An exploration into the acculturation experiences of female Iranians after their migration to Britain following the 1979 Iranian revolution

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Tooran Issapour

Department of Education,
Brunel University
London

2026

ABSTRACT

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 caused great changes in the status of women in Iran. Many of these changes, together with the war with Iraq, resulted in life being intolerable for many women, especially those who were highly educated, to such an extent that they and their families had no option but to leave the country and restart their lives elsewhere. This study is concerned with the experiences of 17 such women who started new lives in Britain in the 1980s and 90s, how they dealt with any lack of ability to communicate in English, how they continued their careers or started new ones, and how they coped with the effects of substantial differences in the cultural values of their previous lives in Iran and in their new country. Using face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, a large amount of data has been elicited from the participants. Analysis of this data has resulted in the following main findings. All of the women showed great strength of character, giving them determination to forge new successful lives. They all realised that learning the host language was a fundamental necessity in helping with their acculturation. Additionally, they encountered problems with the different sociocultural values of Iran and Britain. For example, living within a host society more liberal and less patriarchal than that of their home country was a factor that badly affected seven of their marriages. Moreover, homesickness and even bereavement as a result of leaving their home country was strongly felt by most of the participants. The main recommendations arising from this study are that the teaching of English to immigrants should be prioritised by the UK government and implemented competently with sufficient funding, that immigrants who have experienced trauma should be offered help and that the UN and host governments should make it clear to the Iranian ruling regime that their treatment of women, even at the current time, is inexcusable and foreign policy should be focussed upon making this clear to the authorities in Iran.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, and most importantly, I want to express my great appreciation of and admiration for my participants, the seventeen Iranian women whom I have asked to tell me about their traumatic experiences in Iran and in Britain in face-to-face interviews, often very disturbing for them to recall. I thank them for their time, the rich data they have provided and the emotional strain they have endured whilst revealing their personal experiences. These women have been an essential element of this study.

Additionally, I could not have even begun implementing and writing this study without the benefit of having Drs. Deborah Jones and Kate Hoskins of Brunel University as my supervisors. They have given me an enormous amount of encouragement, support and advice and have kept me on track in a friendly but firm way throughout the six years this study has taken. Furthermore, Gwen Ineson, Paula Zvordiak-Meyers, and Giuliana Ferri, my Research Development Advisors, have made sure that I have been provided with relevant courses to help me with the writing of this study and have organised the progression reviews. I am also indebted to the progression review panel members, who have made helpful comments and suggestions.

I also wish to thank Ernest Bebbington, who has assisted me with in various practical ways, including transcription of the recorded interviews, helping me with the computer technology involved and proofreading my work.

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my work.

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

I declare that while registered as a candidate for the University's research degree, I have not been a registered candidate or an enrolled student for another award of the University or other academic or professional institution.

I confirm that I have undertaken the programme of related studies in connection with the programme of research following the requirements of my research degree registration.

Tooran Issapour

October, 2023

Word count: 83,848 (counting only words contained in the eight chapters)

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The starting point for this study is informed by two events. The first event, which occurred on 1st February, 1979 at about 9.30 am, was the return of Ayatolla Ruhollah Khomeini to Iran after being in exile since 1964, starting a revolution, which eventually resulted in the other event, my leaving Iran for ever in April 1988. The conditions in my home country in the years following the 1979 Revolution were such that people like myself were very vulnerable to imprisonment or worse. New laws applying to women's status and behaviour were created or revived, severely restricting women's previous relatively unrestricted participation in social and working life and exceedingly degrading their status. My job as a secondary school teacher was taken away from me. Not only that, the effects of the Iran-Iraq war, lasting from 1980 to 1988, were felt particularly badly in the part of Iran where I lived, and life became even more intolerable and dangerous. The city where I lived, being an important source of oil, was heavily bombarded by the Iraqi forces and under siege for several months (Abu Ghazala, 1993). At the end of the war, my husband and I felt there was no secure future for us in Iran and we decided to leave and begin a new life elsewhere.

When I arrived in London with my husband, after an arduous journey, I had no work. In Iran I had taught Persian literature and history at secondary school level and had qualifications at university level which were neither valid nor useful in the UK. The very basic American style of English I had learned in Iran was inadequate for life in the UK and I had no time to take language classes in London. Eventually, as our children grew up, I began to study in the little spare time I had, starting with GCSE English, then A-Level mathematics and English, followed by a BA in Education, a Master's degree and studied degree-level mathematics and now, of course, a doctorate is in progress. I also did part-time work in a law office and as a teaching assistant at a sixth form college. I tend to speak Farsi with my husband, my children, Iranian friends and family, but I am much more fluent in English now than when I first arrived. Life has been a struggle, and still is, but learning English has been a major step in being able to survive and even thrive in my new home.

I have been speculating whether or not the acculturation experience, in terms of language, sociocultural factors, gender issues and general survival, of other Iranian women living in Britain and who came for similar reasons, has been in any way comparable with mine. This study is the result.

Aims of the Thesis

The topic of this thesis concerns Iranian women who emigrated to the UK between 1979 and 1989, their acculturation, especially in terms of learning the host language, and the level of their success in overcoming difficulties encountered in that process.

