explore Muslim men's perceptions and experiences of collective power and social change and, more importantly, their perception of British Muslim women's power. During the interviews, Muslim men were sometimes constructed as an advantaged group by their female counterparts, who dominated most Muslim communities. This research would contribute to a better understanding of the intersectionality of gender and power relations.

Future research could also investigate whether the findings are supported through another methodology. Potentially, a quantitative approach could explore not only whether the findings generalise across the population, but also provide detailed evidence of British Muslim women's social participation, still under researched (Joly & Wadia, 2017).

In the study, interviewees expressed multiple feelings around their power experiences, such as joy, belonging and anger. Future research could examine the role and effect of emotion in women's power, and how it links with their Islamic values (such as modesty and peace). Radke et al. (2016) argued that women might struggle to express anger due to internalised sexism. Hence, it is fair to predict that they are less likely to engage in anger group-based collective action, which is a stronger predictor (van Zomeren et al., 2012). Thus, further research needs to provide more gender-diverse examinations of collective action and power that give account of British Muslim women's diversity and the role of emotion and its effect.

This study has contributed to the provision of collective identity presentation and construction dynamics. In the findings, it was highlighted how few participants identified as activists. It was illustrated that, for most of them, what would qualify as being an activist was bound up in their Muslim identity. Future research could examine their perceptions around meanings and boundaries of activism and how it related to their identities. Following previous research (Hartley et al., 2016; Louis et al. 2016), future studies could examine their understandings and perceptions of activism and its implications. For example, Rasha expressed that British Muslim women had been excluded from the feminist movement. Thus, this line of questioning could also examine intergenerational differences and perceptions of social change.

Another aspect highlighted in the findings was how participants reached out and promoted intergroup contact with wider society. They emphasised how they preferred contact experiences on their own terms. This finding followed Dixon et al. (2005) and Durrheim and Dixon (2018) who researched the meanings of contact for participants. In that vein, future research would benefit from examining British Muslim women's experiences and meanings of contact.

Finally, future research might benefit from examining how social media might be an enhancer of British Muslim women's social power. Recent research has demonstrated how social media facilitates political protest (Jost et al., 2018), but only a few examples have been found concerning Muslim women (Agarwal et al., 2011; Leurs et al., 2012). Besides, the analysis suggested intergenerational differences. There was a shared perception among participants that social media was the main field of younger Muslim women's involvement. Yet, when talking with participants, all were actively engaged in social media. It might be the case that the difference is more qualitative than quantitative, where younger participants engage with wider and multiple sources (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat) while older participants prefer the practical aspect (e.g., WhatsApp groups or Facebook) to keep themselves connected, and for support.

8.10. Socio-political implications

In addition to the provision of some direction for future research, this study makes four major contributions to the social psychology of power and to the understandings of British Muslim women's power.

First, the phenomenological approach to power has proven successful to encourage participants' reflections on their collective power experiences. More importantly, it helped to illustrate a process of building a politicised identity and gaining social power by engaging in processes of identity construction and representation of these women's collective identity. Furthermore, a phenomenological approach informs about their motivations, experiences and perceptions around their own power. This is crucial to inform future social policy oriented towards supporting Muslim communities.

Second, this study contributes to previous research on Muslims' identity construction (Hopkins et al., 2007b; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Blackwood et al., 2015) by contributing to the gap in research on British Muslim women (Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Lewicki & O'Toole, 2017). It increases understanding on the different ways in which British Muslim women understand and perform collective power; in particular, how they challenge the negative social representation and prejudice around their group and their power (Breakwell, 2001) by redefining it, promoting social change and influencing other people's views.

Third, this research contributes to social psychological research on collective action and social change (Durrheim & Dixon, 2018; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Mummendey et al., 1999; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren et al., 2012) by showing how British Muslim women are building their politicised identity and are engaged in an ongoing process of civic and political conscious raising, motivated by the gradual realisation of their socio-political deprivation, and the need to represent themselves to contest their misrepresentation and exclusion. These findings can

inform future research by increasing understandings on the psychological processes that motivate people to act in ways that challenge the status quo (Dixon et al., 2016), building collective efficacy. Additionally, these findings can help future social policy interested in exploring what kind of support social institutions can provide to Muslim communities, and especially to British Muslim women.

Fourth, the process of bottom-up empowerment identified — in which participants were building networks of support and providing other women with opportunities to develop themselves — was consistent with previous research (Drury & Reicher, 2005; Werbner, 2000) that established this process as the way to pursue social change. As participants recounted, their perception of empowerment contrasted and contested policies of empowerment around their group, instigated by the British government (e.g., Prevent) that followed top-down approaches. This finding might inform future social policy to ensure its effectiveness.

Furthermore, the current study advances the argument of the overall thesis in showing how power is culturally informed. The analysis showed that participants, in following a social understanding of their religion, asserted their collective power in different ways. The study allows us to entertain the consideration that individual accounts of power (found in the previous study) and the collective enactment of power (displayed in the current study) are not different conceptualisations of the same subject, but rather part of a collective effort to construct identities on their (the participants) own terms, which emanates from both individual and collective actions.

8.11. Conclusion of Chapter 8.

This study set out to examine collective power, following up on the findings of the previous interview study, where participants talked about their experiences of power mainly in individual terms, and barely invoked their collective identity and power. The analysis comprised 21 semi-structured interviews with British Muslim

women about their social participation and civic engagement, making salient their collective identity. Its key contributions are as follows:

- Participants understood collective power as coming together and bringing change in society and in themselves. Interestingly, it was also found how participants also related to their individual actions as part of a collective effort to bring social justice and improve the conditions of their group. This finding helps to understand the findings of the previous study, where participants may have been asserting power individually, but also collectively, through their individual engagement.
- Their power was informed by a strong social understanding of their religion. The findings of this study advance the general argument of the overall thesis: that power is contextualised and culture specific (Lukes, 2005; Mahmood, 2005; Torelli & Shavitt, 2010).
- Participants engaged in processes of (re)definition of their religion and challenged individualised understandings of Islam, which excluded women and families, by reclaiming its social nature.
- The analysis also suggests a process of gaining politicised identity (Simon & Klandermans, 2001), where participants were raising collective awareness of their own power (Breakwell, 1986), building collective efficacy (Bandura, 2000) and trying to change and (re)define the negative social representation around their group by coming together.
- The phenomenological approach adopted was successful in illustrating how these women assert their collective power in ways that make sense to them, challenging the stereotype around their group in diverse ways.

Chapter 9.

Discussions and Conclusions

"I do not wish them [women] to have power over men;
but over themselves."
Mary Wollstonecraft (1792/2014)

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even
when her shackles are very different from my own."
Audre Lorde (1929/2017, p. 117)

9.1. Introduction

This thesis set out to research British Muslim women's power relations, drawing on social psychology research using feminist qualitative methods. It argued that Westernised understandings of power, which neglect gender and enhance autonomy, might fail to comprehend the complexity of British Muslim women's power relations. It adopted a combined theoretical framework of identity process theory (IPT) (Breakwell, 1986, 2010; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2014) and social representations theory (SRT) (Duveen, 1993; Moscovici, 1976/2008, 1988, 2001) for identity purposes and a relational approach to power (Allen, 1998; Guinote, 2008, 2017; Reicher, 2016). To assist in this examination, a phenomenological approach to power was adopted. Three main questions led this research endeavour:

- How do British Muslim women understand, experience and perform power?
- How does their power and identity inform/impact each other?
- How do their own and other's actions, identities and systems of representation sustain and transform power relations?

This final chapter will offer a summary of the findings and will discuss the contribution of the research in different sections. First, the results of the empirical studies will be outlined. Theoretical, empirical and methodological implications of the thesis will then be outlined in four main sections, where the findings will be tied to existing theory and research. The following section will offer an assessment of the limitations of this thesis and directions for future research. In the final two sections, implications for social policy and practice will be provided, along with a final word about this research.

9.2. Summary of Results

To explore how British Muslim women understand, experience and perform power relations, three empirical studies were conducted in this thesis. **The first study (Chapter 6)** examined the representational landscape around British Muslim women's power in the British press from national, local and ethno-religious sources. Drawing on SRT (Moscovici, 1976/2008, 1988), the thematic analysis of the data showed a prevalent objectification of power as choice across all sources. Yet British Muslim women's choices were problematised and portrayed as bad choices or no choices by dominant sources. Examining the process of anchoring revealed how power was anchored in barriers. Careful examination showed how this anchoring sustained a depiction of these women as lacking agency in dominant representations. Likewise, the analysis revealed how minority representations challenged dominant representations of barriers; in particular, the misrepresentation of Muslim women. Finally, it also unveiled an alternative representation in minority sources that portrayed these women speaking out; and celebrating their success and social contribution. This alternative representation contested the dominant representation and was indicative of social change. However, it was argued that it was still a very narrow representation that could potentially exclude women who might not work or develop a career, reifying the stereotype around British Muslim women as oppressed. This study captured the cognitive polyphasia of available media representations concerning British Muslim women's power. In so doing, it provided a glimpse of the

representational landscape that future participants could mobilise, reproduce, contest or redefine in their everyday lives when constructing their identities and asserting their power.

The second empirical study (Chapter 7) involved a qualitative analysis of 21 semi-structured interviews conducted with British Muslim women of three age groups (18-20; 25-32; and 37-51). Adopting a combination of IPT (Breakwell, 1986) and SRT (Moscovici, 1976/2008, 1988) — as explained in Chapter 3 — the interviews focused on these women's power experiences in their everyday lives. In also adopting a phenomenological approach to power, it was unexpectedly found that participants mainly related to individualised notions of power, such as autonomy and control, which seemed to reproduce neoliberal narratives and coexisted with a collective orientation on helping others. Patterns of independency and interdependency were found across all groups. It was argued that their understandings of power were evidence of how power is culturally informed, combining Western (individualistic) and Islamic (collectivistic) values. It was also shown how asserting power in different ways had different impacts on their identities — for example, an increase in self-esteem (Breakwell, 1986). The analysis also revealed that participants contested the stereotype around their group in multiple ways, mainly individually, that were indicative of social creativity. Similarities and differences across the different age groups were also highlighted.

Interestingly, the study unveiled an absence of collective power assertions. Despite all participants mentioned the prejudice around their group, they barely invoked their collective identity or suggested actions that would change the negative social perception around their group. The prevalent individualised assertion of power was interpreted as part of a collective identity strategy to contest the predominant negative social representation around their group.

Considering those unexpected findings around individualised forms of power, **the last empirical study (Chapter 8)** focused on the examination of collective power by making salient their group identity and situations where these women participate

in collective action. For that purpose, 21 semi-structured interviews with British Muslim women were conducted around their social participation and civic engagement. The thematic analysis showed that participants conceptualised collective power as coming together and bringing change in society and in themselves. Participants also related to their individual actions as part of a collective effort to bring social justice and improve the conditions of their group. Their power was informed by a strong social understanding of their religion. They challenged individualised understandings of Islam, which excluded women and families, by reclaiming its social nature. The analysis also revealed a process of gaining politicised identity, where participants were raising collective awareness of their own power, building collective efficacy and trying to change and redefine the negative social representation around their group by coming together.

9.3. Theoretical, Empirical and Methodological Implications

9.3.1. How do British Muslim women understand, experience and perform power?

One of the main aims of this thesis was to examine how British Muslim women understand, experiences and perform power. It was argued that Western theories of power that emphasise individualism failed to understand British Muslim women's power (Chapter 4). The phenomenological approach showed that participants understood power in ways that combined Western and British values, their religious beliefs and their personal values. As it will be developed in this section, participants seemed to mobilise individualised assertions of power (Chapter 7) reproducing available representations (Chapter 6) to collectively contest the stereotype around their group. A further exploration of these findings (Chapter 8) illustrated that these women understood their power assertions interpedently as part of a collective effort to (re)define their representation informed by their Islamic beliefs.

The analysis of the British press conducted to capture the representational landscape around British Muslim women's power (Chapter 6) exposed a consensus around representing these women's power in terms of choice. However, choice is at

the centre of a neoliberal ideology (Gill, 2016b; McNay, 2009; McRobbie, 2008) that emphasises individualism. Likewise, choice is the epitome of Western agency and female emancipation (Bracke, 2008; Madhok et al., 2013; Salem, 2013) that relates to self-interest and independent action. Interestingly, the media analysis showed how dominant representations constructed these women's choices in terms of adopting British values, in ways that depicted them as lacking agency even when they were making their choices (e.g., being a house wife).

Thus, the questioning around British Muslim women's choices is part of a wider socio-political debate on the integration of Muslim people in the West, where women tend to be scrutinised and instrumentalised to serve political agendas rather than seen as pursuing their own interests (Joly & Wadia, 2017; Rashid, 2016). In fact, notions of choice are also mobilised in regard to migrants' acculturation. For example, Schwartz and colleagues (2010, 2014) showed how migrants' processes of acculturation were implied as a result of certain choices. Furthermore, questioning women's choices is not exclusive to Muslim women, but to women overall. As shown in previous research (Baker, 2008; Braun, 2009; Griffin et al., 2009), patriarchal views subject women to the expectations of having to justify their choices, which assists in undermining their interests and agendas.

The media study (Chapter 6) emphasised that power representations were dilemmatic and polyphasic, context-dependent and culturally informed (Jovchelovitch, 2007; Wagner et al., 2000). That is, it showed majority and minority representations of British Muslim women's power as either lacking agency and autonomy, due to barriers; or as successful and achieving, yet deprived of their own representation.

To test our argument that current theories were failing to understand these women's power, a phenomenological approach to power was adopted. This approach aimed to capture their power experiences in their own terms and avoid imposing dominant understandings, as detailed in Chapter 5. However, the first interview study (Chapter 7) did not show fundamentally different forms of power.

Participants of three different age groups invoked power experiences mainly in individual terms (e.g., choice, autonomy) and barely mentioned their group identity or collective actions that would lead to change the social perception and/or position of their group. In this respect, their accounts seemed to reproduce available social representations (SRs) identified in the media study (Chapter 6) around choice, personalising them (Breakwell, 2010).

This emphasis on individualism resonated with neoliberal ideology (Gill, 2007b; McNay, 2009; Rottenberg, 2014), which emphasises autonomy and self-development, as already stated. Also considered was the emphasis on self-development, which could have been motivated by their religion. Islam was particularly highlighted as a source of empowerment, identity and guidance in their lives, behaviour and social relations. This was consistent with previous research (Brown, 2006; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005; Woodhead, 2007, 2011). Yet a few participants also portrayed their religion as a constraint on their power relations, mainly due to cultural misinterpretations, a finding also supported by previous research (Dwyer, 2000; Joly & Wadia, 2017; Nyhagen, 2015).

However, the following interview study (Chapter 8), motivated by the lack of references to their collective assertions of power and identities, which also adopted a phenomenological approach, revealed that most participants understood power as coming together to bring about social change in society and in themselves. They asserted their collective power by identifying themselves as capable of bringing change in themselves and their communities, by representing themselves and by seeking to influence other people's views. This finding seemed to resonate with Arendt's (1970) power theorisation, "the human ability not just to act but to act in concert" (p. 44), as well as notions of empowerment (Drury et al., 2014; Yuval-Davis, 1994; Werbner, 1999). Participants seemed to be actively gaining social power and legitimising their voices as part of the public arena (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Spears et al., 2010).

