VERSITA

Article • DOI: 10.2478/v10202-011-0036-7 NJMR • 2(2) • 2012 • 141-149

Nordic Journal of Migration Research

THE IMAGINATION AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Transnational agency and practices among Pakistani Muslims in the UK

Abstract

In this article, we argue that "imagination" is an important tool in the formation of social capital for young Pakistani Muslim men and women in the city of Bradford, UK. The desire for social mobility and the ambition to overcome disadvantage becomes the drivers for change. These aspirations are supported by the transnational habitus, which acts as an important resource and encourages young people to imagine change in their everyday lives and situations. Unprecedented access to electronic media and new information and communications technologies not only assists the imagination but also invests agency in people's everyday lives

Keywords

Imagination • social capital • transnationalism • Pakistani Muslims • Bradford

Gurchathen S. Sanghera*[1], Suruchi Thapar-Björkert[2]

[1]School of International Relations, University of St. Andrews, UK.

[2]Department of Government, University of Uppsala, Sweden.

1 Introduction

In this article, we explore the relationship between transnationalism, the imagination and social capital. We highlight three inter-related themes. First, transnational spaces created through socio-political and technological transformations facilitate the development of social networks that are based on relationships of trust, reciprocity and shared social norms. Transnationalism is subsequently sustained through connections and relationships within and between these social networks. Second, aspirations/motivations to form social networks are in part aided by the imagination, which becomes a realm of possibility. What makes the imagination a potentially important resource is the extent to which it allows people to imagine change and to share the imagined change with other transnational actors. Such imaginings are facilitated by enhanced information and communications technologies (ICTs) interconnectivity. The imagination becomes an important tool in the formation of social capital, which sustains through transnationalism. Thus, the imagination is not merely a fantasy, but provides possible alternatives to people's daily social practices through shared norms and values.

While socio-economic indicators in Bradford point to low levels of human and economic capital among first generation immigrants from rural Pakistan, young Pakistani working class (manual) men and women have achieved a higher participation rate in further education (39.7 per cent and 38.2 per cent, respectively) than their working class (manual) white counterparts (25.2 per cent and 24.6 per cent, respectively) (Thapar-Bjorkert & Sanghera 2010a, 2010b). Thus, we are interested in exploring – why, despite negative social trends (*e.g.* unemployment, poverty and overcrowding), there is evidence of positive educational attainment among young Pakistani men and women; what the drivers of change among Pakistani men and women are; and, finally, how the social environment within the family and community (local and transnational) informs the educational aspirations of young men and women. In particular we are interested in investigating the role of the imagination. In our interviews, one phrase was used frequently by interviewees: "I imagine…". This phrase proved to be an intriguing topic of discussion for us, so much, so that we wanted to explore the possibilities or potentialities of the imagination and its links with transnationalism and social capital. We identify two mechanisms through which the imagination is mobilised in transnational experiences. First, how an imagined life of increased opportunities becomes a driver for change from an existing life of disadvantage and discrimination, thus highlighting the potentially transformative capacities of transnational imaginaries; and second, by demonstrating how the imagination is supported through the transnational mediatisation of people's lives.

Funded by the Leverhulme Trust, the study, entitled *Gender, Social Capital and Differential Outcomes* (2003–2005), explored the question of educational aspirations and mobility among young Pakistani Muslim men and women. Our interview sample was recruited from a range of locations (schools, youth clubs, university, college and employment training centre) in four neighbourhoods. In Manningham, Pakistanis comprise 62.1 per cent of the total population, Girlington 60.2 per cent, Heaton-Oak Lane 67.3 per

* E-mail: gss10@st-andrews.ac.uk

cent and West Bowling 37.4 per cent. In total, 54 in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted between July 2004 and May 2005 by Sanghera. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, coded and analysed using *Atlas-ti* software using a grounded theory approach. We use pseudonyms to maintain the anonymity of our respondents. The research process raised complex methodological and ethical issues, which shaped our findings and the analysis. From the outset, it was clear that research in Bradford was going to be challenging, especially because of its racialised political history and an overburden of previous research. A number of controversies have engulfed the city, which have simultaneously increased the visibility of Pakistani Muslims in public discourses. The antifascist activities in the 1970/1980s, the *halal* meat issue (1982–1983), the Honeyford affair (1980s), the Rushdie Affair (1989), the campaign against the sex trade (1995) and the Bradford disturbances of 1995 and 2001. We found that considerable negotiation was essential with key "gatekeepers" to facilitate access to interviewees (for an in-depth discussion of these issues, see Sanghera & Thapar-Bjorkert 2008).

2 Transnationalism, the imagination and social capital

2.1 Transnational imaginings and social capital

While all kinds of social networks flourish within transnational spaces, we would argue that catalysts or impetuses behind these networks reside in the agential nature of the imagination. What strategy or action is possible to an individual who does not imagine it first? It is the imagination, which becomes a social strategy for survival in the face of adversity, particularly in the contexts of structural disadvantage, that is the focus of this paper.

By imagining a better future than their parents, our respondents create and maintain transnational ethnic and familial social networks that bridge their lives with relatives and friends "back home" and in the diaspora. For Coleman (1990: 302), this constitutes a form of capital that "inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons and is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production". The "obligations and expectations" between actors that are built on trust, open channels for acquisition of information, and "social norms" that endorse or legitimate particular forms of behaviour, facilitate in the creation of capital resources (Coleman 1988: 101). Bankston and Zhou (2002: 286) redefine the concept of "social capital to not only include the resources held by individuals or groups but as 'processes' of social interaction leading to constructive outcomes", and explore how social relations within ethnic groups have a bearing on the adaptation to a host society. Their research identifies "ethnicity as a resource", and how ethnicity can provide social capital. Drawing on the experiences of the Vietnamese immigrant community in the USA, Bankston and Zhou (2002) argue that limitations in human and economic capital among first generation Vietnamese immigrants were overcome by social capital in their "intact families". The relationship between families and the community (local and transnational) is cyclical. Families rely on the community's reinforcement for the realisation of various goals, especially through education and "hard work" (Zhou & Bankston 1994: 831).