The following questions lie at the heart of this study:

1. *How has the learning of English affected the lives of my participants in terms of their acculturation, perceptions and experiences since they arrived in Britain?*

2. *How has learning the English language, and the opportunities gained by doing so, influenced the participants' relationships of with their families and the Iranian community in Britain?*

3. *In what ways have the experiences, including their troubles in Iran, their migration and their problems encountered in the time after their arrival, both before and especially of gender issues, affected the acculturation of my female participants?*

4. *In what ways understanding the lives and experience of immigrants help to improve the lives and acculturation of future female Iranian immigrants in Britain?*

I have aimed, with the use of face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, to ask a group of such women to describe their experiences before and after their migration and then to analyse their testimonies to detect any underlying patterns which can be useful to educators, policy-makers and the general public.

The Rationale for my study

Because of my experience of being forced to leave my home country and emigrating to the UK, I am not the same person I would have been if this had not occurred. This difference is the result of many complex events that have occurred in the last 35 years, and much of it caused by my lack of ability at the outset to communicate with British people and the British authorities. However, I am now, of course, much more fluent in English, but it has been a struggle not helped by the time and energy constraints inherent in bringing up children and seeing that they were educated as well as they could be. Other obstacles have included my gender and my culture, both interlinked. Therefore, at this stage, even though my family still makes demands upon my time and energy, I believe it is necessary, interesting and useful to study the experiences of other women who left Iran as I did and came to the UK to start new lives. I wish to ascertain if they have shared experiences similar to my own and to delve into the fundamental patterns of their lives in relation to more general patterns in acculturation and especially improving their skill in the host language. In other words, I have tried to construct meaning from my interaction with a certain set of people, to interpret intentionality from

their utterances and hence contribute to widening and deepening the understanding of the acculturation of immigrants.

Another aim I have tried to fulfil is to give voice to the stories of my participants, the women of this study, as they are an unrepresented group; they are women, they are immigrants and they are outsiders. It also needs to be stated that they are from the well-educated middle class of pre-revolutionary Iran, not a stratified random sample of society; they were the people who had the ability to escape from their predicament. To contribute their opinions and describe their experiences by means of this study is one way in which they are able to make their voices heard. I am studying women from a particular subsection of pre-revolutionary Iranian society who were profoundly affected by the revolution and had the ability to leave Iran, as they were vulnerable because of their connections with the previous regime and were well-educated and female.

At this point I shall briefly introduce some of the theoretical resources I have called upon in this study. I am doing this in order to show, in a concise way, how I have managed the complexity of the acculturation process. I shall, of course, provide much more detail in the Literature Review (Chapter Three) and demonstrate how the theoretical aspects relate to my participants.

Theoretical resources and frameworks

> 'Immigration is a worldwide phenomenon that produces complex interactions between individuals and groups. As they face an array of disruptions including changes in climate, economics, religious contexts, values, beliefs, and behaviours, immigrants are confronted with a potentially overwhelming number of threats to their identity. How individuals manage such challenges is crucial to their adaptation to a new cultural context, and this is the focus of acculturation research .'(Safdar *et al.*, 2009)

As Safdar implies, acculturation is not a simple, straightforward or uniform process; it encompasses a wide mixture of factors and challenges and therefore the theoretical frameworks required for its study are numerous and wide-ranging. The many different aspects of immigrants' experience are intertwined and intricate, but there are several broad areas of study that can be applied in order to understand them. These areas are, in the case of this study, acculturation theory, linguistic anthropology, gender and education, all of which are essential to fully understand the intricate nature of acculturation. It is also important to consider acculturation as it is applied to groups of people and to individuals; studying it at the theoretical level can provide a general understanding,

while the data provided by interviewing participants offers understanding at a more individual level (Berry, 2005).

Acculturation theory and measurement

Acculturation can be seen from two main points of view: that of the immigrant and that of the host. There are several ways in which the degree and quality of the process can be measured, resulting in the use of various terms, such as *marginalisation, multiculturalism, assimilation* and *segregation* (Hauck *et al.,* 2014; Ghender, 2016). Terms like these are used by sociologists in order to discuss and study acculturation at a finer level of detail than it would be if it were compared with merely saying that someone has been 'acculturated'. In my Literature Review chapter, with respect to acculturation theory, I make reference to the research of Berry (2005), who has devised a two-dimensional model of acculturation which summarises its different aspects in terms of negative and positive dimensions. This model helps in the understanding of acculturation in a general way, but it is more applicable to general groups of people rather than individuals. Other sociologists have developed different methods of understanding acculturation. For example, Schwartz *et al.* (2014) have studied acculturation from two viewpoints: receiving culture acquisition and heritage culture retention; in other words, the amount of the culture of the host society that is learned and observed by an individual or group versus the amount of original culture still held and observed. The fact that there are different ways of examining acculturation shows how complex a process it is, but it also means that I have several tools at my disposal for interpreting my data.

Identity is also a term used in studying the acculturation of an individual or group. It can be defined as 'the notion of who a person is, based on a complex mix of background, personal traits, qualities, beliefs, and behaviours.' (Griffin, 2017, online resource). It is an important concept because individuals who grew up in one culture and move to another can become confused as to what they are in terms of nationality, loyalty, position in society and other connections between themselves and the world around them. Hall (2017) regards the immigrant's (and anyone else's) experience in terms of identity as 'taking part in an unfinished game' (p. 174). It is a process, rather than a fixed idea. Even after more than 30 years living in the UK, I feel that I am still in the process of acculturation, of finding my place in the host society and still working out my identity, how Iranian or British I am, even though I live in a multicultural society. My aim here is to discover how other women in a similar position to mine have experienced these issues.