More importantly, in their accounts, they highlighted how they also considered their individual contributions, such as role modelling, as part of their collective effort to bring about change. This finding shed some light on the findings of the previous study (Chapter 7), where it seemed as participants where mainly asserting power in individual terms. However, this perception of individual engagement as part of a collective effort allowed to reframe this individualistic trend identified. The previous participants that emphasised making an impact and helping others, may as well have perceived their individual engagement as part of a collective effort to make an impact. Likewise, it reinforces the interpretation of how the individual strategic presentation, identified in the previous study, could be read as a collective strategy to contest the collective prejudice and to redefine their representation.

Adopting a phenomenological approach also gave evidence on how these women's understandings and experiences of power relations were inseparable from their religion. The first interview study (Chapter 7) showed how Islam informed participants' agency, despite Western secular notions of agency, such as autonomy, control and independence being reproduced. For instance, some participants expressed autonomy even while they prioritised other people in their lives (e.g., family) and their religious duties over themselves. Thus, they asserted power in ways that might appear as oppressive or non-agentic to an outsider but were in fact indicative of power in terms of their religious values. This finding supports previous research that has shown how religious women might enact their agency in the light of their religious beliefs (Burke, 2012; Korteweg, 2008; Salem, 2013). Furthermore, performing agency in this way enhanced participants' self-esteem, continuity and distinctiveness (Breakwell, 1986). This finding is crucial in showing how power is culturally informed, and the need to examine individuals' social contexts following previous research (Lukes, 2005; Mahmood, 2005), as will be discussed later.

Participants emphasised vividly the social aspect of Islam in the second interview study (Chapter 8). These women engaged in a process of redefinition of

Islam as a social religion. In so doing, they asserted power collectively, redefining and pushing back their exclusion sustained by male-dominated mosques. They strongly criticised individual and literal practices sustained by most mosques, which were failing to create community, especially for women and families. This finding complements previous research on SRs and identity (Breakwell, 2010; Howarth et al, 2014), showing one of the multiple ways in which participants used available SRs to challenge their position and to (re)define their religion and identity.

When contrasting these findings with the relational approach to power described (Chapter 4), participants reproduced the different ways of asserting power provided (section 4.3.). In this sense, they had power to identify themselves (e.g., as social agents), to influence other people's views and attempting to change them (e.g., to challenge stereotypical views around their group through their identity presentation), power to control themselves (e.g., to rule their lives according to their values), power to create consensus (e.g., collective effort to challenge the stereotype) and power to obey, to adhere to their values and beliefs (e.g., making everyday life decisions based on their religious beliefs). Furthermore, the findings also illustrate how participants asserted power in various ways depending on the contexts. Different aspects of the ways in which participants asserted power will be elaborated further throughout this discussion chapter.

9.3.2. How does British Muslim women's power and identity inform/impact each other?

Questions of identity are central to power relations and this thesis has contributed to a wider understanding of them. Who British Muslim women think they are, how they define both themselves and the boundaries of their identities, and how others identify them proved to be key to their own understandings and experiences of power relations. Previous research has mainly adopted a social identity approach to research Muslim communities (Chapter 3). It has been argued that this approach neglects gender and also undermines other aspects of identity beyond their intergroup relations. The current research, combining SRT (Duveen, 1993; Moscovici,

1988, 2001) and IPT (Breakwell, 1986, 2001, 2010), and adopting a phenomenological approach to power, was not only able to capture how British Muslim women negotiate their power relations, individually and collectively, as it will be elaborated as follows, but also to show the meanings attached to their social practices and relations; the personal, religious and social values that motivate them; the interpretations and perceptions these women have about their power experiences; and the identity principles guiding those power assertions. In this sense, it is strongly believed that this theoretic-methodological approach adopted can complement and benefit social identity informed research in multiple ways. Thus, this thesis makes an original contribution to this body of literature on power and on British Muslim women and identity performance (Barreto et al., 2003; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Hopkins, Greenwood & Birchall, 2007; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Klein & Azzi, 2001).

Combining SRT and IPT and adopting a phenomenological approach was deemed a successful method to examine how these women construct, present and negotiate their identities by adopting, contesting or reinstating available social representations in ways that enhanced their identity principles (e.g., self-esteem). This thesis illustrated how survey participants adopted, personalised, contested and redefined available social representations to identify themselves and to suit their own interests. The first interview study (Chapter 7) illustrated how most participants of the younger and middle groups mobilised notions of success and achievement to attain a kind of proxy power, which seemed to reproduce the minority representations identified in the media study (Chapter 6). These participants seemed to engage in a process of redefinition of success for Muslim women, which escaped the traditional patriarchal Islamic view that reduced success to motherhood (Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2016; El Saadawi, 1982). However, this depiction was problematised as it translates into “the neoliberal fantasy that anything can be achieved if the correct disposition has been adopted” (Gilroy, 2013, p. 30). This individualised representation is problematic because it diminishes or completely ignores any structural inequal power relations (e.g., institutional racism or

Islamophobia) at stake. Furthermore, it poses the risk to reinstate the negative prejudice around women who might not be successful (not highly educated or seeking a career). Similarly, participants of the last study (Chapter 8) attempted to redefine their religion and their collective identity by engaging in processes of consciousness raising (Breakwell, 1986; Wright, 2010), which allowed them to revise the SRs available. These findings contribute to existing research by showing how individuals and groups have agency in personalising SRs for their own interests, sustaining, challenging and transforming them (Breakwell, 1993, 2010; Howarth et al., 2014; Staerklé et al., 2011).

Moreover, both findings illustrate patterns of social change in the representation of these women. This is important because, as previous research has shown, SRs have been strategically used to induce social change (Klein & Licata, 2003). Therefore, the indication is that amplifying the reach of these SRs could facilitate social change in British Muslim women's social perception, reducing the prejudice around them.

Another crucial aspect unfolded by the phenomenological approach adopted in both interview studies (Chapter 7 and 8) was how participants asserted power combining independent and interdependent ways, capturing participants' relational accounts. For example, the first interview study (Chapter 7) showed how several participants' assertions of power in every age group combined autonomy and interdependency; that is, in some contexts they asserted their power as independence from others (e.g., through education), while in other contexts they asserted their power interdependently (e.g., by prioritising others).

Furthermore, a collective orientation of participants' actions was found in both interview studies (Chapters 7 and 8). Many interviewees stated how their power assertions pursued not only individual benefit but, more importantly, collective orientation (e.g., helping others) following their religious beliefs. It was argued that this orientation resembled their religious values and their sense of duty ("da'wah") as Muslims to represent their religion and their communities. Thus, beyond asserting

their power to achieve their own goals, participants were also considering the implications for their significant others, their beliefs and their communities. This finding is consistent with previous research that showed how Muslim women in European countries pursue a common good beyond individual interests (Erel, 2016; Jouili, 2015).

Overall, the research showed how asserting power independently or interdependently served different identity purposes for these women — self-esteem, distinctiveness, continuity and uniqueness (Breakwell, 1986). Participants combined Western values (e.g., autonomy) that promote individualism (Singelis et al., 1995) with Islamic values that promote collectivism (Basabe & Ros, 2005), depending on the context. This finding contributes to previous cross-cultural research (Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003; Markus & Kitayama, 1991, 2010; Triandis, 1995; Utz, 2004) in showing how cultural influences, both Islamic and Western, converge in individual assertions of power. It supports the argument of the thesis that power is contextually and culturally informed.

The phenomenological approach also enabled to identify participants' identity presentation as strategic to contest the stereotype around their group. In presenting themselves as agentic and active, mobilising individual notions of power (Chapter 7), further exploration (Chapter 8) showed, they were in fact engaging in a collective effort to contest the stereotype through their identity presentation. This finding adds on to previous research on British Muslim's identity construction and presentation (Barreto et al., 2003; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Klein & Azzi, 2001), by showing how these women negotiated their stereotype collectively.

A deeper insight into these women's perceptions of their own power was also provided by undertaking the phenomenological approach to power. Perception of one's own power is important as it informs what we believe we are able to do. Participants of the first study (Chapter 7) mainly related to their personal power, which highlighted their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) in asserting themselves as well as supporting others. Yet given the absence of references to collective power, it was

argued that the emphasis on their self-efficacy was a strategy to contest the prejudice around their group, following Ozer and Bandura (1990). Contrastingly, in the following study (Chapter 8), participants shared a positive collective identity and collective efficacy (Bandura, 1982, 1997). Enquiry into British Muslim women's civic engagement shed light on a process of building up a politicised collective identity (Simon & Klandermans, 2001), where participants were engaging on behalf of their group to improve their condition and raise consciousness awareness. In other words, interviewees engaged as British Muslim women in the struggle against their social exclusion (within and outside their communities) on behalf of their group, while also reaching out to others in an attempt to influence their views. This finding confirms the existing model of Simon and Klandermans (2001) of politicised collective identity. Developing their collective identity, as for any other disadvantaged group, matters because it is crucial to motivate collective action and social change (Drury et al., 2014; Wright, 2010). This finding supports once more the interpretation that the individualised pattern identified in the previous study (Chapter 7) should be read as a strategic presentation as active agents to challenge the stereotype. Therefore, both studies (Chapter 7 and 8) showed how British Muslim women were actively engaging in processes to challenge their prejudice, which are indicative of their power. In addition, most participants of the study (Chapter 8) were actively involved in social organisations. Many perceived their involvement not as activism, but as part of their identity as Muslims, "to be is to do and to do is to be" (Simon, 2009, p. 223), which highlights the importance of unearthing the meanings given to social involvement when exploring social participation and power relations.

The thesis also showed how the (mis)representation of British Muslim women was a limitation of their power. As identified in the media study (Chapter 6), all participants in the interviews (Chapter 7 & 8) referenced everyday occurrences of misrepresentation in the media and in public debates, which translated into multiple experiences of Islamophobia, racism, misrecognition and exclusion. Dominant negative assumptions about them become a huge barrier to their power, by portraying them in stereotypical and constraining ways, failing to take into

consideration the real barriers they experience and, in some cases, having a negative impact on their own self-perception. This finding resonates with, and contributes to, literature on British Muslims (Barreto et al., 2010; Blackwood et al., 2012, 2015; Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013) that has shown how failing to be recognised or represented by others can translate into a threat (Breakwell, 1986). This finding is very important as it shows how constructions and representations of their identities and power relations have the potential to legitimise racism, exclusion and inequality. Ultimately, it shows how this representation has a negative impact on their capacity to act and to assert their power.

In conclusion, this identity framework (Breakwell, 2010; Howarth et al., 2014; Moscovici, 1988) allowed this thesis to approach British Muslim women as social agents with agency to sustain, challenge and resist dominant social representations, as well as to create alternatives, thus asserting their power.

9.3.3. How do their own and other's actions, identities and systems of representation sustain and transform power relations?

Given the social context of prejudice (Chapter 2), participants adopted different strategies to challenge the negative SRs around their group to gain self-esteem, distinctiveness and/or self-efficacy, and to maintain continuity (Breakwell, 1986). However, as shown in the analysis, depending on the strategies adopted, they were at risk of reinforcing the stereotype around other women. For example, in the first interview study (Chapter 7), individualised strategies were prevalent (Branscombe & Ellemers, 1998; Breakwell, 1986), where participants presented themselves as autonomous agents, following their religion. Within this identity presentation, some participants self-differentiated themselves from other women in their communities. In so doing, they were gaining self-esteem and distinctiveness, but were also reinforcing the stereotype around other women who did not pursue a career.

Furthermore, this prominence of individual identity strategies ran counter to previous work (Fischer et al., 2010) that indicated that Muslims are more inclined to choose collective coping strategies than those with alternative faiths. Yet it was argued that participants would have been positioned as representatives of their group, enhancing their sense of duty ("da'wah") by the effects of the interview, thus performing their identities in ways that contested the stereotype around their group, which was indicative of power. This finding supports previous research (Barreto et al., 2003; Hopkins et al., 2007b; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Klein & Azzi, 2001) that showed how individuals presented themselves in strategic ways to challenge the stereotype.

The study that followed (Chapter 8) provided insights into how these women contested the stereotype collectively, engaging in different processes such as: claiming their collective identity as agents of social change; coming together and promoting consciousness raising; and getting involved with non-Muslims. These processes increased their collective efficacy, esteem, distinctiveness and sense of continuity (Breakwell, 1986). This engagement in multiple processes of social influence was indicative of their collective power. Additionally, it contributes to the relational categorisation of power describer earlier (Chapter 4), enriching collective power assertions.

Furthermore, this thesis showed how the strategies adopted by participants were also indicative of how social inequality might limit their access to identity strategies. As shown above, negative SRs underpinned the dynamics of exclusion and othering, which limited participants' power. Yet resistance is possible, according to Duveen and Lloyd (1990), where individuals/groups oppose any attempt to influence their identity within the course of the communication of current social representations. For example, in the first study (Chapter 7), participants from the young and middle-age groups portrayed themselves as active agents, achieving their goals, reproducing the minority representations identified in the media study (Chapter 6) that contested dominant views and depicted British Muslim women as

achievers and successful. But some participants in the last study (Chapter 8) resisted this kind of representation, as they wanted their Muslimness to be part of the narrative, not the narrative. In this sense, they claimed for their social inclusion.

Overall, the thesis showed how participants within the interview setting resisted and contested social representations, personalising them (Breakwell, 2001), which was also indicative of power. This identity presentation strategy (as active and social agents) could be part of their religious duty of representing Islam through da'wah (Jouili, 2015; Kahani-Hopkins & Hopkins, 2002). As the phenomenological approach unveiled, some participants recounted they were very aware of and strategic about presenting themselves, particularly in those instances where they were the minority, as it was an opportunity to contest the stereotype and to transform the characteristics associated with their social group (Breakwell, 1986; Fiske, 1993; Hopkins et al., 2007b; Hopkins & Greenwood, 2013; Klein & Azzi, 2001). In so doing, they would not only enhance their self-esteem and self-efficacy (Breakwell, 1986), but also attempt to influence how the larger Muslim community was perceived and treated, increasing their collective self-esteem.

9.3.4. Researching power: a phenomenological approach to power.

In this thesis, power was understood as relational (Allen, 1998; Guinote, 2017; Reicher, 2016), rather than as influence and control over others (Chapter 4). Drawing on previous research, an illustrative conceptualisation on British Muslim women was provided in Chapter 4. Likewise, it was argued that non-feminist Western formulations of power and current research fail to comprehend British Muslim women's experiences in two main ways: by neglecting gender relations, which is crucial given that most research on Muslim communities disregard women's experiences (Joly & Wadia, 2017); and by focusing on the individual level through exploring notions of agency (Gill, 2007a; Madhok et al., 2013). Also presented was the argument that the misrepresentation of British Muslim women's power was mainly due to the fact that power is culturally informed; therefore, research and public debates miss the ways in which British Muslim women may enact power as it

escapes Western understandings of power that prioritise autonomy (Bracke, 2008; Mahmood, 2005).

In order to capture British Muslim women's power understandings and experiences, paying attention to their perceptions, meanings and motivations (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Mahmood, 2005) without imposing pre-existent dominant views on power, a phenomenological approach to power was adopted (explained in Chapter 5).

By asking participants about their power experiences in their everyday lives (Chapter 7) and about their social participation (Chapter 8), the phenomenological approach unveiled how these women understood and experienced power in ways that combined British and Western values, Islamic beliefs and personal attributes, depending on the context. In this respect, the phenomenological approach assisted in demonstrating how power is culturally informed. That is, that power relations are not only informed by the context but also participants' identities and cultures.

