# Marriage Migration and Integration



**Katharine Charsley & Marta Bolognani, University of Bristol**

**Sarah Spencer & Hiranthi Jayaweera, University of Oxford**

**Evelyn Ersanilli, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam**

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Visit:

http://www.bristol.ac.uk/ethnicity/projects/mmi/

Write to:

Dr Katharine Charsley
School of Sociology, Politics and International Studies
University of Bristol
11 Priory Road
Bristol, UK. BS8 1TU

Email: katharine.charsley@bristol.ac.uk

## About the authors

**Katharine Charsley** is Reader in Sociology at the Centre for Ethnicity and Citizenship, School for Sociology, Politics and International Studies (SPAIS), University of Bristol. She is Principle Investigator for the Marriage Migration and Integration project. Her academic work focuses on marriage-related migration, and includes the books *Transnational Marriage* (Routledge, 2012), and *Transnational Pakistani Connections: marrying 'back home'* (Routledge, 2013). She convenes the 'marriage and migration' research network.

**Marta Bolognani** is Research Associate at the Centre for Ethnicity and Citizenship, SPAIS, University of Bristol. In the project she was the responsible for the qualitative data collection and analysis. She has been the coordinator of the Pakistan Studies Group (2005 -2011), and General Secretary of the Muslims in Britain Research Network (2011-2014). She has published extensively on Pakistani diaspora and is the author of *Crime and Muslim Britain* (I.B. Tauris, 2009) and *Pakistan and its Diaspora* (Palgrave, 2011, with Steve Lyon).

**Sarah Spencer** is Director of the Global Exchange on Migration and Diversity, part of the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at the University of Oxford. She is a Co-Investigator in the Marriage Migration and Integration Project in which she focused on the conceptual framework. Her academic research focuses on irregular migrants in Europe and on integration processes and policy. She has published widely on migration, equality and human rights issues.

**Hiranthi Jayaweera** is Research Affiliate and former Senior Researcher at the Centre on Migration, Policy and Society at the University of Oxford. She is a Co-Investigator in the Marriage Migration and Integration Project. She has particular research interest in issues of the integration of migrants, a subject on which she has undertaken both qualitative and quantitative research.

**Evelyn Ersanilli** is Assistant Professor in Sociology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Her research interests are immigration and integration policies, immigrant integration, citizenship, identity, migrant families, and research methodology. Her work has been published in key journals such as *International Migration Review* and the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. She conducted the quantitative analyses of the Labour Force Survey for the Marriage Migration and Integration project.

# Executive Summary

## Background to the research

Recent restrictions on marriage-related immigration to the UK have been justified with reference to problems of integration, echoing policy developments elsewhere in Europe. In the UK, the focus of these discourses is usually on marriages between British South Asians (particularly Muslims) and partners from their parents' or grandparents' countries of origin. The overall suggestion is that the arrival of a first generation in every generation undermines processes of integration, with perceived implications ranging from poverty to lack of attachment to the UK, and persistent gender inequality.

Empirical research on this topic is, however, surprisingly limited, and has produced varying results. The Marriage Migration and Integration project uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to provide new insights on the relationships between transnational marriage and the multi-facetted, two-way processes of integration. It focuses on two of the largest British ethnic minority groups involved in this kind of transnational marriage – Pakistani Muslims and Indian Sikhs – comparing the characteristics of couples in which one partner has migrated to the UK with couples from the same ethnic groups in which both spouses are born/raised in Britain. While most attention on marriage migrants has focused on migrant wives, the project was also interested in the trajectories of migrant husbands, who form a significant proportion of South Asian marriage migration to Britain.

## Overview of findings

Processes of integration are complex, encompassing several dimensions of life: social, structural (e.g. the labour market), cultural, civic and political, and the realm of identity. Processes within these domains can enhance each other and proceed together, as when a newly arrived migrant spouse finds employment and develops social networks with colleagues. But they can also be in tension, for example if long working hours in low-wage employment leave little time to make new social networks or engage in civic activity. Processes of integration in the various domains are also not always clearly connected. The issue of identity in particular appeared separate from other aspects of integration among our participants. Hence, when migrant spouses did not develop a British identity, this did not appear as an impediment to broader processes of integration. For the British born/raised Indian Sikh and Pakistani Muslim spouses interviewed, we found no correlation between a transnational marriage and strength of British identity. Among some British respondents, we found a 'paradox of integration' (not related to transnational marriage) in which their social and political engagement meant greater awareness of discrimination and issues of foreign policy, sometimes leading to political disillusionment and/or questioning the significance of Britishness. As this suggests, processes of engagement and identity do not simply increase over time but can also decrease.

We find variations in patterns of engagement by gender and ethnic group, so that while migrant husbands had high levels of paid employment, rates of employment are lower for migrant wives, particularly amongst Pakistani Muslims. Some findings challenge common assumptions

about relationships between transnational marriage and integration. For some British Pakistani women, for example, rather than a transnational marriage being a sign of traditionalism or creating more patriarchal domestic relationships, marriage to a migrant enhanced their autonomy. Whilst British families often expected that a wife from the subcontinent would have more traditional expectations of gender roles, and rates of extended family living were higher among migrant wife couples, some migrant wives had high levels of education and strong aspirations around work and careers. Whether and how quickly these aspirations were fulfilled depended on a range of factors including not just familial support, but also matters of policy and local opportunities.

One key finding is that patterns of integration vary across the life course. For both migrant and non-migrant participants, marriage and childrearing is a time of life when social networks tend to focus around the family. Marriage migrants enter this stage of life at the same time as entering a new country (with attendant loss of social networks), with the effect of amplifying this focus on the family. These early patterns of integration are not, however, set in stone, and can change later in life. At all stages, the opportunities presented by the local environment, job markets, and policy frameworks are crucial effectors of patterns of integration. This two-way process of integration, involving not just the characteristics of the migrant, but also the society into which they arrive, is shared with other forms of migration. In comparison with many other categories of migrants, spousal migrants have an important potential advantage in the form of their relationships with their British partner and in-laws, who can provide information, contacts and support for the new arrival. Families vary, however, in their knowledge and resources and in the expectations they may have of their new member.

These new, nuanced insights into the relationships between transnational marriage and processes of migration offer the possibility of more productive dialogue, and more effective interventions to facilitate the integration of migrant spouses.

**For policy implications, see next page.**

## Implications for policy and practice in the public, private and voluntary sectors

- There is a clear need for information and signposting for arriving spouses. Receiving families initially fulfil this role, but have varying knowledge, resources and expectations.
- Challenges faced by migrant husbands are less widely recognised than those affecting migrant wives, forming a gap in service provision.
- Integration interventions for migrant spouses should take account of issues of gender and life-course. The report suggests four phases of opportunity for interventions:
    - *Pre-migration* – practical information about life in the UK could be offered with language training.
    - *Arrival* – often a window of opportunity before migrants find work and/or have children for provision of information, training and other opportunities.
    - *Childrearing* - often a period of time pressures from work and caring. Space for encouraging and supporting engagement could still be found in: community groups, schools, and workplaces.
    - *Later in life* – initial patterns of integration are not set in stone, with room for initiatives targeting those at later life stages.
- Perceptions of equality are a pre-requisite for integration. Hence, action is needed to address stereotypes and build understanding. Sensitivity is needed to avoid policies and discourse on marriage-related immigration being viewed as having unjust impacts on, or being targeted towards, particular communities.

**For more detailed discussion of recommendations see p69-71.**

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# 1. Introduction

## Marriage Migration and Integration

In recent years many Western-European countries have increased restrictions on marriage-related immigration. These legislative changes are often justified by presenting such marriages as detrimental to integration. Discourses focus particularly on the transnational marriages of some minority ethnic groups as, in contrast to many expectations, significant proportions of the European children (and grandchildren) of earlier labour migrants have continued to marry partners from their ancestral countries of origin, rather than 'natives' or even co-ethnics raised in their country of birth. In the UK, South Asian groups have been the particular focus of such concerns.

Some arguments emphasise cultural issues, with the choice of a foreign partner interpreted as indicating a lack of cultural integration or national identification and an orientation towards the 'homeland', and migrant spouses seen as importing 'traditional' values. Other arguments concern the socio-economic consequences of transnational marriage. Recently introduced basic language tests aside, there are no skills or qualification requirements for family migrant visas, so such migrants are often assumed to have low levels of education, and hence low value on the labour market, with consequences for their own structural integration, the socio-economic position of the couple, and cumulatively for the ethnic group. 'Traditional' values, moreover, are assumed to restrict the labour market participation of women migrating through marriage, or married to migrants.

The overall logic is that continual 'replenishment though family reunion' (Heath 2014:3), or the arrival of a first generation in every generation, undermines generational processes of incorporation, at best creating only 'segmented assimilation' (Zhou 1997). In sum, such marriages have been viewed as 'importing poverty' (MP Ann Cryer in The Economist 2009), and drawing generations born in Europe back into inward looking ethnic communities whose integration is hindered by the economic and cultural consequences of the 'immigration super-highway' of marriage (The Economist 2009).

Empirical research on this topic is, however, surprisingly limited, and has produced varying results. This research project provides new data on the relationships between marriage migration and integration. It focuses on two of the largest British ethnic minority groups involved in this kind of transnational marriage – Pakistani Muslims and Indian Sikhs – and uses a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

## British Pakistani Muslims and British Indian Sikhs: transnational marriage and integration

Pakistani Muslim and Indian Sikh labour migration to the United Kingdom started to take off in the 1950s. Family reunification and the development of large British-born populations followed. Substantial numbers of these later generations have continued to marry partners from their parents' or grandparents' countries of origin, so that now over half of British Pakistani Muslims, and around a quarter of British Indian Sikhs, are married to spouses from overseas.

British Pakistanis have often been the focus of concerns over integration, which heightened after the Bradford riots in 2001, and intensified amid anxieties over extremist Islamism in Britain. They are also routinely identified as suffering from weak labour market position and poor educational performance (eg Modood 2003). The co-existence of these factors with significant levels of transnational marriages is suggestive of a connection between the two, but empirical research directly addressing the impact of transnational marriage on integration is lacking. In contrast, British Indians are often represented as a 'model minority' in terms of socio-economic progress, although Sikhs have poorer socio-economic outcomes than Hindus (Khattab *et al* 2011, Platt 2005). Sikhs sometimes feature in discussion of forced marriage, but their transnational marriages are otherwise seldom presented as problematic. Over two decades ago, Roger Ballard (1990) suggested that differing marriage patterns (marriage within the extended kin group is common amongst Pakistani Muslims but not Indian Sikhs) might be among the factors influencing contrasting socio-economic fortunes of Mirpuris (a subsection of the British Pakistani population) and Jullunduri Sikhs, but little additional evidence has since emerged. The notion that 'Muslims integrate less and more slowly than non-Muslims' (Bisin *et al* 2008: 245) has also been debated (Arai *et al* 2011). The inclusion in this study of one Muslim group in which connections between marriage migration and poor integration have been assumed, and one non-Muslim group in which such connections are not generally identified was intended to reveal whether the transnational marriage had similar or differing implications for processes of integration in the two groups.

## What is integration?

Integration is used to refer to the processes of migrant engagement in the receiving society. In this project we conceptualise integration as two-way processes of participation and change in which individuals are engaged across several societal domains: the structural (as in participation in the labour market or education system), social, cultural, civic and political, and in relation to identity. As will become clear in the discussion of our findings, these domains are sometimes less easily separable in practice, but provide a useful framework for investigation and analysis.

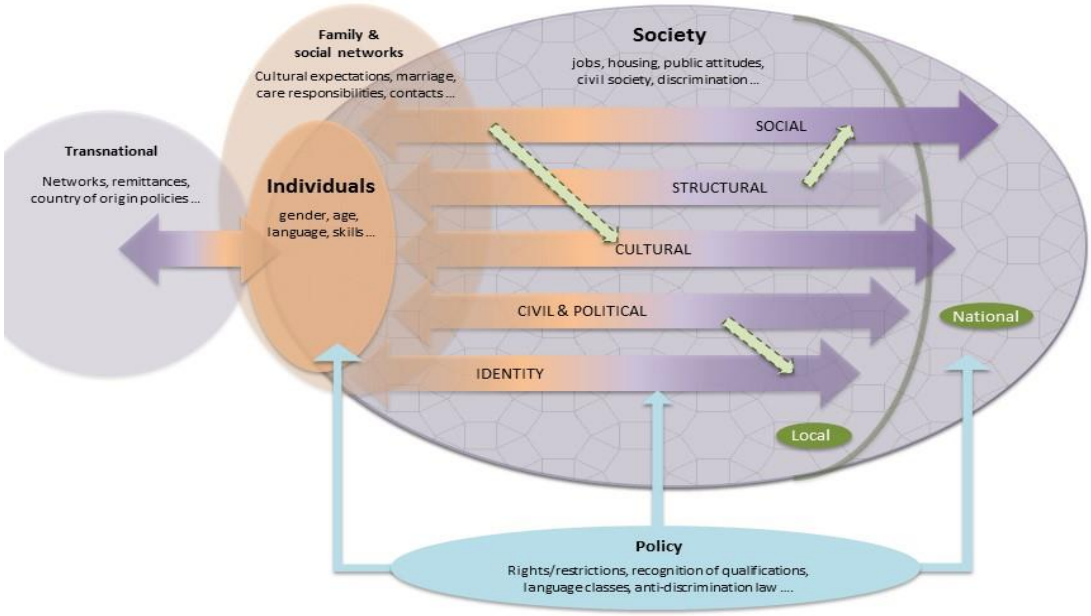
Integration processes across these domains are two-directional in two senses: the interaction engages not only newcomers but also established residents and institutions; and in the sense that the processes can be reversed. Participation in the labour market can be followed by unemployment; a strong sense of national identity can be undermined by events that lead to a sense of detachment and withdrawal. In addition to these processes in the country or locality of settlement, individuals may simultaneously continue to engage across domains in their country of origin or previous residence (practices known as 'transnationalism').

Individuals are rarely isolated beings but embedded in family and social networks (transnational and in their new country of residence): connections which bring opportunities, obligations and constraints that can facilitate or impede the integration processes in which they are engaged. Integration processes also clearly have a place dimension – local, where most interactions take place and attachments are formed, but also national (the source, for instance, of legal and policy frameworks which may facilitate or impede integration) and transnational.

Conceptualizing integration processes in this way enables us to see, first, that it is not only what the newcomer brings to the table that matters but also the opportunities open to them across domains, and the barriers (such as employment opportunities or discrimination) that they may face. Seeing the individual in the context of their family highlights the importance of life-course events on integration processes in ways that may have no relation to their migration experience. We can also see clearly that what happens in one domain may not be mirrored in another: participation in work may facilitate social engagement but working antisocial hours, for instance, can also prevent it. We need to tease out both what happens in each domain and the impact of events in one domain on another. Taking this approach we see immediately that integration outcomes are not static but fluid, changing and sometimes reversing, over time. Integration indicators can thus only measure a snap-shot in time. Finally, this approach requires us to identify the full range of 'effectors' – those factors which facilitate or hinder the integration processes we are studying – and where we cannot do so, to acknowledge that there are missing pieces in the puzzle that we cannot yet explain.

The diagram below provides a visual representation of this model of integration:

Figure 1 **MODEL OF INTEGRATION PROCESSES AND EFFECTORS**



Integration is also often used to refer to the societal engagement of ethnic minorities. This usage is considered controversial, as it can be taken to be perceiving ethnic minorities as analogous to migrants. Using separate terminology for the processes in which different groups of people are engaged can however be seen as drawing false distinctions. The markers commonly used to assess integration (eg. labour market and civic participation) may be applied equally to migrant and non-migrants. This allows comparison between migrant spouses and their British partners, and between couples in which one partner has migrated to Britain from overseas, and those in which both were born and/or raised in the UK. We employ these comparisons in this study, without wishing to endorse the problematic use of integration in some contemporary discussions of ethnic minority groups.

## Methods

The project employed a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods.

### Analysis of data from the UK Labour Force Survey

We compiled data from the UK Quarterly Labour Force Survey (LFS) household files, aggregating data from 2004 to 2014. The sample is limited to heterosexual couples in which partners either both list Indian as ethnic identity and Sikh as religion, or both Pakistani identity and Islam as religion. We included only couples in which at least one partner was either born in or migrated to the United Kingdom before the age of 18. Inter-ethnic marriages are relatively uncommon among these groups, and present a different set of dynamics, so were not included. The sample includes a very small number of non-married cohabiting couples. As labour market participation falls sharply after the age of 50, the sample was restricted to couples in which both partners were below 50 at the time of the survey.

In total, the sample from the LFS contains 1,815 Pakistani-Muslim couples and 544 Indian-Sikh couples.

The Labour Force Survey provides information primarily on the structural domain (employment, education) and on household composition, enabling comparison between transnational and

### TERMINOLOGY

In this report we use the following categories:

*Intranational couples:* those in which both partners are UK born/raised.

*Transnational couples*: those in which one partner migrated to the UK as an adult

The gender of the migrant spouse often has important implications for processes of integration, so transnational couples are further divided into:

*Migrant wife couples*

*Migrant husband couples*

*British* is used to refer to spouses born or raised in the UK (of Indian Sikh or Pakistani Muslim ethnicity), whilst *migrant* is used to refer to those born overseas who came to the UK as an adult. In this context, *migrant spouse* therefore refers to a history of (adult) migration rather than current citizenship or self-identity.

intranational couples, but does not provide insights into the mechanisms underlying these statistics. To address these processes, and those in other domains of integration, we conducted qualitative research with spouses in both transnational and intranational marriages.