Linguistic anthropology

> 'To say language is to say society.' (Lévi-Strauss, cited in Duranti, 1997, p. 337)

Identity is also closely connected with *culture*, which, in its turn, is strongly connected with *language,* an important aspect of acculturation (Berry, 2005; Jiang *et al.*, 2009; Kim *et al*., 2011). An understanding of what exactly is culture and how it interacts with language is relevant, as it lies at the heart of the experience of any immigrant. Duranti (1997) has proved useful to my study in this respect. He has explained many of the essential ideas contained in linguistic anthropology and described the work and concepts of several important researchers, such as Boas, Sapir, Whorf, Lévi-Strauss and himself. The Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, which proposes that language and thought are very closely linked, was one of the most significant concepts in linguistic anthropology in the first half of the 20th century, because of the connection between language, behaviour and identity (Bucholtz and Hall, 2004). It resulted from studying the language and society of native Americans and examining their speech patterns as a method of ascertaining the nature of their culture in relation to language.

In my study, because I am not examining the original language (Farsi) spoken by my participants, I asked them about their experience of using and learning English and of communicating with it in their host country. I wanted to know how it has changed their outlook on life and how it has helped them to become acculturated. Although it would be interesting, and perhaps relevant, to study the ways in which the fundamental differences between Farsi and English affect the ease by which a person fluent in one can learn the other, I believe it would be too much of a digression in this study. (Birney (2014) has made an interesting examination of such language differences.)

Gender

The role of women in the typical Iranian family has conformed to classic patriarchy for centuries, regardless of religious considerations and its relation to social class and privilege (Kandiyoti, 1997). The women of this study were perhaps more able to leave Iran at the time they did more easily than those with a lower social status. Ebadi (2006) states that her particular family, before the Revolution, was organised in a more liberal fashion than was the norm, and she herself was able to become a judge in Iran because of their higher social status and her education. Most of the time, 'rules' of patriarchy were not codified by law; families were organised in the patriarchal system by tradition, by unwritten rules passed down through the generations. Sons were considered to be more valuable

than daughters, and female family members had arranged marriages which could limit them in their choice of career, or even prevent them from working. During the rule of the Shahs (1925 – 1979), women were given more freedom than before, at least in public life, and some families abandoned strict patriarchy in the more tolerant atmosphere of the time (Ebadi, 2006).

However, after the 1979 Revolution, this situation changed, and women had to conform to a rigid code laid down by law, with harsh punishments for those who offended. Centuries-old laws were brought back: stoning as a punishment for women involved in adultery was reinstituted; women were literally worth half of men in terms of court testimony and compensation; women could not start divorce proceedings; contraception was prohibited; the prisons were filled with women who had transgressed the new laws (not wearing a veil, for example) and the age of legal marriage was lowered from 15 to 12 for females (Moghissi, 1991; Moghadam, 2002; Ebadi, 2006; Mahdavi, 2009; Buchan, 2012).

People who fled Iran after the revolution and arrived in western countries, such as the USA, Canada, Sweden and the UK, found themselves living in the midst of much more liberal values, especially in terms of gender. In addition, Iranian migrants were often economically restricted and the women, if they took on work, could become the financial supporters of their families, which went against the grain of traditional patriarchal values (Darvishpour, 1999). The pressure to extend their education, learning the host language and giving themselves more independence and financial power has been very great on women of the diaspora, although traditional female family roles have still had to be maintained to a certain extent (Safdar *et al.*, 2009). Iranian women migrants have had to balance their traditional roles in the family and in their own community with that of bettering themselves educationally, giving them more chance of a career and helping to support their families. Immigrant Iranian women are positioned between two opposing forces: traditional culture and the reality of living in a freer society. One of the aims of my research is to see how the struggle between these forces has been handled and by the participants, how they, being women, have dealt with the situation of having a dual identity, how they have coped with the necessity of being mothers, wives and breadwinners while trying, at the same time, to gain educational qualifications.

Although the idea of speaking out against female subjugation in Iran since the Revolution has been rejected by the authorities as being a degenerate western idea (Tohidi, 2016), there has been a continuous undercurrent of what is termed ‘Islamic feminism’ (Ebadi, 2006; Mir-Hosseini 2015). It seeks to persuade the religious powers in Iran that the Quran can be interpreted in a way that gives

women a higher status. However, outside Iran there are secular feminists, those not speaking out from a religious point of view, who argue that Islamic feminists are avoiding oppression by giving it a religious slant.

Education

Host language acquisition is necessary for any immigrant if he or she is to take part in the life of their new country, to work and to benefit from being there (Bloch, 1999; 2002; Chiswick and Miller, 2003). In this thesis I shall explore the different ways in which learning English was accomplished by my participants at the time of their arrival and the educational provision that exist today for immigrants in general. I shall also describe the English learning facilities that the women had in Iran in the years before they left. Learning the host language is an important aspect of the acculturation process and is extremely relevant to this study (Salvo, *et al.,* 2017).

Additionally, some of my participants had already begun their careers, or embarked upon study for their careers, prior to migration, and wished to continue in Britain. If continuation was not possible, then they had to undergo education for another type of career. I shall recount their experiences in this respect.