Connections with the "homeland" can be conceptualised in a number of ways, such as a (discursive) sense of de-territorialised solidarity among a group of strangers as "imagined communities" (Anderson 1983), or in a more (material) pragmatic sense whereby goods, funds and opportunities flow in and through transnational circuits (Kivisto 2001). Over the past decades, increasing focus has been given to the question of how migrants maintain affiliations to families, communities and causes beyond the nation-state to which they have migrated (Ballard 2003; McLoughlin 2006; Vertovec 2001). Vertovec (2004: 17) suggests that, "For many individuals, families and communities in both sending and receiving contexts, transnational patterns of everyday activity, communication and exchange become embedded in a kind of transnational moral economy of kin". The norms and practices that develop, involve what Landolt (2001: 217) calls "circuits of transnational obligations and interests". Often these can be strengthened through marriage, which frequently are arranged to strategically extend a family's kinship networks and for collective upward mobility. In this way, the social capital of families can be transformed into economic possibility if the need arises (Ballard 2003; Voigt-Graf 2004).

Migrants' social patterns that span borders variously condition people's everyday expectations (about potential for migration, work, household development and individual life course), moral duties (for disseminating information to friends and kin, engaging in reciprocal exchange of resources and enlisting in mutual support), institutional structures (including how best to organise or participate in religious communities and local associations) and relations to the state (fashioning practices to manipulate it, contest it or avoid it altogether).

2.2 The imagination

Appadurai (1996) provides fascinating insights into the potentially transformative nature of the imagination. Situated within his theorisation of "cultural flows" (*ethnoscapes*, *technoscapes*, *finanscapes*, *mediascapes* and *ideascapes*), Appadurai (1996: 15) explores how the complex interplay between processes of migration and electronic media (cinema, television, computers and telephones) have resulted in the emergence of "diasporic public spheres", which undermine the nation-state through transnational and postnational imaginings. Werbner (2005: 759) describes diasporic public spheres as spaces of "creativity" where alternative types of modern identities that link individual and social groups to new types of transnational cultural formations are possible. Globalisation has expanded the range of possibilities for alternatives available to people in their everyday lives. Through the imagination, the world has become smaller and far more accessible.

Appadurai (1996) understands the imagination in a number of ways. First, the imagination is no longer confined to "expressive space of art, myth and ritual"; rather it is part of people's everyday lives and is an avenue through which possibilities of change are imagined (Appadurai 1996: 5). Appadurai (1996: 5) observes that "more people that ever seem to imagine routinely the possibility that they or their children will live and work in places other than where they were born...there are those who move in search for work, wealth and opportunity often because their current circumstances are intolerable". Thereby "diasporas of hope, diasporas of terror and diasporas of despair" are imagined by ordinary people. Second, by distinguishing between the imagination and fantasy, Appadurai challenges the claim that the imagination will be undermined by processes of commoditisation, industrial capitalism and secularisation. Instead, there is evidence that the consumption of

the mass media throughout the world has facilitated the imagination by mobilising "resistance, irony, selectivity and in general 'agency'" (Appadurai 1996: 5). Unlike fantasy, "the imagination is today a staging ground for action, and not only for escape" (Appadurai 1996: 7). Third, the imagination is not limited to individuals; but it is also the property of collectivities. Indeed, it is through "community sentiment" that groups begin to imagine and feel a sense of togetherness. For Appadurai (1996: 8), "collective experiences of the mass media, especially film and video, can create sodalities of worship and charisma...such as those formed [for example] transnationally around Ayatollah Khomeini". For example, Turkish guest workers in Germany who watch Turkish films in their German flats, Koreans in Philadelphia who watched the 1988 Olympics in Seoul on satellite or Pakistani taxi drivers in Chicago who listen to cassettes of sermons recorded in mosques in Pakistan (Appadurai 1996: 4). While mass migration and the media are not wholly new, it is how they "seem to impel (and sometimes compel) the work of the imagination" (Appadurai 1996: 4). Importantly, transnational communities are able to move from shared imagination to collective action.

In a globalised world, "the image, the imagined, the imaginary – these are all terms that direct us to something that is critical and new in global cultural processes – the imagination as a social practice"; "an organised field of social practice"; "a form of work"; "a form of negotiation between sites of agency (individual) and globally defined fields of possibility" (Appadurai 1996: 31).

Recent developments in ICTs have served to compel the imagination in unprecedented ways, which Appadurai did not foresee. Web 2.0 websites such as Wikipedia, Flickr, Facebook, Twitter, Blogspot, YouTube and others depend almost exclusively on data input from users, without which they would have no content. With the increased ability for users to interact and shape the structure of the internet itself comes the ability for ideas and information to spread globally (Birdsall 2007). For example, the recent wave of uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa is indicative of how near universal access to mass media has democratised and extended the imagination of ordinary people around the world. The fact that ordinary people would, for example, record images and events on their mobile phones and disseminate the pictures to friends and family in diaspora communities in diverse global sites is demonstrative of how imaging mobilises beyond traditional state boundaries, and time and space. As active agents, people can interpret images by themselves within and through the imagination. Information and images presented to them are used as practical tools in their daily social lives. In exploring the momentous "Arab Spring" (2010–2011), Elseewi (2011: 1198) states that, "...new ways of consuming and producing culture create new kinds of Arab subjectivities...they allow people to make connections simultaneously across the globe and across the street, and ultimately, to imagine their relationships in the world differently...A revolution of the imagination had pushed people into the streets". During the recent urban disturbances in London (2011), *The Times of India* (New Delhi) reported in an article entitled "Soft policing helped Britain riot fire to spread" (8 November 2011), that online forums and social media played a central role in supporting the rioters to continue the disturbance to oppose the budget cuts proposed by the Conservative Party led-coalition government. It is important to note that the very same technology has been harnessed by the state to curtail demonstrations, identify protesters and close down potential channels of communications.