## Qualitative research

The core of the qualitative research design are semi-structured interviews with a sample of sibling pairs of British Pakistani Muslims and Indian Sikhs and their spouses, in which one of the siblings married transnationally, whilst the other married within the ethnic group in the UK. The logic of this design was to reduce some of the differences in individuals' backgrounds which may be independently related to integration, but may also influence the likelihood of transnational marriage. Siblings are likely to share a number of relevant background characteristics (e.g. region of parental origin, parental socio-economic status, faith). Sibling sampling therefore offers a method of identifying individuals who share several characteristics but differ in their marriages (transnational or British-born spouse). Some variation of course remains. Differences between siblings influencing marital choices, but also impacting directly on integration processes may include: gender, age order, and forms of capital (e.g. education) affecting prospects in UK/overseas marriage markets. Such factors do not of course entirely determine partner selection, which is also influenced by personal preferences, relationships within the (extended) family, and the potential spouses available for each individual. The in-depth nature of the interviews allowed such issues and differences to be explored.

We sought to interview 'sets' of two siblings and their respective spouses. Inevitably, interviewing the full set of four people was not always possible – availability varied, and a few who initially agreed to interview later changed their minds. Where there were absent members in a set, information on these individuals was often available from the other interviews in the set. Where absent individuals meant we had fewer interviews in a particular category of participants (for example, migrant husbands), additional interviews and focus groups with people from that category (but not related to a set) were conducted. In total, interviews were conducted with 35 Sikh participants (all from sets) and 43 Pakistani participants (31 from sets). We also conducted 5 focus groups with a total of 25 participants. There were, however, significant recruitment difficulties for Indian Sikh migrant husbands, resulting in more limited qualitative data on this category of individuals.

As processes of integration develop over time, we sought to include transnational couples in which the migrant spouses had been in the UK for a variety of lengths of time. Arrival dates ranged from 1982 – 2007 for Indian Sikh migrant spouses, and 1982 – 2011 for Pakistani Muslim spouses, with the majority in both groups having arrived in the UK in the late 1990s or 2000s. All therefore arrived before the income and language requirements introduced in 2012.

Among the British Sikhs participants, a significant minority (7/27) were 'baptised' or Khalsa Sikhs, that is to say they had gone through a religious rite of passage involving taking new names and wearing the 5 Ks (*Kesh*, uncut hair; *Kangha*, a wooden comb; *Kara*, a metal bracelet; *Kachera*, a specific style of cotton undergarments; and *Kirpan*, a short curved sword), and another 4 individuals were preparing to be baptised (among migrant spouses, only one husband

was baptised). Without official estimates of the growing number of baptised Sikhs in the UK, we are unable to assess whether the presence of baptised Sikhs in our sample is representative, but in one relatively small recent survey of British Sikhs, only 10% were estimated to be Khalsa Sikhs[1]. We note this issue here, as becoming baptised had implications for social, cultural and religious practices relevant to this research.

The semi-structured interviews were designed to cover processes in all five domains of integration, with sections on life before and after marriage. In addition, an 'attributes' form was completed with each participant, capturing basic demographic, socio-economic and migration data. In order to expand the data available on identity, participants were also asked to complete a 'Who am I?' (WAI) sheet, which asked them to fill in 5 terms which they felt reflected their identity (for other studies using similar methodologies see Kanagawa *et al* 2001, Sökefeld and Bolognani 2011).

Interviews were conducted in Bradford and Leeds in the North of England, and Birmingham, Bristol and London in the South of England. This range of locations allows us to identify where issues are particular to certain locations, and where they are shared more generally across regions.

## Overview of the report

This report sets out the findings of the project. Chapters 2-6 set out findings related to one of the five domains of integration outlined above: structural (Ch 2), social (Ch 3), cultural (Ch 4), civic and political (Ch 5), and identity (Ch 6). In some of these domains, quantitative data from the Labour Force Survey is available and is used in combination with the findings from the qualitative research, whilst others draw only on the interview data. Chapter 7 deals with issues of transnationalism, which span multiple domains. In Chapter 8, we explore the effectors (barriers and facilitators) of integration revealed by this research, and interactions between the domains, concluding with policy recommendations resulting from this research.

Given the multi-facetted complexity of integration, we frame Chapters 2-7 around key questions in each domain or area, derived from the academic literature and political discourses surrounding marriage migration and integration. The qualitative and quantitative findings provide responses to these questions, but also suggest the need to interrogate some underlying assumptions, and provide additional information which nuances understandings of the relationships between marriage migration and the various aspects of integration.

[1] www.britishsikhreport.org

| Domain/Area | Key research questions |
|---|---|
| Structural | • How do migrant spouses' levels of education compare to spouses born/raised in the UK?<br>• How do migrant spouses perform in the labour market (compared to British South Asian spouses)?<br>• How do migrant wives' levels of paid employment compare to those of UK born/raised wives of the same ethnic group?<br>• Do levels of paid employment among British South Asian women married to migrants differ from those not married to migrants?<br>• What are the implications of transnational marriage for household economic well-being? |
| Social | • How do the social networks of migrant spouses and their partners differ from couples in which neither spouse is a migrant? |
| Cultural | • How do the cultural practices of transnational couples compare with those in which both partners were born/raised in the UK?<br>  ○ Do transnational couples more commonly live in extended family households?<br>  ○ Does extended family living indicate a more 'traditional' outlook (e.g. attitudes to gender roles)?<br>  ○ Does the choice of a migrant spouse reflect more traditional gender norms on the part of the British spouse and/or their family?<br>  ○ Does the arrival of a spouse from the Indian subcontinent produce more traditional gender roles?<br>  ○ How well do migrant spouses speak English?<br>  ○ What impact does a migrant spouse have on language of communication within households?<br>  ○ Do migrant spouses differ from those born/raised in the UK in their media consumption? |
| Civic and Political | • Do transnational and intranational couples differ in their levels and forms of civic and political engagement? |
| Identity | • To what extent do migrant spouses develop a British identity?<br>• Is there a relationship between transnational marriage and British identity on the part of the UK spouse?<br>• Is local identity patterned differently to national identity in relation to transnational marriage?<br>• Is there a relationship between transnational marriage and religious identity? |
| Transnationalism | • Do transnational couples differ from intranational couples in their transnational connections and orientations? |

## 2. Structural Integration

In this Chapter, we discuss findings on structural integration: focusing on education, work and income.

- education (both as a form of capital related to labour market integration, and as an aspect of structural integration in itself)
- employment (integration into the labour market)
- economic well-being.

Economic well-being can be an outcome of labour market integration, but has also been suggested as a pre-requisite for broader processes of integration, such as when the minimum income requirement for sponsoring a partner from overseas was justified in these terms:

> *The Government believes that family migrants and their sponsors must have sufficient financial independence not only to be able to support themselves without recourse to the State, but also that they should have the wherewithal to allow the migrant to participate in everyday life in a way that enables them to integrate and play a full part in British society. This requires a level of income higher than the current maintenance requirement, which (sic) is equivalent to the level of income support, is inadequate to prevent migrants and sponsors becoming a burden on the welfare system and in turn inhibits proper integration.*
> https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/257357/fam-impact-state.pdf

### Education

***How do migrant spouses' levels of education compare to spouses born/raised in the UK?***

**KEY FINDINGS:** *In both transnational and intranational couples, spouses most often have similar levels of education to each other, but with some evidence of an association between transnational marriage and having a partner with lower levels of education. There are also differences in the likelihood of transnational marriage according to the British partner's level of education, with those with higher education less likely to be married to a migrant.*

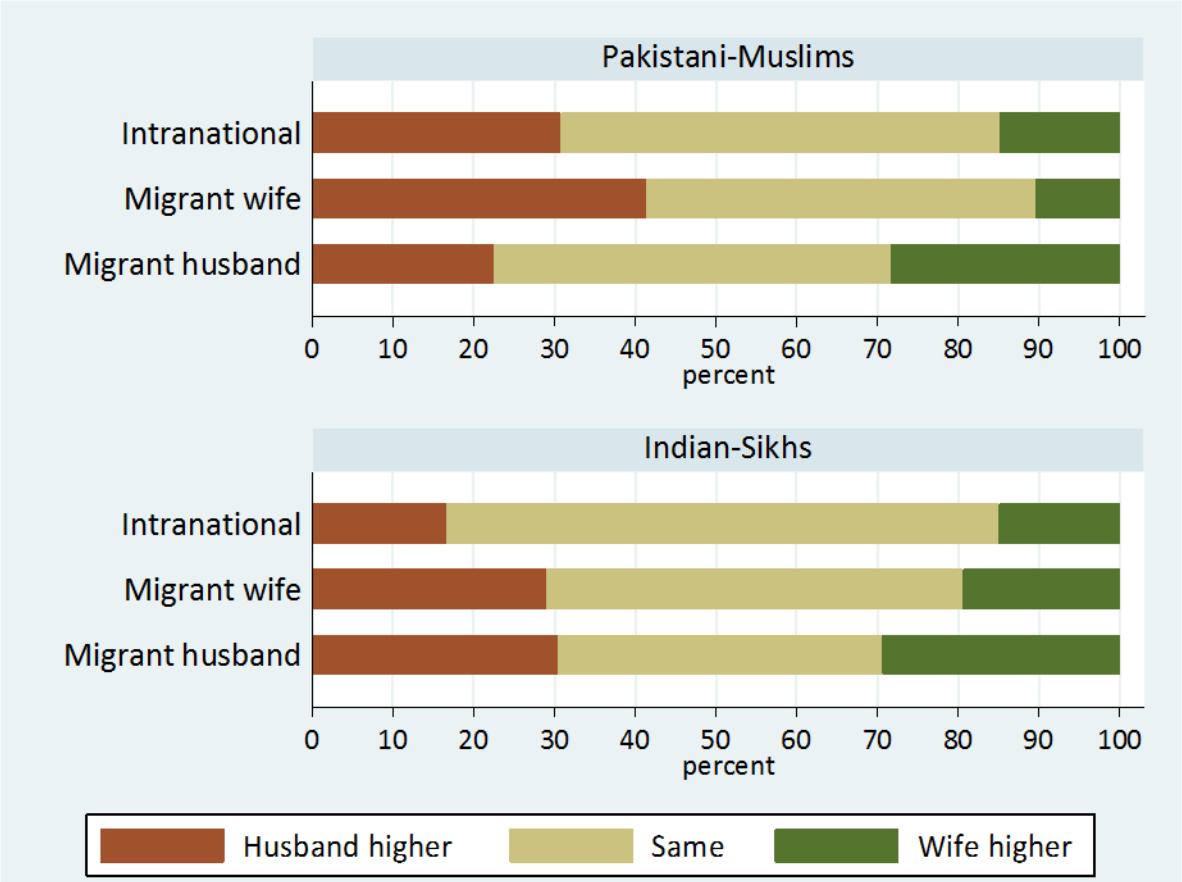
#### Quantitative Findings

The LFS data allows us to compare the levels of education of UK born/raised respondents to those of their spouse. This allows us to assess whether British South Asians marrying a partner from overseas bring spouses into the UK who have lower levels of education than themselves (for details of education categories used see Appendix).

As can be seen in Figure 2, the most common pattern in all marriage types and both ethnic groups is for spouses to have the same broad level of education. Where there is a difference in

level of education between spouses, however, the patterns vary between the two ethnic groups. In both ethnic groups, those marrying transnationally are more likely than those marrying intranationally to have a spouse with lower levels of education than themselves. But British Indian Sikh women married transnationally are also more likely that those married intranationally to have a husband with higher levels of education than themselves (an apparently similar pattern for British Indian Sikh men is not statistically significant when their own level of education is taken into account). Strong stereotypes exist of South Asian migrant wives as poorly educated, but around a third of Indian Sikh migrant wives and a sixth of Pakistani Muslim migrant wives are graduates, comparing very favourably with the general educational profile of women in their countries of origin.

**Fig 2: Education matching by couple type**

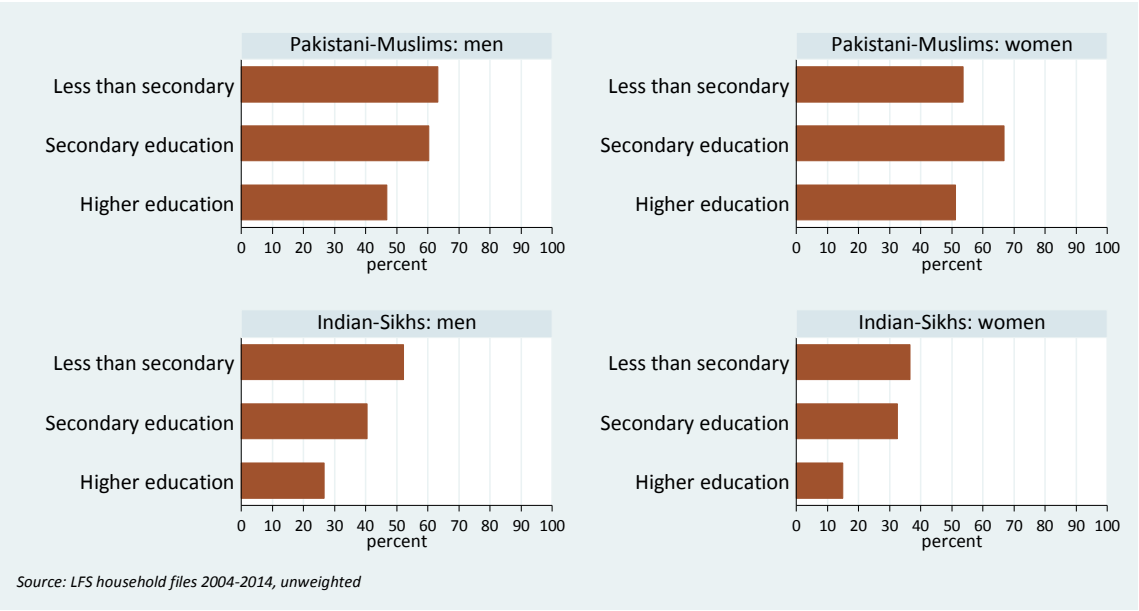



*Source: LFS household files 2004-2014, unweighted*

Further analysis shows that the *British* spouses' level of education also significantly affects their likelihood of being married to a migrant: lower qualifications correlate with higher levels of transnational marriage (Fig 2). The exception to this is the category of British Pakistani women with less than secondary education, who have rates of transnational marriage comparable to

those with higher education. Reasons for this are unclear, but may include difficulties in meeting financial requirements for sponsoring the immigration of a spouse.

**Fig. 3: Percentage of UK born/raised in a transnational couple by highest qualification**




*Source: LFS household files 2004-2014, unweighted*

Overall, then, the dominant pattern is for spouses to have similar levels of education, but with some evidence of an association between having a transnational marriage and having a partner with lower levels of education. British Indian Sikh women marrying transnationally are also more likely to have a spouse with higher levels of education than themselves. However, British Pakistani Muslims and Indian Sikhs who contract transnational marriages themselves tend to have lower levels of education than those marrying within the UK ethnic group. These findings suggest that a focus on levels of educational capital of marriage migrants distracts from the significant of differing levels of educational capital among UK born/raised partners.

## Qualitative findings

Our interview data reflects the Labour Force Survey findings on the relationship between the level of education of British spouses, and their likelihood of being in a transnational marriage, with fewer graduate participants having a migrant spouse, and more participants without degrees being married to migrants. In the sibling pairs, moreover, it was often the less educated sibling who was in a transnational marriage – although this was complicated by a relationship with age-order, as parental attitudes to both education and marriage choices often changed over time so that younger siblings were both more likely to attend university, and to contract a 'love' marriage (usually but not always within the UK).

The educational level of spousal migrants in our sample was varied. We had several examples of foreign wives in both groups who were more educated than their British husbands. Sikh migrant wives in our sample tended to have higher qualifications than the Pakistani migrant wives. Our sample of migrant husbands had a variety of qualifications.

***Barriers to translating migrant spouses' educational capital into labour market opportunities***

Where migrant spouses had significant educational capital (or ambitions to improve their qualifications) a range of barriers could prevent its translation into labour market advantage. These fall into three interacting categories: characteristics of the receiving family, labour market and policy barriers, and issues related to the life-course.

### Receiving family characteristics

British families whose own members had low levels of education were sometimes unprepared for educated migrant wives' career aspirations. Whilst education is often considered a desirable attribute in South Asian marriage markets, valuing an educated bride did not necessarily translate into expectations on the part of the British family that she would pursue a career after marriage/migration to the UK. Some British Pakistani families assumed that the wife would take on a purely domestic role, whilst Sikh families often assumed their new member would also undertake paid employment, but did not necessarily envisage them developing a professional career. Such women often found longer-term routes to at least partially fulfil their career aspirations, or other ways to use their education to benefit the family – some assisted lower-educated husbands with paperwork, or encouraged them to re-enter education.

*Charandeep (British Sikh M, 38, transnational marriage) only had GCSEs and did not set out to look for an educated wife, but his relatives in the Punjab only introduced him to the most desirable and therefore educated potential matches. He married Daljinder, a graduate, who was happy to help with his family business. However, when the business went bankrupt, she was able to get a managerial job, pursued a second degree and encouraged Charandeep to improve his qualifications leading to secure employment.*

### Labour market and policy barriers

Discrimination in the labour market represents an obvious barrier to the translation of educational capital into employment opportunities. Here, however, we discuss other structural barriers to migrant spouses obtaining employment commensurate with their qualifications. Overseas qualifications may not be recognized in the UK labour market, necessitating retraining or conversion to obtain employment commensurate with a migrant's qualifications. Recent migrants are not entitled to student loans. Family finances are often stretched by the costs of setting up a new household (unless the couple live with the British spouses' family – see section X) and of migration, including the considerable costs of visas and the settlement/citizenship process. Hence, higher education was out of reach for most in the first few years after migration.

### Life-course

Spousal migrants simultaneously enter Britain and a stage of the life-course focused on family – parenthood often following on relatively quickly from the couple's reunification. In this phase of

the life-course, gendered expectations of childrearing and breadwinning responsibilities often constrain both time and financial resources for further education/retraining. Where migrant or British spouses did manage to undertake further qualifications after marriage, flexible routes back into education (such as evening classes, community provision etc.) were key facilitators.

Nabeela, below, provides a striking example of the interaction between policy barriers and life-course issues in translating education into employment.