Overview of the thesis

In Chapter Two I briefly describe the history of Iran leading up to the 1979 Revolution and its aftermath, mentioning mainly events that have been directly and indirectly applicable to the status of Iranian women, and hence the participants of this study. This description is important because it helps to explain the reasons why the participants left Iran and the culture they have brought with them and the way in which people in the Iranian diaspora behave.

Chapter Three is a detailed literature review in which I delve into the theoretical background of acculturation, language (linguistic anthropology) and feminism, using them as a basis for the interpretation of the data derived from interviewing my participants. In order to give authenticity and realism to the theory, I also describe several examples of research into the experiences of women in the Iranian diaspora that are relevant to my study.

Chapter Four describes my methodology, the way I have conducted my study. I begin with a discussion on the theory of sociological research, offer my rationale for using a semi-structured interviewing technique in this particular study and explain my positionality. The ethical considerations of using human participants are extremely important and I have included a section detailing my approach both theoretically and in practice. I also include information about the seventeen women who have contributed their experiences to my study and the methods I have used to record, transcribe and analyse my data.

The purpose of the subsequent three chapters (Five to Seven) is to present the data I have collected, and, in order to attempt answers to my research questions (see above), to analyse it. In Chapter Eight I discuss my conclusions resulting from the data I have analysed. I also offer some consequential suggestions of further study and recommendations to those who have the power to affect the ways in which immigrants are treated and to influence the regimes of the countries which people such as my participants are forced to leave.

CHAPTER TWO

THE BACKGROUND

This study is concerned with the effects of learning English, and the difficulty with and motivation for acquiring or improving it, upon the assimilation of professional, well-educated Iranian female immigrants. It focuses upon a set of women who migrated to Britain between 1979 and 1990, now living in London, because of the after-effects of the Iranian Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war (1980-88). I have elicited the experiences of 17 of these women by interview and have analysed their responses in order to gain some knowledge about the experience of migrants generally and about Iranian women immigrants' experience in particular. In this chapter, in order to put some perspective and context upon the reasons for my participants' migration, I present background information about Iran itself and its history over the past 1500 years, especially focusing on issues concerning women.

Before and after the Revolution

The professional immigrant Iranian women who are the participants of this study came to the UK as a result of the conditions in Iran after 1979 Revolution and the turbulent times that followed, when events in Iran created great changes in the lives of the people. During the 53 years before the 1979 Revolution the country had been ruled by two successive Shahs since 1926: Reza Pahlavi and, from 1941 to 1979, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, his son. They had tried to create a more modern and secular westernised country, free from the influence of the religious clerics. Women had been partially emancipated and an elite sector of them could be well-educated, holding positions such as judges and university professors, and were able to live more freely than they had before (Ebadi, 2006), although it has been suggested that these reforms were superficial and Iranian women did not have any real power over their own lives (Moghissi, 1991). However, most Iranians, and especially the religious elements of the population, believed that the country was not well led, that the Shah was a despot and was influenced too much by Western powers, especially the USA (Ansari, 2007; Davison, 2013). After the Revolution, in which the Shah, absent from Iran, was deposed and the country was taken over by religious rulers who applied strict Islamic law, there was a complete and sudden change, and life for many women in Iran became very difficult and even intolerable. Many professional women lost their jobs or were demoted, veils had to be worn, the value of women in the eyes of the law was greatly diminished, and female education was curtailed, amongst many other deprivations: 'The Iranian women have traditionally been deprived of many of their

basic rights and have suffered from both male centred ideologies and male dominance that treat women as irrational, child-like and immature, and from widespread discriminatory policies that affect their lives from birth to death.' (Mohammadi, 2007, p.2). The only role considered appropriate for women was to be wives and mothers (Moghissi, 1991; Ebadi, 2006). The suicide and self-burning rate amongst women escalated and, especially during the subsequent Iran-Iraq war (1980-88), emigration became a necessity for a large number of women and their families (Ebadi, 2006; Buchan, 2012; Moghissi, 1991).

In order to understand the general background to this complex situation, I shall provide a brief historical overview of Iran because it has had a continuous history as a country since the 7th century BCE and many events that occurred before the 1979 Revolution have significance to this study. I shall select some significant events that have made Iran the country what it is today. Although these events were not all directly concerned with women, they certainly have affected the fundamental structure of Iranian society, which, as I have said, has had a high level of social continuity for at least 2600 years. I shall begin this historical survey with some general information about Iran and then describe its early history. Religion in Iran has been, and still is, a very powerful force and an explanation of how it has affected women will be relevant. This includes information on how the attitudes of different governing powers have changed the way that religion, mixed with politics, especially in the last 100 years, has had an impact upon the lives of women. The most relevant period to this study is the period immediately preceding and the aftermath of the 1979 Revolution and its impact upon the lives of women, causing many who could to leave Iran and start new lives for themselves and their families. This impact will be studied in some detail after a preliminary brief historical survey.