Others have also explored the role of the imagination. Drawing on critical feminist epistemologies, Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis (2002) echo the transformative potential of the imagination by outlining the concept of "situated imagination", which informs all forms of knowledge production – thus knowing and imagining should be seen as complementary. In particular, they focus on two ideas – first, the creative role of the imagination and, second, how it mutually reconstitutes in its relationship with the political and the social. Herbert Marcuse's (1969) critical insights inform Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis' analysis in two respects. First, they argue that "imagination provides a kind of shelter for those mental activities that can only survive by resisting the reality check" (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis 2002: 324). In this paper, the "reality check" is situated within contemporary local, national and global experiences of being "a Muslim", often perceived as a social problem and the enemy within. Indeed, it is the experience of disadvantage and deprivation that shapes these processes. Second, Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis suggest that the imagination is a necessary resource, but often mediated by what society suppresses and bans from discursive rational knowledge. For example, in the context of Bradford official hegemonic narratives have at times worked to suppress the lived experiences of Muslims in the city by presenting the Muslim community as homogeneous, disorderly and antithetical to "British ways". Counter-prevailing voices within the Muslim community are frequently ignored, if not silenced (McGhee 2008). For Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis (2002: 324), "the imagination that allows for change, emancipation and border crossing is the same faculty that constructs and fixes the borders. In both instances, the imagination is 'creative'. It is our imagination that gives us experiences, their particular meanings and their categories of reference. Whether it is 'borders', 'home', 'oppression' or 'liberation', the particular meanings we hold of these concepts are embedded in our situated imaginations".

There are some convergences between the analyses of Appadurai and Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis. For Appadurai, the project of the imagination is "neither purely emancipatory nor entirely disciplinary", but rather is "a space of contestation in which individuals and groups seek to annex the global into their own practices of the modern" (Appadurai 1996: 4). Correspondingly, Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis (2002: 327) describe "creative imagination" as Janus-faced – a source of freedom, change and emancipation as much as a source of the border and boundaries that emancipation wants to challenge. Their emphasis on the creative potential of the imagination is important in terms of being transformative. Despite coming from different epistemological approaches, both Appadurai and Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis understand the importance of context and situatedness. However, we would argue that these authors do not demonstrate the processes through which the imagination is transferred inter-generationally and how this needs to be understood as a form of social capital (as a resource). Furthermore, building on these insights we would suggest that the imagination is layered, so that in any given context the imagination could be something that allows people to imagine alternative realities; an aspect of a strategy or action; or connected to physical images and the electronic media, which in turn leads to mobilisation. For us, the imagination encompasses all these dimensions simultaneously and/or separately.

We conclude this discussion on transnationalism, the imagination and social capital with a number of observations. First, it highlights how people live in social worlds that stretch across geographical sites and draw on cultural repertoires to imagine, make their lives and construct their identities. This challenges the idea that migrants are tied to mutually incompatible and exclusive cultures. Second,

and related, the role of the globalised media and developments in communications technology are central in such processes as they bring the "homeland" even closer, and, through which, social networks are sustained. Third, the imagination allows migrants to foster relationships that by-pass the nation-state via diasporic public spheres, and which facilitate creativity and alternative types of modern identities that link individual and social groups to new types of transnational cultural formations. Fourth, the imagination is an important source/tool of social capital that enables people to imagine changes in their everyday lives and experiences by, for example, drawing on transnational influences via ICTs. Importantly, the imagination is informed by socio-political and cultural contexts. Fifth, transnationalism and social capital share a didactic relationship – social networks are increasingly facilitated through global transnational processes and global transnational processes are facilitated through social networks. The driving force for social mobility is (transnationally informed) social capital, which we argue is in part driven through the imagination.

3 Pakistani Muslims in Bradford and the transnational experience

3.1 Historical overview

The primary motive for immigration of South Asians during the 1950s and 1960s was primarily economic as wages for labour jobs in Britain were substantially better than those offered for similar jobs in Pakistan. This movement was encouraged by demands in the textile industry in Britain for workers to undertake jobs that were shunned by the indigenous population. In Bradford, for instance, the majority of immigrants (from India, Pakistan and East Pakistan) were largely less educated and worked the night shifts in the textile mills as wool combers (Lewis 1994: 54).

For many original immigrants, the reality of moving to Britain proved to be quite different from their initial expectations. These feelings of alienation, frustration and rejection (due to racism, discrimination and poverty) were compounded in Bradford during the 1970s and 1980s when the city witnessed a massive decline in its economic and industrial base (Bujra & Pearce 2011).

The largest groups of Asian immigrants to have settled in Bradford are the Pakistani Kashmiris and Pathans. These groups often came from areas that are economically backward and where people are poorly educated (Bradford Congress 1996: 79). The first generation of predominantly male immigrants in Bradford usually settled in close proximity to fellow relatives and friends from their own villages, so as to provide protection and support to each other in a different, and potentially hostile, society.