Furthermore, the phenomenological approach adopted allowed to examine their understandings and experiences without imposing pre-existent dominant understandings of power that could potentially have undermined or misrepresented their own experiences. In this respect, rather than asking them about specific understandings of power, I asked them to describe their power experiences in their everyday life (Chapter 7) and to describe their social involvement in a recent event. In both instances, participants were encouraged to choose the examples/settings they wanted to discuss and follow-up questions were posed. Thus, adopting a phenomenological approach to power, the thesis thus valued/accepted/followed/ adhered to the importance of examining social contexts, cultural values, systems of meaning attached and ideology behind power relations (Abu-Lughod, 1990; Breakwell, 1986, 2010; Mahmood, 2005; Reicher, 2016).

Adopting a phenomenological approach to power also enabled the capture of not only their experiences and accounts, but also their silences and the "unsaid"

(Finlay, 2014, p. 135). In the first interview study (Chapter 7), it was identified an absence of refences to collective power and identity. This finding was interpreted as part of their collective identity performance to contest the negative stereotype around their group. In this sense, participants seemed to be presenting themselves as autonomous and independent, reproducing the predominant representation of power depicted in the media study (Chapter 6), in a collective effort to challenge the stereotype and redefine their representation. To examine this finding further, the second interview study (Chapter 8) focused on British Muslim women's social engagement in order to examine their collective experiences of power. Adopting a phenomenological approach in this follow-up study unveiled how participants perceived their individual and collective actions as collective assertions of power to bring about social change, improving their communities and society.

Combining SRT and IPT assisted in capturing processes of influence and legitimisation that reproduce and maintain certain representations (e.g., what it means to be powerful/have power) while undermining others (e.g., British Muslim women's power). Thus, the thesis showed that, when adopting dominant systems of representation, as illustrated in the media study (Chapter 6), these women could potentially be perceived as lacking agency, being powerless or having false consciousness. This finding draws on previous research (Howarth et al., 2014; Joly & Wadia, 2017; Mahmood, 2005) that has shown how members of marginalised or disadvantaged groups might be more likely to be misrepresented or fail to be recognised. Yet the interview studies (Chapter 7 and 8), in adopting a phenomenological approach and attending to their own systems of beliefs, values, meanings and social contexts, showed how they were acting in ways that were indicative of power.

This examination of power adopting a phenomenological approach allowed to explore participants' power relations while attending to the psychological processes involved in their identity construction and contestation of the stereotype around their group. It has been shown how participants engaged in individual and

collective identity strategies to contest the stereotype and (re)define their representation in different contexts.

Lastly, it is my view that if this research combining SRT and IPT would not have adopted a phenomenological approach to power, it could still potentially have allowed to examine some British Muslim women's power assertions and processes of identity construction and negotiation, yet it would not have been able to capture British Muslim women's understandings, experiences and performances of power in their own terms, focusing on their meanings, values and the contexts that inform their power relations.

Overall, the phenomenological approach to power of this research offers a novel contribution both theoretically and empirically. The thesis demonstrated that adopting a phenomenological approach was useful to capture British Muslim women's understandings and experiences of power in their own terms.

9.4. Limitations of the Thesis

This research has contributed to our understanding of power as intertwined with processes of identity construction. As with all research, however, it is presented with some limitations.

9.4.1. Sample and design.

Despite the sample being quite diverse in terms of ethnicity and even Muslim sects, it was nonetheless quite exceptional when compared with the wider population of British Muslim women. The aim of this thesis was not to be representative, but this sample can still be deemed limited. For both studies, the majority of the participants were higher education students or graduated professionals. Thus, the voices of unemployed women and stay-at-home mothers

were underrepresented. Similarly, most participants were living in London and Greater London, with a few from the Birmingham area at the time of the interview.

Similarly, issues around class were left unexplored, which may have had a huge impact on these women's experiences and opportunities (Jay, Muldoon & Howarth, 2018). Subjective social class influences social thought, emotion and behaviour (Kraus, Piff & Keltner, 2011). For example, perceptions of one's own lower or upper class may trigger different strategies to navigate the same environments as well as different priorities (e.g., self-interest) (Kraus, Piff & Keltner, 2009). Considering how subjective social-class rank influences social behaviour, and therefore power, this research would have benefited from adding questions, following the phenomenological approach to participants' perceived social class.

The thesis may also have benefitted from follow-up interviews conducted with the same participants in both studies. However, as was argued in Chapter 8, participants of the first study (Chapter 7) were invited to take part in the following one. Yet at that stage they all knew what the research was about and the ones who replied recused themselves, except for one, and then referred other people. Furthermore, the second study was motivated by the findings of the first, rather than being part of an original plan.

In considering the overall research design, a qualitative approach, in which thematic analysis was conducted, was applied throughout the whole thesis. This method was found ideal for the theoretical flexibility that the thesis demanded (Chapter 5). This commitment might be seen as missing an opportunity to apply Interpretative Methodological Approach (IPA) (Smith et al., 1999; Smith & Osborn, 2008). However, I believe that, considering the theoretical complexity of the thesis and the analytical intricacy of conducting an SRT media analysis, a three-group comparative analysis and another interview analysis, this method was effective to examine such rich data in consonance with the theoretical framework.

9.4.2. Phenomenological approach.

The phenomenological approach to power that the thesis adopted is not free of limitations, as argued in Chapter 5. Approaching power through subjective experiences might be seen as giving the subjects too much power to account for themselves, neglecting the wider context that might inform their experiences. In other words, critics may argue that some participants were actually unaware of their oppression, and therefore examples of false consciousness (Hirschkind & Mahmood, 2002; Jost, 2011; Meyerson, 1991). However, as has been shown in each study, by considering the accounts provided with the wider social debates, this approach allowed the thesis to demonstrate how women were performing power in multiple ways that ejected assumptions of false consciousness.

9.4.3. Interviews on and analysis of power dynamics.

As was already argued (Chapter 5), any research involves power dynamics. As Khawaja and Mørck (2009) emphasised, the key aspect is "the constant awareness of and reflection on the multiple ways in which one's positioning as a researcher influences the research process" (p. 28). In the Methodology chapter, I reflected on my own positioning (as a non-Muslim, non-British, white, etc.) and how it could influence the interview process and the data analysis. For some readers, my positioning as an outsider could have motivated participants to position themselves in particular ways (e.g., as agentic) to contest the negative social representation around their group and influence this research. A potential solution would have been to conduct the interviews in concert with a female British Muslim female researcher (see Archer, 2002, for an example). Yet there would still remain the potential risk of being seen as researchers, which would offer participants an opportunity to influence the research with their views.

9.5. Directions for Future Research

Further questions remain open for future research, which this thesis has touched upon. These questions address the following aspects: generalisation of the

findings; examining power in action; and investigating power across groups in the same context.

The thesis adopted qualitative methods and a phenomenological approach to investigate British Muslim women's experiences of power. In light of the results, it would be interesting to test if the findings could be scaled and replicated on a broader population of British Muslim women. In this regard, a future study might explore not only if the results could be generalised but also further nuances around the impact of demographics, which were not considered in this thesis (e.g., class or geographical differences).

It is also important to find ways to research power in action. Although this thesis sought to investigate the interplay between power and identity, it did not explore the very practice of power in their everyday lives. By research in action I mean, for example, that the researcher could shadow different women in their everyday lives, as active participant observation and engage in reflective conversations.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate the subjectivity of power across groups, with Muslim men and non-Muslim women (e.g., religious and non-religious). I have argued and evidenced how power is culturally informed. Thus, such a line of research could address questions such as: How does the specific socio-political context inform understandings and experiences of power? How do other people's perceptions of who we are impact (enable or limit) our power? Regarding British Muslim men, it would be interesting to examine: How do they perceive and experience their power, and how do they perceive their gender counterparts' power? Do they perceive power as religiously informed, and if they do, do they also emphasise its social interpretation? Or: Do they focus on self-fulfilling their duty, adopting a more individualistic interpretation? To what extent do they perceive an ongoing social change in which women are organising themselves and trying to bring about change for themselves and to the status quo? And if they do, how do they perceive the process and how do they position themselves (e.g., as supporters)?

Similarly, an examination of British non-Muslim women's understandings and perceptions of power would provide an interesting counterpoint. Do they also engage in neoliberal understandings of power, appearing agentic and mobilising individualistic accounts? Are there intergenerational differences in the ways they understand and perceive their power? Such an empirical endeavour would address a theoretical gap as it would provide a deeper understanding on how power is understood, experienced and perceived by different groups in the same context. This research would be able to contribute to debates about the extent of power group dynamics and how individuals/groups perceive and negotiate their power relations.

Finally, another useful research area to investigate further would be the perceptions of social change by British Muslim women, considering intergenerational differences. Although this pattern appeared in the third study of the thesis (Chapter 8), the question of how British Muslim women are changing the status quo would inform future policy making.

9.6. Implications for Policy and Practice

From this thesis, several implications for policy and practice concerning British Muslim women's power can be drawn:

- British Muslim women, of different backgrounds (ethnicities, class), should be actively involved in the making of social policy oriented to support them in overcoming structural limitations.

Participants shared their perceptions on how most policy making around them seemed to support other people's agendas, but never theirs. Previous research (Brown, 2012; Rashid, 2017) has already highlighted policies around women that fail to support them due to misconceptions of their identities, desires and goals. This research showed how these women organised themselves, had clear goals and ability to assert themselves to pursue their goals, individually and collectively. At the same

time, they were aware of their limitations, such as misrepresentations, and facilitating factors (e.g., spaces to come together).

- Policies should be written with an understanding of the diversity within British Muslim women, not only in terms of backgrounds but also considering their multiple values, motivations, goals and desires, that might vary across age, ethnicity, class, sexuality, etc.

As shown in this thesis, participants might assert themselves in different ways, seeking different goals, following their different values.

- Success and achievement, which need to be acknowledged, might not be the alternative to represent British Muslim women.

This thesis has shown how success and achievement might offer an alternative representation to contest the dominant (mis)representation. However, it was shown how this was also narrow and risked reproducing the stereotype on women who might not seek a career or pursue higher education.

- Find a more inclusive representation for British Muslim women.

Social policy might need to provide broader representations that include women who might not pursue academic studies or desire to be a housewife to raise their children, without excluding them or considering them subjugated or oppressed.

- Create spaces for women to come together and discuss their concerns with other women, Muslims and non-Muslims.

An occurrent theme in the final study on social involvement was the lack of spaces for these women to come together to express themselves and discuss their own concerns. Thus, social policy should benefit these women creating and funding more opportunities for them to organise themselves and to come together to discuss.

9.7. A final word

In the time I have been writing this thesis, the social and political landscape in which I conducted the interviews and carried out my research may have shifted (Brexit, prime ministerial changes), but the Islamophobic climate seems to persist in the UK and in the West. The singling out of and abuse against British Muslim women continues unabated and is validated by individuals in powerful positions like Boris Johnson, the current PM, who has openly voiced Islamophobic remarks several times in his political career (Dearden, 2019). As stated in the Introduction (Chapter 1), Mr Johnson's comparisons of fully veiled Muslim women to "letterboxes" and "bank robbers" in his weekly newspaper column in The Telegraph (Johnson, 2018) caused another spike in violence and abuse against these women (Sadique, Tangen & Perowne, 2019). The targeting of British Muslim women seems an easy way to avoid tackling wider and more entrenched social issues (e.g., white privilege, racism, migration), which reproduces social inequality and prejudice around them.

In this respect, this thesis is particularly prescient in the current times, when the mixing people of different cultural backgrounds is becoming the norm in most countries, rather the exception (Verkuyten et al., 2019). Understandings of what is deemed powerful and significant for each group is essential for coexistence and solidarity. To that end, the thesis contributes to a wider understanding of how power is culturally and contextually informed (Lukes, 2005; Mahmood, 2005; Reicher, 2016), which demands careful examination of individual and group identities, social contexts, norms and desires. Only then can one start to comprehend that what is powerful for a particular group might differ from a minority group, and vice versa.

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Appendices

A. Appendix study 1 (Chapter 6)

Table 8.

Circulation rates of National Newspapers 2015

National daily newspapers	Rate in 2015
The Sun	1,978,702
Daily Mail	1,688,727
Daily Mirror	992,235
Evening Standard	877,532
The Daily Telegraph	494,675
Daily Express	457,914
Daily Star	425,246
The Times	396,621
i	280,351
Financial Times	219,444
Daily Record	203,725
The Guardian	185,429
The Independent	61,338

Note. Data from Turvill (2015, 6 Feb)

Table 9.

Parliamentary Constituencies with Over 20% Muslim Population

Constituency	All	Muslim Population	Muslims as % of All Population
Birmingham, Hodge Hill	121,678	63,417	52.1
Bradford West	114,761	58,872	51.3
Birmingham, Hall Green	115,904	53,990	46.6
East Ham	149,842	56,008	37.4
Bradford East	113,820	42,056	36.9
Blackburn	107,246	38,887	36.3

Note. Data from The Muslim Council of Britain's report of 2011 Census (MCB, 2015, p. 29)

Table 10.

Circulation Rates of Local Newspapers

Newspaper	Publication Day	Circulation
Bradford Telegraph & Argus	Mon-Sat	31,331
Birmingham Mail	Mon-Thu, Sat	67,759
	Friday	26,747
Sunday Mercury	Sunday [w]	7,954
Birmingham Post	Thursday [w]	30,855
Burnley, Pendle, Blackburn, Darwen, Hyndburn Citizen	Thursday [w]	13,092
Lancashire Telegraph	Mon-Sat	1.361,306
Metro (London)	Daily	600,000
The Evening News (London)	Daily	30,855

Note. Figures obtained from Ponsford (2015).
[w] = weekly sources

Table 11.

Circulation of Ethno-Religious Newspapers

Newspaper	Year	Publication	Circulation/Readership
The Muslim News[1]	1989	Friday[w]/online	- / 150,000
The Muslim Weekly[1]	2003	Friday[w]/online	50,000 / 275,000
The Asian Today[2]	2002	Friday[m]/online	60,000 / 150,000
Asian Sunday[3]	2011	Sunday [w]	50,000 / 100,000
Eastern Eye[3]	1989	Friday/online	50,000 / 275,000

Note. [1] Figures obtained from Field (2014, April 6)
[2] Figures obtained from Asian Today website (n.d.)
[3] Figures obtained from Asian Times online (2016)
[w] = weekly sources

Table 12.

Webpages of Sources

The Sun	https://proquest.libguides.com/Europeannewsstream
The Daily Telegraph	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/
The Guardian	https://www.theguardian.com/uk
Bradford Telegraph & Argus	https://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/
Birmingham Mail	https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/
The Muslim News	http://www.muslimnews.co.uk
The Muslim Weekly	http://www.themuslimweekly.com/
Asian Sunday	http://www.asiansunday.co.uk
Eastern Eye	https://www.easterneye.biz

B. Appendix study 2 (Chapter 7)

B1. Participant Information sheet

Project title: Everyday experience of women living in England.

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Contact me if anything you read is not clear and you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?
The purpose of this research is to increase our understanding of what women living in England take into account when they go about their everyday lives – when they deal with the regular tasks of day-to-day living and with other situations or issues that they consider to be important. There is a gap in previous research exploring views or understandings of different groups of women living in England. Your participation will help to extend understandings of women's lives, experiences and views.

Who can take part in this study?
For this part of the study, I would like to speak to women who see themselves as Muslim and who were born in Britain. The views and experiences of women participating in this country will help build up a more complete picture of how women living in England experience their everyday lives.

Do I have to take part?
No. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part in the study and discuss some aspects of your experience with me.

What will happen to me if I take part?
If you decide to take part, I will arrange to meet you at a suitable place and time for a research interview. That might sound a bit off-putting but it's really just a discussion, with me asking you questions about your life and experience. Some questions will relate to everyday things and others to issues that may be very important to you. The interview will take between 45 and 60 minutes and is very open.