The country

Iran, officially known as The Islamic Republic of Iran, is the second largest sovereign state in the Near East, being about 1.5 million square kilometres in area and having a population of about 81 million. It has a wide variety of terrain, including desert, subtropical forest, fertile plains and mountains. It is governed by a parliamentary democracy which is overseen by a theocratic Supreme Leader. Iran's official main language is Farsi and its official religion is Shi'a Islam (Davison, 2013)

The name 'Iran' is derived from 'Aryan', which describes the people who inhabited the area of Central Asia from about 600 BCE. The Greeks at that time used the alternative name, 'Persia', taking it from Pars (or Fars) in the south-western part of the region, from which we also get the name for

the language, Parsee or Farsi (Davison, 2013). Although for centuries it has been called Iran by its people, Persia has been the name used by historians and others conscious of the history of the country.

Significant historical factors that form modern Iran.

Early religion

Although Islam has been the predominant religious influence over Iranian society since the 7th century, it has been argued that Zoroastrianism, an earlier faith, has had a strong influence upon the culture of Iranians, even up to the present day (Stepaniants, 2002).

After a life-changing revelation in about 600 BCE (or even before), Zoroaster preached a faith that was monotheistic, in contrast with pre-existing beliefs, and one which was connected with justice, morality and philosophy. Evil was represented by demons, who had been deities in older beliefs, and Good by the creator and Ultimate Being, Ahura Mazda, who represented truth and light and their dominance over evil (Axworthy, 2008; Kriwaczek, 2002).

The conflict of good and evil, ritual purity, Heaven and Hell, and a belief in a Day of Judgement were basic to Zoroastrianism and also to Islam, which connects the older religion to the present-day observance of ancient traditions (Stepaniants, 2002). Some of the ideas of the earlier religion still influence modern Iranian culture. For example, the ideas of light conquering darkness, truth, justice and the importance of nature and the elements are represented in modern festivals such as *Nowruz*, the Iranian New Year, which is celebrated in spring. Some of the earlier deities became archangels in the 7th century BCE belief system, and they are remembered today as names for some of the months in the modern Iranian calendar, for example, *Bahman*, the eleventh month (Davison, 2013). Zoroastrianism is today considered to be 'unlawful' by the Iranian Muslim clergy (Buchan, 2012) and Zoroastrians in Iran have been, to various degrees, persecuted and forced into ghettos (Foltz, 2011). Khomeini, the leader after the Revolution of 1979, has described Zoroastrians as 'reactionary fire worshippers' (Foltz, 2011). Most of the 200,000 Zoroastrians in the world today live in India (Mumbai in particular) where they are known as Parsees.

The influence of early rulers

Rulers such as Cyrus II and Darius I are familiar to readers of the Bible because they had a strong influence on the early history of the Jewish people in the first millennium BCE. They also feature in more general histories as being associated with power struggles and empire building in the region now occupied by Iran and Iraq (Axworthy 2008).

Cyrus II of Persia (ruled 559-530 BCE), founder of the Achaemenid Empire, of which Persia was a part, is much revered even today by Jewish people, as it was he who released the Jews from their second exile and allowed them to return to Jerusalem. He was a strong and charismatic but tolerant ruler and was probably a Zoroastrian, but did not supress other religions. He ruled over a large part of Central Asia and did much to unify the various tribes who lived in the area (Cook, 1983). Even today, many Iranians are proud of this era, as it represents the birth of Iran, and Cyrus II has been referred to as the 'Father' of the nation (Krivaczec, 2002). His reputed tomb in Iran is now a World Heritage Site (Davison, 2013).

During the reign of Darius I, who succeeded Cyrus II's son by means of revolt (Cook, 1983), the Archaemenid Empire was expanded to cover Egypt and the Balkans in the west and what is now Pakistan in the east. Culturally, the empire began to produce art of great quality at this time; splendid palaces and new cities (Persepolis, for example) were built. However the Greek people on the islands covered by the expanding Empire began to revolt, which led to Darius attacking the Greek mainland. In spite of having a vast army, Darius was beaten. After Darius's death in 486 BCE, the Greeks, led by Philip II and later Alexander the Great, took over the western part of the Archaemenid Empire, what is now Turkey, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt. Alexander eventually ruled over the whole of it. The present day enmity between the Greeks and the Turks is said to have its roots in these events (Axworthy, 2014), and the existence of blond-haired, blue-eyed Persians today is believed to be the result of Alexander's policy of encouraging his soldiers to marry Persian women as a means of integrating the resident people with the invaders (Davison, 2013), showing that events which happened more than 2000 years ago still have effects today.

During the 900 years after the death of Alexander the Great in 323 BCE, the area over which he ruled was split up and various empires – the Seleucids, the Parthians and the Sassanids - took over. The Sassanids (from 224 BCE) in particular saw themselves as direct descendants of Cyrus II and also considered the king to have divine status under the Zoroastrian god Ahura Mazda. As well as the original religion being revived, the Persian language, Farsi, was still used in a very much unchanged

state. (Although it was later to be mixed with some Arabic and the Arabic script used for writing, today it is surprisingly close to its 11th century CE form.) (Axworthy, 2008) .