3.2 Bradford the "inner landscape" and socio-economic dynamics

Bradford is both culturally and racially heterogeneous. In mid-2009, population estimates published by the Office for National Statistics put Bradford's resident population at 506,800, the fourth largest metropolitan district in England after Birmingham, Leeds and Sheffield, and fifth largest in the UK. The 2001 census shows that White residents make up 78 per cent of the total population of Bradford. Bradford had the highest percentage of people of Pakistani origin in Britain, comprising 15 per cent of the city's population; three per cent Indian; one per cent Bangladeshi; one per cent African/Caribbean; and two per cent "others".

Bradford is one of Britain's most deprived areas, due to processes of de-industrialisation and recessions during the 1970s and 1980s. According to the National Index of Local Deprivation, Bradford emerged as the 23rd most deprived local authority area in England out of 366. The Asian Muslim population is heavily concentrated within the inner city areas of Bradford associated with physical and social deprivation. For example, they make up over half of the population in electoral wards such as Toller, University, Little Horton and Bradford Moor (incidentally, each of these wards named among the poorest wards in England). The Manningham neighbourhood incorporates two of these wards, Toller and University, and the other is Heaton. The 1993 "Areas of Stress Report" within the Bradford district calculated that over half of Pakistanis (53 per cent) and Bangladeshis (81 per cent) live in areas of "multiple stress". It found that the unemployment rates in areas of multiple stress averaged 32 per cent compared with 12.7 per cent average for the district as a whole. In some electoral wards, including those covering Manningham, the rates were considerable higher, for both total unemployment and youth unemployment.

Due to historical processes of settlement and the cheap availability of housing (Bujra & Pearce 2011) ethnic enclaves have appeared throughout the city. Concentrated predominantly in the inner city, Pakistani-owned groceries, butchers, travel agencies, hair and barbers shops, clothing shops, hardware stores, computer shops, restaurants and takeaways, taxi companies, mosques and community centres have become visible features of its landscape. Such Pakistani businesses become a vehicle for ethnicity and subtly reproduce a sense of Pakistani-ness in the everyday "by displaying Urdu language signage, posters depicting the Holy Place of Mecca and pictures of Pakistan's national poet-philosopher, Muhammad Iqbal; by disseminating information about Islamic festivals; and by selling Pakistani newspapers" (McLoughlin 2006: 118). The day-to-day social interactions that take place in neighbourhood shops, the ability to access food similar to back home, borrowing on credit, all contribute to the social trust in the neighbourhood. Such everyday practices and symbols permeate the imagination and this was especially important for early migrants for whom "the priority was not formal political organising again racism or unemployment but simple day-to-day survival" (McLoughlin 2006: 118).

4 Transnationalism in the field: imagination as agency and social practice

4.1 Imagined life of migration and expectations to succeed

Processes and experiences of transnationalism impacted on traditional family life in profound ways. As Yeoh, Huang and Lam (2005: 308) put it, "[t]he 'transnational family' as a formation derives its lived reality not only from material bonds of collective welfare among physically dispersed members but also a shared imaginary of 'belonging', which transcends particular periods and places to encompass past trajectories and future continuities". The family is a vital institution in the Pakistani diaspora. In our research, young Pakistani Muslim men and women talked at length about how migratory and transnational practices and experiences of their

parents affected and shaped the way they imagined their own relationships with their parents and family (*e.g.* cousins, aunts, uncles and relatives) back in Pakistan, and in relation to their future and career trajectories.

The imagination initially played a central role for many first generation migrants as it fed into public (official) discourses about the opportunities to be gained from moving to England from Pakistan. Many parents of the young respondents that we spoke to believed that their live would be transformed by moving to the UK and life would become easier in terms of overcoming hardships (especially poverty and insecurity) that they encountered in Pakistan. There was also a certain prestige associated with migration as Singh (1994: 17) suggests, "sending people away from home is an indicator of economic success and enormous social pride for families within their own communities". Such perceptions were reproduced through the narratives of pioneer and early migrants who reiterated the "streets paved in gold" discourse. In this sense the "imagination is based on the capability of leaving the actual in order to embrace the potential; to create images of not *what is* but of *what may be*" (Styhre & Engberg 2003: 120).

A prominent theme in the narratives was of how parents had sacrificed security and stability of being with their family and friends in Pakistan to move to a country that was alien to them. Although official discourses told (figuratively) of "streets paved in gold" and a land of opportunity, the reality, however, was very different. Migrants endured discrimination and racism when looking for a place to live, in the workplace, having to do undesirable jobs, having to work long hours, and struggled in everyday interactions because they were unable to speak English proficiently. Tariq Mehmood (1983) in his novel, *Hand on the Sun*, eloquently describes the hidden costs of migration to Bradford for pioneer and chain migrants. For instance, he describes how mothers rarely ventured out of the home and this is juxtaposed to the laughing, joking and the singing of songs that took place in the villages of Pakistan (Mehmood 1983: 56–9). Due to pressures of providing for their families, husbands are distanced from their wives and rarely saw their children. For Mehmood (1983: 54), work in the mills made them lose their fun and vigour; 'they" melted into the machines". For many early migrants these were short-term sacrifices that had to be made and would benefit both their immediate and extended families in the long term. In this sense, the imagination was mobilised to understand about how their lives have been transformed, particularly in terms of what migrants left behind in their "homeland". Mehmood encapsulates the sense of loss and not belonging that many of our respondents spoke about in terms of what their parents endured. While early migrants imagined the promises of migration to the UK and this acted as a catalyst that prompted them to leave Pakistan, they also harped back to what they had left behind in the "homeland". The imagination indeed generates many versions of a reality in which no version is more truthful than the other. As Rushdie (2010: 10) states, "imaginative truth is simultaneously honourable and suspect … It may be that...emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge...that our physical alienation [from Pakistan] almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost...that we will, in short, create fictions, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, India's of the mind". But, importantly, the imagination, therefore, becomes a source of comfort and a means through which to understand the present, past and future.