*Nabeela (Pakistani migrant wife, 29) was teaching at a University in Pakistan after completing her MA. Her family were keen for her to develop her career, and would have preferred her to stay in Pakistan, but the most eligible proposal of marriage was from a British Pakistani. Both she and her husband hoped Nabeela would continue teaching (at a lower level) in the UK, but discovered that she would have to convert her qualifications or do another degree. Having taken out a mortgage and set up their marital home, her husband could not afford the university fees, and Nabeela was not eligible for a student loan. Nabeela attends community groups, where she hopes she may start teaching on an informal basis, but by the time she is eligible for student finance she is likely to be a mother to small children, so is unlikely to undertake further study for many years to come, and may never return to the labour market at her pre-migration level.*

## Employment

In this section we explore first the Labour Force survey data related to employment, and then the qualitative interview data, to address three key questions:

***How do foreign spouses perform in the labour market?***

***How do migrant wives' levels of paid employment compare to those of UK born/raised wives of the same ethnic group?***

***Do levels of paid employment among British South Asian women married to migrants differ from those not married to migrants?***

**KEY FINDINGS:** *Migrant husbands have similar levels of employment to their British born/raised counterparts, but migrant wives are less likely than their British-born/raised counterparts to be in employment. Levels of employment among women (migrant and non-migrant) are lower in the Pakistani Muslim than in the Indian Sikh group.*

### Quantitative findings

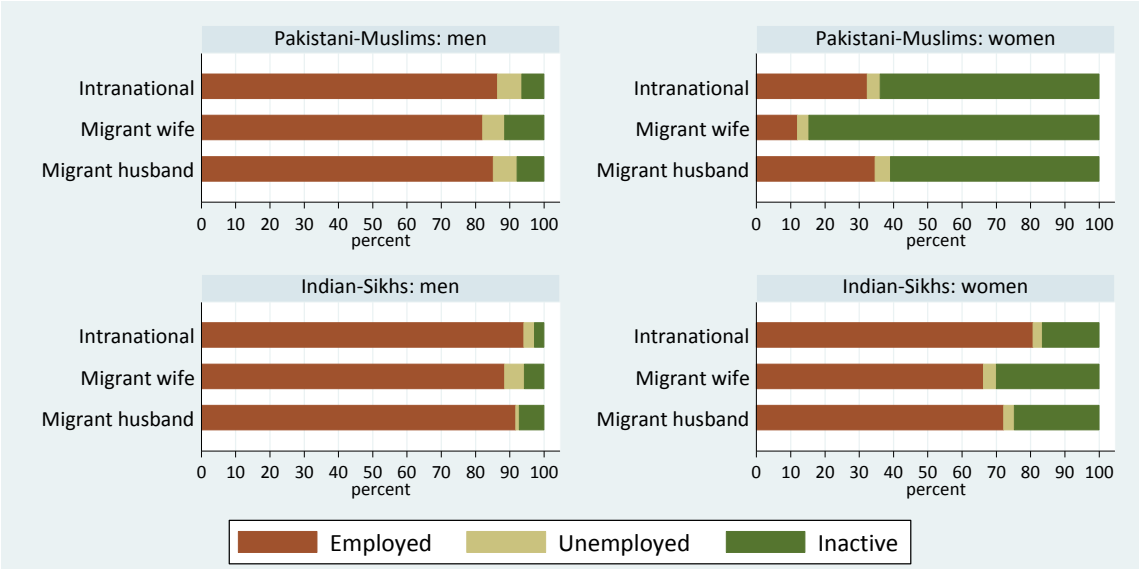
The Labour Force Survey data represented in Figures 4 and 5 provide statistical answers to these questions (controlled for age and education).

Both migrant wives and husbands are more likely than their British counterparts to be in low skilled employment (and less likely to be in professional or managerial employment), even after taking their level of education into account, suggesting other barriers to higher status employment.

There are clear gender and ethnic group differences in proportions of migrant spouses in paid employment. Whilst migrant husbands have similar levels of employment to their British born/raised counterparts, migrant wives are less likely than their British counterparts to be in employment. Levels of employment among women are significantly lower in the Pakistani than in the Sikh group.

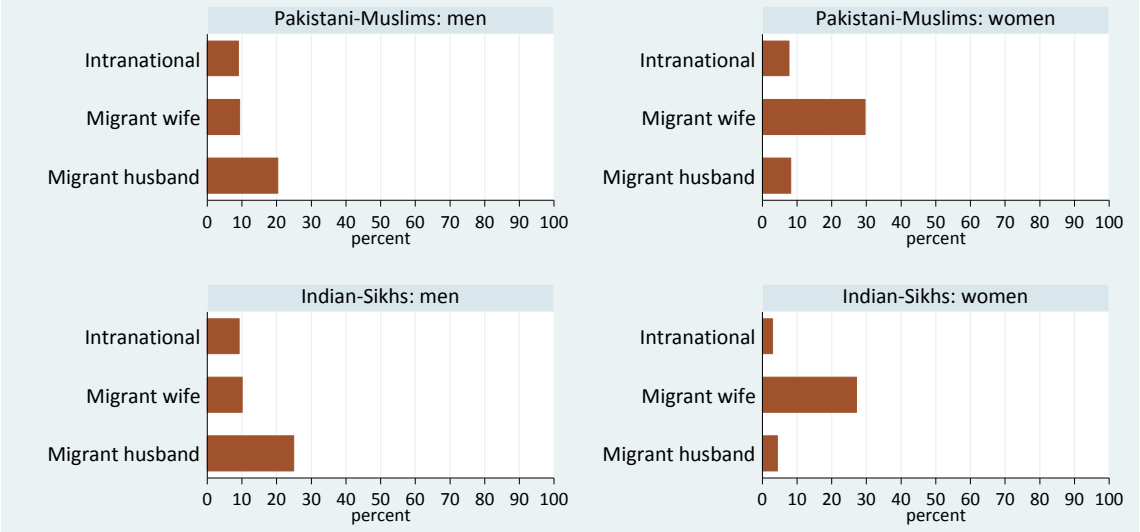
We find no support for the suggestion that marriage to a migrant inhibits British South Asian women's labour market engagement. On the contrary, British Pakistani women married to migrants are less likely to have 'never worked' than other British Pakistani wives in the sample (perhaps attributable in part to visa requirements requiring demonstration of the ability to financially support a spouse, even before the 2012 introduction of formal income requirements). Interestingly, however, British Pakistani men married to migrants are slightly less likely to be in employment than their intranationally married counterparts.

**Fig. 4: Labour force participation by couple type**




*Source: LFS household files 2004-2014, unweighted*

**Fig. 5: Percentage working in elementary/low-skilled occupation (of those employed)**




*Source: LFS household files 2004-2014, unweighted*

## Qualitative findings

The interview data allow us to explore some of the mechanisms behind, and consequences of, these patterns of employment. In this section, we explore the influences of gender and ethnic group differences on employment. We also discuss experiences of discrimination in relation to employment.

### *Gender and ethnic group differences*

#### Women and employment

Paid employment for women was a longer and more widely established practice amongst the families of our British Indian Sikh participants than among the British Pakistani Muslims. Most of the British Indian Sikh women's mothers had worked outside the home. Although many of the British Pakistani wives in the sample were in employment, only one British Pakistani woman had a mother who had worked outside the home, and this had been the subject of domestic controversy (although piecework such as sewing at home was common in this generation – Shaw 2008).

Amongst British Pakistani women, perceived economic need was described as the primary influence on whether women worked, so that for example, one husband's success in business led to the wife withdrawing from the labour force. In another example, a British Pakistani woman had given up work on the basis of her husband's wishes, but later asked for her job back, telling her former employer that the family's financial situation meant her husband would be unable to refuse. Assessment of the threshold of economic need necessary for both partners to work may differ between individuals, couple types and/or ethnic groups, however, as such assessments are made in social contexts. There was also a pattern of ethnic difference in the way women spoke about work. Whilst there were exceptions, Sikh women participants tended to speak of the long term value of work and career development overriding short term childcare costs, whilst the Pakistani respondents were more likely to evaluate working in terms of present economic benefit. We are wary, however, of attributing these patterns solely to cultural differences, as variation in socio-economic status, the nature of available employment (e.g. varying opportunities for career development), and the implications of time spent out of the labour market are likely to play significant roles.

#### Migrant wives, domestic work and employment

Most migrant wives from Pakistan had not been brought up expecting to take up paid employment. Among those who did have aspirations to work, some in-laws encouraged these plans, whilst other families were unprepared for such ambitions and did not encourage the wife to work outside the home. This was sometimes the case even in families where other women were in employment. These differing contexts are illustrated by the cases of Parveen (next page) and Erum, the successful migrant Pakistani woman entrepreneur discussed in Chapter 4 (p43). Employment patterns could also change over time and the life-course, so that some Pakistani migrant wives who had not been employed whilst their children were young took up part time work later in life.

*Parveen (Pakistani migrant wife, 22) had recently arrived in the UK. Although studying at University in Pakistan, she had agreed to marry a British Pakistani who had no qualifications but who she thought had a kind personality. Her visa came through before she finished her degree, and she arrived in the UK keen on exploring the surroundings, making friends and finding herself a job. Lacking qualifications to pursue her teaching ambitions she thought she might find work as a beautician, a relatively common source of income for migrant wives. Her sisters-in-law were all in professional employment, but Parveen found that her in-laws did not want her to work, or even go to the city centre by herself – they feared that, fresh from Pakistan, she was too inexperienced and naïve. The family expected that a bride from Pakistan would fulfill a domestic role – the good reputation of her family had been more important to them than her educational background.*

Although British Sikh men also spoke of the potential domestic advantages of a wife from India, the Sikh migrant wives in the sample were all in paid employment. These women had not worked in India before their marriages (in part because most had just finished their studies), but they came into families in the UK where women working was considered the norm.

### Migrant husbands and over-employment

The Labour Force Survey data shows high levels of employment for migrant husbands, something that was reflected in our interviews with Pakistani migrant husbands, their wives and in-laws. Our interview data also reveals, however, that some husbands were not just working, but could be said to be over-working. For some Pakistani migrant husbands, the dual responsibility of earning for their new households and remitting money to family in Pakistan, combined with the low-paid nature of the jobs available to them, meant working long and often unsociable hours. The social consequences of this situation are explored in Chapter 3.

### *Discrimination and ethnicity in the workplace*

It is important to acknowledge that our interview data provides only partial information on discrimination as an effector on employment, as it focuses on individual experiences rather than the patterns of discrimination affecting particular social groups – to identify these, alternative research methods would be required. Nevertheless, our interview participants' responses provide some interesting insights.

Working with co-ethnics may offer protection from experiencing discrimination in the workplace. Working in mixed ethnic environments was more common among Sikh respondents, and among higher educated and/or intranationally married British Pakistanis. Many migrant Pakistani husbands worked in ethnic niches (eg. shop and warehouse work). Husbands in both groups (British and migrant) who worked in in low status mixed ethnic employment, or ethnic

niche roles like taxi driving involving substantial interaction with customers from other ethnic groups, commonly reported experiencing discrimination or racism. Those in higher status occupations also reported experiences of discrimination at work, although these tended to be at an institutional level rather than in the form of verbal abuse. The Pakistani migrant husband and British Sikh wife health sector workers described in the cases below, for example, both complained of only being given ethnic minority cases.

*'I think the racism has got so bad over time, that it's so under cover now, and you can't pinpoint exactly when it's coming in, but it's little things, like they'll talk about you; they won't give you any eye contact; when you walk into a room, rooms are quiet. It's like, my current job, even right now, I get all the difficult Asian women cases; I won't be... You don't always get recognition for the work that you do. We've had people in our team who've said, 'I don't want to work with so and so, because of their cultural background or racial background, and then they give them to us… In my current team, as an example, there's all white, then there's me, the Asian, a black person, and a Mauritian. And I'm a female Asian, and they need that because they need the ones to work with the female Asian and domestic violence cases. That's how I feel sometimes, why I've got that, because I fit the bill of what they needed… before, I was given a job more for my merit and what I've done. I feel, here, it's more of a tick-box exercise, actually. (Eknoor, British Sikh F, 31, intranational marriage)*

*Bahadur (Pakistani migrant husband, 40), enjoyed his training in a health care discipline at a UK educational institution, but has been frustrated by the job market, complaining of a vicious circle by which lack of UK work experience prevented him from gaining a job in which he could gain such experience. He eventually found work dealing with South Asian patients, but would like to work with all ethnic groups, and feels humiliated by his suspicion that he has been employed more for his language than professional skills. He feels discriminated against, complaining that Pakistanis are the third choice for employers, after British applicants, and other Europeans.*

Some participants (migrant and non-migrant) responded to ethnicised employment opportunities by developing ethnic niche businesses (eg catering, beauty services). Here one British Sikh man gives discrimination as the context for his decision to become self-employed:

*When I was a child and people would say, 'Go back to your own country.'… Then when I got into construction, I found the same thing again, because predominately it was all white people in construction. Me coming into construction, it was something different for them, so everything that I did, it was always myself that had the difficulties. The issue of wearing hard hats [rather than the turban] would come every time, even though I kept on bringing it to them to say, 'Health and safety - we are exempt. Here is the policy, here is the documents, this is what has been agreed.' …Even when I worked with the council, any promotion, I was held back and you realise that people... there was that tension. (Sewa, British Sikh M, 39 transnational marriage)*

Migrant wives who were in employment tended to report more satisfaction with their jobs than migrant husbands, and did not report experiencing discrimination, although it was clear that some were overqualified for their positions. A parallel gendered difference in job satisfaction and perception of discrimination existed amongst British respondents.

## Economic well-being

Here the key question is:

***What are the implications of transnational marriage for household economic well-being?***

Implicit in the question is a comparison between households which contain a migrant spouse, and those which do not. However, other differences between households present challenges for isolating the economic impact of the migrant spouse.

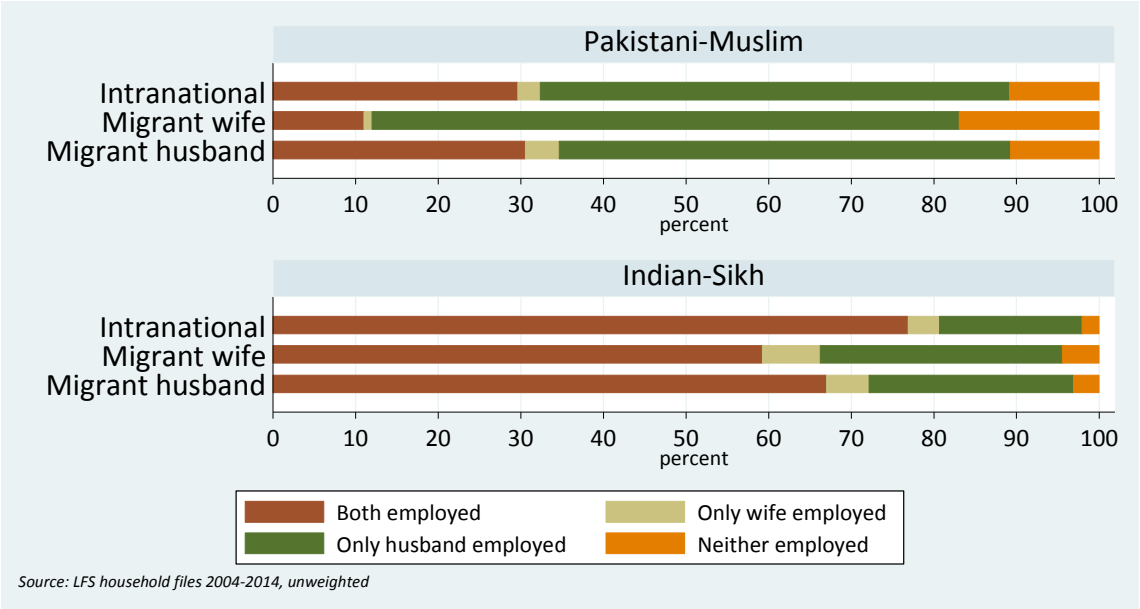
**KEY FINDINGS:** *Differences exist between couple types in patterns of employment. Both partners are most likely to be employed among Sikh intranational couples. Dual-earner couples are least common among Pakistani migrant wife couples. However, extended family living and gendered patterns of remittances among migrant spouses complicate assessments of differences in household economic well-being between couple types.*

### Gender, ethnicity and sole/dual earner couples

We find some patterns by gender and ethnic group with likely economic implications; the most obvious being varying levels of women's employment, and smaller variation in the employment

levels of British men in transnational versus intranational marriages. There are therefore differences in the proportions of couples in which both partners are in paid employment, as set out below.

**Fig. 6: Employment by couple type**




*Source: LFS household files 2004-2014, unweighted*

Pakistani Muslims are less likely to have both partners in paid employment. There is little difference between the employment patterns of Pakistani Muslim intranational and migrant husband couples, but Pakistani Migrant wife couples have particularly low rates of both partners in employment. Among Indian Sikhs, migrant wife couples also have lower rates of dual earning, but over half of such couples have both partners working. Unlike among Pakistani Muslims, Indian Sikh migrant husband couples are also more likely than intranational couples to have only one partner in paid employment. Reflecting broader differences in employment rates between the two groups, neither partner being employed is rare amongst the Sikh sample (2-4%), but accounts for 11% of Pakistani Muslim intranational and migrant husband couples, and 17% of Pakistani Muslim migrant wife couples. In both groups and all couple types, sole earners are predominantly men.

## Qualitative findings

Our qualitative research reflects these gender and ethnic differences in employment. It also, however, points to other factors complicating assessments of the economic implications of marriage choices, such as the economic implications of extended family relationships in both the UK and the Indian subcontinent. Where only one partner is employed, this does not necessarily mean a single earner in the household, as a substantial minority of households will contain other adult family members. Extended family living is patterned by couple type and ethnic group (see Chapter 4). A further factor in economic circumstances, gendered responsibilities to remit money to family in the Indian subcontinent, is discussed below.

### Migrant women and economic activity

In our interview sample, migrant wives from India all worked, while migrant Pakistani wives working was more unusual, particularly when they had young children. A woman's economic inactivity would have consequences for household financial resources. Conversely, however, as is not uncommon in the UK more generally, wives sometimes withdrew from the labour force if the family were comfortable financially, reminding us to treat indicators and discourses around integration with caution – wealthy housewives are not integrated into the labour market, but are not normally presented as problematic in integration terms.