What will I have to do?
If you would like to take part in this study, please contact me (Ms Neus Beascoechea) by email at [REDACTED]. I will then contact you to arrange a date and time to meet and talk about your experiences. You can also use my contact details if you have any questions about the study and would like to know more before you decide whether or not to take part. Alternatively you can contact my supervisors at Kingston University: Professor

Evanthia Lyons [Redacted] and Professor Adrian Coyle ([Redacted]).

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
There are no major risks involved in taking part in this research. If I ask you a question that makes you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer. If at any point you want to stop or withdraw from the study, you can do this without having to explain your decision. After the interview, if you decide that you do not want the information that you provided to be used in the research, you can contact me and I will withdraw your material from the study and will erase it. This applies for up to one week after the interview.

What are the possible advantages of taking part?
We cannot promise the study will help you but the information that we get from the study will help to increase our understanding of how British women think and feel about their everyday lives.

What if there is a problem?
If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me. Alternatively you can contact my supervisors at Kingston University: Professor Evanthia Lyons ([Redacted]) and Professor Adrian Coyle ([Redacted]).

If you have any concerns about the research or if at any point you wish to complain about how you have been treated during the research, please contact Professor Simon Morgan Wortham (Acting Dean, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Kingston University, Penrhyn Road, Kingston Upon Thames KT1 2EE – e-mail [Redacted]).

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
Yes. All information that you give us will be kept strictly confidential. I will audio-record all interviews so that I have an accurate record of everything that is said. I will then transcribe each interview (in other words, I will type out everything that a participant has said). When I do that, I will not include the names of people, places or organisations that a participant mentions. Instead I will replace all names with pseudonyms. Indeed, all participants will be referred to by pseudonyms. If I am unsure about whether I have done enough to protect your confidentiality, I will contact you and seek your advice. During my PhD, the only people who will have access to the transcripts of the interviews will be me and my supervisors. All interviews files and transcripts will be stored in a password protected computer. The data will be retained for ten years.

What will happen to the results of the research study?
I will analyse what you say and look for similarities and differences between what you say and what other women say. When I write the research up for my PhD, I will quote from some interviews. However, no individual woman will be identifiable to readers from these quotations. The same applies to any academic articles that might be written on the basis of my research.

Who is organising and funding the research?
This research is part of a student doctoral thesis and is a self-funded PhD.

Who has reviewed the project?
This research study has received a favourable ethical opinion from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Kingston University London.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Ms Neus Beascoechea, PhD researcher and interviewer, ([Redacted])
Supervisors: Professor Evanthia Lyons ([Redacted]) Professor Adrian Coyle ([Redacted])

B2. Consent Form

Kingston University London

- I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on how British women experience their everyday lives.
- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been advised about any distress and possible ill-effects on my well-being which may result. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.
- I agree to comply with any instruction given to me during the study and to co-operate fully with the investigators. I shall inform them immediately if I suffer any deterioration of any kind in my health or well-being.
- I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I agree that I will not seek to restrict the use of the results of the study on the understanding that my confidentiality is preserved.
- I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study.

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS) ……

Signed ……

Date …….

<u>Statement by investigator</u>

I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this participant without bias and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Name of researcher/person taking consent (BLOCK CAPITALS) …….

Signed …….

B3. Debriefing Sheet

Project title: Everyday experience of women living in England

Thank you for taking part in this study. This study is part of a larger research project which looks at women's understandings, perceptions and experiences of power in their lives – particularly British Muslim women.

Your valuable contribution will help to increase our understanding of how British women think and feel power in their everyday lives. This study is important because it informs of British Muslim women's power experiences and perceptions in their own terms. It also attends to their emotions.

Your participation will provide wider understanding of experiences of power and it will offer further orientations for academics and policy makers. If you would like to receive a copy of recording and the transcript of the results, we can email them to you at the end of the study.

Last questions
Do you have any questions about this study?
When you were doing the study what did you think the study was about?
Was there any part of the interview that was difficult?
What would you change about the study?

Again, thank you very much for your participation in our research. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask me (Neus Beascoechea, [Redacted]) at a later date. Alternatively you may wish to contact my supervisors; Professor Evanthia Lyons, ([Redacted]) and Professor Adrian Coyle ([Redacted]).
If you have any concerns about the research or if at any point you wish to complain about how you have been treated during the research, please contact: Professor Simon Morgan Wortham, Acting Dean, ([Redacted]), Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Kingston University London, Penrhyn Road, Kingston Upon Thames, KT1 2EE.

Ms Neus Beascoechea Seguí,
PhD researcher

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR COOPERATION ☺

B4. Advert

Hi! My name is Neus Beascoechea, a female PhD student at Kingston University London.

For my doctoral research I am recruiting participants for a study on understandings, experiences and views of women's lives, specifically the lives of British Muslim women. This will increase our understanding of what women living in England take into account when they go about their everyday lives.

I would like to complete 21 interviews from different age groups (16-20; 25-30 and +35) of Muslim women born in England or women who have studied from Primary school.

The interview is about 45 minutes and it is basically a conversation where the person gets to choose the topics on how they go about their everyday life. This research will increase our understanding on what women consider powerful in their lives. The interviewee's name will be a pseudonym and all data collected will be encoded to ensure it remains anonymous and confidential.

If you feel you could help with this exciting research, please contact Neus Beascoechea, [Redacted] for further information. Please feel free to pass this on to anyone you think it might be interested. I have full ethical approval from the Kingston University, Faculty of Arts and Social Science Ethics Committee to conduct this research.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

B5. Faculty Ethics Approval

Kingston University London

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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09 February 2016

Neus Beascoechea Segui
PhD Student
Department of Psychology
School of Psychology, Criminology and Sociology
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Kingston University

Dear Neus

British Muslim women's understandings and experiences of power, 151610

To confirm that the Faculty Research Ethics Committee has conveyed a favourable opinion on your revised application 151610 entitled 'British Muslim women's understandings and experiences of power'.

Yours sincerely

Emma Finch
Research Operations Manager (FASS)
Clerk of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Kingston University

B6. Interview Guide Study 2 (Chapter 7)

Background information questions

To begin, I will ask you some basic information (such as your age, occupation, education…). The reason why I would like this information is so that I can show those who read my research report that I managed to obtain the views of a cross-section of people. The information you give me will never be use to identify you in anyway because this research is entirely confidential. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, remember that you don't have to, and please let me know.

1. How old are you?
2. How would you describe your ethnic origins[1]?

(Choose one section from (a) to (e) and then tick the appropriate category to indicate your ethnic group or background)

(a) White

English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British __
Irish __
Gypsy or Irish Traveller __
Any other White background, please write in below
_____

(b) Mixed/multiple ethnic groups

White and Black Caribbean __
White and Black African __
White and Asian __
Any other mixed background, please write in below
_____

(c) Asian or Asian British

Indian __
Pakistani __
Bangladeshi __
Chinese __
Any other Asian background, please write in below
_____

(d) Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

African __

[1] The ethnicity classification was taken from the 2011 Census from the Government.

Caribbean __
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please write in below
_____

(e) Other ethnic group
Arab __
Any other ethnic group, please write in below
_____

4. What is your highest educational qualification?
(tick the appropriate answer)
None __
GCSE(s)/O-level(s)/CSE(s)/NVQ or SVQ Level 2 __
A-level(s)/AS-level(s)/Scottish Higher(s)/NVQ or SVQ Level 3 __
Diploma (HND, SRN, NVQ or SVQ Level 4 or 5,etc.) __
Degree __
Postgraduate degree/postgraduate diploma __

3. What is your current occupation (or, if you are no longer working, what was your last occupation?)
_____

4. What is your current legal marital status?
(tick the appropriate answer)
Single __
Married __
Civil partnership __
Divorced/separated __
Widowed __

5. a) Do you have any children?
(tick the appropriate answer)
Yes __ (go to part b) No __ (Go to Question 6)

b) How many children do you have?
[ ]

6. How religious would you say you are you?
(tick the appropriate answer)
Very religious __
Quite religious __

Not very religious __
Not at all religious __

Thanks for answering these questions! ☺

Preamble

Now, as we discussed before, my research is trying/aims to understand what things women take into account when they go on with their everyday lives; both when they deal with the simple tasks of day to day living and with other situations/issues that they consider to be important.
So thank you for agreeing to help me with this.
What I would like us to talk about is: everyday things, which may be routine for you, and other things, that may be very important to you. If at any point you feel you don't want to discuss something any further, please let me know and we can switch to another topic or we can stop the interview altogether.

Questions

Perhaps we can start with you telling me something about yourself. **Where do you live?** *Who do you live with? Do you like living there? Why do you or don't you like living in...?*

Can we now please turn to some of your day to day experiences? **Can you please tell me about something that happened to you recently that made you feel happy?**
What happened? Who else was involved? Why did this make you particularly happy?
Is it something that happens to you often or was it surprising?

What about a recent experience you might have had which made you think you were powerful?
What do you mean? Something that made you think you had power …
What happened? Who else was involved? Why did this make you particularly powerful?
Is it something that happens to you often or was it surprising? How did it make you feel?

In what situations do you usually feel that you have power… *e.g., in your personal life? In professional life? / recreational life?* Or **Can you think of a time that you felt you had power in your personal life/professional life/recreational life?**

How important is it for you to feel that you are powerful?

What would make you feel that you have power?
E.g., when you feel you have the freedom to do whatever you want? When you feel that others want /need your help/advice/something from you? When you feel you can make others do what you want you/them to do? When you feel you can help others to do what

they want to do? When you feel have information that others don't? When others depend on you?

Why do you feel powerful in these situations?

Can you think of a situation when you would have liked to have power but you felt you didn't? *When? What happened etc*
*Looking backwards**, would you have done something different? What? Why?***

Are there any situations that you felt you didn't have power but you didn't mind? *What? Why?*

You said that … In the situations above…
Do you think others (members of your family, friends, children, other women, workmates etc) would like it if they thought you had power/ expect you to have power?

When you think of the people who are close to you, who do you consider to be the most powerful person? *Why? What they are like? Why do you think they have power?*
Do you recognise yourself in this description (now/ or in the future)? Why / Why not?

When you think of all the people you know in your personal circle or in the wider society, who do you consider to have power? *Why? What do you think makes them powerful?*

How likely do you think it is that you would/could be/become as powerful as the person who you thought of…?

B7. Sample transcript (Chapter 7)

Jaiden, 18 years old

I: Hello, so perhaps we can start with you telling me a bit about yourself. Where do you live?

M: I live in Wandsworth.

I: Do you like living there?

M: Yeah, I've lived there all my life and I do like it, I don't see myself living anywhere else.

I: Why is that you like it so much?

M: I think it's local, I feel like I know the area a lot, I feel like I've made friends in the area and I have family friends in the area.

I: Now let’s turn to your day-to-day experiences, can you tell me about something that happened to you recently that made you feel that you ... Made you feel happy?

J: Happy, happy, it must be a long time. I don't know. I'm definitely a happy person I don't know if there's something specific or that made me happy. Maybe waking up. Waking up actually makes me happy.

I: How is that?

J: It's like I've got another chance. Got a chance for another day. I'm given another chance. I could have my life taken away. Everything is the best in the world, to be honest. I think of it like that. Got a lot of blessings.

I: Wow, that's impressive. So, I guess that you always get up happy, then?

J: No. I get up miserable, but I've always said, at the end of the day, I'm saying, okay, you know you've got these friends, you know you've got university. You know you can wake up, you can dress yourself, and ... It's just the blessing at the end of the day.

I: Good. What about a recent experience you might have had which made you think that you were powerful?

J: Hmm. Powerful in like… what ... trying to think…

I: Something that you think you had power, or ...

J: Something that happened that was so shocking, that I never expected to happen, or?

I: You get to choose.

J: Yeah… Basically, right, I was in the train once, and I didn't happen directly toward me, but because I was in the scene, it sort of [inaudible 00:01:52] with me, is when a friend of a friend, that I knew of, ages ago back in primary school, was verbally attacked on the train by.. it casts as an Islamophobic attack because it was against her for no reason specifically, but that moment in the sense that, of course I would have to defend her because he just kept going on, and just being in that situation itself was horrible. It didn't happen to me and I wanted to cry. I almost cried and she wasn't even crying, and I was trying to protect her, and I defended her and it was just horrible. I didn't think people were like this, especially living in London, I didn't think it was like this. So that was sort of one moment I can remember.

I: But why do you think you were powerful in that moment?

J: I was powerless.

I: Powerless?

J: Yeah. Oh, did you say powerful?

I: Yeah, that's why I was like were you a superhero and did you save her?

J: No, I thought you said powerless. Oh, powerful. Em…What do you mean powerful though, like I had authority? I would say now ... actually, you know what, for this gathering because the head was Yasmine, and because I have the role of a rep, it doesn't need to fall on my shoulders that I have to take charge of the situation, but it fell on my shoulders that, you know what, this is going to be on your shoulders if someone asked about it, so I was the one that had to email and be like, okay, this is happening in our side. We need to inform them, just right now, like an hour ago. That's when I last felt this powerful.

I: Okay. Then I understand that you mean powerful because you were having responsibility.

J: Yeah in that sense, yeah.

I: And having somehow the control of the situation, to report the situation, but I could hear you telling me, oh powerful as in authority before you said something. Could you think of another example?

J: Of when I had authority?

I: No, that you were powerful because I could tell that you were just giving me one picture, so I'm wondering is there another pictures?

J: Another picture?

I: Or other meaning?

J: Powerful.

I: Or maybe what if we move, I don't know, maybe in your personal life, like…

J: I associate the word powerful with ... it's not responsibility but it's like, powerful is a weird word, a very weird word. There's another moment. I don't make any sense by the way, I'm really sorry.

I: It does absolutely make sense, I assure you.

J: When my mum was ill two days ago, I went in and I heated up water and Tiger Balm, I put it inside and I made her inhale it because she's got a cough and stuff. I guess that was a powerful moment. I said to myself, yeah you could take care of your mum. You're okay. That's powerful.

I: That's awesome.

J: I don't know.

I: Yeah, no, I mean it sounds awesome. So... instead of saying powerful because you said it's a weird word, what if we think about situations where do you usually feel that you have power?

J: Power?

I: For instance, you said one as a rep of the Prayer Room, but maybe in your more personal life you give the example of helping your mother-

J: Helping my mother.

I: Or with your friends or with your siblings that you have…

J: I guess with my siblings because, with my siblings I was the older sister for a few years, before my older sister came back, so I guess, in that sense ... and my dad and mum divorced as well, so then I guess I was the powerful one in a sense as I took them under my wing, as well as my mum, but you get me…

I: Yeah. Absolutely.

J: That's … I still help them now. I still try to teach them things about life and they can turn around to me one day and be like, why didn't you teach me this, so I guess in that sense I have the power to sort of ... I have that sort of power to teach them stuff and help them grow ... I don't know ... siblings.

I: The knowledge you're teaching and guidance… Good. How important are all these things for you that you feel that you are powerful and stuff?

J: I don't know if I actually like it sometimes, I'm not… in the sense that I don't enjoy having

... when my older sister did go for a while, it is like I had the ability to teach my siblings all these things as well as my mum. She's a big role, but em… things with ... not education, but the weird subjects, like periods, right. When I first started, my mum taught me right, but she didn't teach me how to put on a pad, so I had to figure that out for myself and as dumb as that might sound, that sort of thing. And then… So I was like, when my sisters are around that age, make sure I'm telling them these things. Sometimes I don't like for them to ... sometimes I would like to think of someone else doing it if I miss out, so I'm not that fond of the idea of having power, of being quite reliant on someone else as well sometimes. I don't think that answers your question to be honest.