Many migrant parents evoked imaginings of "loss", "sacrifice" and "hardship" that they had encountered in order to demonstrate to their children the lengths that they had gone to improve their prospects. Respondents talked about how the lack of a formal education meant that their parents were ill-prepared for the challenges that faced them in finding meaningful employment once the mills closed down and, therefore, faced the spectre of long-term unemployment and state welfare dependency. So, imagining and understanding their parents' hardship became a source of motivation to do well, for example, in education. One of our respondents, Shakil (24-year-old Pakistani male), talked about being "brought up in a poor family" and how the poverty and hardship experienced by his parents motivated him to do well educationally and instilled a sense of obligation towards his parents for the sacrifices that they had made. Elaborating on this sense of parental sacrifice and hardship, Adiba (17-year-old Pakistani female) discussed the "hard time" that her parents encountered when they came to the UK, because of discrimination, racism and unemployment and they did not "want us going through that at all". Kao (2004: 173) describes how "immigrants often use the rhetoric of sacrificing their lives … so that their children can benefit from the freedom and possibility of socio-economic mobility that the USA affords them". The imagination is used so as to create empathy and understanding.

Young men and women often strategically juxtaposed imagining living and being brought up in Pakistan with the "realities" of living in Bradford; they often discussed the relative advantages of being brought up in one country against the disadvantages of the other. Hassan (23-year-old Pakistani male) talked about how while Pakistan had moved on in terms of becoming more liberal, secular and modern, his parents still imagined (often uncritically and in an overly romanticised and idyllic manner) the country that they left had behind as "untouched" and "unchanged", and therefore were more inclined to hold on to cultural values and practices that young people considered to be "conservative" and "irrelevant". So for many young men and women it was about negotiating their parents' imaginations by demonstrating how things had changed and also the benefits of living in the UK. Hassan said that the UK "offered the opportunity of free education, free health care and all the state social security system...this would not have existed had I been in Kashmir...so it has had a huge bearing on...who I am and what I've achieved, because I have been able to have those opportunities". Similarly, Shaza (17-year-old Pakistani female) talked about how her parent "held onto ideas of Pakistan that existed when they left [*i.e.* migrated]...but Pakistan has moved on...Go to Lahore, it's all modern with boutiques, professionals, women living independently, going to university, people have mobile phones, even in the village...but they just think it's exactly the same as they left it". This sentiment was shared by many of our respondents. For parents, the primary concern is to protect the honour of the transnational biraderis (patrilineal descent group) (Bolognani 2001). Young female respondents talked about how they used the media to explain to their parents how "Pakistan has moved on", and that the values and beliefs that their parents left Pakistan with are in fact no longer relevant to contemporary Pakistan. They often did this by drawing on what they saw in Bollywood films and by drawing on conversations that they had with their relatives. So, for example, they negotiated greater freedoms and access to higher education by giving examples of cousins in Pakistan. The imagination was used to selectively absorb aspects from the Pakistani culture but reject unwanted ones.

4.2 *The imagination as a driver for change and motivation*

Being successful educationally and career wise, for example, are seen to be symbolically very important, especially as the promises of migration proved to be largely unfulfilled. Yeoh, Huang and Lam (2005: 312) note how often the principal goal of transnational family strategy is to enhance "social, cultural and symbolic capital" through "the 'project' of educating the children" (Waters 2005). Amira (17-year-old Pakistani female) discussed how her mother emphasised the importance of education in terms of "a good life" in the material sense, and also in terms of "respect … from your family and from the community". Respect is not just in terms of the immediate family, but perhaps more importantly, extends to the transnational family. For some of our respondents the fact that aunts and uncles in Pakistan successfully became doctors, lawyers and teachers gave them the belief that they too could be just as successful. Indeed, it is an opportunity not to be missed, especially as they imagined it to be far more difficult to enter professions (because of exorbitant education fees, gender-related issues and corruption) in Pakistan. So, the fact that relatives have "succeeded" in the face of such adversity, the young respondents that we spoke to also sought to make the most of the relative advantages that they have in the UK. Azra (17-year-old Pakistani female) said that,

> My relatives in Pakistan always ask my mum and dad about what I am studying and what profession I going into and what I will do afterwards … they seem interested … it's probably because they are educated, my aunt is a teacher and my uncle is a doctor … it is inspiring, especially my aunt … that they have done so well even though life is tough in Pakistan … my mum and dad aren't educated.

So, the imagination and the aspirations to do well educationally are co-constituted by young people and transnational actors. For example, aunts, uncles, relatives and friends in Pakistan also imagined the vast array of opportunities that people have in the UK, and used this to encourage young men and women in the UK to grasp them and to take full advantage of them. Our respondents talked about how relatives in Pakistan imagined life to be far easier in the UK compared with Pakistan, and expected the young men and women in the UK to make the most of such opportunities.