### Migrant men and remittances

Pakistani migrant husbands tended to remit money to family in Pakistan, and this demand on family finances was sometimes a cause of marital tension. Migrant wives were not expected to send money regularly to their natal families, unless as gifts or for emergencies. Indeed, in one case, the wealthy parents of a Pakistani migrant woman married into a poorer family in the UK paid the travel costs for the couple's visits to Pakistan. Pressures on men to remit varied, but were greatest for those with elderly parents to support and expectations to contribute to unmarried sisters' wedding costs. Among Sikh migrant men, we have less evidence of regular financial ties with India, but the men in our sample often had other relatives in the UK so may not be typical. Some British Sikh men contributed to the building and up-keep of parents' holiday/retirement properties in India, but otherwise British Pakistani and Sikh spouses in intranational marriages did not report financial obligations to relatives in the subcontinent.

### Sharing costs in extended family

Sharing expenses with other family members was common among our sample. As we discuss further in Chapter 4, transnationally-married couples, particularly migrant wife couples, are more likely to live in extended family households. In our qualitative data, the willingness of women from the subcontinent to live with her parents-in-law was cited by some British men as one attraction of transnational marriage. As well as providing company and/or care for aging parents, such arrangements can have financial benefits, as the following example illustrates.

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*Babar (British Pakistani M, 41, transnational marriage), a graduate, started a successful business, and moved his extended family to a 'better' area. To help his children settle in to their new fee-paying school, he hosts dinner parties for their friends' parents and attends local events. Babar entered this marriage reluctantly, but now credits it with his success: 'Because I married from Pakistan which meant I lived at home... my mum was closer to her, so therefore stayed at home, save all our money, my mum and dad paid for everything. I had the encouragement to save up for my own business… if you had a mortgage and kids and you open your own business, how could you have the courage to do it?'*

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Our qualitative material also reveal statistically 'hidden' extended family arrangements of various kinds, when couples live in close proximity to the parents of one spouse, enabling shopping and/or cooking to be shared across households, or parents to provide childcare enabling women to work. Living with extended family at least initially could also enhance the ability of couples to save or invest in business, and assist those on low-incomes to get by.

Sharing resources within the family was one reason given for objecting to the level of minimum income requirement set in 2012 for those applying to sponsor the immigration of a spouse, as illustrated in the following case:

*'£18,600 - now I think is very difficult. I believe now it's unfair 'cause it's stopping a lot of people getting married abroad that want to get married… Even the people that are educated are finding it difficult to find jobs, so what they're having to do is take on low paid jobs just to get work… Because most places pay about 15 or 16 [thousand pounds], standard jobs. And [with that] standard job you're able to provide for your spouse, especially with Asian families. We've got a lot of extended families. We're all living together and we're all helping. Like my mother lives with us but she helps just as much as anybody else, so it's not a case of it's just husband supporting wife. It's all the family helping. So I think if you look at the whole house income and family income, like how we work, then they'll realise yeah, well it's not just him helping, it's the whole family helping her. So I think it can work.' (Jagvir, British Sikh M, 35, transnational marriage)*

For Habiba (British Pakistani, 34), on the other hand, the perceived economic and lifestyle impact of the labour market challenges migrants can face formed part of her rationale for deciding against marrying a man from Pakistan:

*'There was a part of me that kept saying, you're not going to have the lifestyle that you've always wanted, you're not going to have… he's not going to have a good job until years and years later, maybe not ever, he's going to always work in a factory, he's going to always get racism, your kids are always… And, eventually, I said no, and I said my decision's made, don't ask me again.' (Habiba, British Pakistani F, 34 intranational marriage)*

# 3. Social integration

In this chapter we set out findings related to social activities and networks, including intra- and inter-ethnic networks, and the social impacts of discrimination.

## Social activities and social networks

***How do the social networks of migrant spouses and their partners differ from couples in which neither spouse is a migrant?***

**KEY FINDINGS:** *Marriage and childrearing is a time of life when social networks commonly focus on the family. Migrant spouses enter this phase of the life-course at the same time as relocating to a new country, so family connections are particularly important providing both social and employment opportunities. Workplaces, community groups and children's schools are further important sites for developing social networks but offer varying opportunities. Use of these sites varies between non migrant and migrant spouses and is patterned by gender and ethnicity. Experiences of discrimination are a potential barrier to inter-ethnic social networks.*

In the discussion and measurement of integration, inter-ethnic networks are usually considered more important than those within the ethnic group. Inter-ethnic social networks are often assumed to be both a key sign of, and a mechanism for, broader integration. Indeed, having social networks only within the ethnic group is often presented as emblematic of a lack of integration. If integration refers to the processes by which a migrant engages with the new society, however, the formation of social networks with co-ethnics who are part of that society cannot be excluded from consideration. A lack of social integration would instead refer to cases where migrants did not develop social networks at all. Moreover, inter-ethnic networks have been found to be one significant means through which broader networks are secured (Maxwell 2012, Portes *et al* 2005).

Discussion of migrant social integration often uses the concept of 'social capital' (the value of social networks). Such analyses often distinguish between 'bonding' and 'bridging' forms of social capital – those networks that form bonds within a group, versus social connections that bridge between groups. Two key questions then arise:

- Do social networks within the ethnic group present a barrier to those between ethnic groups, or can 'bonding' be the basis for 'bridging'?
- What implications do 'bonding' or 'bridging' social capital have for processes of integration in other domains?

In our interview data, the importance of co-ethnic and family relationships particularly for arriving migrant spouses, was clear. Not only were they the principal initial source of social networks and companionship, but also often provided routes into employment, local knowledge, and advice on practicalities, with importance for integration in other domains. Co-ethnic social networks also offered protection from many experiences of discrimination. There were, however, variations in the extent of receiving families' knowledge, networks, and expectations of their new member.

On the question of whether 'bonding' facilitates or impedes 'bridging', we find variation among our participants. The interview data also suggests the importance of other factors in influencing the ethnic composition of social networks: issues of life-course and gender, the opportunities afforded by particular locations for the development of social networks available to individuals, and perceptions of safety and discrimination.

**Life-course and gender**

For participants in all couple types, the years after marriage usually included having and raising children. British spouses' pre-marriage interethnic networks tended to become less important in this phase of the life-course, regardless of whether they were married to a migrant. This was usually not a product of a preference for co-ethnics, but of a strong social focus on the family during the childrearing years. Some baptised Sikhs in our sample were keen to provide a social environment for their children in keeping with their religious views, creating a focus on relationships with other baptised Sikh families. Issues related to the life-course thus have important consequences for patterns of social networks or social integration across couple types. In transnational couples, however, the migrant spouse starts off with very limited social networks (often just their in-laws) and simultaneously enters the most family-focused phase of the life-course. The effect can be to amplify both this limitation in terms of networks, and the focus on the family.

*'Since getting married, you have to grow up, don't you? You get more responsibilities because you're thinking about someone else now, not just yourself. Whereas before, I'd say I was a bit more careless, I used to come home different times, I used to go out with friends and now when you go out you've got to make sure your wife's okay at home... [Even if I married a British Sikh] it would have been exactly the same. I think if, yeah, it'd be exactly the same… my friend got married here [i.e. had intranational marriages] and they're exactly the same. I don't think it's a bad thing. I think it's a good thing because it's part of life, it's part of growing up; it's just the next stage in life, so you have to get married and you have to change… as you get older the time lessens with your friends and it starts going into family. Like when I got married, the time with my friends got less and then when I had my son it got even more less, and it just seems to be getting lesser and lesser. When they've got kids it'll even get more lesser, so I think you tend to lose touch.' (Jagvir, British Sikh M, 35, transnational marriage)*

### Locations for developing social networks

Despite these constraints, migrants commonly actively looked for social opportunities outside of the family circle. Here there were patterns by ethnic group and gender in addition to those around the nature of employment discussed in Chapter 2. Community groups (used predominantly by co-ethnics and/or those from other migrant backgrounds) were of vital and long-lasting importance for many Pakistani migrant wives, whilst the British Pakistani women in the sample seldom used them, even where they had attended such groups with their mothers before marriage.

*'One thing they had in Bradford, at least for the girls that come from outside UK was a college for women from India and Pakistan. And that was one of the best things I ever did for my wife because the first thing, everyone's in the same boat, all the girls from Punjab were there, from Pakistan were there, yeah. So basically it's going to college... The second thing is she made a lot of friends, you know, and they're friends now still' (Gunbir, British Sikh husband, 33, transnational marriage)*

Sikh migrant women participants also sometimes used community groups, but also often developed social opportunities through educational settings and employment, so had greater opportunities to develop inter-ethnic social relationships. We also had examples of the importance for migrant and non-migrant women of opportunities for social mixing created by children's schools, which could be ethnically mixed even in areas of high ethnic concentration. In this family-focused life-stage, mixing with other parents was one extra-familial social possibility for those with time to invest in the cultivation of new networks (this was more common among intranational than transnational couples).

For some British men, sports clubs provided social opportunities which continued after marriage. One vignette from our research hinted that some British men with migrant wives may experience more autonomy in relation to their leisure time and social networks:

*Obaid, (British Pakistani M, 42, transnational marriage) has tried to involve his wife in his circle of British Pakistani friends. Their wives were either other British Pakistanis or more highly educated Pakistani migrants. His wife felt out of place and now prefers to stay at home while he goes out. Obaid enjoys considerable freedom in his social life (although has a pact with his wife that they will never move away from the city where she has extended family networks). When Obaid planned a group trip abroad for his 40th birthday, for example, he found he was the only one amongst his friends whose wives did not veto the scheme.*

While gurdwaras were an important social resource and site for civic engagement for our British Sikhs interviewees, they were less socially important for the Sikh migrant wives we interviewed, and mosques did not appear as important social sites for the British Pakistani or Pakistani migrant respondents of either gender.

## Finding work and ethnic niche employment

Workplaces can be sites for developing social networks, but equally, social networks can provide connections to employment opportunities. Whilst Sikh migrant spouses reported using 'mainstream' methods of finding employment such as job centres, or careers advice services at colleges where English classes are offered, Pakistani migrant spouses tended to find work through personal contacts, in particular their British spouses' family members. For men, this often resulted in initial employment in ethnic niches such as shop or catering work. Pakistani migrant wives and British Pakistani wives (re)entering employment when their children were older also generally found employment through co-ethnic social networks — school dinner supervisor was one popular choice, offering limited hours compatible with childcare. This pattern of finding employment through personal contacts was also common amongst British Pakistani men with lower levels of education (higher educated British Pakistanis in the sample more often used 'mainstream' methods).

### 'Bonding capital' and employment

For many Pakistani participants, therefore, 'bonding' networks (family members and co-ethnics) play a key role in gaining employment. Here migrant spouses' position within a British household with pre-existing social connections is an advantage in their labour market integration. These networks may also help overcome barriers to migrant employment – one Sikh migrant respondent suggested that whilst only a few years ago she found work in the low-skilled sector (cleaning) quite easily, higher standards of English language fluency are now required by many employers for even bottom-of-the-ladder jobs. For migrants in such positions, family contacts provide a valuable route into employment. Self-employment has been suggested as a response on the part of some British South Asians to labour market disadvantage, but generally requires resources and local knowledge which are developed over time, so is usually not an option in the early years after arrival in Britain.

As most jobs found through family contacts were within ethnic employment niches, social opportunities at work were often with co-ethnics (even specifically other co-ethnic migrants), suggesting a reinforcing of 'bonding' social capital. In practice, however, some migrant Pakistani husbands worked such long hours that they had limited opportunity to develop even these social networks. Particularly when viewed over the longer term, such employment could nevertheless offer opportunities to develop skills and resources which could enable them to access other forms of employment with more opportunities for social 'bridging'. This is clearly illustrated by the case of Jafar in Chapter 4 (p44), who went from warehouse work to running his own business employing and working with people from a range of ethnic backgrounds, or

the example of Sabiha's husband in the box below (cf. Liversage & Jakobsen 2016 on parallel processes in Denmark).

*Sabiha (British Pakistani F, 42, transnational marriage) married a cousin from Pakistan. When her husband arrived in the UK from Pakistan, he worked initially as a baker in a Pakistani business. Working long and irregular hours, for several years he did not have much social contact through work. Lacking opportunities to practice, his English language skills were limited, constraining other employment prospects. The job did, however, eventually allow him to save enough money for a taxi. As a taxi driver, his income and English language skills have improved, and he has much more contact with people from other ethnic groups.*

### Employment and discrimination

Working in a mixed-ethnic environment was more common among Sikh respondents, and among higher educated and/or intranationally married British Pakistanis. Men in professional jobs often socialised with colleagues after work, whilst ethnically-mixed work environments provided Sikh migrant wives, for example, with opportunities to practice their English and develop inter-ethnic social networks. However, husbands in both groups (regardless of migration status) who were in low status employment in mixed ethnic workplaces, or ethnic niche roles like taxi driving which involve substantial interaction with customers from other ethnic groups, reported experiences of racism, and often understood it to be an expected aspect of work. Such experiences did not encourage inter-ethnic socialising. Working with co-ethnics limits possibilities for inter-ethnic sociability through work, but offered some protection from discrimination — and gave some migrant husbands opportunities to socialise with other migrants between shifts when long hours inhibited other social opportunities.

## Gender, experiences of discrimination, and social activity

Male and female respondents in our sample reported very different experiences in relation to discrimination on the basis of their ethnic or religious group. Women were much less likely to report feeling that they had been discriminated against, and racist encounters such as name calling were rare even if they wore religious clothing (many lived in areas with significant minority populations where such garments are commonplace). Living in an area with many co-ethnics may mean women were less likely to encounter discrimination, but Indian Sikh women working in ethnically mixed environments also did not report such experiences.

The groups who made most mention of experiences of discrimination were British Pakistani Muslim men and British Indian Sikh men (British women were also more likely to report discrimination than migrant women). For those who worked in ethnically mixed environments, experiences of discrimination did not encourage socialising with colleagues outside of work,

whilst broader experiences of racism also led some to moderate their social activities to avoid particular spaces. Hence, Charandeep (British Sikh man, 38, married transnationally) told us that he avoids going into the centre of town on weekends because he is uncomfortable with the tension and sometimes violence which he feels are coloured by inter-ethnic animosity.

**Recognising discrimination**

Those raised in Britain and engaging in inter-ethnic environments may both encounter more hostility, and also be more aware of discrimination and inequality. In addition to complaints of institutional discrimination and verbal abuse, several British respondents discussed more subtle social barriers created by what they perceived to be negative attitudes towards Muslims or people from South Asian backgrounds. Spouses who have recently arrived in Britain may lack the fine grained local social and cultural knowledge to recognize more subtle forms of discrimination. One British Pakistani woman in Bristol, for example, reported attending a mixed post-natal group, but gave up as she felt she was regarded as an outsider. Vidya and Uchpal (an intranationally married Sikh couple) gave the following account of their move to a new city:

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*Vidhya: I think the people around the area were at first a bit, you know, like, 'Who has moved in? Oh they are Asian,' you know.*

*Uchpal: Now I think they've got used to us. It's like Halloween which was a prime example - they didn't expect us to do Halloween and trick or treating with the kids.*

*Vidhya: …When we first got the house, we completely demolished the majority of it, so we were living in a bit of tip and this area was supposed to be very nice and [neighbours thought] 'They are living like this.' Once we had the house done up they said, 'Oh… you've done a really good job with that house, we would love to come and see it.' But when we first moved in, I felt... Uchpal didn't feel it as much as me, because I used to drop [the children] off, didn't I... Some of the parents were a bit... you will remember this, because we went to the Nativity play. We were the only Asian family there and Uchpal, as he is, you will spot him out of a million and they just looked at us like we were aliens.*

*Uchpal : They thought we were Muslim, they thought we were Taliban, because they don't know the different between...*

*Vidhya : And this is middle class people, this is middle class, professional people! He would say, 'Hi,' to people in the street and they would ignore him.*

*Uchpal : Some people do, but the majority, I would say the majority of English people still don't get the difference.*

*(Vidya, British Sikh F, 33 & Uchpal, British Sikh M, 33, intranational couple)*

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Rather than viewing the school as a site where she would gain more familiarity with parents from other ethnic groups, Vidya presented it as an opportunity for majority ethnic parents to see beyond her ethnicity, reducing barriers to inter-ethnic socialization:

*'At the Nativity play there was a lady and her little boy [who was] really good friends with my son, started to talking to us, oh my god, the first time she met me, she gave me a hug, she said, 'Nice to see you and thank you,' you know. I sent a present for her little boy, because it was his birthday and she was really nice and everybody started looking and going, 'They are normal, they are speaking English, they are actually human' and then everyone starting smiling and nodding and they were okay.' (Vidya, British Sikh F, 33, intranational marriage)*

**Intra-ethnic discrimination**

Most accounts of discrimination recounted by participants referred to people from other ethnic groups, but this does not mean that co-ethnic communities were uniformly welcoming of spousal migrants. Our qualitative data also contained a few reports of intra-ethnic discrimination against recent migrants, sometimes even by family members, including the use of the derogatory term 'freshy' (a contraction of 'fresh off the boat' - see Charsley & Bolognani 2016).

*'You have people from over here saying, "Oh they're different to us", they're like, call them "freshies". They call them this, they call them that: "Oh, they're all…"— you know how we go. They [recent migrants] don't understand like our music or MTV, you know what I mean, stuff like that. So a lot of like cousins, they didn't want to associate with my wife, you know, because she was different. (Gunbir, British Sikh M, 33, transnational marriage)*

## 4. Cultural Integration

In the cultural domain of integration, the key question is:

***How do the cultural practices of transnational couples compare with those in which both partners were born/raised in the UK?***

'Culture' is a broad and often ill-defined concept. Here, we focus on several areas commonly employed as indicators of cultural difference or cultural integration:

- Extended family living
- Gender norms
- Language use
- Media and cultural consumption

This is a challenging area of investigation, as neither 'British' nor 'South Asian' cultures are monolithic. Distinctions between 'traditional' and 'modern' attitudes or behaviours are also less clear-cut in practice. Our qualitative material reveals the complexity underlying some indicators of 'traditional' South Asian values (such as extended family living) used in previous studies. The evidence from our qualitative research suggests more complex cultural dynamics than binary understandings of a 'traditional' South Asian culture on the one hand, and a 'modern' British culture on the other. Cultural practices also often vary between members of a household, so that even where a migrant maintains a preference for consuming South Asian media, for example, this may not affect the viewing patterns of non-migrant family members.