I: It does.

J: Oh, okay.

I: Yeah it did, absolutely, it was fantastic. Now let's change because you are telling me how it can be almost overwhelming sometimes or not enjoyable, what if we turn around, what sort of situations you would enjoy or that you would feel that you had power?

J: So, if I had power?

I: No, what would make you feel that you have power?

J: What would make me feel like I've got power?

I: Some people may say… you already gave me this idea of taking care of your mum, right? So taking care of other people, or guiding my young siblings, so knowledge and teaching… Any other thing like, I don't know, when some people say the authoritarian side of, when people do what I say, I feel I have power.

J: Yeah, that I would agree on. If you were to listen to me, then I would feel like I've got power. But also I notice if someone in power allows me to go and do something, they open the door and allow me to go do it instead of them telling me do this, do that, do that, they actually give me the chance. I'm going to set an example because, you know that Yasmine is the head of the quiet room, right? and when she came to me, she never used to tell me what to do, but she would always be like: "Oh okay, I'm going to give you this task. I'm going to give you the task and you go and do it". In that sense, I had the power. She gave me the full control ... just automatic in the sense where today I didn't have to do it, but ... with me, I choose when I want to be the authority figure and when I don't want to be.

I: I think what you're kind of illustrating earlier on is that although you are the powerful to say to others to give them advice or to educate them, you have been somehow forced to do so, so you are powerless in a way because you would like other people to take your role,

rather than when you have the option to formulate your own options or do it in your own terms. Is that your point?

J: Yeah. I also ... I've noticed that a lot of people when they start to get to know me, they sort of allow me to have that figure. I don't know what it is about my personality, I really don't. I think ... I've been told that when people see me is when I first do things, I make it seem like I know everything, so people just assume that I'm in that authority figure already when actually I don't. Around the Prayer room, people think I've been there for three years, and I'm like, no, I'm not one of the youngest, but I like to listen and understand things, so then I know it, but it seems like I know everything when I actually don't. I know nothing.

I: Why do you say people allow me to?

J: Not as in people allow me to, but people ... no one ever stops me, like, no, you need to sit down, relax yourself. Stop telling me this, stop telling me that. I think people, people just let me be. Then it's different. In the sense of ... I keep reflecting about here at uni, because that's the only sense I can think of it right now because with my siblings I'm the oldest, I automatically have that power with them. I don't, but they sort of have given it to me in some situations. Back to my point, I forgot my point already.

I: No, you were trying to say this idea of how people let you be.

J: Yeah. No one has ever said you need to stop.

I: Would you like to have someone to tell you sometimes to stop?

J: No. I don't like that at all. I'm not going to lie. I don't like it. I've never encountered it either. I don’t know… At home people do. At home, my mum says I'm bossy, I'm this. My mum always says it and it aggravates the hell out of me. But with here (university association), they sort of appreciate it. I don't know why, and they sort of ... not power in the sense that I overpower them, in the sense that I have the power over myself whereas I do the things instead of telling people. Power in the sense that I do it, instead of telling them, so they actually do it like that… They see me and they see me do a lot of things and I think that's what they interpret as, you know, this girl has some sort of power, and they like it because I'm a first year, I'm taking interest in their society and they like it.

I: Great. Let's move into… have there been any situations that you felt you didn't have power, but you didn't mind?

J: Yeah, when things get too much, like any intense situation, I'm trying to think of any now.

I: Like for instance, within the organization, like this idea when things get tough, someone

gets in over you and, being the leader, dealing with the situation it's something you like? It's something that made you feel like second?

J: I'm trying to think. I think when ... oh I cannot think of one off the top of my head to be honest.

I: It's fine. If it doesn't come, it doesn't come. It's just that for instance earlier on you said something like when I'm taking care of my siblings, sometimes I would like someone to come and do it. (J: oh yeah yeah) So this idea of not always being on the scope.

J: That would be nice. Yeah, that would be nice [inaudible 00:17:36] because I cannot think of anything else.

I: Okay, great. We are almost in the last block. Are you all right? Are you fine?

J: Yeah.

I: Okay, just checking that you are happy. Earlier you said that in some situations you are powerful by giving advice, by taking care of others, by knowing, by doing, right? Do you think that other people, let's start with, for instance, other classmates, for instance here at uni, would like, or they expect you to have power? Different from your friends because the friends they know you, right?

J: Do they expect me to have power? I wouldn't say around my friends in class and stuff because when I'm in class I'm generally not myself, so I'm just quiet and just getting the stuff done.

I: What do you mean you're not yourself?

J: As in there is no chance that I would show my ... actually, no. In group work, like when even we are speaking out loud, we have to answer questions and stuff, my friends automatically pick me, because they know "you know what… she'd be the one that ..." I create the conversations in the group and I also will then feed it back to the teacher, always expected of me. If I'm not the only one doing it, I'm the one that starts it. I would have someone join me but, in that sense… mmm what was the question again?

I: I was asking basically if they felt or ... do you think that others, like classmates, would-

J: Yeah, they I guess they do… I think they do think that, to be honest.

I: And what about other women, for instance?

J: Other women.

I: In your community, not necessarily here.

J: Here, I know that other girls around me do think that I do have power because when things ... a lot of them don't know my age, that's why as well, I think and people think I'm

older than I actually am, so then whenever anything involved anything in general, some of them come to me for advice, some of them come to me just to speak to me. If there's a matter about the prayer or anything, even before I was given that role, they would come and speak to me randomly. They would just think that I was a part of the society committee when I wasn't. I think they thought, like even in families, not families in household families but actually bigger families, then I don't have the authority figure in any situations.

I: How come?

J: Because I'm the youngest out of all the girls and I don't know. I don't know why I teak the back seat...

I: Just real quick, what do you mean that you take the back seat?

J: Yeah, I don't like to involve myself in those situations to be honest, some weird situation that I just wouldn't really be, so I isolate myself in the sense that I don't ... I don't want to be in that situation so don't bother turning to me about it. So they just don't.

I: You mean family issues or things like that?

J: Yeah, family issues, I hate getting involved in. Everyone knows that. They tell me things, but I don't ever say: “oh, okay let me” ... I wouldn't ... if people try to resolve it. I would basically take myself out of any situations in any way, but for the youngest, I do remember even when I was young ... okay, I'm going to say this because it does also influence why I don't have any authority figure now. When I was younger, I never used to practice Islam, like I used to be alienated and stuff. We were all really chill, me and my cousins, so they used to tell me things that they wanted advice on that would go against our religion. But they did use to do that up until now, and they saw I was practicing my religion, so it sort of increased the barrier in the sense that they didn't tell me anything, so I couldn't help them and that sort of took the power away from me.

I: I missed it. So basically, if I understood you right, some years ago you were not practicing and suddenly you start practicing, but in the meantime, your cousins that were not practicing, they would be telling you things that went against Islam.

J: Yeah.

I: Yeah? And now that you are practicing, they keep on encouraging you to do things that they-

J: Oh, no, no, no. Before, they would ask me for advice in a situation, so that sort of gave me the powerful figure because even though they are all older than me, I am the youngest one, they would all come to me with their individual issues as if I'm the oldest one and I'm

the mature one, but now because they know that-

I: That you have changed into-

J: I don't know why they assumed I was [inaudible 00:22:44] even though literally anyone tells me anything, I mean anyone tells me anything regardless of what it is, they just kept to themselves and they didn't come to me for advice anymore. They don't speak to me much about the private life that they have behind closed doors, nothing of that is said to me now. So…

I: How do you feel about it?

J: It's annoying in the sense that why the hell has there been a barrier because I'm a sinner myself. I'm no one perfect. I'm not a scholar. I'm not anyone. Literally I-

I: Even scholars are not perfect.

J: Even they, every single person on this earth sins and I am one of them, but automatically as soon as the hijab and this abayas is worn, it's created this sort of ... [inaudible 00:23:37] it has done something to the relationship that I had with my cousins and these are ... we were practically like sisters, we grew up together and everything. We are first cousins, so we did everything together and now it's just like, I don't know if the issue is because we're tired and not everyone is in university and they work and everyone just has work and uni, but even a "what's up", there's never a hi. In the group chats it's quite dull. I don't know. I don't know why they stopped ... because you know generally if ... even people here, they're more accepting ... I don't know if they're more accepting, but they just don't judge you for ...

I: When you say here, you mean the whole university or your friends?

J: I only speak for my friends because they're the only ones that I speak to.

I: But they can be Muslims and not Muslims.

J: Yeah, both. These people, I don't know. In truth, because they do just judge someone from their outward appearance, not only Islamic, generally all-

I: Like, more superficial criticism.

J: Yeah.

I: Okay, let's move on into… When you think of the people you have around close to you, who do you consider to be the most powerful person?

J: Powerful in the sense that...?

I: you want…

J: My mum.

I: Why is that?

J: Because if my mum says; “no, don't do this”, I will really doubt doing it. I just feel like ... my mum for a lot of reasons because even in Islam, we're told love Allah, love the profit and then love your mum three times, three times before you love anyone else in this universe. The fact that she has such a high figure-

I: Even before your dad as well?

J: Yeah.

I: They are not together?

J: No, your mum three times and then your dad. If your mum says don't do anything, that's the one person who can actually ... because the mother figure is given such a high role in Islam, it's sort of ... you actually understand it, like ... I don't know. It’s just if mum says: “no, don't do that”, it always puts a bad feeling in my heart. Whenever my mum would be like: “these friends aren't good for you”, and I never used to listen back in the day, now I look back and say you know she was right from that day that she said that girl wasn't a good friend and it's just like my mum has the utmost authority in my whole life, forever and ever and ever.

I: Yeah, well also in terms of powerful, as in does she take care of you I imagine but as well as the knowledge, does she work, does she not?

J: Yeah, my mum in all senses she is powerful in life experiences. She is not telling me directly, but from her actions. She has shown me how to behave. She has taught me the basics and more. In all around…the figure…

I: Great. Do you recognize yourself in this description?

J: In mum's description? I wish. No. I think because with my mum, she is an authority role for me because I'm her child and I don't have my own children and she's not ... when I seem to have the authority figure, it's because I seem to be doing a lot around everyone. I'm going to give you the example of the prayer room. People assume that I've got an authority figure because I'm always cleaning it. Whereas my mum, even if you said she wasn't my mum, even then I think it's because of the way she conducts herself. I don't think she's the type that would be always giving it ... giving her all. It's the way she upholds herself in intense situations. That's why I sort of look up to her. She doesn't insert her ... not insert her authority, but ... I cannot think of it.

Okay, I'm going to take it back a bit. I see the similarities between me and my mum because we never state that we've got authority. We never actually have the label of authority figure, but we behave as if we do and that I would say the same, but personality wise I would say

no…

I: And why do you behave in this way, do you think?

J: In what way.

I: In the way that you said it, that we behave as if we were the authority figure?

J: I don't know. I guess I'm just so used to behaving like that at home, I guess. I think that's why. I'm just so used to it.

I: Okay. When you think of all the people that you know in the world, in society, who happens to be ... who do you consider to have power?

J: What, in society? Not me. Not me at all. I guess the bloody government. They've got the power in everything. If I was to associate power with someone in society, I would say the government has the power. They do.

I: Okay. Why do you think that makes them powerful?

J: Because they run everything. They control society. They control the norm, the norms and the values of society. They have the majority of the money. If they switched one day ... everything is at their fingertips. Let's take media for example. In both here and the States, we know that these small media outlets and stuff, the ones that aren't run by normal people like the Huffington Post, they're normal people that you actually want to say hi to, but all the others like BBC, that's just rubbish. It's got news, but you know it's been filtered, and it's presented to benefit people, like the government. Wait, what was the question?

I: Why do you think that makes them powerful?

J: Because they control basically everything. That's what [inaudible 00:30:38] because they get to control things like media, which everyone knows now it's one of the biggest, sort of biggest outlets, I don't know if it's an outlet, but they are able to control and change all of these things, even though we are the people, they say we've got the power. But then again, we could give the example of the whole Syria thing, when everyone signed the petition. I remember those huge petitions, huge rallies; all this and that, saying we've got the people power to the democracy, but we all signed a petition. I wonder how many signs that the petition had… but they do currently say we've got the power, but in actual we don’t because I think they ... what they've been regardless of what we say because safest when they were upping the tuition fees and stuff. Those rallies out in the streets and all this and that, but they weren't listening to what we were saying. We don't have the power as much as we would like to think so.

I: Last one. How likely do you think it is that you would or could become as powerful as

the person you thought of?

J: That guy, David Cameron?

I: Well, Cameron or your mother or whoever you want.

J: If we're talking about David Cameron, I'm never going to be as powerful as. I don't really want to be as powerful as him anyways.

I: You would not like to be a prime minister, you're saying.

J: As sad as that might sound, no. I feel like-

I: What?

J: As sad as it sounds, because aim to always be the best of the best but I don't want to be someone who has so many people's lives in their hands and ... that's a stressful job. I would never want to do it. As for my mum, who was the other figure who I said was quite powerful, taking aside the society part, she is society, I mean community wise. I do hope one day I become a mum, so I am assuming that I would want the same amount of power, but I wouldn't want the power that mum had because she has the full ... authority figure wasn't fully hers and it was shared with my father, and I would want-

I: She was the shared…

J: The authority figure in that household. It was completely on her. She was the one that was dominating it. Not when my father was there. After, when my father had left. I wouldn't want as much authority figure as she did, because I know the effects that it had on her. It did stress her out a lot and she used to blame herself when things went wrong, so I would want to share that amount. So, I'm not someone who likes too much help. I would like to have ... do you know what it is I think, because I was thinking about it before, you know when you have power? It gives you a feeling of self-worth, like you're worthy of having ... so I feel like I would want that, a bit of power, but not too much like my mum had it.

I: How would you know ... how would you describe this amount of power that is good but not too much?

J: When I can control things, but I also know if I didn't want to, I could give it to someone that's on the side because I know I'm going to have on the side of myself. I don't know if that-

I: When you think about having someone next to you, do you mean your partner, or you mean friend?

J: Partner, friend, someone that's close to me. As long as I've got someone that's close to me, I'll know that’s okay. You know you don’t want to take control of this today, you know

what, you could just be like: “I don't want to do this”. I want to give it over today, but you know in a lot of cases, just say like my mum, she couldn't just be like: “oh, I don't want to be a mum today. I'm just going to give it to you” you can’t. In that sense, oh I don't want to have this. I'm going to give it to you.

I: Okay. Great. I think we are done, actually. Unless you have any other question.

B8. Thematic Structures of each group (Chapter 7)

Table 13.

Thematic structure of the older group (aged 38-51)

NODES		SUBTHEMES	THEMES
I depend on me / I provide for myself.		1.1. Power as independence /autonomy	1. Individualised understandings and experiences of power
I make my own decisions. I can speak out for myself.		1.2. Power as making decisions and voicing them out	
Constrained vs. supportive upbringing		2.1. The role of upbringing	2. Agentic but lacking power
It informs my power/ Empowering / comes from God		2.2. Religion, ethnicity and culture: enablers and constrains	
I don't think I ever feel powerful		2.3. Self-perceptions of lacking power	
Abuse. Not being heard.		3.1. Facing attributed identities: misrecognition and degradation	3. Facing and contesting the social stereotype
Self-presenting themselves	*3.2.1. Identity construction*	3.2 Contesting outgroup stereotype and ingroup expectations	
Empowering young girls	*3.2.2. Promoting social change*		
Doing more of what I want	*3.2.3 Self-believing and taking opportunities*		

Table 14.