These quotations demonstrate the embeddedness of second and subsequent generations in transnational social fields in terms of how resources, ideas and individuals from the home country permeate the lives of young men and women in Bradford. In numerous ways, they have a constant presence although it may ebb and flow in significance over time and space (Levitt & Waters 2002). We found that young Pakistani men and women in Bradford continued to be influenced by transnational processes in terms of their outlooks, activities and identity (Vertovec 2004). The transnational dialogues between the home and host countries shaped educational choices that young men and women made. However, we would reiterate that these dialogues would not take place if young respondents were unable to imagine a successful career. The imagination aids aspiration and aspiration is the first step in overcoming disadvantage. Significantly, the imagination disrupts the "pre-given normative" and "can be understood as a (temporary) site of resistance and alterity, which opens up the possibility of difference and even change" (Latimer & Skeggs 211: 404). However, we would caution that while the imagination is an important tool for social change, it is still dependent on how an individual mobilises its realisation and on structural determinants that may also hinder its productive potential. This disrupts simplistic suggestions of linear causality between the imagination and positive outcomes.

4.3 *Mediatisation of the everyday: ICTs and intra-cultural capital*

Social norms surrounding processes of transnationalism create their own sets of dispositions, which structure social practices and attitudes. We refer to this as a form of "transnational habitus" (Guarnizo 1997). The transnational habitus is facilitated by increasing accessibility to technology and an unprecedented access to electronic media, which transcends time and space in terms of connecting diasporic public spheres with the "homeland" through, for example, international telephone calls. To be able to telephone family members, at a low cost, arguably, is a mode of transnational practice that provides a platform for the imagination to act as a driver for change. TeleGeography (Inc.) found that between 1995 and 2001 tele-traffic between specific countries with strong migration connection increased markedly. For example, "calls from Pakistan to the UK increased 123 per cent and calls from the UK … to Pakistan [increased by] 390 per cent". This was supported by unprecedented rise in Pakistan's mobile market that expanded by almost 150 per cent to surpass 20 million subscribers in 2005, according to the latest statistics released by the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority. According to Vertovec (2004: 13), "The personal, real-time contact provided by international telephone calls is transforming the everyday lives of innumerable migrants", and communication technologies enable ties to be maintained between the "homeland" and the diasporas.

Furthermore, there is far greater interaction in cultural realms with television as the dominant media in British Asian household, 83 per cent of South Asians have satellite and/or cable TV compared with the national average of 48 per cent. According to a report by Continental Research (2009) entitled "Mainstream advertisers ignore UK's Asian TV Channels" (for ZMTV that represents 18 of the 50 South Asian channels), 79 per cent of South Asian adults view ZMTV channels. More specifically, 76 per cent of the viewers are Indians, 78 per cent Pakistanis and 83 per cent Bangladeshis. The report outlines the central role of the family in moulding attitudes to careers and the consumption of good and services. Nearly all respondents in our research talked about how family interaction predominantly took place within the home and involved watching television – especially satellite and cable programmes from Pakistan and South Asia more generally. Bollywood films, Pakistani soap operas and news programmes were particularly popular. Transnationalism coupled globalisation and its constituent characteristics has meant that "'culture' and 'community' have become separated from locality … [and, perhaps more importantly] distance is no longer an impediment to community" (Kennedy & Roudometof 2002: 15). For Carstens (2003: 322), the production and exchange of cultural products (material and discursive) can "produce transnational imageries capable of creating and sustaining new forms of transnational publics". Indeed, in some instances, "visual culture … makes possible another form of identification with the homeland...one that emphasises kinship and affective relations based on shared affiliations and identifications" (Moorti 2003: 356). Thus, in the contemporary world, it is far more probable and practical

that migrants will continue to participate in processes taking place in their "homeland".

It is important to stress that respondents did not passively consume television programmes. Often they were quite critical of how such representations could reproduce, for example, gendered norms and practices, (Gillespie 2006; Turow 2009) and how these were reproduced transnationally, such as in relation to *izzat* (honour) and arranged marriages. For example, in her examination of how some institutions of Mirpuri village life in "Azad" Kashmir were being "strengthened, modified, and altered in Bradford", Khan (1979: 76) noted how village-kin networks in Bradford and solidarity with *biraderi* (patrilineal descent group) continued (Bolognani 2001; McLoughlin 2006). Similarly, Macey (1999: 854) outlines the transnational involvement in local affairs during the 1995 local elections when surprisingly and against the national trend a Conservative Party candidate gained a seat in Bradford. The context to this electoral success is that both Labour and Conservative candidates were Pakistani Muslims, but were from rival clans, "and this resulted in a high level of street activity by rival gangs of young men venting their anger and aggression at 'the enemy' in public" (Macey 1999: 854). News from the homeland is disseminated in the local community and "may be consumed alone or collectively but their interpretation is carried out in everyday conversations in homes, in cafes, at work with friends and family 'here' and 'there'" (Eickelman & Anderson 2003; Gillespie 2006: 906). In other words, discussions of news stories often take place locally (one-to-one in everyday interactions in both public and private spheres) or translocally (*e.g.* when a family member in the UK telephones another in Pakistan to see whether a particular event reported on the news (*e.g.* floods in 2010 or harvest news) has affected them). As Kwaja (2005: 4) observes that "when a *Whahabi* bomb maims or kills dozens of Shi'a in Multan, the repercussions are felt in Bradford; an attack on a Barelvi mosque in Lahore invites reprisals in Birmingham".

Having access to relevant and reliable news about events "back home" is crucial for many migrant families as it constitutes an important social practice, which mediates their interactions with each other in the diaspora and "back home". It also serves to sustain, and even revitalise, the imagination.