The idea that a spouse – particularly a bride – from the Indian subcontinent would be more 'traditional' than one brought up in the UK was, however, shared by some of our participants and their families. Research on majority ethnic men seeking so-called 'mail-order-brides' demonstrates that the idea that a women from a less developed country would have more 'traditional' expectations of gender roles is not confined to ethnic minority transnational marriage (Constable 2005). Our research, however, suggests this is not always the case, as some migrant wives arrive with or later develop aspirations outside the domestic sphere.

### Extended family living

Extended family living has historically been common amongst the majority ethnic population in the UK. As adult children remain or return to living with parents in response to rising accommodation costs or the needs of elder care, multi-generational households among the ethnic majority population are far from rare in contemporary Britain[2]. Extended family living

[2] http://www.telegraph.co.uk/women/mother-tongue/9490940/Return-of-the-extended-family-home-as-sandwich-generation-take-in-old-and-young.html

amongst South Asian minority ethnic groups, however, is sometimes taken to indicate particular and interconnected patterns of (a lack of) both social and cultural integration. In social terms, extended family living is sometimes presented as exemplifying the concentration of social networks within the family, and therefore within the ethnic group. Such living arrangements might also have gendered implications for members' social autonomy, as they are often taken as an indicator of cultural 'traditionalism' (Gonzalez-Ferrer 2006). In this section, we set out findings in relation to these issues.

Key questions relating to extended family living are:

***Do transnational couples more commonly live in extended family households?***

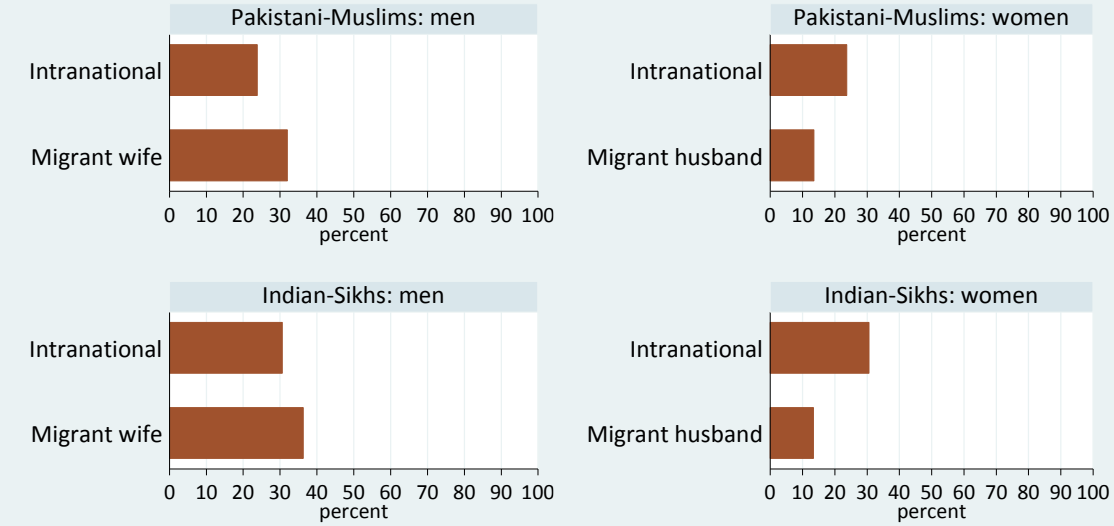
***Does extended family living indicate a more 'traditional' outlook (including attitudes to gender roles)?***

**KEY FINDINGS:** *Extended family living is more common among Indian Sikhs than Pakistani Muslims, and most common for migrant wife couples in both groups. Interview data suggests some British families assume a migrant wife will be content to live with her in-laws. Some other qualitative findings, however, challenge the association of extended family living with traditionalism. Among Indian Sikhs migrant wives were also often expected to work outside the home. For some British Pakistani women, transnational marriage offers the culturally unusual possibility of continuing to live with or near their own families, with consequences for domestic relations of power.*

## Quantitative findings

The Labour Force Survey data reveals significant differences in extended family living (see Appendix for definitions) between ethnic groups, and between couple types. Figure 7 shows the proportion of UK-born or raised respondents living in an extended family, by couple type for each gender and group.

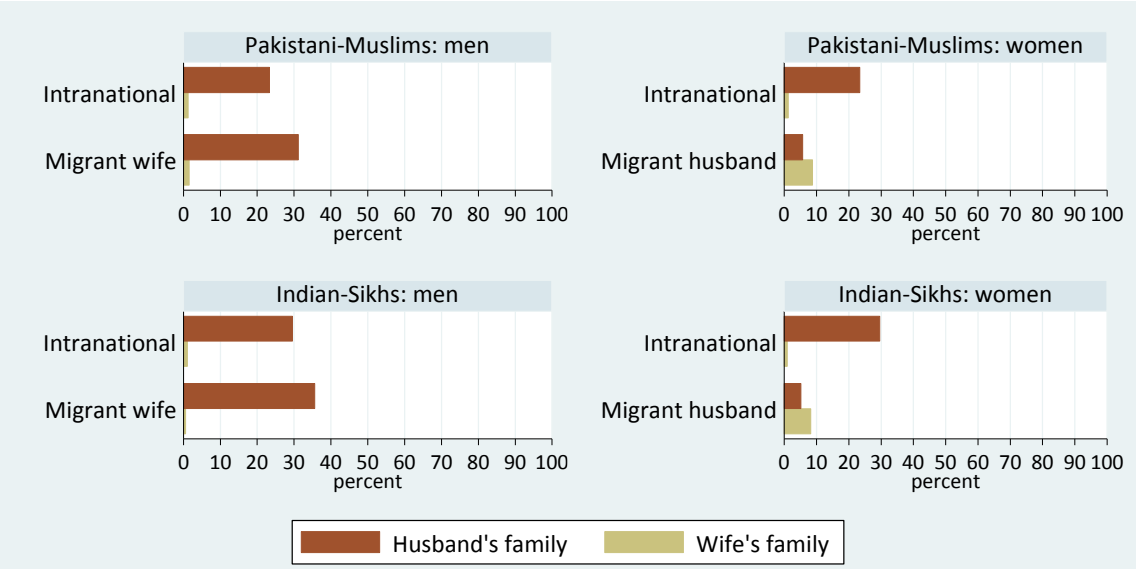
**Fig. 7: Percentage of UK born/raised living in an extended family by couple type**




*Source: LFS household files 2004-2014, unweighted*

Extended family living is more common in the Indian Sikh than the Pakistani Muslim group. Extended family households are not unusual among couples in which both partners were born or raised in Britain, but are more frequent among migrant wife couples, and less common among migrant husband couples. Separating extended families according to whether they are living with the family of the husband or the wife (Figure 8) helps explain this gendered difference. Among both Pakistani Muslims and Indian Sikhs, there are strong traditions of virilocality – in other words, wives are expected to move to their husbands' households rather than *vice versa.* As most migrant husbands' families remain overseas, it is therefore not unexpected to find that few live with their own family, so that rates of extended family living are lower for migrant husband couples.

**Fig. 8: Percentage of UK born/raised living in an extended family with husband's and/or wife's family by couple type**




*Source: LFS household files 2004-2014, unweighted*

Levels of residence with the wife's family are extremely low in both intranational and migrant wife couples. However, comparing migrant husband couples with intranational couples, in both ethnic groups it is more common for couples to be in the traditionally unusual position of living with the wife's family[3]. While for intranational couples and migrant wife couples, 85% of those in extended family households live with the family of the husband, more than half of migrant husband couples living in extended families live with the family of the wife. Multivariate analyses on the relationship between couple type and the likelihood of living with the husband or wife's relatives shows that both Pakistani-Muslim and Indian-Sikh women are significantly less likely to live with the families of their husbands when they are married to a migrant, than when they are in an intranational partnership. They are also significantly more likely to live with their own family. As we will see in discussion of the interview data, this difference can have important consequences for gender relations in the household, undermining the equation of extended family living with traditionalism.

[3] The small number of migrant husband couples living with the husband's family may be a result of diversity in family migration histories such as: one sibling migrates as a student or on a work permit, whilst another arrives through marriage; circular migration resulting in some family members having access to British citizenship; or (unusually given UK immigration regulations) reunification with dependent relatives.

## Qualitative findings

Whilst living with family or separately was a distinction often made by our interview participants, the separation of extended family and nuclear family living can be less clear cut in practice. Quantitative data on extended family households also conceals contexts in which extended families share costs and household activities, but across separate addresses. Our qualitative material suggests the extent of extended family living understood in this broader sense, is significantly higher, particularly among Pakistani migrant husband couples who frequently lived in proximity to the wife's family.

### *Extended family living and 'traditionalism'*

The notion that a wife from the Indian subcontinent would be more willing to live in an extended family household than a woman raised in Britain was cited as one of the attractions or benefits of transnational marriage for some British men and their families. As noted earlier, some Pakistani migrant wives found their career or social aspirations were restricted by their husband's family's expectations of their domestic role, whilst one British Pakistani man also complained that his aspirations to move to pursue job opportunities were restricted by his parents' and migrant wife's desire to stay living together in the area of Birmingham with which they were familiar.

However, our qualitative data suggest that traditionalism would be an incomplete interpretation for extended family living. Babar (discussed in Chapter 2, p26) for example, who cited the economic advantages of a migrant wife's willingness to live with his parents, moved the household to a 'better' predominantly white area, and set out consciously to strengthen the family's inter-ethnic social networks. British Sikh families who hoped that a migrant wife would live in the extended family and provide companionship and care for elderly parents also tended to assume that their new family member would engage in paid employment. Such contexts do not fit easily into a binary opposition between 'tradition' and integration into British cultural and social norms.

### *Migrant husbands living with/near the wife's family*

Our data on Pakistani migrant husband couples provides a more radical challenge to the equation of extended family living with traditionalism[4]. As we saw above, the LFS data show that migrant husbands are more likely than non-migrant men to live with their wife's family. Our interview data reveals a more widespread reliance on the wife and her family for accommodation, as in our sample even the Pakistani migrant husbands who did not live with their in-laws all lived in property owned or rented by their wife or her relatives. Among both Sikhs and Pakistanis, residing with the wife's family presents a challenge to stereotypical notions of the South Asian daughter-in-law vulnerable to patriarchal control by her in-laws, as here the husband is the lone incomer whilst the wife has family members close at hand.

[4] Our data on Sikh migrant husband couples is more limited.

Among British Pakistani women participants, this situation sometimes appeared as a conscious strategy – as when one young women explicitly decided to consider a match from Pakistan so that she could stay living near her parents and avoid in-law control. There were other cases in which women married to migrants reported various benefits in terms of domestic power or autonomy but this seemed to be unplanned consequences of these gendered logics of marriage migration. Here, then, marriage to a migrant appeared to have the potential to challenge rather than increase gender inequalities (cf. Liversage 2012 on gendered inequalities of power among Danish Turks being amplified in migrant wife couples, but reduced or reversed for migrant husband couples).

*Lanika (45), Madiha (35) and Cantara (31) are three British Pakistani sisters. Lanika married a cousin from Pakistan and stayed living close to her family, enjoying their support and, she felt, considerable freedom. She then passed this advice to Madiha, who decided to marry a man from Pakistan, this time outside the extended kin-group as she wanted to avoid intensifying family politics and being outnumbered in decision making. She is very pleased with her marriage and feels that her husband is grateful to her for the opportunity of migration. By contrast, their youngest sister Cantara had a love marriage with a British Pakistani. She moved to another area of the city to live with her in-laws, who restricted her freedom considerably. She ended up getting divorced, confirming her sisters in their belief that it is easier to be married to a migrant.*

We did not encounter similar discourses among British Sikh women participants. Although our data on Sikh migrant husband couples is more limited, Sikh conventions of marrying out of the area/city of residence may reduce women's expectation of the possibility of living near their natal families after marriage. Whilst the LFS data show a similar proportion of Sikh migrant husbands living with their wife's families, our limited qualitative data on Sikh migrant husbands suggests a strong aversion to living with the wife's parents. The migrant brothers-in-law of one participant, for example, could have stayed with their in-laws long enough to save deposits for mortgages, but instead moved into rented accommodation with their wives. One important contextual factor here is that Pakistani transnational marriages are often between cousins or more distant members of the extended kin group, so the in-laws of Pakistani migrant men are often also their relatives. Sikhs, on the other hand, marry out of the kin-group, and so migrant men are unlikely to have a pre-existing relationship with their wife's parents.

Whilst company and care for elder relatives was cited as one advantage of extended family living, it was also understood by many of our participants as an economic strategy to reduce costs of living and permit a couple to build savings. In several cases in the Sikh sample, couples reported with disappointment that their parents were less keen on having their children and their spouses live with them in the longer term, undermining assumptions of a uniform cultural preference for this 'traditional' form amongst the older generation.

## Gender norms

Key questions in this area are:

***Does the choice of a migrant spouse reflect more traditional gender norms in the part of the British spouse and/or their family?***

***Does the arrival of a spouse from the subcontinent produce more traditional gender roles?***

**KEY FINDINGS:** *British Pakistani and Sikh families often anticipate that a wife from the Indian subcontinent will have more traditional gender role expectations. Some migrant wives, particularly those from more educated urban backgrounds, had different aspirations. For British Pakistani women, the choice of a husband from the Indian subcontinent does not necessarily reflect a 'traditional' orientation.*

As we have seen, the LFS data demonstrates that migrant wives in both ethnic groups have lower levels of paid employment than those born and/or raised in Britain, and that levels of employment are particularly low amongst Pakistani migrant wives. Marriage to a migrant, on the other hand, does not appear to reduce British South Asian women's labour market engagement. Moreover, the discussion of extended family living demonstrates that the choice of a husband from the Indian subcontinent does not necessarily reflect a 'traditional' orientation, and indeed can be part of a trajectory of increasing women's domestic power and autonomy.

*Madiha, one of the British Pakistani sisters mentioned above, had been taken out of school early to care for her mother. As a teenager burdened by household duties, she missed both the social and educational aspects of school life. When a proposal arrived from Pakistan, she welcomed the opportunity to establish a separate household with her husband and renegotiate her responsibilities to her natal family. Through involvement with her children's school, she embarked on a new social life, and now says that has more friends than ever before.*

As we saw in Chapter 2, British Pakistani and Sikh families arranging transnational marriages for their sons, and young men themselves seeking such a marriage, often expected that a wife from the Indian subcontinent would be more willing to assume a domestic role (although for Sikh families this went alongside an expectation that they would also take up paid employment). Some migrant wives however, particularly those from more educated and urban backgrounds, viewed themselves as more progressive than their British in-laws in their gendered expectations, as illustrated in the case of Harmit:

*'Firstly it was very hard because we were living with the in-laws and [mother-in-law]… wanted me to, you know, cover my head all the time and say 'yes, yes, yes' to her all the time. And if I go out, I need to ask the permission and, you know, if I want to make any decision, make sure I involve her. But I wasn't like that. I was the completely opposite person: I was independent and I was self-confident person because, you know, this is the way I was brought up. So the clashes happened and even they found out that I'm not like really traditional Indian girl. But sooner or later they accepted me and I accepted them.' (Harmit, Indian Sikh migrant wife, 30).*

The suggestion that transnational marriages would be more 'traditional' may also rest on an assumption that they will be 'arranged' rather than 'love' marriages[5]. Whilst it was true that transnational marriages were more often parentally-arranged than those taking place within the UK, we also encountered cases of arranged marriages within the UK, transnational 'love' marriages, and transnational arranged marriages which challenge stereotypes of traditionalism in gender norms. Some examples are provided in the cases of Ulfah and Maaz (below) and Erum (on the following page).

*Ulfah and Maaz are a British Pakistani couple in their early fifties who grew up in what they described as traditional households. Their families arranged their marriage after deciding that a good match for their levels of education would not be found in the pool of potential spouses among their contacts in Pakistan. Ulfah's younger brother Nasir, in contrast, fell in love with his cousin Usma on a visit to Pakistan. They were eventually married, but only after a struggle to overcome family tensions resulting from Ulfah's parents' earlier rejections of proposals for her hand.*

[5] These categories are used by participants, but conceal a range of degrees of parental/third party involvement in partner choice.

*Erum is a Pakistani migrant wife in her early forties. She had a vetted marriage (she and her husband met and liked each other under their families' supervision), but reported that when she moved to the UK, her husband started losing interest because he felt there was too much of a cultural gap between them. They were living with her in-laws at the time, who encouraged Erum to enrol in English classes and college courses and to set up her own business from home. Erum's husband now helps her run her thriving business.*

## Language

In this area, key questions are:

***How well do migrant spouses speak English?***

***What impact does a migrant spouse have on language of communication within households?***

**KEY FINDINGS:** *Opportunities to practice English language skills vary, but were greatest for those migrant spouses working in inter-ethnic environments. Language use within households is complex and cannot be reduced to a single 'language spoken at home'.*

The Labour Force Survey provides only limited data on language proficiency, so we are not able to generalise about levels of English fluency among migrant spouses. However, our interview data provides information on participants' language use. Unsurprisingly, English was not the 'mother tongue' for any of our migrant participants, although some had learnt English at school. All now spoke at least some English, but levels of fluency varied. There was also often variation between an individual's level of spoken English, writing ability, and listening comprehension – so that for example, one participant who did not feel confident in responding to interview questions without an interpreter was able to follow the television news in English.