Thematic structure of the middle group (aged 25-32)

NODES	SUBTHEMES	THEMES
In charge of the situation I control my own expenses.	1.1. Being in control: *power to* & *power over*	1. Assertions of power
Making own decisions Expressing her ideas	1.2. Voicing out and expressing their own views	
Academic and work achievements Hard work and skills	1.3. Succeeding	
Helping in her community Influencing	1.4. Having an impact on other people's lives	
You will be the Doctor, not the wife of the Doctor. Successful and yet not successful	2.1. Family expectations	2. Power enablers and constrains
Self-control / Self-confidence	2.2. The power of emotion	
Redefining their identities Passing / Complying	3.1. Individual strategies	3.Transforming their representation
Self-differentiating Influencing other people	3.2. Intergroup strategies	

Table 15.

Thematic structure of the younger group (aged 18-20)

NODES	SUBTHEMES	THEMES
I chose what to wear what to study/ I control my own expenses	1.1. Making their own choices and having control over their lives	1. Assertions of power
Teaching and helping others	1.2. Having an impact	
I will put my religion first It is between me and God	2.1. Power informed by religion	2. Nuances of power experience
But at the end of the day I still have to ask my mum.	2.2. Ambivalence: independently dependent	
Shifting identity/ Resisting / Compliance	3.1. Facing attributed identities	3. Contesting the stereotype
I am studying for myself / I know what is best for a Muslim woman	3.2. Asserting power through identity	

C. Appendix study 3 (Chapter 8)

C1. Participant Information sheet

Kingston University London

Project title: British Muslim women's experiences of community life

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide, you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Contact me if anything you read is not clear and you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this research is to increase our understanding of what British Muslim women take into account when they engage in everyday life and social communities. In other words, I would like to know about your everyday activities such as participating in a community event, a demonstration, volunteering, fundraising, civic participation of any kind.

There is a gap in previous research exploring British Muslim women's views about community and social involvement that motivates this study. Your participation will help to extend understandings, experiences and views of women's social participation and involvement.

Who can take part in this study?

For this part of the study, I would like to speak to women who see themselves as Muslim and who were born in Britain, or studied in an English Primary school. We are interested in interviewing British Muslim women, who identify as activists (members of any given organisation) as well as non-activists.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is entirely up to you to decide whether or not you would like to take part in the study and discuss some aspects of your experience with me.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part, I will arrange to meet you at a suitable place and time for a research interview. That might sound a bit off-putting but it's really just a conversation with me, asking you questions about your social involvement and participation in social community, events you may have taken part on. The interview will take between 45 and 60 minutes and is very open.

What will I have to do?

If you would like to take part in this study, please contact me (Ms Neus Beascoechea) by email at [Redacted]. I will then contact you to arrange a date and time to meet and talk about your experiences in social involvement. You can also use my contact details if you have any questions about the study and would like to know more before you decide whether or not to take part. Alternatively, you can contact my supervisors at Kingston University: Professor Evanthia Lyons ([Redacted]) and Professor Adrian Coyle ([Redacted]).

Once you have taken part in the interview, after 1 or 2 days I will contact you by email or by phone to check whether, in light of any post-interview reflections, you wish to elaborate or amend anything they said during the interview.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

There are no major risks involved in taking part in this research. If I ask you a question that makes you feel uncomfortable, you do not have to answer. If at any point you want to stop or withdraw from the study, you can do this without having to explain your decision. After the interview, if you decide that you do not want the information that you provided to be used in the research, you can contact me and I will withdraw your material from the study and will erase it. This applies for up to one week after the interview.

What are the possible advantages of taking part?

We cannot promise the study will help you but the information that we get from the study will help to increase our understanding of how British Muslim women perceive and participate in social community.

What if there is a problem?

If you have any questions about the research, please do not hesitate to contact me. Alternatively you can contact my supervisors at Kingston University: Professor Evanthia Lyons ([Redacted]) and Professor Adrian Coyle ([Redacted]). If you have any concerns about the research or if at any point you wish to complain about how you have been treated during the research, please contact Professor Simon Morgan Wortham (Dean, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Kingston University, Penrhyn Road, Kingston Upon Thames KT1 2EE – e-mail [Redacted]).

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

Yes. All information that you give us will be kept strictly confidential. I will audio-record all interviews so that I have an accurate record of everything that is said. I will then transcribe each interview (in other words, I will type out everything that a participant has said). When I do that, I will not include the names of people, places or organisations that a participant mentions. Instead I will replace all names with pseudonyms. Indeed, all participants will be referred to by pseudonyms. If I am unsure about whether I have done enough to protect your confidentiality, I will contact you and seek your advice. During my PhD, the only people who will have access to the transcripts of the interviews will be me and my

supervisors. All interviews files and transcripts will be stored in a password protected computer. The data will be retained for ten years.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

I will analyse what you say and look for similarities and differences between what you say and what other women say. When I write the research up for my PhD thesis, I will quote from some interviews. However, no individual woman will be identifiable to readers from these quotations. The same applies to any academic articles that might be written on the basis of my research.

Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is part of a student doctoral thesis and is a self-funded PhD.

Who has reviewed the project?

This research study has received a favourable ethical opinion from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Kingston University London.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

Ms Neus Beascoechea, PhD researcher and interviewer, ([Redacted])

Supervisors: Professor Evanthia Lyons ([Redacted]) Professor Adrian Coyle ([Redacted])

C2. Consent Form

Kingston University London

- I the undersigned voluntarily agree to take part in the study on **British Muslim women's experiences of community life.**

- I have read and understood the Information Sheet provided. I have been given a full explanation by the investigators of the nature, purpose, location and likely duration of the study, and of what I will be expected to do. I have been advised about any distress and possible ill-effects on my well-being which may result. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions on all aspects of the study and have understood the advice and information given as a result.

- I agree to comply with any instruction given to me during the study and to co-operate fully with the investigators. I shall inform them immediately if I suffer any deterioration of any kind in my health or well-being.

- I understand that all personal data relating to volunteers is held and processed in the strictest confidence, and in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). I agree that I will not seek to restrict the use of the results of the study on the understanding that my confidentiality is preserved.

- I understand that the interviews will be audio recorded.

- **I** understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time without needing to justify my decision and without prejudice.

- I confirm that I have read and understood the above and freely consent to participating in this study. I have been given adequate time to consider my participation and agree to comply with the instructions and restrictions of the study

Name of volunteer (BLOCK CAPITALS) ……

Signed ……

Date …….

<u>Statement by investigator</u>

- I have explained this project and the implications of participation in it to this participant without bias and I believe that the consent is informed and that he/she understands the implications of participation.

Name of researcher/person taking consent (BLOCK CAPITALS) …….

Signed …….

C3. Debriefing Sheet

Project title: British Muslim women's experiences of community life.

Thank you for taking part in this study. This study is part of a larger research project which looks at women's understandings, perceptions and experiences of power in their lives – particularly British Muslim women.

Your valuable contribution will help to increase our understanding of how British women think and feel collective power in their everyday lives. This study is important because it informs of British Muslim women's power experiences and perceptions in their own terms.

Your participation will provide wider understanding of experiences of power and it will offer further orientations for academics and policy makers. If you would like to receive a copy of recording and the transcript of the results, we can email them to you at the end of the study.

Last questions

Do you have any questions about this study?

When you were doing the study what did you think the study was about?

Was there any part of the interview that was difficult?

What would you change about the study?

Again, thank you very much for your participation in our research. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask me (Neus Beascoechea, [Redacted]) at a later date. Alternatively you may wish to contact my supervisors; Professor Evanthia Lyons, ([Redacted]) and Professor Adrian Coyle ([Redacted]).

During any interview there is a risk that you might disclose distressing experiences. If you feel after taking part in the interview some issues have been unlocked or you feel distress or unwell, please contact with your GP or you can also contact the following sources:

Muslim Women's Network Helpline *www.mwnhelpline.co.uk*

0800 999 5786 / 0303 999 5786

MIND, *www.mind.org.uk*

0300 123 3393

(A confidential free phone helpline giving a safe place to talk if you, or someone you know, is in distress)

Samaritans, *www.samaritans.org*

116 123 (Free phone 24hrs)

Cruse Bereavement. *www.cruse.org.uk*

0808 808 1677

Provides support after the death of someone close

If you have any concerns about the research or if at any point you wish to complain about how you have been treated during the research, please contact: Professor Simon Morgan Wortham, Acting Dean, ([Redacted]), Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences, Kingston University London, Penrhyn Road, Kingston Upon Thames, KT1 2EE.

Ms Neus Beascoechea Seguí,

PhD researcher, Kingston University

THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR COOPERATION

C4. Advert

Hi! My name is Neus Beascoechea, a female PhD student at Kingston University London.

For my research, I am recruiting participants for a study on women's experiences of social involvement and participation in their communities, specifically the lives of British Muslim women.

I would like to complete 20 interviews with British Muslim women, either born in England or women who have studied from Primary school.

The interview is about 45 minutes and it is basically a conversation where you tell me about your participation in events, such as: volunteering in an organisation, a demonstration in your local neighbourhood, a fundraising event… You get to choose the events you talk about.

This research will increase our understanding on how women engage and get involved in their communities. The interviewee's name will be a pseudonym and all data collected will be encoded to ensure it remains anonymous and confidential.

If you feel you could help with this exciting research, please contact Neus Beascoechea, [Redacted] for further information. Please feel free to pass this on to anyone you think it might be interested. I have full ethical approval from the Kingston University, Faculty of Arts and Social Science Ethics Committee to conduct this research.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME!

C5. Faculty Ethics Approval

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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Penrhyn Road
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UK

1 November 2017

Ms Neus Beascoechea Segui
Department of Psychology
School of Psychology, Criminology and Sociology
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Kingston University

Dear Neus

Ethics Application 171808 British Muslim women's perceptions and experiences of collective power

To confirm that the Faculty Research Ethics Committee of 11 October 2017 conferred a favourable opinion on your revised application 171808 entitled British Muslim women's perceptions and experiences of collective power.

Yours sincerely

Emma Finch
Research Operations Manager (FASS)
Clerk of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Kingston University

C6. Interview Guide Study 3 (Chapter 8)

Background information questions

To begin, I will ask you some basic information (such as your age, occupation, education…). The reason why I would like this information is so that I can show those who read my research report that I managed to obtain the views of a cross-section of people. The information you give me will never be use to identify you in anyway because this research is entirely confidential. If you do not feel comfortable answering a question, remember that you don't have to, and please let me know.

1. **How old are you?**
2. **How would you describe your ethnic origins?** (Choose one section from (a) to (e) and then tick the appropriate category to indicate your ethnic group or background)

(a) White

English/Welsh/Scottish/Northern Irish/British __
Irish __
Gypsy or Irish Traveller __
Any other White background, please write in below
_____

(b) Mixed/multiple ethnic groups

White and Black Caribbean __
White and Black African __
White and Asian __
Any other mixed background, please write in below
_____

(c) Asian or Asian British

Indian __
Pakistani __
Bangladeshi __
Chinese __
Any other Asian background, please write in below
_____

(d) Black/African/Caribbean/Black British

African __
Caribbean __
Any other Black/African/Caribbean background, please write in below
_____

(e) Other ethnic group

Arab __
Any other ethnic group, please write in below
_____

3. **What is your highest educational qualification?**

(tick the appropriate answer)

None __

GCSE(s)/O-level(s)/CSE(s)/NVQ or SVQ Level 2 __

A-level(s)/AS-level(s)/Scottish Higher(s)/NVQ or SVQ Level 3 __

Diploma (HND, SRN, NVQ or SVQ Level 4 or 5,etc.) __

Degree __

Postgraduate degree/postgraduate diploma __

4. **What is your current occupation (or, if you are no longer working, what was your last occupation?)**

_____

5. **What is your current legal marital status?**

(tick the appropriate answer)

Single __

Married __

Civil partnership __

Divorced/separated __

Widowed __

a) **Do you have any children?**

(tick the appropriate answer)

Yes __ (go to part b) No __ (Go to Question 6)

b) **How many children do you have?**

[ ]

6. **How religious would you say you are you?**

(tick the appropriate answer)

Very religious __

Quite religious __

Not very religious __

Not at all religious __

THANKS FOR ANSWERING THESE QUESTIONS!

Preamble

I would like you to ask you a few questions about your community life. As discussed, I will pose questions about your participation in social events, your views and engagement in everyday life, what I mean is activities such as participating in a community event, a demonstration, volunteering, fundraising, civic participation…

If at any point you would like to change topic, or to stop the interview altogether please do let me know.

RECENT SOCIAL EVENT

1. Could you tell me about a time when you have got involved / taken part/ participated in a social event the last six months? *If participant cannot recall any, ask about "*When was the last time you participate in a social event?
2. How would you describe your experience in the event/ group?
3. Could you give me more details? *Prompts: When? Where? How? Why? How long?*
    a. What did you do? Your role…
    b. How did you get involved?
    c. Why did you think it was important to take part in it?
        i. *If they reply it wasn't important, ask* "Can you think of one that it was important?"
    d. What were your reasons to join other people for this event? What motivated you to do it (friends, family, religion…)?
    e. Who did you participate with?
    f. How did you feel while participating?
    g. And now?
    h. To what extent do you think this [*event chosen*] was worthwhile? What makes you say that?
    i. What changes may [*your participation in X*] it brings or has already brought?
    j. To what extent do you feel your participation made a difference/ a change?
    k. In retrospect, would you have done something different?
    l. What did you learn from your participation?
4. Earlier you talked about what lead you to be involved, I wonder if your religion/ Islam played any role? If it did, in what way?
5. How did your participation in [*this event*] has contributed to your community? Or to what extent your community has made [*this event*] possible?
6. How do you think that other British Muslim women would think about your participation in this [event]? Do you think they would consider it appropriate/ or they would like it?

7. How do you think British Muslim women should get involved within the community?
8. Have you tried to engage other British Muslim women into these kinds of events? How? Why?
9. What about other people in your community?

PARTICULAR EVENTS (LOCAL / NATIONAL / GLOBAL LEVEL)

Now I would like you to think about recent events such as the campaigning to avoid Hospital being closed or organising fundraising for your mosque (LOCAL LEVEL); also Grenfell Tower (NATIONA LEVEL), the London terrorist attacks (NATIONAL LEVEL) or the Syrian Refugee Crisis (GLOBAL) and the social action that have motivated. For example, during Grenfell Tower, Muslim communities supplied food and assistance for the victims, British Muslim women participated in demonstrations to claim support for the victims from the government, as well as providing for the victims. Regarding the Refugee crisis, there have been multiple actions such as fundraising for charities as well as food collection to find support for Syria. Lastly, in the aftermath of the terrorist attack in Westminster, a group of British Muslim women organised a human chain in the bridge in solidarity with the victims. Other events I am thinking of are the Women's March that is being hold all over the world or demonstrations against Climate change.

Based on participants' reactions, ask about one event.

10. Have you participated in any event related to the examples mentioned above? Or any similar event? How would you describe your experience in the event/ group?
11. Could you give me more details? *Prompts: When? Where? How? Why? How long?*
    a. What did you do? Your role…
    b. How did you get involved in this particular event or movement?
    c. Why did you think it was important to take part in it?
        i. *If they reply it wasn't important, ask* "Can you think of one that it was important?"
    d. What were your reasons to join other people for this event? What motivated you to do it (friends, family, religion…)?
    e. Who did you participate with?
    f. How long have you been involved?
    g. How did you feel while participating? (challenges and obstacles)
    h. And now? (any changes? Differences in expression of own voice?)
    i. To what extent do you think this [event] was worthwhile?
    j. What changes may it brings or has already brought?
    k. To what extent do you feel your participation made a difference/ a change?
    l. In retrospect, would you have done something different?

m. What did you learn from your participation?