Through these activities and processes, we would contend that context-specific "intra-communal cultural capital" is built, which refers to cultural markers and habitus that are specific to, and ascribed by, certain sections of the Pakistani community and may be regarded as antithetical to mainstream British society. Intra-communal capital within diasporic public spheres is about reflecting on the past, understanding the present and imagining the future. For example, along with speaking Punjabi proficiently, which is considered as a marker of Pakistani "authenticity", tastes in terms of South Asian art, music, food and entertainment (such as the Bradford Mela [festival], "Bite the Mango" Film Festival and the Bollywood Film Awards in 2008) are indicative of cultural capital that does not necessarily correspond with the acquisition of white middle class cultural capital. Participation in such cultural events and practices can provide Pakistani Muslims with a sense of collective membership that can counter their sense of exclusion in the public domain. All the respondents talked about the popularity of Bollywood films. Indeed, Bollywood productions (such as films, thematic restaurants, dance courses, fashion, etc.) have had a long-established consumer base within Indian, Pakistan and Bangladeshi diasporic communities now long settled in the USA, UK and Australia, among other countries. For many, the films and the music allows for nostalgia and continuity with particular cultural habits or their origins. These films become the means through which language (Punjabi/Urdu) is preserved, often through for example cultural entertainment – recreating – recreating traditional aesthetics, festivals, traditions, rituals, and a framework for social and ethical values, both are more traditional and relatively modern products. In terms of Appadurai's (1996: 35) "mediascapes" (which includes the print, celluloid, electronic screens and billboards), while "the lines" between "realistic and fictional landscapes" become blurred, scripts can be formed of imagined lives, their own and those of others living in other places.

5 Conclusion

In this article, we draw on Appadurai's (1996) and Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis' (2002) theorisations about the imagination, which is understood to be a realm of possibility that is democratic and available to all; a method of resistance, irony and selectivity; and it facilitates agency. The imagination can be mobilised as a resource, so that people in "diasporic public spheres" can actively create identities and subjectivities that transcend the nation-state. For us, the imagination is an important concept because it opens up spaces and alternative forms of thinking and seeing, "that makes absent, or marginalises other ways of seeing, feeling and thinking" (Latimer & Skeggs 2011: 397). For migrant communities, the imagination becomes a source of agency and opens up possibilities for emancipation, especially when their "realities" are situated in an environment of structural disadvantage. Thus, the imagination allows people to understand the past and to think about the future.

In locating the imagination as a resource and a form of social capital, we identified two processes. First, how an imagined life of increased opportunities becomes a driver for change in the context of disadvantage and discrimination, thus highlighting the potentially transformative capacities of transnational imaginaries; and second, we demonstrate how such processes are supported in and through the transnational mediatisation of people's lives. The imagination is situated, constructed and reconstructed over time and space, it is actual and perceived, and has the potential to be transformative, and also open to contestation and subversion. This explains to some extent the positive educational attainment among young Pakistani men and women in Bradford.

Gurchathen S. Sanghera is a Lecturer at the School of International Relations, University of St. Andrews, UK, having previously been a Research Fellow at the University of Bristol. His research interests are international relations and UN peace support operations; the politics of race and ethnicity in contemporary Britain, particularly post-9/11 and 7/7 and critical approaches to human rights. He has co-authored with Dr. Suruchi Thapar-Bjorkert (2010a) *Social capital, educational aspirations and young Pakistani Muslim men and women in Bradford, West Yorkshire* for *The Sociological Review*.

Suruchi Thapar-Björkert is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Government, University of Uppsala, Sweden. She has previously held academic positions at the Department of Sociology, University of Bristol; London School of Economics and Political Science and Warwick University in the UK. Her research falls in four specific areas: Gendered Discourses of Colonialism and Nationalism, Gendered Violence in India and Europe, Gender, Social Capital

and Social Exclusion and Qualitative Research Methodologies. She has co-authored with Dr. Gurchathen Sanghera (2010a) *Social capital, educational aspirations and young Pakistani Muslim men and women in Bradford, West Yorkshire* for *The Sociological Review*.

References

Anderson, B 1983, Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism, Verso, London.

Appadurai, A 1996, Modernity at large: cultural dimensions of globalization, University of Minnesota, Minnesota.

Ballard, R 2003, 'The South Asian presence in Britain and its transnational connections', in Culture and economy in the Indian diaspora, eds H Singh, B Parekh & S Vertovec, Routledge, London, pp. 197–222.

Bankston, C & Zhou, M 2002, 'Social capital as process: the meaning and problems of a theoretical metaphor', Sociological Inquiry, vol. 72, no. 2, pp. 285–317.

Birdsall, WF 2007, 'Web 2.0 as a social movement', Webology, vol. 4, no. 2. Available from: < http://www.webology.org/2007/v4n2/a40.html>. [Last accessed 1.01.11].

Bolognani, M 2001, 'The myth of return: dismissal, survival or revival? A Bradford example of transnationalism as a political instrument', Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 59–76, DOI:10.1080/13691830601043497.

Bradford Congress 1996, The Bradford commission report, Bradford Congress, Bradford.

Bujra, J & Pearce, J 2011, Saturday night & sunday morning: the 2001 Bradford riot and beyond, Vertical Editions, Skipton.

Carstens, SA 2003, 'Constructing transnational identities? Mass media and the Malaysian Chinese audience', Ethnic and Racial Studies, vol. 26, no. 2, pp. 321–344, DOI:10.1080/0141987032000054457.

Coleman, JS 1988, 'Social capital in the creation of human capital', American Journal of Sociology, vol. 94, pp. 95–120.

Coleman, JS 1990, Foundations of social theory, Harvard University Press, London.

Eickelman, D & Anderson, J 2003, New media in the Muslim world: the emerging public sphere, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

Elseewi, TA 2011, 'The revolution of the imagination', International Journal of Communication, vol. 5, pp. 1197–1206.