The information on language use provided by our participants was not always easily reducible to one 'language spoken at home'. Multiple languages were often used within a household; sometimes for different purposes - prayers may be in Urdu, Arabic or Punjabi, food may be discussed in a South Asian language, but English used to talk about personal matters. Household language use was patterned by couple type, but also by context. Despite often growing up in families where very little English was spoken at home, all British spouses were fluent in English and consider it their first language. Intranational couples therefore predominantly spoke English among themselves, but (particularly among Pakistanis) a South Asian language was often used

to communicate with elders. Transnational couples tended to speak a South Asian language between themselves, but the British spouse usually spoke English to their children. Mixing elements of multiple languages within individual interactions or even sentences is also common (Qureshi 2015, Charsley 2013). Among Pakistani transnational couples migrant wives were more likely improve their English than their British husband was to invest time in improving his South Asian language fluency, whilst in migrant husband couples, the husbands learnt English but the wives also improved their South Asian language fluency.

Opportunities for migrant spouses to improve their English varied. Language classes were the starting point for most women. Some British husbands suggested private individual lessons were most effective, but migrant wives often preferred the social environment of a class. Employment in a mixed-ethnic environment provided the most significant opportunities for practicing and improving language ability – even when women worked for only a few hours – but was not available to all. Pakistani migrant women, as noted above, were less likely to be employed, whilst Pakistani migrant husbands were often employed in co-ethnic environments. Limited language fluency can be a barrier to gaining employment in other environments, forming a catch-22 in which lack of fluency is then a barrier to opportunities for improving language skills. Over time, however, many Pakistani migrant women found opportunities to develop their English language abilities outside of work, through watching TV in English with their British families, and chatting with their children and neighbours. Migrant husbands (under greater pressures of time) generally did not attend classes, or if they did, abandoned them earlier on, preferring to learn on the job.

*'I was working very hard, but I always got the same money, regardless of the amount of the hours. My English was very poor, but I did not need much English for a packing job. I don't know if my English was too poor, but the new supervisor… started to give me problems. So I started working on building sites. I learnt all building work here - I was only a farmer in Pakistan. Slowly, slowly, I built up work. Some weeks I would work one day, some weeks four days. I learnt how to do central heating, tiles, bathrooms… I learnt my English from my friends. In Pakistan I knew a little, but from school. I have English friends from work. English people talk to me about plastering, and I understand quickly, but if they talk about different things, it is difficult for me. I have had a friend from Ghana for a long time, another Jamaican… After 2 or 3 years I started to be self-employed and I am still self-employed. I do plastering and I am taking a course on plastering and decorating. I am also doing a course to get a certificate to do central heating and then I will be paid more money… It has been easy for me to make friends and now I make new friends at college, it is easier because I speak more English… I took English classes in 2001 in the evening but at that time it was a problem with my working hours. The teacher told me that I could not come to class tired, I needed to recharge my batteries first.' (Jafar, Pakistani migrant husband, 42)*

## Media and cultural consumption

The key questions in this field is:

***Do migrant spouses differ from those born/raised in the UK in their media consumption?***

> **KEY FINDINGS:** *A variety of media consumption exists within households in both ethnic groups and couple types. Migrant wives in particular enjoyed TV from the Indian subcontinent but also reporting improving their knowledge of English and British society by watching UK programming with their children.*

As with language, we found a variety of media consumption within households in both ethnic groups and couple types. A migrant wife, for example, may watch Indian dramas with her mother-in-law but Eastenders with her children. Equally, more religiously-oriented British spouses in both couple types and from both ethnic groups may focus their viewing on religious channels (often produced in the UK or other western countries). The recent availability of Sikh channels, for example, had led to changes in British Sikh participants' viewing habits, and increasing engagement with political issues affecting the religious group. British Pakistanis who could hold conversations in Punjabi, Mirpuri or Pushto but had not become fluent in Urdu did not watch Pakistani or Indian channels (which tend to be in Urdu or closely-related Hindi). British Sikhs also tended not to watch Indian channels.

Watching TV with their children was something particularly mentioned by migrant wives as helping their language learning and understanding of British society. With more time to engage in such activities, migrant wives were sometimes more up to date with current affairs than their British spouses.

*'I like to watch Star Plus [Indian drama channel]. But sometimes when my husband's watching, then I sometimes try to understand what they said [on English TV], but I leave it there – I'm watching too much stuff. He said "That's why your English is no good, because you're not watching. If you're watching then maybe you can speak little nice [better]." I said "All right, all right…" It is good for me if I'm watching mostly [English TV] then maybe I can understand very good and can speak properly. I speak mostly Punjabi with my husband, but sometime he is trying with me, speak English. Then I'm scared, because I think I'm saying wrong [i.e. she is worried about making mistakes].' (Kiran, 33, Indian Sikh migrant wife – interview in English)*

## 5. Civic/Political Integration

In the civic/political domain, the key question is:

> ***Do transnational and intranational couples differ in their levels and forms of civic and political engagement***?

> **KEY FINDINGS:** *Transnational marriage did not detract from civic engagement among British born/raised participants, but perceptions of injustice impact on political engagement. Among migrant spouses, levels of civic participation were lower, centring on community groups for migrant wives, and affected by time pressures for migrant husbands. However, migrant spouses, and Pakistani wives in particular, reported greater engagement in democratic processes.*

Differences between couple types in this domain are not straightforward. British participants reported more engagement in civic activities than migrant spouses, and transnational marriage did not detract from this engagement. In fact, among our participants, British Pakistani men married transnationally tended to be more active in civic terms than those married intranationally. They were also more active than migrant husbands, for whom time poverty was the main explanation given for not engaging in such activities. Migrant wives' civic engagement centred around participation in community groups. In the political sphere, migrant spouses – particularly Pakistani migrant wives – often reported greater engagement in democratic processes than participants born/raised in Britain. Time, life-course, gender, and perceptions of injustice or lack of representation emerged as important variables influencing both civic and political participation. This included a 'paradox of integration' when well-developed social and political engagement leads to political disillusionment.

### Civic participation

We define civic participation as activity in the community beyond family and friends, including within the co-ethnic community. It can include volunteering, activism, or participation in the local religious community (going beyond worship). For Sikhs in our sample, religious practice was often connected to *seva* (public service organised through the religious community such aspreparation of food in the gurdwara's kitchen). Among the Pakistani Muslims participants, religious activities and other forms of civic activity were not so clearly related. In both groups, while political participation beyond voting often resulted from recruitment as a representative of an ethnic group, civic participation in ethnically mixed contexts was sometimes a result of a personal reflection on responsibilities as a British citizen.

*I was part of the students' NUS thing; I was in charge of the funding side, which looked after drinks, so that helps. I suppose I didn't really formally join that many places, but yes, not because I... You know, I just never did... It was just basically, I was in the NUS, I was looking after the treasury sort of thing, looking after that side… I want to [get more involved]. I really care about the environment, I care about areas around here, but I want to do more charity work. That's what I'm trying to organise. I'm just starting now. I'm just sending my CV to a few places. Just like joining a couple of boards, helping out financially, so from my background, see where I can help them to plan better and build those sort of skills. There's a couple [of organisations] that I'm looking at. One is working with deaf people, one is working with blind people; they're two charities, so yes, that sort of thing. (Waris, British Sikh, M, 45, transnational marriage)*

We should note, however, that our research took place before the Syrian migrant crisis and floods of 2015, which saw widespread voluntary activity among both British Pakistanis and Sikhs[6].

**Migrant spouses and civic participation**

Democratic and civic participation are often treated as measures of integration, but can also be mechanisms for advancing various processes of integration. Migrants, for example may learn how to be political actors through 'being ethnic' (Portes *et al* 2008:1058). Pakistani migrant wives in our sample often joined community groups serving Asian women, participating in the organizing of community events, for example. Such sites often became informal spaces of support and mutual help where women exchanged advice and experience, as exemplified by Noor's story below:

*Noor (Pakistani migrant wife, 33) suffered emotional abuse from her controlling in-laws. Eager to escape her husbands' sisters taunting over her accent, she persuaded the family to let her go to English classes. Through these, she spent increasing time at women's centres, and developed strong friendships with women of various ages who had similar experiences, gaining both in confidence and knowledge – learning of the 999 service and the existence of women's refuges. After two years, she spoke with the police, accessed a women's refuge and got divorced.*

[6] E.g. http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2016/jan/05/how-floods-united-the-north-chefs-bearing-curries-refugees-with-sandbags

Pakistani migrant husbands in the sample, on the other hand, tended to be too time-poor for such activities. Local community group services often also focus on women, with fewer such opportunities for men. Whereas earlier male migrants from the Indian subcontinent sometimes set up voluntary sector organisations for mutual support, with a well-established voluntary sector now in place, there may be fewer such roles for recent migrants. (A similar logic may also apply for some born and/or raised in Britain – so for example the son of a migrant who founded an all-Sikh football team, did not feel levels of discrimination still warranted such efforts.)

Among the Sikh sample, migrant wives also participated in community groups. Migrant spouses also sometimes took part in gurdwara-based *seva* activities such as cooking for the *sangat* (religious community). The migrant spouses in the Indian Sikh sample were, however, less active in the local religious community than many of those born/raised in Britain. Here the concentration of baptised Sikhs in our sample of British spouses forms an important context for interpreting this result.

**Civic engagement and the life-course**

In parallel to observations in the social domain, civic engagement often fluctuated over the life course. Whilst Pakistani migrant wives not in paid employment may find more time for community group activities, and British Pakistani husbands sometimes reported more independent free time (see chapter 3), for those with work, children and often elderly relatives to juggle, there was less time to devote to civic activities in the years after marriage. In the following example, Nasir describes discovering volunteering when his children were older.

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*'I wasn't ever involved in anything like that, I mean it was just, by chance. Because up until the age of about say, I'd say up until 40, I was always, the kids were my kind of thinking. 'This weekend we need to take them somewhere, this weekend…' but as soon as they became teenagers and suddenly they made their own friends, I became a bit sort of redundant. I remember once I took a week off in the May half term, so like, you know, 'Where are we going to go?' 'Oh dad, I'm going out with my friend, I'm going out with my friend.' The next day, the same. So I then phoned up work and said, 'Can I come back to work? Nobody wants me!' …suddenly, when they grew older, it's not, it's just something I just found, you know, I think about five years ago [I started getting involved in associations]. (Nasir, British Pakistani M, 47, transnational marriage)*

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Religious observance was a particularly important effector among British Indian Sikh participants, who tended to engage more than other participant groups in civic activities snowballing from their religious life. Whilst some of these activities (e.g. soup kitchens) were inter-ethnic in nature, most focused on the religious community. On the other hand, Pakistani Muslim intranational couples who did not attend mosque were also less likely to engage civically

with the ethnic community. Opportunities for religious and civic activities also varied between local areas.

*Harbhajan, (42, Indian Sikh, M, migrant husband) says that apart from family events, the gurdwara is the only place where he engages with others socially, and participates in civic activity:*
*'I would say when we mix with our own obviously background and we go to events from like how the Gurdwara… we felt more welcome there because everybody's in the same boat as us. They're all in the same background, they were all there for the same thing, so yeah, apart from that, not anything else really no.'*

In both couple types and in both groups, level of education and confidence in having useful skills created incentives for volunteering. For men, involvement in sport associations sometimes created more civic awareness.

*Latif (45, British Pakistani, M, transnational marriage) grew up engaging in multiple sports associations and performed in a variety of cities and environments. He says this prepared him in terms of confidence in dealing with others and in awareness about the importance of community initiatives. He was then involved in neighbourhood initiatives and lately has run for election as a local councillor.*

## Political participation

Our interview data on political participation covers voting, party support, and political activity beyond voting in elections.

### Voting

In our sample, Pakistani migrant wives were more likely to vote than British spouses married intranationally. The Pakistani women interviewed were concerned about cuts to the NHS and also enjoyed the voting experience per se as it provided a topic of discussion and the opportunity for socializing. The party they voted for was often influenced by their in-law's political opinions. Pakistani migrant men, and Sikh migrant women expressed less interest in voting, whilst some British wives and husbands cited lack of free time to vote (or remember to register to vote). For some British participants, however, outrage at policy created a new impetus to engage in the democratic processes.

Some participants also voiced increasing concern over levels of immigration (particularly from Eastern Europe).

*Fatehjit, (39, British Sikh, F, intranational marriage) did not always vote, but recently she has made a point of doing so:*
*'I have to [vote]. With the state of the country and where Labour is and where the Tories are. You can't change things if you don't vote, and I think with being a business owner and the way we've seen care go and the way people are suffering and cuts in everything, I think it's important that if you don't get your say then you ain't going to make any changes. So that's why I say we have to vote; it's important.'*

Among participants born and/or raised in the UK, political affiliation appeared more diverse than they reported of their parents' generation. The loss of strong familial allegiance to a particular party may play some role in decreasing commitment to vote.

**Political participation and the life-course**

As in the area of civic engagement, life-course issues often had important impact on political participation.

*'My dad always wanted me and my brothers to do well in life so he said to us, you have to go and join the Conservative Club. And I was about 12 or 13 years old, so we went there. We did leaflets, you know, to people's houses, promoting the Conservatives. I haven't participated again since then. Purposely I haven't because like my wife, you said 'Does she vote for one party?' - I don't do that. I always look at what the manifesto is and what these people are saying. Because Labour Party has become more like the Conservative Party and, you know, where's UKIP and all these things. And I like to keep an open mind to see what they're doing, you know. I'll watch the news and I'll think who's doing the right thing, you know?' (Pratap, 46, British Sikh, M, intranational marriage)*

For some British Pakistani women participants, university life offered opportunities for political engagement outside the ethnic realm, in the form of student union activism or participation in political campaigns, for example. Such activities were not, however, generally sustained after marriage, starting work and/or the arrival of children.

*Habiba, (34, British Pakistani, F, intranational marriage) was involved in politics when she was younger, but stopped when she started working:*
*'When I finished university I was part of Stop the War Coalition. After the Americans and the British went into Afghanistan, as we all did, I became quite heavily involved, and they tried to get me to run for councillor, and at that point I said no and walked away from it, because it got too nasty and too political for me… It felt like we were tokens because we were Muslims and we were Asians. And they were just holding us up like trophies, and I didn't like it so I left it. So because of that I just thought… I just walked away from it. And it became too… I just couldn't understand how anybody could be so passionate about something and give up their entire life, which is what they used to do for that, and I couldn't do it. I had so many other things that I enjoyed doing, but I was a part of it for a good few years and I made some cool friends through it, and, again, it formed a large part of me.'*

The only British Pakistani Muslim couple (intranational) in our sample who continued to be politically active (and whose social life revolved around party membership) did not have children.

As these examples suggest, being politically active often had implications for extending social networks. The contrary was also true for British Pakistanis - those who were asked to participate in party political activity tended to have wider social networks to start with.

*Latif, (45, British Pakistani, M, transnational marriage) has run for local elections many times, but, feels that his family's regional background has been a disadvantage:*
*'I think as time has gone on and people have got to know that we are not actually Mirpuris and especially with my father being involved in the local mosque… Apart from those that are very close to us, because they wouldn't see us in that way, but the Joe Public, they definitely wouldn't vote for us… because they only know us as non-Mirpuris.'*

**The 'paradox of integration'**

Other research in the UK has suggested that 'second generation' ethnic minorities are less likely than their parents to participate in the democratic process (Sanders *et al* 2014). One explanation is a 'paradox of social integration' (Heath 2013) in which political disillusionment is a product integration – those brought up in Britain expect equality but also (as we saw in Chapter 3) have greater awareness of discrimination and inequality. Recognising discrimination may thus be an indicator of well-developed social and political engagement, and simultaneously a

stimulus for democratic disengagement. In our interview data, two areas emerged as particularly important in producing political dissatisfaction: issues of foreign policy, and perceptions of inequality.

Dissatisfaction with British foreign policy is more frequently written about with respect to Muslim populations in Britain (recently in the context of concerns over radicalisation). In our interview data, in contrast, such issues were primarily raised by British Sikh participants, particularly concerning increasing awareness about the possible involvement of UK in the 1984 Golden Temple affair in India. The impact on the feelings they expressed about British identity is discussed in Chapter 6.

Perceptions of inequality were presented as having a more direct impact on political disillusionment and disengagement. Some British Sikhs in the Bradford area complained of a focus by local institutions on the needs of the Muslim community to the perceived neglect of their own.

*'There was the issue that a Muslim guy wanted to open a slaughterhouse next to a place of worship, a Sikh temple, yeah. And basically he was being stubborn, that's all it was really. He just thought he could get his way… Bradford Council is Muslim dominated anyway… We lost the first battle. We took it to the High Court. It cost us a lot of money. The High Court sorted it out, yeah, [not the council]. They 100% did not look after the Sikh population and they're not bothered about the Sikh population at all… I think they have a lack of training, awareness about the community they are dealing with. They came to the Gurdwara itself and it says on the Gurdwara, it's got the Sikh, you know, the symbol and they still called it a mosque, they stood out there for a good two hours… They stood out there for two hours, maybe three, maybe four and then they had the audacity to call it a mosque. We had a meeting with the Chief Commissioner and nothing has happened. We said to him, 'Look, if you want us to get some educational material together to train your police force about what Sikhs are, we will do that, we will come in, free of charge and give you some training, we've done it in other schools.' Haven't heard anything. I am a higher rate tax payer and I feel that there is no point in paying tax, because the Government really doesn't represent us. The level of knowledge that the council or even the police force — very little. (Gunbir, 33, British Sikh, M, transnational marriage).*

## 6. Identity

Key questions in the domain of identity are:

***To what extent do migrant spouses feel British?***

***Is there a relationship between transnational marriage and British identity on the part of the UK spouse?***

***Is local identity patterned differently to national identity in relation to transnational marriage?***

***Is there a relationship between transnational marriage and religious identity?***

In this section we use our data from the interviews and 'Who Am I?' (WAI) sheets to explore issues of national, religious, and local identity. The multiple identifications reported in these sources, and the frequent differences between the terms individuals chose to include on the WAI sheets, and the ways in which they then discussed their identities in the semi-structured interviews testify to the complex, multiple, and contextual nature of identities.