12. Earlier you talked about what lead you to be involved, I wonder if your religion/ Islam played any role? If it did, in what way?
13. Did your community contributed somehow in making this event possible?
14. Do you think your participation in [*this event*] benefitted your community in any way?
15. Or to what extent has your community made [*this event*] possible?
16. How do you think that other British Muslim women would think about your participation in this [event]? Do you think they would consider it appropriate/ or they would like it?
17. How do you think British Muslim women should get involved within the community?
18. Have you tried to engage other British Muslim women into these kinds of events? How? Why?
19. What about other people in your community?
20. One of the things I am interested is about your feelings and perceptions, when you were involved in this [*even*t] would you say you felt powerful in any way?
21. Looking back on it, how does have change your views?
22. Could you tell me in what ways you felt powerful?

SOCIAL NARRATIVES

So far, you have given particular pictures of social and political involvement of British Muslim women. You have also talked about others British Muslim women. I am wondering though,

23. How closely do you think that what you have said reflects the general public views of British Muslim women? Whether relate or difference?
24. Why do you think the difference/ similarity?
25. Or would you say your experience is universal?

FUTURE ACTIONS (ENGAGEMENT & MOTIVATION)

26. What other issues do you hope to see British Muslim women take action on? Why? (Regarding their communities or their role in society…)
27. What do you think would motivate you to get involved?
28. What do you see as the key motivating factors for British Muslim women to take part in social action?
29. Is there any other question you would like me to ask you that I haven't?

C7. Sample transcript (Chapter 8)

Jala, 49 years old

I: Basically, I would like you… maybe, to begin with, if you could tell me about a time when you've got involved and taking part in a social event over the last six months.

JA: Well, I obviously work in the community and I work in the voluntary sector. I'm sort of involved into community events, a charity fundraising event just recently at the centre where I worked for a local madrassa. And I'm a governor at the school. Again, these engagement through community and volunteering. So I have attended um, so meetings for that. So, there's a few different things I've done so I'm not exactly sure which one.

I: No, I would like you to talk of one you find more important for you.

JA: I'm trying to think of which will probably be the most significant. My role as a governor.

I: Your role as a governor?

JA: In a primary school.

I: What do you do? and how did you get involved?

JA: Well, I got involved when my children went to the school. Well, it was when I was, when they were in, they were in the primary school and obviously I was a parent at the time, and I became involved sort of doing some volunteering sort of as parents, uh, when they go on outings, or assemblies and fundraising activities. I've been a governor for 16 years. Um, but the school has been through quite a lot of change. So, I have been involved in recruitment of a head teacher, lots of teaching staff, lots of support staff. Um, you know, the school has been through a couple of Ofsted inspections, so we're very heavily involved in the strategic sort of side of school and I'm trying to keep a school running and making you a very good school for the community and the children that go there.

I: And why would you say that's so important for you to be part of the...?

JA: Oh well, it is important to me for the welfare of the education of children and particularly in a community where I live in the school is based, we would say it was quite a deprived community. Education is something that will enable these children to make something better of their lives, but I think it's important that, you know, I, I'm part of that too. To sort of support them to improve their education or their chances of a good education.

I: How do you feel about it? or how have you been feeling because I guess you've been part of, you said over 16 years, so I guess like your feelings have been changing over the years, but how do you feel about being a governor?

JA: It's a difficult one. I don't about the feelings, I suppose. Partly I feel proud because the school has now evolved into being a very good school. It wasn't a very good school, when I first became a governor, and I'm not saying was just down to me, but it just makes you feel proud that you have made an improvement in the community that you live in. Um, it also makes you feel like you're putting something into that isn't really- there's no financial gain. No, there's, there's no financial gain. There's no personal gain for me. Now my children have moved on. They've gone onto secondary school and done university. So, for me it's not about personal gain of anything. If anything, it takes up my time, some time, you know, because I have a busy, you know, sort of, I work full time. I've got children, so. But it's just about self-satisfaction. It makes sense. I suppose it's given me skills as well, that I can then use in my work and my daily life. Given me confidence.

I: How many other governors are, besides you?

JA: Uh, there are eight. There's eight of us at the moment.

I: Like in terms of ethnicity/diversity, are you the only Muslim Pakistani or ?

JA: I am the only Muslim woman at the moment. I'm the only female Asian woman.

I: Okay. And how does it feel?

JA: I'm quite confident with it because I've been there for quite a long time. So, for me I don't feel, I don't find it difficult because it's within my comfort zone. I think I'm quite a confident person, so I don't need, you know, another woman around me to be able to feel that I need to be able to speak.

I: Then to what extend do you think that while you being part, you've already been telling me a bit but that, while you've been participating in it has made a difference either for you, uh, in the sense that you already said that you've been gaining probably skills and you will won more confidence but also for the community. Do you think it has been some changes there? Due to your practice,

JA: Just shows other people that they can do it as well. Okay. It's not something that is out of our reach because you see somebody else doing something you think: “Well actually if she can do it, I can do it”. Yeah, it's been. It's been known as being a positive role model.

I: And when you say people, you mean other British Asian women and Muslim women or?

JA: Yes.

I: How do they feel about you but your participation in as a governor?

JA: Some of them think I'm probably doing something that I don't need to do, because there's no financial gain. It's taking, it takes my time out of other things that I could be doing, and I could be sitting at home when I come home from work. So sometimes people think "Why do you do it when there's no benefit to you?" But for me, I feel that there is and I've, I think I've gained quite a lot from it as well. But for some people, but I, I continued doing it because I know that if I can be a real good role model because particularly with my age, we were probably some of the first sort of Asians, particularly within our own community that went to further education and worked. Lots of the South Asian community and most of the, particularly the women of my generation never went out to work, never went to sort of higher education. So, I think that perhaps myself and my, my sister was the same. We have sort of been those examples that other people have looked to and said: "Well actually if they can do it, why can't we?"

I: I am wondering then, have you encountered the opposite of other women within the community considering maybe being so involved would not be that appropriate. More like it wasn't your place or-

JA: Yes, I think it can be. Because again, each thing is like, well, it depends to the degree that you are willing to engage with other people because obviously I've been to college, so I went to, I went to uni, I worked all my life. I've always mixed with all genders and all communities, so for me it's always been comfortable, but if you've never done any of that, then actually even going to a meeting in a school, if there are other men not from within your immediate circle, then it would be difficult for them. I don't know if I'm making sense.

I: Absolutely. And then I'm just wondering, have you maybe tried to encourage actively other women to maybe take also part as you do like, I don't know, I'm thinking, about trying to engage them to become more so maybe governors or more involved?

JA: Yes, definitely. We've had three or four, that have been quite successful that have become governors, then moved on to do other things. I stayed, I'm just one of those, I just stick with something. There's a lady, actually there's two, a pair, they've both been parent governors, one moved into employment and she got the job and then she was moved away. The other one actually decided that she went to uni and she's got herself a degree.

I: Wow.

JA: Partly be because of go for government because it gave her the confidence Yes.

Actually, I'm not just a mum, I'm not, I am not just a housewife. This lady left school with not a lot of qualifications, very bright but was married off at a very young age and raised children as a single parent. But it gave her that confidence to actually think “Actually I can do this. I can do something else. I can go into education”.

I: Following on that then how do you think Muslim women should get involved within the community?

JA: I think it is just small things. But sometimes it's not about being involved in huge thing. Sometimes. Like with my, um, my fulltime job that I do in a community centre, I'm always looking out for ladies who may have that little bit of a thing where they can say, well actually why don't you come and help? Why don't you come in to volunteer and come and sit with the ladies, come and have a talk to them, come and help with our lunch club. And then perhaps they have. And there are so many ladies who have gone into education. I've gone into work over the years because they've come to the centre as the first point of call. They've been there, might have been doing a weight management class, they may have gotten to an exercise class, but sometimes you always pick up on those that are wanting to do a little bit more. So, you say to them: “Well actually, why don't you come and help me with this?” Or “I've got an event running. Why don't you come and help me?” “Can you, can you do something, or can you just come and make some tea for the older ladies who maybe don't get lonely and isolated” and it gives them that confidence that they think actually “I can do this” and then they progress to other things.

I: How do you feel about it? For me it feels like it must be kind of a powerful feeling .

JA: I feel very proud and it makes me feel I'm able to support other women to move onto other things because there's a few ladies that were supported that got jobs in schools. Um, I've got some other lady who was actually training to be a midwife at the moment, because she came to us a few years ago, you know, it was bringing children up, was married at a young age, you know, a bit fed up, uh, I don't know what she wanted to do. We had a project running and said like: “well why don't you come and help?” And it's sort of a stepping stone for some of them and it makes me feel happy that I can support other women that perhaps just didn't have that start that I had because I was very little kid, and my dad let me go into education and, you know, sort of work, and more of an independent person that a lot of people did.

I: I'm just amazed because in a way, it feels like you not only participated actively in your job, but also with the volunteering, contributing to the community. But also, your

actions have a major impact within the community. Am I right?

JA: Yes. And it might just be on small individual lives, but you think that those individual lives that have an impact on their own families and their immediate community that they're with it. (...) I was going to say that you don't see the huge wide impact, but you see though individually succeed and make something of themselves.

I: Yeah.

JA: And I'm just wondering now then, to what extent did you think that the community makes it possible if, if it, if it does or it doesn't, because sometimes communities can play as a, as um, as an obstacle rather than a facilitator.

JA: It depends on the individual families and the individual communities. It's not the community. And again, it's about perception. Often, it's like, oh, I can't do this because the community will look at me in a negative way.

I: When you say community here though, because we haven't specified, but are you thinking about Muslims or like Asian Muslims or wider society as in British society.

JA: It is the community that you live within your own community, the Pakistani community. Or if you live within Bangla community, it’s the community that you belong to. And predominantly, as all human nature, we tend to cluster with our own, with people from a likely background of people with a familiar language. People with the same religion.

I: Yeah.

JA: So, and I think for me, because I've worked in the wider community, I've had those experiences that perhaps, you know, some people sometimes people will say to me: “Oh, you know these, these English ladies, they have it easy, their husbands do everything for them”. And it’s like, no, they have the same issue as we do, you know, they make you to go home and do the... They're the same. They have to do the cooking, they have to do the cleaning, the men sit and they don't do anything. And those perceptions sometimes that people don't understand that actually, you know, as women we're all the same. They don't have those differences. Say of course you can go out and you can stay out till the evening and I look after the children. No they don't. It's the same. It's, you know, and it's that sort of misconceptions there perhaps particularly I know from talking to my own community ladies, but they have those misconceptions of the other communities that we live amongst.

I: So you are misperceived but, so we misperceive the other women outside. And do you think, is any changing though going there?

JA: Yeah, it was definitely, I don't even now I am the older generation but when I look

at sort of my daughter on her sort of friends and as they're growing or I'm just thinking that they have much more freedom now than I did when I was growing up. At her age, you know, I wasn't allowed to go to town. Or the cinema or to the restaurant for a meal with my friends because it just wasn't something you did or. No. I go out and I'll see young girls on their own. And I think “Do your parents know you are here?” then, even then, even the way they dress now, you know, it's much more Westernized, which was when we were growing up, you still had to dress very modestly. You still had to cover your head if you were outside. So in those senses, you know, times have changed now.

I: How do you feel about all these changes? Is it something you like or?

JA: Sometimes I am still a bit old fashioned. I like it the way it was.

I: Yeah.

JA: Not in the sense that it was maybe too dominating unto predominantly male orientated. But I think sometimes the younger generation is being given too much freedom, we are losing those values that we had growing up. How they sort of, and I just feel that the, you know, the sort of looking after the elders and the being respectful, having that understanding for your religion and the culture that we still belong to, it is being lost in some, um, I think is sad that, you know, we are losing some of that. Some people might think, well lots of good things, but I sometimes think, well no actually I don't think it's a good thing. I think we still need to have some to [inaudible 00:18:22].

I: And just because you were mentioning it, now, but earlier you talk about what motivated you, you know, to become a google school. Um, but I'm wondering also like at what extent or if your religion or Islam played any role in you becoming a governor?

JA: I don't think so. I think the important thing there was that I was a mum. It was about my children's education and their future. So, I don't think it had anything to do with my religion. It was about having the best for my children.

I: But at the same time being the only Muslim woman, I guess you were able to make across maybe relevant points for Muslim children that other teachers or other children might not be. Now I'm thinking from trying to avoid having an exam on Eid week or during Ramadan. Significant days like maybe you know, working around those days or-

JA: Because I was through the primary school, we don't have those issues, but yes it is. I mean, I, I am, I am at the moment I am only Muslim woman on the governing body, but over the few years there has been other Muslims governors as well. There have been others that have been and then gone.

I: Okay. So, before we move into the next section, just because we were, we've been talking all about the community and people's perceptions, have you encountered not only from other women but also from these wider community. And now I'm thinking about men, women, younger, older, uh, the mosque. Um, have you encountered people like who or like do you think that there's a major view of people kind of looking up at what you do and celebrating it or, or like have you encountered other views on, well actually maybe you aren't just coming to, you know, or like I'm taking too much or what are the views from the wider community?

JA: Just accept it as it is and it's never sort of, it's never sort of spoken about. It's never. Nobody ever says to you: “Oh, well done.” “You've done, this”, you know, “You’re doing something good”. It's not, it doesn't sort of happen. In my work role, the people I work with, they appreciate what we do because we do something for them, because you're there, you're there, you're helping them, you've made a phone call for them. You've advised them on something that perhaps they were struggling with. So in that sense you get a gratitude that you are there for them. But the governance thing, the wider community, to be honest, you have never had any, you know, nobody's ever said to you: “Oh well done. You're doing something good”.

I: No, no, because I thought I had the chance to interview ,funny enough, another woman who among all of the women I'm interviewing with all these wonderful experiences that you shared with me, she also was telling me how there was another member in the board who was Asian background and how at the end of the day that would be a kind of, you know, gender at stake of “let me tell you” or kind of “I know what's better”. You know. So, I was just trying to see if you...

JA: I know, I don't, I don't think so. But I think my character is that I don't let people get the better of me. Okay. I'm quite vocal. I am quite, I will say what I think and what I feel. So people never give people the opportunity to talk down to me. They never get the opportunity to say to me…

I: Do you think that comes with age?

JA: I think it comes with age. It also comes with experience. Having had that quite a lot of times now you’d be like, often the people will walk into you and they will say; “Can I speak to the person who is responsible” and you as a like “I'm the person responsible” and they look and you think, “Are you? an Asian women in Asian clothes?” Um, but my, my, my job before this one I'm doing. When, when I first trained, I trained in the NHS, often I was a

technician and people would come to you and they would expect you to be the interpreter, not the technician. But they used to say to you, um, “can you interpret” and it's like, “no, I'm here to do the test”. But because they saw your face, they automatically thought you were the interpreter all the time. Even now, with the work I do, because I lead the project, often people will say, “can I speak to the person in charge?” “Well, I am”. They don't expect it. Oh, there's my colleague and myself, my colleague is a gentleman. Particularly on official sort of, when we have events, sometimes he will wear a suit, because he, you know, they will always go to him. and don't come to me, because he is the man in the suit and I am the Asian lady in the dress. And yet he would always turn to me and ask me, well, you know, “what should we do?” Because he doesn't have the confidence that it will do and I will, I will make decisions and I will stick with those decisions and he finds that difficult. So he would always come to me and say, “what do you think?” And well leaving it to me. But yet people will still go to him.