The Islamic Conquest

By the 6th century CE (Common Era) the Middle East (the area now including Turkey and the countries south of it, Egypt, Iran , Iraq and Saudi Arabia, amongst others) was occupied by a mixture of peoples and religions. The cities were home to many Jewish and Christian people as well as Arabs and nomadic Bedouins, who had a polytheistic faith. In the early 7th century an Arab called Mohammad, the son of a trader, began to travel in the area around the city of Mecca and preach about a series of revelations he had received. He preached a simple monotheistic faith in which there was a just God who would judge people at the time of their death on the basis of their actions in life, good or bad. People who had false pride, neglected the poor, were cruel to the weak and did not pray adequately were condemned to hell (Axworthy, 2008). The return to Islamic principles after the 1979 Revolution in Iran is considered by some commentators to be the result of the country's leaders' misunderstanding of Islam's basic principles, ignoring them and leading by personality rather than by the simple faith first introduced by Zoroaster and then by Mohammad (Krivaczek, 2002). Axworthy (*ibid.*) provides a reason for this departure from these original ideas by suggesting that, immediately after Khomeini's return to Iran in 1979, he let the more moderate political organisations believe that, as a religious leader, he would not interfere with the secular aspects of government. However, in time, this proved to be a tactic that prevented counter-revolution, and he was eventually able to impose his own ideology upon the country, with consequent effects upon the status of women.

Mohammad's preaching was popular with the poor and those on the margins of society, as his teachings emphasised the protection of disadvantaged people (Axworthy, 2008). However, the ruling classes of Mecca saw these teachings as a threat to their position and Mohammad was eventually forced to flee to Medina in 622 CE, where he was accepted as someone who could pacify the warring clans there. This migration and the formation of a Muslim community in Medina is considered to be the beginning of the Islamic faith and its calendar (Davison, 2013).

The growth of Islam in Medina caused problems for other religions. Both Christianity and Judaism were rejected by Mohammad (although Judaism and Christianity are respected in principle by Muslims) and Medina became a solely Muslim community where Islam took shape (Foltz, 2011). The

five main principles, or 'pillars', on which it was based were the *shahada* (belief in one God and Mohammad his prophet), *salat* (prayer), *zakat* (almsgiving), *Haj* (pilgrimage to Mecca) and *Ramadan* (fasting). The idea of Islam being a unifying force helped to destroy the previous rivalry amongst clans and integrity and honesty in dealing with others became a basic principle (Axworthy, 2008).

An important aspect of Islam at this time, and relevant to this study, was its attitude to women. Mohammad led by example, as he treated his wives and daughters with great respect for the time and, through the teachings of the Qur'an, men were urged to honour the modesty and privacy of women. 'Unwanted' female infants were no longer put to death, as they had been in previous times (Axworthy, 2008). Of course, women certainly did not have equality with men (Ebadi, 2006). Restrictions of clothing, for example, the veil, were not specified by the Qur'an, and were later interpretations (Axworthy, 2008). However, it has been argued that Islam's approach to gender status was not significantly different from that of pre-Islamic patriarchal Arabic society and women had no more political, economic or legal power than they had before – which was none at all (Mehregan, 2016).

During the next ten years up to the death of Mohammad in 632 Islam quickly spread throughout the region. Jews, Christians (in the vanishing Roman Empire) and Zoroastrians were persecuted and conversions to the new faith were enforced by zealous Muslim Arab armies. With the exception of Mesopotamia, Persia and Byzantium (now Turkey), most of the Middle East and parts of North Africa had been converted to Islam. After raiding the Mesopotamian (Iraqi) part of Persia several times, Abu Bakr, Mohammad's military successor, finally beat the weaker combined Persian and Byzantine armies in 636 (Davison, 2013).

Islam in Iran

In the early years of Islam there was a split caused by arguments about who should succeed the Prophet after he had died in 632. Many Muslims believed that Ali Ibn Abi Taleb, a son-in-law of Mohammad, should be the new leader, but it was not until 656 that he became the leader of the Persian Shi'a form if Islam (*Shi'a Ali*: 'the party of Ali'). The rest of the surrounding areas were peopled by Sunni Muslims (those who believed that Abu Bakr, rather than Ali, should succeed Mohammad). Five years later Ali was assassinated, as later was his son, and for the next 130 years, Persians in the area we now know as Iran were Shi'a Muslims, while most of the rest of the Middle East remained Sunni (Buchan, 2012). After the last of the early Shi'a leaders was executed in 755, Persia, for the next 750 years, was Sunni and not Shi'a. As far as Shi'a Muslims were concerned, any

other leader was only provisional, which is important to what happened centuries later (Axworthy, 2008).

It was not until the 16th Century that Persians became Shi'ites again, when Ismail Safavi and his Turkic followers invaded Iran from the north, made himself Shah and declared an extreme form of Shi'ism to be the religion of the country (Buchan, 2012). This provoked much enmity from Sunni areas surrounding Iran (Axworthy, 2008), as it did after the 1979 Revolution, particularly from Iraq.

Iran/Persia before the 1979 Revolution

Briefly, between about 900 and 1750, Persia suffered many invasions. In the 13th Century, Genghis Khan, leader of the Mongols, aggressively spread westwards and took over much of southern Europe and the Middle East, including Persia, preventing what had been a golden age of literature and art in the country to continue. Another invasion started the Safavid dynasty, continuing until 1722 (Davison, 2013). This was a time when Persia became an important ally to Western Europe in their battle with the Ottoman Empire (Ansari, 2007). The Safavid dynasty fell into decline after a weakening of trade, caused partly by English and Dutch trade competition, and attacks from the Ottoman Empire and the Afghans (Davison, 2013).