### National identity

In this section, we discuss two key questions:

***To what extent to migrant spouses develop a British identity?***

***Is there a relationship between transnational marriage and British identity on the part of the UK spouse?***

**KEY FINDINGS:** *Migrant spouses in our sample retained identification with their country of birth, but this did not function as a barrier to other processes of identity. For British spouses, transnational marriage was not associated with a lack of attachment to Britain.*

For migrant spouses, issues of identity appeared as distinct from other processes and markers of integration. Even migrant spouses who had been in the UK for a couple of decades and appeared highly integrated by other conventional indicators did not describe themselves as British (or have a strong local identity). Retaining an Indian or Pakistani national identity did not therefore appear to function as a barrier to other processes of integration. Many spouses also felt that they were perceived as Indian or Pakistani both by wider British society, and the families into which they had married. This awareness of being considered as foreigners is likely to play a role in inhibiting adoption of a British identity.

Transnational marriage might also have implications for the identity of non-migrant spouses. It is possible that someone born and/or raised in the UK might seek a spouse from overseas because they identify more with that other national identity, than with Britain. We do not,

however, find support for this suggestion in our qualitative data. In the WAI forms, British Sikh and British Pakistani men married transnationally were most likely to define themselves as British, and in interviews with British spouses of migrants, a strong British self-identification stemming from being born and raised in the country was evident and taken for granted[7] – although some suggested that they might not be seen as such by others. For some British South Asian men interviewed, having a spouse who could compensate for their own perceived lack of knowledge of South Asian culture was part of the attraction of a transnational marriage. Living with a partner from overseas could even reaffirm the strength of a Britishness identity, in the daily experience of cultural difference with a migrant spouse. UK born/raised men married transnationally were the category of participant most likely to include the term British in their 'Who Am I?' (WAI) form.

Some British Sikh and Pakistani Muslim men, however, reported instances which led them to question what it meant to be British. These fell into two categories: foreign policy and geo-political events, and experiences of perceived discrimination or lack of equality with other British citizens. In the latter category, Eshan recounted his shock at the way in which his complaint of racist abuse at work was treated by his employer and the police:

*'So the police officer believed [my senior managers] over their authority because they were senior management instead of looking into the complaint… When I rang the police officers [to report] that I had been racially abused, they didn't even support me. They logged it down as a hate crime until I said 'No you need to come and take a statement.' She goes to me: 'It would not go anywhere because you have got no evidence to support it'. I was shocked… I don't know what British is because since I've been racially abused, I don't know what British is. To be honest with you, I have seen so much prejudice. This is the first time it's happened to me. I'm 36 years old and I felt frightened, really scared. When I told authorities and they always say, 'zero tolerance to racism' and I have had no support from them. So it's shocking to me. To be honest with you, I don't feel British. No, I don't know what British is.' (Eshan, 38, British Pakistani, M, intranational marriage)*

[7] Those who came to the UK as children also called themselves British, but specified that they were born abroad.

The impact of foreign policy and geo-political events on identification with Britain was raised by some British Sikh men in relation to recent revelations of British government advice to India prior to the 1984 'Operation Blue Star' storming of the Golden Temple in Amristar, in which many Sikhs died.

*'[In relation to Operation Blue Star] I feel that we've been betrayed, you know, especially when since World War 1 all the Sikhs that died for this country and then they go and do that to us… I feel a British Sikh [but the revelations and rumours about 1984] that's had a big influence.' (Gunbir, British Sikh M, 33 transnational marriage)*

## Local Identity

With reference to local identity, the key question is:

***Is local identity patterned differently to national identity in relation to transnational marriage?***

**KEY FINDING:** *We find no clear relationship between transnational marriage and local identity. Local characteristics and ethnic differences in marriage patterns may also influence local attachment.*

Our interview data suggests variation in strength of local identity, and no clear patterning in relationship to transnational marriage. British Pakistanis in Bradford often expressed attachment to the city, whilst Sikhs were less likely to do so (perhaps not surprisingly given the association in public discourse of Bradford with the Pakistani community). British Sikhs in London and the Midlands often expressed strong attachment to their city or area. Attachment to a locality was strongest when people felt at ease in an area. This was often related to the perception of a significant local co-ethnic or religious community and facilities (ethnic food-stores, places of worship, etc.), but not necessarily because of a preference for co-ethnics. One British Pakistani couple who moved to a predominantly white neighbourhood reported difficulty in forming relationships with neighbours who, they felt, saw their ethnicity as problematic. Among Sikh participants, perceptions of social or economic problems (anti-social behaviour, economic opportunities, school performance) reduced local attachments. In Bradford, migrant Pakistani wives' local social networks and limited experience of other UK locations meant that the distinction between their experience of/attachment to Britain and to Bradford was not meaningful.

Differences between the two ethnic groups in marriage patterns may also influence local attachment. Among Sikhs it is conventional to marry a partner from a different area (in the UK and/or in relation to ancestral villages of origin in India) with the consequence that families tended to be less concentrated in particular localities than among our British Pakistani respondents. We also, however, encountered examples of British Pakistani geographical mobility, particularly among more highly educated intranational couples.

## Religious Identity

The key question in this area is:

***Is there a relationship between transnational marriage and religious identity?***

> **KEY FINDING:** *We find no clear relationship between transnational marriage and religious identity.*

Again, we found no clear patterning of religious identification in relation to transnational marriage. In the WAI questionnaire, British Sikh men regardless of marriage type, and Pakistani migrant wives were the most likely to use religious terms to describe themselves, whilst none of the British Pakistani wives in transnational couples in our sample used any religious term to describe themselves. In the interview data, on the other hand, British Pakistani Muslims regardless of marriage tended to identify strongly as British Muslim, and British Indian Sikhs as Sikh (most were baptised Sikhs) whilst migrant spouses stressed their Pakistani or Indian identity.

Some British Sikh men married transnationally placed less stress on a religious identity than did their (baptised) intranationally married siblings. Gunbir, below, reported the influence not of his migrant wife, but of his British sister-in-law as a factor in his developing interest in Sikhism:

*'I never used to be religious at all. I never used to listen to* shabads *(religious songs). I never used to listen to it at all, but, you know, my brother's wife's sisters, they're quite, well one of them is quite religious… I was never interested in them, but now in my car it's full of* shabads*, yeah… [It has been because of] both age and [my sister-in-law's] influence, you know. You're not getting any younger, you know… There's a lot of like resources [in Bradford], obviously there's a lot of Sikhs here, a lot of like people to help you. You can learn more about Sikhism.' (Gunbir, 33, British Sikh, M, transnational marriage)*

One British Pakistani wife reported that she started wearing the hijab despite the objections of her Pakistani migrant husband, and Ghalib, a British Pakistani husband also reported that his increased religiosity was unrelated to his marriage to a woman from Pakistan:

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*Ghalib, (27, British Pakistani, M, married transnationally) has started learning the Quran by heart and dedicates most of his free time to religious studies, while his migrant wife Jamila's religious activity is limited to her daily prayers.*

*'You know that was about 22, 23… we had a six month break before we found another [business], so in that six months… I started thinking about life, the purpose of life and what is the purpose? Is there a God? Even though I said I was Muslim, I was never really Muslim though, if you know what I mean? I said I was Muslim, if I had to tick a box, if the option was there, your religious beliefs, I would relate to Islam, I would tick the box, but I would never think twice. Then I bumped into a Jehovah's Witness one day and we got talking and she got talking and asked me a few questions about my religion and, have I read the Bible, and 'It says, in your book, it says "the meek will inherit the earth, the righteous."' She said that it says in my book, that is what she said to me, she said 'the righteous will inherit earth.' But then I thought, 'No, we are supposed to go to Paradise - that is our eternal place.' So I still remember her very words. I was thinking she knows more about my book than me, I'm not reading and you know, so that is when I came home and I started reading. I had all these questions about death, of purpose, life, is God there, is he talking to me and should I be talking to God? Then it started. When it started I would be reading constantly all the time, all the time I would be reading, reading, reading, then I found inner peace. the purpose of life, what is life? God and you all and what is your job to do, you are the job, what is your job? That's when I took it seriously'*

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In all, the data from this combination of self-definition questionnaire and interview material serves to remind us of the complexity, multiplicity, and contextuality of identity, cautioning against simplistic interpretations of the relationship between transnational marriage and identity (religious, local or national).

# 7. Transnationalism

The connections that migrants and others retain with countries of origin or other sites in the diaspora are known in contemporary migration studies as 'transnationalism'. Transnational practices and networks can include visiting, (ethnic) return migration, remitting money, or links forged through kinship, business or religion. Whilst South Asian transnational marriages are sometimes presented as maintaining connections to the Indian subcontinent at the expense of engagements with British society, the growing literature on this topic suggests that transnationalism and local participation or identification are not mutually exclusive (e.g. Snel *et al* 2006). In this chapter we explore connections between transnationalism and the choice of a transnational versus an intranational marriage. We focus on visiting, keeping in touch, and financial connections, as the forms of transnational connection appearing most frequently in our interviews.

In this area, the key question is:

***Do transnational couples differ from intranational couples in their transnational connections and orientations?***

**KEY FINDINGS:** *Migrant spouses keep frequent contact with family overseas. Their British spouses do not always accompany them on transnational visits, particularly when finances are tight, but British Pakistanis and Sikhs may visit the subcontinent for reasons other than family connections. Migrant spouses' transnational financial ties are highly gendered, with men much more likely to remit on a regular basis. This was sometimes a cause of tension with their British wives.*

## Visits and keeping in touch

For two of the British Pakistani Muslim men and one British Indian Sikh man interviewed, extended periods spent in the subcontinent during childhood or adolescence had direct connections to their transnational marriages – Waris moved to the UK from India aged 7 and grew up expecting to marry someone from the country of his birth, whilst the others had met their future wives whilst living in Pakistan. Most other British spouses in our sample had only visited India or Pakistan once or twice in their childhoods. Some members of the older generations were reported as splitting their years between the UK and the subcontinent, where their families had constructed houses. For some British spouses, early positive experiences of sub-continental connections encouraged later openness to the idea of a transnational marriage, whereas negative experiences or lack of familiarity often reduced the likelihood of considering an Indian or Pakistani spouse as a desirable match. Experiences of and attitudes toward ancestral countries of origin often varied between siblings, so that Waris' younger brother, for

example, felt that his lack of familiarity with the Indian Punjab explained why he had never contemplated a transnational marriage.

In both ethnic groups, migrant spouses kept daily contact with relatives in the country of origin, and most aspired to visit annually. Finances were an important constraint on the ability to visit, and on whether other family members accompanied the migrant spouse. Differences in socio-economic standing help explain why Indian Sikh families in our sample often visited the sub-continent more frequently than our Pakistani Muslim participants. In general, British spouses married to migrants visited their partner's country of origin more frequently than their intranationally married siblings, but were not necessarily drawn into intense transnational connections by virtue of their marriage. Pakistani migrant spouses frequently visited Pakistan alone, although British Pakistani women married to migrants were more likely than their male counterparts to accompany their spouses on visits (suggesting that the often observed gender imbalance in 'kin work' [Di Leonardo 1987] may also apply in this transnational context).

There were other reasons, however, unrelated to connections of kinship, why some non-migrant participants visited India or Pakistan. Lower costs of living offer attractive travel experiences for some (cf. Bolognani 2014). Some British Sikh participants undertook pilgrimages to religious sites in the Punjab, whereas British Pakistani Muslim participants were more likely to undertake religious or leisure travel to other destinations in the Islamic world (eg. Mecca or Dubai) rather than, for example to undertake devotion to Sufi *pirs* in Pakistan. Others had business or investment connections in the subcontinent (discussed below).

## Financial connections

The sending of remittances to family members was highly gendered (here we draw only on data from the Pakistani Muslim sample, having insufficient information on remittances among Indian Sikhs). Migrant Pakistani husbands often sent regular financial contributions to relatives in Pakistan, particularly where they had elderly parents and/or sisters' weddings to help finance. This practice did not seem to be taken for granted by British Pakistani wives - a husband's desire to remit money was sometimes a cause of marital tension. Migrant Pakistani wives, on the other hand, more often sent money sporadically, as gifts, in situations of financial emergency (e.g. hospital treatment for relatives), or in the form of charitable donations.

A few British husbands had investments in India or Pakistan, but these were unrelated to transnational marriage. In the cases below, two men in intranational marriages illustrate differing motivations for and implications of these investments. Easharbir, a British Indian Sikh, helped finance the building of a family holiday house in the Punjab, but seldom visits. One British Pakistani Muslim man, Nabil, on the other hand, was so convinced of the business opportunities in Pakistan that he moved his family to live there.

*Nabil (British Pakistani M, 50) was at first married to a non-Pakistani, and is now married to a British Pakistani. A successful entrepreneur, he accepted the challenge laid down by an employee to go and look at Pakistan from the point of view of potential for business. The only other experiences he had of Pakistan as a child were very negative. What he saw now, however, was so appealing, that he sold his house and delegated the running of his own UK businesses, and now lives with his family in an urban centre in Pakistan where he does not have pre-existing family ties.*

*Easharbir (British Sikh M, 42, intranational marriage) agreed to help with the building of a new family house in India 6 years ago. His mother visits there once a year and did not want always to be a guest of relatives. Easharbir and his family, however, have only visited the house a couple of times, 'to do a bit of Gurdwara on the side' - hinting at spiritual tourism rather than visiting family as the primary motivation for these trips.*

Whilst, as might be expected, migrant spouses in our sample maintained frequent contact with their relatives in countries of origin, and having a spouse from India or Pakistan did seem to be associated with more frequent visits for the British spouses in our sample, our findings do not suggest a strong causal relationship between transnational marriage and other forms of transnationalism. Those married transnationally often had stronger transnational attachments (when compared to their intranationally married siblings) pre-dating their marriages, whilst factors other than marriage inspired transnational activity in some of those married to partners from the UK. We should note, however, that the sibling pair design on which the core of our sample was based means that the majority of participants had at least one sibling or spouses' sibling who had married a partner from India or Pakistan. Families in which no such marriages take place may have differing levels and patterns of transnational activity.

## 8. Discussion and recommendations

In this report, we set out new research findings on the relationships between marriage migration and processes of integration among two British ethnic groups: Pakistani Muslims and Indian Sikhs. Statistical evidence from the Labour Force Survey allow us to explore patterns of correlation between transnational marriage and various indicators in the structural domain of integration, through a contrast with intranational partnerships. The complexity and multi-facetted nature of integration, however, means that this narrow range of quantitative indicators would by itself be inadequate. Data from semi-structured interviews with British Indian Sikhs and British Pakistani Muslims and their migrant and non-migrant spouses provides more detailed insight into the range of processes at play. Together, this research reveals that transnational marriages can have a number of relationships with processes of integration.

Spouses entering the UK from India and Pakistan face similar challenges to other migrants: forming new social networks to replace those lost through migration; entering a new labour market and/or negotiating domestic responsibilities; gaining practical, cultural and political knowledge of their new surroundings; developing new patterns of life; and maintaining connections with family members left behind. These processes are influenced by their own characteristics and networks, but also the opportunities and constraints provided by the social environment, labour market, service providers and policy frameworks. In these two-way processes of integration, spousal migrants have an important potential advantage in the form of their marital connections to the British partner and their family who can provide knowledge, support and connections for the incoming spouse. The resources and attitudes of these receiving families are, however, not uniform, creating a further layer of variation in the experiences and trajectories of migrant spouses.

For the British partner, the implications of the arrival of a migrant spouse are also diverse. At least initially, migrants commonly experience disadvantage in the labour market, and we have seen that migrant wives have lower levels of economic activity than those born/raised in the UK. But assessments of the economic impact of transnational marriage are complicated by variation in extended family living and pooling of resources (in some cases also related to transnational marriage), and by the lower likelihood of transnational marriage among those with higher levels of education (and among British Pakistani women with very low levels of education). Where having a migrant wife correlates with a strongly gendered division of labour, men may find more time to develop social or business interests. For some British Pakistani women, sponsoring a migrant spouse necessitates paid employment and/or can be part of a trajectory of increased domestic power, but was often associated with time-poverty in dual earner households. We found little evidence of an impact of transnational marriage on the identity of the British spouse, cultural practice varied within households; associations with levels of transnationalism were less strong than might be imagined; and there were only weak associations with patterns of civic or political engagement.

Among both migrant and non-migrant spouses, variation in processes in the five domains of integration is often patterned along lines of gender and ethnicity, but also with considerable differences between individual contexts. Moreover, processes of integration unfold over time, and interact with other dynamics across the life-course – so the situation of a couple immediately following the arrival of a migrant spouse may be very different five, ten or twenty years later, as careers, families, aspirations, relationships and resources develop. The rich data from this mixed methods study provides much more nuanced understandings of these dynamics, and of the effectors which facilitate or inhibit processes in and between domains, than those offered by quantitative research alone.

## Effectors: facilitators and barriers

From the empirical data and discussion in the preceding chapters, we can derive 'effectors' (barriers and facilitators) of integration processes in each domain, set out in table on the following page. It is important to note that this list does not represent an exhaustive account of the effectors involved in processes of integration. Our research methods allow us to address many aspects of integration, but are less able to access others. The range of issues addressed in our qualitative research help contextualise the Labour Force Survey data, and expand from the latter's focus on indicators in the structural domain. However, wider structural issues of discrimination and the impacts of policy frameworks are only partially accessible through these methods. The focus in this discussion particularly on effectors pertaining to the characteristics of individuals and families, and their direct experiences, should therefore not be taken to suggest that these constitute the primary facilitators or barriers to processes of integration (see the Introduction for a diagrammatic representation of this conceptualization of integration). In particular, we were not able to establish the extent of opportunities (or lack of them) in the local labour market in the areas in which the couples were living, or other variations in local opportunities such as for civic participation. Nevertheless, identifying the contributing factors on which we do focus provides opportunities to develop recommendations relating to them for policy or service provision.