I: Now I would like you to think about recent events, really unfortunate ones. The examples which I'm thinking about are like the Grenfell tower where Muslims organised the food collection; or at the national level, the London terrorist attacks where in the aftermath Muslim women organised a human chain in Westminster; or the ongoing refugee crisis where there's a lot of demonstrations also and fundraising. And I was just wondering like if you either have participated in any way or in any event related to any of these.

JA: I have chosen to go to out. There's been lots of protests in the city where I am. There's always protest outside city hall for lots of different things and it's something I choose not to participate in. I would rather, if I'm going to make a contribution to charity, I do it quietly, um, you know, sort of do that thing a try. I think there's a petition that I think is quite strong petition. I will sign it, but I, I, I find that these ladies go on stand these placards have other agendas. And this is not nationally, I’m thinking more of the local ones. There is more, it is more political than either politics and this is just within my city and my sort of personal and perhaps this is just my personal opinion rather than an observation in that most of these ladies who go and stand outside protests around, you know, Palestine and Syria and all these things, it always seems to be the same group. They always seem to sort of political undertone to me.

I: What is the difference for you when you say, because for me I would say like everything can be almost political, even a relationship. Right? But what do you mean? What is the distinction for you when you say that they are more political and having a different

agenda than you?

JA: I think some of they are affiliated to politicians. All they have the desire to be within politics. And affiliated to certain parties within the city. I think naturally people will go on because they feel that that is the way to protest. They want to do that and it's just something that I've never chosen to do. I mean the way we do it, and we do this most years and we haven't done this yet. And somebody did say to him and I said, you know, I've had so much on this year, uh, we have a group of ladies and they all knit, so every year we collect wool, um, we, uh, we will ask them to knit things. We donate them to charity, every year we choose a different charity. So, whether it's the salvation army in this country. Last year we sent two large boxes to Syria, uh, whether we donate them to one of the church groups. So that's the sort of thing that I would feel. I would rather though than go and stand with a placard or stand outside city hall or Times square in London city centre and protest against something. It's just the way I do. We had a collection, during the Grenfell, we had a collection of clothes. I know that afterwards said: “Oh no, there's too much of them. We don't need them.” But that's how we coordinated it, in the, within just out our friends and family. We collected all our sort of clothes, you know, like the children don't wear and shoes and bags and everything. We thought maybe useful still. We had the collection, we took it to a donation point and we donated, but that was just something that we did as a group of sort of family and friends to somebody going in and they took sort of a few loads down. Uh, so we will do small things like that, but I never been into the big political rallies and going and protesting.

I: Do you think there's something about the way you, you live your religion. So that kind of doesn't make you go. I'm thinking now about, you know, from humbleness or modesty or keeping needs more indoors rather than

JA: I think is about, and again perhaps maybe a little bit old fashioned and that as in the Muslim woman and she's supposed to be quite refined. I'm reserved. I'm not in the public limelight too much. You know, the woman is, she's supposed to, she was not supposed to be seen, as in her, she's supposed to be behind closed doors and perhaps my upbringing still has that little bit in me , but I don't have the desire to go and stand in large crowds protesting with the media and everything their way. Everybody knows and sees that you have done this thing.

I: But at the same time do you think that there has to be other British Muslim women doing it and maybe playing this role of role models?

JA: Yes, of course, because again, particularly as a British Muslims, we are being quite

ostracized at the moment. Even just in the news today, everything that's happening in Sheffield at the moment, it's scary. It's scary. I'm scared for myself and my children of what retaliation comes to us. So if those women have that desire to go do it, I said to them, you know, go for it, hey, it's no something that is within my comfort zone, but if it is in that comfort zone, then we need to show that yes we are that, but here we are here to stay in, and we can speak out if we want to.

I: And so I was just wondering like if you find solidarity or you engage also in other ways. For instance, when you connected with your family and friends to collect clothes for...

JA: Yeah, I would say that I would try and do is doing it to one to one, you know, standing in a supermarket cue and saying hello to the person next to you? It doesn't matter what colour they are it makes them feel like you're not some sort of alien person that you are still human, you know, if you are... I don't pick my children up from school anymore, but I would stand in the playground and I would talk to all the parents in the school playground, not just Pakistani ladies. So it's also about that. It's about showing people that actually you asked to a human being.

I: What you're describing the same way that some women refer to the charity starts at home, uh, for Muslims. I think that what you're saying is almost like, um, demonstrations start with, you know, the immediate neighbour and in your everyday life you don't need to go into demonstration to be kind or to show.

JA: Yeah, exactly. It could be that you see somebody struggling out on the street and you say to them: “Can I help you?”

I: Yeah.

JA: That will have a more of an effect on somebody's life, than them seeing you protesting on the, on the road somewhere. Or you just smile or say hello to somebody.

I: Yeah

JA: But he's, you know, from your community. And they actually think that's a nice person.

I: Yeah. And brilliant because one of the things I'm also interested in is your feelings and perceptions and you are giving me amazing account on that. And actually, that's what I was going to ask you earlier on you said, um, how you were feeling about, uh, working as a governor or when you kind of encouraged other women to come. And I was wondering like, even when you are knitting or when you are collecting, um, like, would you say that somehow there is some sense of power? because you are reaching out; but also power in

the sense of power with other women to bring in change, if that makes sense.

JA: Yes. No, that makes it. Yes, I wouldn't use the word power, but it gives me that, um I can't think of the word as well, it gives me I think the opportunity to be able to help others, to do something good as well. Yep. I am that person that I can be the role model. I can be that sort of person who initiate something.

I: Yes. And then just to finish this section and then we move to the last few questions. Um, but looking back then to all your participation, would you say that your views have changed over the years and how you see social involvement? Due to your own experience as you were saying and you do age, would you say that before you would be less inclined of maybe being that active and then over the years you've become more active or, or the opposite? Maybe earlier you would be more engaging because you felt like you had to, you know, show up as Muslim women and now it's like: "You know what, you take it or leave it?", I don't know.

JA: I think so, yes, definitely. And I think particularly with the climate has changed. Um, I think it definitely is something that I think yes, I'm doing, I'm definitely doing something right and I'm glad that I am engaged because I think there is just so much bad press, particularly around the Muslim community now, that I think all engagement needs to be positive. And if you have something that you'd be to prove?

I: In what sense?

JA: That we are, we are, we are, we are, we feel just as bad, about some of these things that are happening and they are not happening in our name so it feels even stronger. That needs to be engaged.

I: But it sounds as well as it is almost exhausting or unfair having to show that you oppose?

JA: I think it also feels like we are now having to do it rather than choosing to do it.

I: Yeah.

JA: Before you did something because you wanted to do it, now you are consciously thinking about all the time, but you're also very conscious about yourself, how are you going to be judged, or if you approach somebody, how are they going to react to you? So, it's becoming much more difficult now.

I: More needed than ever but at the same time more difficult than ever.

JA: Yes.

I: Okay. And now, um, so far and as I said we're reaching the end, but so far you've

been giving me particular pictures of your social engagement and, and all the women and, and your, um, involvement of British Muslim women. Right? And you've also talked about all the views and perceptions, but I'm wondering how closely do you think that what you've said reflects the general public view of British Muslim women?

JA: It doesn't, at all, the general view of British Muslim women is that they are not heard, that they go around with their faces covered. They don't have an opinion or a voice. But if you read what's in the media, that is how Muslim women are being perceived. We are just these non-people who actually don't even exist within our communities, but people don't know us, people don't know how much input, we put in our communities. But in the media, we are not... we are just seen as these women in black with their faces covered with no opinion.

I: But at the same time, I'm thinking about the Grenfell tower events, women were used almost as the pictures illustrating all the events from demonstrations to food collection. Uh, women were all the time either interviewed or portrayed in the pictures.

JA: I think it's just such on such a small scale. Grenfell was huge and it is a very significant thing in lots of people's lives, but I think when still you look at the, the media and how much is - but if you actually think about the Grenfell, the one most, and although I live in the north, we don't see what the London media, so I don't know what was in the media and then in London, but in national media, the biggest picture was of that Muslim lady standing, ignoring that man on the floor. That was the strongest picture from Grenfell. Sorry. No, that was from London Bridge.

I: Oh ok I haven't seen that picture. I will definitely look for it.

JA: There was also on the first incident on London Bridge where the people were knocked over and there was quite a lot of hype. There was a lady who was standing on her phone, ignoring the gentlemen on the ground, and there was a big media hype about it as “this woman doesn't care”. “This Muslim woman did not care about this man being on the ground.”

I: Do you remember what newspaper, where did you see it?

JA: It was an old newspapers. It was a national newspaper. It was on the national newspapers. It was in the news. It was everywhere.

I: So not only they have no, they are no people, but when actually they act is to be mean and, and kind of disrespectful to others

JA: But with Grenfell, as somebody living in the north, we only saw what was on the

national media. So, we don't see the local news. We don't obviously, you know, we only get it our local news, so we didn't, we didn't see as much of what happened on the ground.

I: Yeah. And then, but I'm just wondering, don't you think there's also an alternative narrative, that we've been actually laughing about it with other interviewees, that there's also the of: “Oh, let's find the Muslim women of the year who read the first book, let's find the first Muslim women of the year who did…” because someone was making actually fun of all these awards and acknowledgements and kind of putting British Muslim women on the media as the exception or as the, again, like almost as the one single woman doing these things.

JA: Because actually if you look within society, there are so many, particularly in the communities where we are quite highly populated in bigger numbers, like in my city, if you've ever been to. If you come, you will just see how many Muslim women there are in this city, in either quite well-paid jobs, although our politician at the moment isn't doing too well, but how many Muslim women that we have on our council, how many women, are uh, just doing everyday jobs.

I: And yet the media then, in this area, show it as such?

JA: No, but if you, if you got to say I don't know, um, some very southern city in the UK, whether it is very, very small Muslim population that yes, of course you're not going to get the same proportion of Muslim women that are active and are working and are engaged in social communities.

I: In numbers, the numbers and the population, or whatever, I think it's four percent.

JA: In that sense in places like Yorkshire, where is predominantly Yorkshire, Birmingham, all the sort of big cities where there is a lot predominantly large numbers of Muslim women. Then, “yes!” there is a lot going on, and there is a lot happening. Some are still having to just carry on with their life and not work and bring their children up and that's a fantastic job to do. There are so many of us that are outside doing things that we think really benefit our community.

I: So and now, just to conclude almost, but what then, other issues do you hope to see these Muslim women taking action on?

JA: I think just the understanding, that at the end of the day we are all still human and particularly in the wider political things that everything that is happening is not down to the wider Muslim population. It is a minority that have those ideas and thoughts and that we are all being ostracized. You know, I grew up in a country where I thought I could just go

anywhere and not worry. Now when my children said to me: “Mom, I'm going to leave”. I have to say to them: “Please be careful, you know, just be careful. Don't be on your own. Don't do this”. I travelled all over on my own and I never thought about it. And now I am having to, uh, I was born here, I'm 50 next year. I know a big one. And again, you see, that's something for me. I have other friends who are also going to be 50 about the same time as us, and we always said we would go to the States, for our 50th.

I: But now it doesn't feel appealing anymore.

JA: No, this is now I'm thinking, well, do we want to go because are we going to be welcomed? Are we going to be?...

I: In my opinion, I've been there a couple of times. You will have a harder time in the airport, but you will have it anyways anywhere at the moment.

JA: Do you know what I'm thinking about? Do I really want to go? Should I stay? Should I go somewhere in Europe? But then again, I'm thinking, well actually I don't want to go to in France because again they are saying, well, you know, Muslims there. So again, it's like I'm having to think about things I've never considered before. Like holidays, we thought about Barcelona, we ended up going to London. We spent three days in London at the end, because I just said to the children, I don't want to take you somewhere where I am worried.

I: Yeah, definitely,

JA: So, um, what would you think that would make women or would motivate women to get more involved then, based on your experience?

JA: I think it's a personal thing. I think it would be giving those women the confidence and I think seeing other women having done it. But actually, I'm not the only person doing this thing that somebody else has done this and I come do it and being able to have that confidence to do it. So, I think seeing others do something, then I think it makes you think “what actually…”

I: Do you think that there is something about the doing it together. That kind of makes you feel like you can do it.

JA: Yes, yes, definitely. I think it gives you that support, but then it's also about having the support from your family because if you have a family who, uh, totally against, you know, women engaging and doing it, you know, going out and sort of being involved in something and that stops.

I: Yeah. But actually, I was going to ask you about the barriers, like the same way that would motivate, might be also seen as an obstacle to participate (Families, views...).

JA: Yes. But there is the parents, there is the husbands, that still does happen, you know, and that's not just in our community, that's in all communities.

I: And do you think it is down to Islam or it's down to culture?

JA: Culture, because if you look at if people understood Islam, then in Islam there is no differentiation for women, there is some but if you look at work and education, there isn't. Our prophet and his wife was a fantastic business woman.

I: I am super fan of Khadija!

JA: In that sense, we are always told this is our religion, but you know, women shouldn't be seen. I mean, yes, we have to be modest and that is religion and we have modesty and we keep ourselves covered and we don't mix with just men on their own, but there's also limits as well.

I: What about the role of the mosque, because during the interview you haven't mentioned or referred to it . Do you think it plays any role with women involvement or it is failing, or it is a space that needs to be changed in any way or…?

JA: It needs to be changed in some, in in a lot of ways, and I haven't mentioned the Mosque. Although my father was very involved in the mosque and growing up, we always had a lot of connection with our local mosque. We have a local mosque, um, in our local mosque we are not allowed to go and pray with the men. Some mosques now have a lady area, where you can go and pray. The community I am from is a little bit behind that. They don't, they don't do that. But what we now have in our community, we have a mosque and we have a ladies-only building. So, there are activities going on.

I: Wait a second, basically you are saying that as a woman you are not allowed to pray in the mosque?

JA: Not in the mosque and not in my local mosque, that I am associated with that my family go to, there are others mosques.

I: Yeah I know, but for a second I thought you were just segregated... How do you feel about it?

JA: So it's something that I have grown up with, so it is something that I have never questioned. I know that I am okay on my obligations to do my prayers at home I hope so. I do my prayers at home. I have been to Saudi, I've done Hajj [pilgrimage to Mecca], I did go to the mosque to pray then. But here, uh, because I've never been given the choice.

I: Yeah.

JA: It's something that I've never questioned. What I would like to do is be more

involved in the running and the management of the mosque, but it's all men.

I: Why would you like to be involved?

JA: Because I think the mosque is a focal point for our community. When there is a death, everybody goes to the mosque. We are there two, three days, we support each other as a community. Our children go there to learn, our husbands go there to pray, so the mosque is something that is part of our life. Particularly now our mosque has a community section but yet the women run some of the activities so there is still no woman on the management.

I: Maybe among all the examples you just told me that is a lack of space for women, like real involvement for women then, within the mosque?

JA: Yes, yes there is. But then again, different mosques… Some Mosques are very open to women that have lots of space for women. We now do have that because we have the community space, a lot of the community classes running that I don't go because I'm so busy with my own work, I don't go but I know people who go... I don't. At the time, I bet I have supported them, I've given them advice on funding, so I, because I know one of the ladies from, because she lives in the community, so I've told her about where she could maybe go for funding, all she could perhaps go and get a tutor for a sewing class. So, I've given it that sort of advice. But I know that the building is there, women do go.

I: Then the last question, um, is there any other question that considering your experience and what is important as I said for you and considering, you know, all the things you've been through a we haven't addressed, or I haven't asked you

JA: There isn't.