Gillespie, M 2006, 'Transnational television audiences after September 11', Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, vol. 32, no. 6, pp. 903–921, DOI:10.1080/13691830600761511.

Guarnizo, LE 1997, 'The emergence of a transnational social formation and the mirage of return migration among Dominican transmigrants', Identities, vol. 4, no. 2, pp. 281–322.

Kao, G 2004, 'Social capital and its relevance to minority and immigrant populations', Sociology of Education, vol. 77, pp. 172–183.

Kennedy, P & Roudometof, V 2002, 'Transnationalism in a global age', in Communities across border: new immigrants and transnational, eds P Kennedy & V Roudometof, Routledge, London, pp. 1–26.

Kivisto, P 2001, 'Theorizing transnational immigration: a critical review of current effort', Ethnic and Racial Studies, vol. 24, no. 4, pp. 549–577, DOI:10.1080/01419870120049789.

Khan, S 1979, 'Migration and social stress: Mirpuris in Bradford' in Minority Families in Britain, ed S Khan, Macmillan Press, London, pp. 37-51.

Kwaja, M 2005, 'Muslims in Britain: generations, experiences and futures', Open Democracy, vol. 8, no. 2. Available from <http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-terrorism/identity_2721.jsp> . [Last accessed 15.3.11].

Landolt, P 2001, 'Salvadoran economic transnationalism: embedded strategies for household maintenance, immigrant incorporation, and entrepreneurial expansion', Global Networks, vol. 1, no. 3, pp. 217–241, DOI:10.1111/1471-0374.00014.

Latimer, J & Skeggs, B 2010, 'The politics of imagination: keeping open and critical', The Sociological Review, vol. 59, no. 3, pp. 393–410, DOI:10.1111/j.1467-954X.2011.02024.x.

Levitt, P & Waters, M C 2002, The Changing Face of Home: The Transnational Lives of the Second Generation, Russell Sage Foundation, New York.

Lewis, P 1994, Islamic Britain, I. B. Tauris, London.

Macey, M 1999, 'Class, gender and religious influences on changing patterns of Pakistani Muslim male violence in Bradford', Ethnic and Racial Studies, vol. 22, no. 5, pp. 845–866.

Marcuse, H 1969, 'Repressive Tolerance', in A Critique of Pure Tolerance, R P Wolff, B Moore Jr & H Marcuse, Jonathan Cape, London, pp. 95–137.

McGhee, D 2008, The end of multiculturalism? Terrorism, integration and human rights, Open University Press and McGraw-Hill, Berkshire.

McLoughlin, S 2006, 'Writing a British-Asian city: race, culture and religion in accounts of postcolonial Bradford', in A postcolonial people: South Asians in Britain, eds N Ali, VS Kalra & S Sayyid, Hurst, London, pp. 110–149.

Mehmood, T 1983, Hand on the Sun, Penguin, Harmondsworth.

Moorti, S 2003, 'Desperately seeking an identity: diasporic cinema and the articulation of transnational kinship', International Journal of Cultural Studies, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 355–376, DOI:10.1177/13678779030063007.

Rushdie, S 2010, Imaginary homelands: essays and criticism, 1981–1991, Vintage Books, London.

Sanghera, GS & Thapar-Bjorkert, S 2008, 'Methodological dilemmas: gatekeepers and positionality in Bradford', Ethnic and Racial Studies, vol. 31, no. 3, pp. 543–562, DOI:10.1080/01419870701491952.

Singh, R 1994, Here to stay, Bradford's South Asian communities, City of Bradford Metropolitan Council, Bradford.

Stoetzler, M & Yuval-Davis, N 2002, 'Standpoint theory, situated knowledge and the situated imagination', Feminist Theory, vol. 3, no. 3, pp. 315–333, DOI:10.1177/146470002762492024.

Styhre, A & Engberg, T 2003, 'Spaces of consumption: from margin to centre', Ephemera, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 115–125.

Thapar-Bjorkert, S & Sanghera, G 2010a, 'Social capital, educational aspirations and young Pakistani Muslim men and women in Bradford, West Yorkshire', Sociological Review, vol. 58, no. 2, pp. 244–264, DOI:10.1111/j.1467-954X.2010.01902.x.

Thapar-Bjorkert, S & Sanghera, G 2010b, 'Building social capital and education: the experiences of Pakistani Muslims in the UK', International Journal of Social Inquiry, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 3–24.

Turow, J 2009, Media today: an introduction to mass communication, Routledge, New York.

Vertovec, S 2001, 'Transnationalism and identity', Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, vol. 27, no. 4, pp. 573–582, DOI:10.1080/13691830120090386.

Vertovec, S 2004, Trends and impacts of migrant transnationalism, Centre on Migration, Policy and Society Working Paper No. 3, University of Oxford, Oxford.

Voigt-Graf, C 2004, 'Towards a geography of transnational spaces: Indian transnational communities in Australia', Global Networks, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 25–49.

Waters, J 2005, 'Transnational family strategies and education in the contemporary Chinese diaspora', Global Networks, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 359–378.

Werbner, P 2005, 'The translocation of culture: "Community Cohesion" and the force of multiculturalism in history', The Sociological Review, vol. 53, no. 4, pp. 745–768, DOI:10.1111/j.1467-954X.2005.00594.x.

Yeoh, SSA, Huang, S & Lan, T 2005, 'Transnationalizing the "Asian" family: imaginaries, intimacies and strategic intents', Global Networks, vol. 5, no. 4, pp. 307–315.

Zhou, M & Bankston, C III 1994, 'Social capital and the adaptation of the second generation: the case of vietnamese youth in New Orleans', International Migration Review, vol. 28, no. 3, pp. 821–845.