Some effectors identified here facilitate participation or engagement in a domain, whilst others act as barriers, but in many cases they may have the potential for either inhibiting or facilitating effects depending on their character and context. Geographical mobility within the UK, for example, can open new social or employment opportunities but also separate people from social networks and from familial sources of childcare that could otherwise facilitate women's employment. The effectors in each domain suggested by this research are summarised in the table below. In the discussion that follows, we identify several key themes, and explore interactions between the various domains, before drawing practical recommendations from this research.

| Domain | Positive and Negative Effectors |
|---|---|
| **Structural** | • Employment opportunities<br>- Social contacts to job opportunities<br>- Job Centres, employment agencies<br>• Education<br>- Qualifications for employment/non-recognition of qualifications<br>- Confidence and skills<br>• Discrimination<br>• Language skills and language requirements for particular jobs<br>• Family attitudes and resources<br>• Life-course and gender roles<br>• Financial resources:<br>- For business investment<br>- For retraining/conversion of qualifications/further education<br>- Ability to pool family resources<br>- Financial obligations (including remitting)<br>- Costs of migration/ setting up home<br>• Flexible training/education options (e.g. evening classes)<br>• Geographical mobility |
| **Social** | • Life-course and gender roles, and implications for free time<br>• Family attitudes and resources<br>• Employment<br>• Social characteristics of available locations including:<br>- Workplace<br>- Community groups<br>- Schools (children's and own school experience)<br>- Local area<br>- Religious institutions<br>- Universities, Sports clubs etc.<br>• Perceptions of discrimination |
| **Cultural** | • Language<br>- Level of fluency<br>- Opportunities for language learning/practice<br>• Media consumption<br>• Multiplicity of available media<br>• Cultural stereotypes |
| **Civic/Political** | • Life-course and gender roles, including implications for free time<br>• Perceptions of discrimination and political representation<br>• Knowledge of current affairs<br>• Domestic and foreign policy, perceived injustice<br>• Religious institutions<br>• Positive discrimination<br>• Family attitudes and resources |
| **Identity** | • Being treated as foreign<br>• Perceptions of local area (welcoming, safe, facilities etc.)<br>• Degree of religiosity<br>• Perceptions of discrimination and political representation<br>• Domestic and foreign policy, perceived injustice |

## Understanding integration: relationships between processes

Our investigation of these themes highlights the complexity of processes within and between domains of integration. Here we consider:

- Relationships between domains
- Fluctuation in processes over time
- Interaction between effectors at differing levels

### Relationships between domains of integration

This research demonstrates that:

- Processes in different domains may be separate or interacting
- Engagement in one domain may facilitate or inhibit engagement in another

A good illustration of differences between domains can be found in our material on identity. For migrant spouses, issues of identity appeared as distinct from other processes and markers of integration. When it came to national identity, even migrant spouses who had been in the UK for a couple of decades and would score highly on other conventional measures of integration did not describe themselves as British. Experiences of discrimination or exclusion (structural, cultural or social domains) can inhibit the development of a British identity, but we found no evidence that maintaining identification with a country of origin inhibited engagement in other domains of integration.

For migrant spouses, two important examples of the relationships between domains are found in the roles of receiving families, and of employment.

#### *Employment*

For migrant spouses who work outside the home, the workplace can be an important source of new social contacts. Many migrant Sikh wives in our sample, for example, got to know people from different ethnic backgrounds in their workplaces, where they also had opportunities to practice their English. In this case, processes in the structural, social and cultural domains reinforce each other.

On the other hand, many Pakistani migrant husbands in our research worked at least initially in ethnic niches where opportunities to practice their English were more limited. Some also worked long and/or unsociable hours, leaving little time for the development of social networks beyond, perhaps, interacting with migrants co-workers between shifts. Here, engagement in the structural domain through employment does not necessarily lead to the rapid development of social networks, and indeed long working hours can inhibit engagement in the social domain. For some, particularly in the context of the recent recession, this was a difficult position to emerge from, but for others it was a phase before moving into better opportunities or self-employment.

Wives who did not work, or who withdrew from the labour force if family finances allowed, had social networks with varying characteristics. These were formed through family and community groups (which tended to lead to co-ethnic networks) but also through children's schools and other activities (which could include those from other ethnic backgrounds). Indeed, wives who did not work often had more time for the development of social networks than those who juggled employment with child (and elder) care.

Economic activity is usually treated as an important aspect of the structural domain of integration. It can also be an important facilitator of integration in the social domain, but these examples show that it may also be a barrier to the development of social networks and participation, and that processes in the social domain can develop independently of economic activity.

### *Receiving families*

Arriving into a family with local knowledge and connections is an important potential advantage for migrants entering the UK through marriage. The family into which the migrant spouse arrives is often a crucial source of practical and emotional support and advice. However, the attitudes and resources of receiving families vary.

Most migrant Pakistani husbands in our sample initially found work through family contacts. Those with limited English language and/or qualifications might otherwise have struggled to find employment without this crucial social capital. Whilst some remained in ethnic niche employment, other were eventually able to progress from these initial jobs to forms of employment (particularly self-employment) which offered more opportunities to practice their English and expand their range of social contacts. Here 'bonding' social capital facilitates structural integration, with consequences for other forms of social engagement. For more educated migrant Pakistani husbands, however, our previous research (Charsley 2013) suggests that families' social connections may not facilitate access to higher status employment.[8]

For women whose upbringing in South Asia did not lead them to expect to work after marriage, the families into which they marry can provide not only a comfortable social and cultural context, but also an arena in which they may develop employment aspirations through witnessing the paid employment of other women in the family. Some migrant wives, particularly those with higher levels of education, arrive with aspirations to take up paid employment. The attitudes and characteristic of the receiving family may act as barriers or facilitators of these aspirations, with consequences for the development of the migrant's social networks.

[8] Our data on migrant Sikh husbands is more limited, but included more use of external services to access employment.

### Fluctuating engagement and interacting effectors

Our research also shows that engagement in domains is shaped by interacting effectors at various levels (individual, family, locality, national, transnational), and that engagement in domains may fluctuate, or even reverse. These points are well illustrated by the importance of issues related to life-course, and by the 'paradox of integration' found amongst some British spouses in the sample.

#### *Life-course*

A key theme in many chapters of this report has been the importance of life-course in understanding dynamics of engagement in the domains of integration. Across both couple types and marriage types, the early years of marriage and raising a family brought new roles and responsibilities. Life-course issues are inherently gendered, but often involve a focus on family relationships for both men and women, on domestic responsibilities for women, and on paid work for men (and some women). This emphasis has implications for both the structural and social domains. For migrant spouses, the effect of entering this phase of the life-course was amplified by their migration, as family formed the basis of their initial social networks, and some migrant men shouldered responsibilities to contribute financially to family in the subcontinent as well as their new household[9]. An appreciation of these as life-course-related, however, also points to the likelihood of further change: women who do not work whilst children are little may (re)enter the workforce; careers develop; caring and financial responsibilities change; and the amount of time available for social, civic or political activities varies over time.

Factors associated with the life-course also, however, interact with other effectors to produce opportunities and constraints. Local areas and institutions offer varying social and civic possibilities. One British Pakistani woman married to a migrant and inactive in the labour market, for example, became heavily involved in volunteering and fundraising for her children's school (where the headmaster had a particular interest in encouraging such activities among parents), expanding both her civic engagement and social activities. Her autonomy to pursue such activities was enhanced by the fact that her parents-in-law lived overseas, reducing her practical responsibilities as a daughter-in-law. In this case, social and civic engagement is strongly shaped by a combination of motherhood, local opportunities and the familial consequences of marriage to a migrant.

Policies affecting transnational couples intersect with life-course issues in important ways. For Nabeela, the migrant woman graduate from Pakistan described in Chapter 2 (p18), opportunities for converting qualifications to enable employment commensurate with her qualifications were limited by lack of access to student funding, in combination with the costs of setting up a new household, whilst responsibilities of motherhood reduce the likelihood of further education by the time access to student funding becomes available. For several migrant

[9] Again, our data on migrant Sikh husbands is more limited.

wives we encountered, the need to travel to the UK promptly after the granting of their visa prevented them from completing higher education before migrating to join their husband.[10] For British spouses, the costs of marriage and sponsoring a migrant (including the substantial and increasing costs of visas) may encourage employment, but also reduce financial resources available not only for education but also for housing and investment.

### *The 'paradox of integration': equality, foreign affairs and dis-engagement*

Levels of engagement in and between domains therefore vary over time. In contrast to models of integration which presume an even and increasing process, in some cases, active engagement can lead to a reversal in some aspects. For some of the British men we interviewed, their social, cultural and political engagement produced sophisticated awareness of issues of inequality or of national and international politics which led, paradoxically, to political disillusionment and to questioning what it meant to be British. Examples here were drawn from both ethnic groups and from those married transnationally and intranationally, with no clear association between such opinions and marriage type.

## Questioning assumptions

Some situations revealed by this analysis call into question common assumptions about the relationship between South Asian transnational marriage and processes of integration. In our research, alongside migrant women content to fulfil a domestic role, we met others keen to use their education in the labour market. Whilst many of the British families assumed that a bride from the subcontinent would be more 'traditional' in their domestic expectations, many also supported their new family member in exploring aspirations for education, employment and social lives beyond the family. Sikh migrant wives, in particular, were often in paid employment, and even educated women who did not work often found ways to use their education for the benefit of their new families (e.g. managing the paperwork for a husband's business). Whilst not all transnational marriages are entered entirely as a matter of individual free choice (although it is important to stress that forced marriage is a minority practice), we encountered some British Pakistani women whose marriages to migrants enhanced rather than reduced their autonomy, and allowed them to maintain close relationships with their own families. Some of these migrant husband couples were closer to stereotypes of time-poor dual earners sandwiched between care demands of children and elderly parents, than to the 'traditional' patriarchal household. For some British Pakistani men in our sample, on the other hand, a migrant wife's responsibility for domestic affairs freed up time and resources for social activities or investment in enterprise. Extended family living is associated in the quantitative data with transnational marriage in both our ethnic groups, but we found could not simply be read as a sign of

[10] Once a spousal visa is granted, it is valid only for a specified time. Delay in entering the UK could result in the need for an additional application for Further Leave to Remain (to fulfil the time requirements for Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK), entailing additional cost and risk for the applicants (and the danger that the initial delay might be interpreted as signaling a lack of commitment to the marriage in subsequent Leave applications).

traditionalism as it can support a range of gendered relationships and roles including provision of childcare for working women. These findings underline the need for nuanced understandings of the range of relationships between marriage migration and the multi-facetted processes of integration. Crucially, the research underscores the need for a holistic understanding of differing processes across the diverse domains of integration, and cautions against the use of individual 'indicators' of integration which are invariably selective and can reinforce existing assumptions whilst masking more complex realities of the lives of migrant spouses and their British partners.

## Recommendations

The insights in this report – concerning life-course and gender, the expectations and resources of receiving families, impacts of policy and local opportunities, and perceptions of discrimination, inequality and exclusion – allow us to develop recommendations from this research. In this final section, we offer practical suggestions for policy makers, service providers and others interested in designing interventions to facilitate the integration of migrant spouses, and enhance the situation of their British spouses.

### 1. Information and signposting

British partners and their families were the main initial sources of information and contacts for migrant spouses. Families cannot, however, offer access to forms of knowledge and opportunity beyond their own resources. Some families may also have gendered expectations of the roles a migrant spouse will play. Our research therefore reinforces the call made elsewhere (Eaves 2015) for information and signposting for migrant spouses to facilitate their initial orientation and knowledge of opportunities and sources of support. This could include information on finding employment, training and education (including language classes), local social and volunteering opportunities, and sources of support (e.g. Citizens Advice, emergency services).

### 2. Services and support appropriate for migrant husbands

Whilst most migrant wives encountered in this research had access to community groups, and benefitted from these in terms of local knowledge, advice, social opportunities and training including English language classes, these organisations often specialised in providing services for women. Similar sources of support for migrant husbands were much more limited, and form a gap in service provision.

### 3. Policy and interventions should take account of life-course and gender implications

When considering possible interventions and the impacts of policy, the implications of gender and life-course are a key consideration.

Four 'time windows' emerge as particularly important potential zones for measures that will foster integration and reduce barriers. Each presents particular challenges and possibilities:

#### *Pre-arrival*

After the marriage has been agreed or conducted, there is usually a period of time whilst visa applications are prepared and processed before the overseas spouse can join their partner in the UK. The introduction in 2012 of language requirements for migrant spouses adds additional preparation time for testing (and language training for those who do not already have the required levels of English language proficiency).

QED, one of the organisations contributing to this research, offers pre-departure orientation and information on life in the UK (alongside language training) to women intending to join husbands in the UK, in two locations in Pakistan. *Similar schemes, taking advantage of this preparatory period, could be extended both to men and to other locations*. It is important to stress that we are not recommending the introduction of a pre-departure Life in the UK test, nor something similar to the Netherlands Civic

Integration Examination Abroad. Rather, such a scheme would offer *practical advice and orientation* such as that suggested at point 1 above.

Once a spousal visa is granted, delay in travelling to the UK may have consequences for the costs and complications of immigration and settlement proceedures. *Greater flexibility in the timing of the entry conditions to visas would reduce the likelihood of spouses abandoning education to migrate, and enhance the ability of both migrant and receiving spouses to prepare for the changes of marriage and migration.*

### *Arrival*

The initial period after arrival, is often a *window of opportunity before migrants find work or have children, in which information could be provided, and opportunities for training or employment could be taken up*. This is also, however, a period in which migrant spouses have no access to public funds. *Access for the spouses of British citizens to student loans* could enhance their labour market prospects and reduce the loss of educational capital entailed when educated migrant spouses are unable to make use of overseas qualifications. As most spousal migrants are future citizens and long-term residents, there are clear benefits in facilitating their education and ability to use their skills in the labour market. Increasing awareness of opportunities for *work experience* would allow migrant spouses to enhance their employability outside ethnic niche sectors. (Care should, however, be taken to avoid unrealistic expectations of time available for voluntary work as seen in the controversy over earlier 'Pathways to Citizenship' proposals).

### *Childrearing phase*

For couples in this phase, it is important that initiatives take account of time pressures and care responsibilities (here focusing on children but also elders). Although this is a family-focused phase of life for many of our participants, *various sites outside the family may also be important and could be used for targeting initiatives*. These include: community groups for migrant wives, schools for mothers, and workplaces for men and working women. As well as potential locations for disseminating information, such sites may strongly influence social networks. Several British participants spoke of the importance in their lives of employers or school heads who actively promoted the development of networks between employees or parents, but workplaces were also key sites for experiences of racism and discrimination. In this context, we note with interest the guidance for businesses employing migrants produced by the Business in the Community (Northern Ireland), which includes advice on how to assist in matters of integration[11].

[11] http://www.migrantworkersni.com

### *Later in Life*

A life-course perspective also means that the patterns common in the early years of marriage and just after migration are not set in stone — later in life many of our participants found time for new activities. Hence, this perspective *invites us not to think of integration as something which does or doesn't happen in the early months or years after migration, but as processes which unfold over the life-course and therefore which can change and be influenced at later points.*

## 4. Promoting equality and reducing barriers: policy and politics

Finally, spousal migrants from the Indian subcontinent, and their British South Asian partners, like other migrants and members of ethnic minorities in the UK, are vulnerable to experiences of racism and exclusion. Experiences of inequality, or even simply being treated as an ethnic or foreign 'other', impact on processes in many of the domains of integration: discouraging 'bridging' social networks, damaging prospects in the job market, encouraging employment in ethnic niches, calling into question identification with the UK or particular localities, and so on. *Both migrant and non-migrant spouses from these backgrounds would therefore benefit from more general measures to address negative stereotypes and build mutual understanding (as undertaken, for instance, by some local authorities[12]) and measures to reduce discrimination on social and institutional levels.*

Perceptions of equality are a fundamental underpinning of social cohesion and, this study confirms, should be recognised as a pre-requisite for integration. In this context, policy and political discourse surrounding marriage migration itself are potential sources of perceived inequalities. Although our participants were not affected by recent changes to spousal immigration policy, their marriages and migration having taken place before 2012, and most were sympathetic to the desire to control immigration, the current level of income requirements for sponsors were the subject of considerable criticism – as unreasonable for those in areas where wages and costs were lower, and as failing to take into account the support of extended family members and friends. Where conditions for spousal migration (e.g. language or income requirements), or the ways in which spousal immigration is presented in the statements of those in positions of political power, are perceived as unjust, targeted at particular sections of the population, or insensitive to lived conditions, these are likely to have negative consequences for processes of integration. *Sensitivity is therefore needed to the ways in which policy and discourse surrounding marriage migration is likely to be received by the diverse audiences involved.*

[12] See for instance examples from the UK and other European municipalities reported in the AMICALL study: http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/project/attitudes-to-migrants-communication-and-local-leadership-amicall/

# Appendix

## Measurement of education in the Labour Force Survey analysis

In the Labour Force Survey, a significant proportion of overseas qualifications are classified as 'other' – in these cases we use age at which the migrant spouse left full time education as a proxy. The resulting categories are:

1) Less than secondary: highest qualification coded as 'no qualification', 'other qualification' or 'missing' and age of leaving full time education as 15 or lower,
2) Secondary education: highest qualification 'GCSEs', 'A Level' and equivalent, or if coded as 'other qualification' or missing, left education between the ages of 16 and 19
3) Higher education: highest qualification is 'higher education' or 'degree', or 'other qualification' or missing, left education aged 20 or over.

## Measurement of extended family living in the Labour Force Survey analysis

In the LFS a household is defined as an independent family unit sharing meals and/or housing, whilst an extended family is defined as "all related people within a household: partners; parents; children; grandparents; grandchildren; brothers and sisters; relatives by marriage; and other relatives". As we are primarily interested in couples who live with their parents(-in-law) or siblings(in-law), we created a new variable for extended family that only covers these cases. Couples who live with their adult children were not coded as living in an extended family for this purpose.

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P4 Henna bride and groom hands © Grand Designs Photography

P6 *Guryian ghar* designed, painted and photographed by Marta Bolognani

P9 Integration concept diagram layout design by Mikal Mast


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