The influence of women in early 20th century Iran

In the early 20th century Middle East, women in countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Turkey and Iran began to form groups which generally did not demand revolution as such, but rather reform of the status of women both politically and socially (Fay, 2008). They wanted to be able to vote, to have equality with men in divorce, raise the age of marriage for females, have more opportunities for education and work, amongst other reforms. It was a time of feminine protest in Western countries too, and the Middle Eastern women's groups had links with women's suffrage movements in the West (Fay, 2008). As in the West, they had strong criticism from within their own countries in respect of damage to cultural tradition, national pride and elitism. They were generally middle- and upper-class women who were more secular in their outlook than those from the poorer and non-urban sections of society (Moghissi, 1991). To understand the backgrounds of the women of this study, this period is important, as it represents a time when women were becoming more confident about asking questions about their status (Axworthy, 2008).

During the 19th Century, Iran began to have a closer connection, through trade, diplomacy and military contexts, with Russia, Europe and Britain. This sparked a new interest among educated Iranian male officials, traders and intellectuals in the identity of their nation and in the possibility of reform and modernisation. Amongst other things, they thought about the role and status of women in Iranian society in both positive and negative ways: would Iranian women be corrupted by the effects of European social ideas, or would women's higher status and more freedom help the country to progress and fit in more with the countries with which it dealt (de Groot, 2010)? The basic principles of an Islamic society also affect discussions on the freedom of women: feminism is now and has always been seen by the religious powers in Iran as an agent of corruption, a potential destroyer of the traditional family structure and a 'western' bad influence (Tohidi, 2016).

Upper class intellectual women in Iran certainly became more confident, and by the turn of the 20th Century had formed secret political groups called *anjumans*, which provided moral and physical support (demonstrations, lectures and human barriers) for the demand for constitutional changes. The *anjuman*'s members were mainly from the urban, privileged and educated groups of women (de Groot, 2010). They were also responsible for new social institutions such as girls' schools, medical clinics and adult education classes (Afari, 1996). Researchers such as Afari (1996) and de Groot (2010) have suggested that these women's groups, although not officially recognised nor encouraged by the government, represented a growing confidence of Iranian women that showed itself again in the period before and just after the 1979 Revolution. It is perhaps not a coincidence that, in the early 20th century, women in Britain were also forming groups campaigning for equality, in terms of voting rights, and which were also discouraged (to put it mildly) by the government. In fact, by means of a letter to *The Times* in 1911*,* Iranian women's groups appealed to the British suffragettes for support for their fight for equality (de Groot, 2010).

Certain women from history have often been used to inspire those who look for more freedom and equality for women within a society that does not want either. A well-known British example is Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) who, through her writing argued for female equality at a time when 'the rights of man gave no rights to women' (Halldenius, 2015, p. 4) and women were seen as virtuous only if they behaved submissively and concentrated their attention upon domestic issues. She admired the spirit of both the French and American revolutions, but felt betrayed when the status of women did not improve in either of these calls for freedom (Halldenius, 2015). One of the women who has been an inspiration to Iranian women seeking equality was Fatima Baraghani, also known as *Tahiri* and *Qurrat al-'Ayn* ('Apple of the eye') (c.1815-1852). Although she did not specifically

campaign for women's rights, she has been seen by Iranian women as an influential female figure when such a person was (and still is) considered unacceptable by those who had power, especially by the clergy. *Qurrat al-'Ayn* became leader of a dissident version of *Shi'a* called Babism. She bravely spoke out against the Shi'a version of Islam, the corrupt behaviour and the immorality of clerics and appeared in public without the conventional head covering (Mojab, 2001). She was forced by the religious powers to hide and was eventually executed without trial in 1852. The fact that she was a woman who was militant, that she did not fit into the expected submissive role and that she was killed for her outspoken ideas, was enough to make her an inspirational figure for Iranian women in later times (de Groot, 2010).

In the late 19th century an Iranian book called *The Education of Wives (Disciplining Women)* was published. This widely-read tract pretended to be humorous advice to husbands on the nature of women and how to respond to female behaviour that was considered unacceptable (Najmabadi, 1993). The anonymous male author, uses phrases such as '… the natural stupidity of the weaker sex' and 'Even if she be not at fault, a clever woman should take the offences of her husband upon herself, and ask his pardon for them ... the sole worth of a wife lies in her love for her husband.' (taken from an English translation of 1927 cited in Najmabadi, 1993 p. 491) Having read a pre-publication version, Bibi Khanum Astarabadi, an aristocratic Iranian woman, published a rebuttal of *Disciplining Women* called *The Vices of Men* (Najmabadi, 1993; Mojab, 2001). Although Astarabadi spoke out against the misogyny of the traditional views expressed in *Disciplining Women,* she did not suffer the same fate as *Qurrat al-'Ayn*, even though her rebuttal was officially suppressed until the early 1990s, mainly for being considered 'pornographic' (Mojab 2001). In the late 19th century the Iranian state was making a move away from religious-centred government and towards a more secular, pre-Islamic style (Mojab 2001).

The period in Iran between 1906 and 1911, known as the Constitutional Revolution, saw an abrupt lessening of the power of the religious clerics and their influence on the structure of society in Iran. While the new constitution did not in itself specify more freedom for women, the general mood of greater democracy and secular power allowed women to bond together unofficially in order to improve the lives of poorer people generally and females in particular (Afary, 1996). Morgan Shuster, an American observer based in Iran in 1912, wrote, 'The Persian women since 1907 had become almost at a bound the most progressive, not to say radical, in the world'. (Afary, 1996, p. 177). However, women were still barred from any political power as, according to the thinking of the time, fathers, husbands and brothers would be dishonoured if the women in the family were

given any chance to behave in any 'improper' ways. Women were considered unable to behave properly without the protection of men (Afary, 1996).

Even so, the period immediately after the Constitutional Revolution was notable for the rise in female education, due partly to the fear that Iran would lag behind countries like Japan (which stood at that time as a model for social progress) and Europe. But there was no government support for this trend; it was mainly due to the women of the *adjumans* forming girls' schools. By 1913 there were 63 such schools in Tehran, and the 2500 students who attended represented an eighth of the total school population in the capital (Afary, 1996).

A typical example of one of these women's societies is The Adjuman for the Freedom of Women. This was formed shortly after the 1906 Constitution in order to educate women and their relatives. Regular secret meetings, in which lectures on social and political topics given by elite women, were held. They even invited American missionary women to take part. However, to avoid any suggestion of improper behaviour, Iranian women had to be accompanied by male relatives and could not attend on their own, not exactly a sign that women were autonomous. The topics of the meetings ranged from calls for greater female education to encouraging the wearing of 'western' clothing and not wearing the veil (Alfary, 1996). It is notable that, even today, women are at the forefront of protest in Iran: in July 2019, for example, three women were sentenced to prison for protesting against the compulsory wearing of the hijab (Human Rights Watch, 2019). There is a history of Iranian women protesting against compulsory dress codes:

> 'Iran has a history of imposing rules about what women can and cannot wear, in violation of their fundamental rights. In the 1930s, Reza Shah, the then-ruler, prohibited women from wearing the hijab and police were ordered to forcibly remove women's headscarves. Following the Iranian revolution of 1979, Iranian authorities imposed a mandatory dress code requiring all women to wear the hijab. Iranian women defied these unjust rules in each of these eras, and they are challenging them again – at enormous personal cost. It's time for Iran's government to respect women's freedom to dress as they please.' (Human Rights Watch, 2019).

During the Pahlavi regime from 1925 up to 1979, Iranian society was increasingly influenced by European and American 'ideals', and women had achieved a status which gave them opportunity to be in professions such as teaching, journalism and the law. The higher status of women after 1925 was partly due to the realisation that women could be used as a workforce and that they should be encouraged to be educated at higher levels (Bahramitash and Hooglund, 2011). The global dimension of the increasing liberalisation of women's status and emancipation was echoed in countries such as Turkey, which, in the early 20th century was considered by the West to be a model

of progressive gender liberalisation. However, this progressiveness was tempered by the traditional concept that the 'ideal' woman was 'modern-but-modest', meaning that women were able to work in positions more or less equal in status to those of men, but had to preserve the traditional values of modesty (Fay, 2008).

The Pahlavi Shahs

The Constitutional Revolution, especially after the First World War, seemed to many Iranians to have weakened the Qajar Shah, the ruler at that time, and his government and made it more vulnerable to influence by other powers, such as Britain (Ansari, 2007). In 1921 a military commander named Reza Khan led 2500 troops into Tehran and, with no opposition, declared a coup. By 1925 he was the new Shah, taking the family name Pahlavi and ending the Qajar dynasty. Reza Shah made many changes to the country, including changing its official name from 'Persia' to the more traditional 'Iran', developing the road and rail systems, expanding education and the army and reduced foreign influence, creating a more nationalistic state (Davison, 2013). However, he also encouraged modern western style dress for both women and men, banning the veil, and encouraging men to wear a more European style of dress. He also promoted schooling for girls and many women became teachers at all levels of education (Rafique, 2017). However, Reza Shah saw himself as a powerful and grand monarch, in the style of the ancient Persian kings, using education as a means of indoctrinating the people with his importance and creating a sense of fear and distrust in the people (Ansari, 2007).

In spite of his dislike of foreign influence, Reza Shah still needed technical and engineering expertise from other countries, and Germany was his choice, as they had already helped the new Turkish regime (Davison, 2013; Ansari, 2007). This proved to be his downfall. During the Second World War, both the British and the Soviets invaded Iran with a joint force in 1941 and forced him to abdicate, partly because he would not expel the Germans from the country. His son, Mohammad Reza Shah, replaced him (Ansari, 2007).

After the Second World War, and the British and Russians had left Iran, the new Shah went to the Americans for financial and technical help to fund mainly military projects, including nuclear power and weaponry. This meant that Iran had a heavy dependency upon the USA, a situation not approved of by many clerics and political opposition groups (Axworthy, 2008). Like his father, Mohammad Reza Shah was autocratic, and any resistance to or criticism of his policies resulted in the disappearance of opposition leaders and government ministers (reputedly helped by the CIA and

MI5) and formed a large secret police force, SAVAK (*Sāzemān-e Ettelā'āt va Amniyat-e Keshvar*, or 'Organization of National Intelligence and Security') (Davison, 2013). Although he had created a modern, Western style of society, giving women the vote in 1963, increasing education and developing industry, with American help, he saw himself as a latter-day Napoleon, a messianic figure, crowning himself and his wife Emperor and Empress in 1967 and erected statues of himself around the country (Ansari, 2007).

The 1979 Revolution

The unacceptable power held by the USA over Iran and its leader was the theme preached by a then obscure religious leader called Ruhollah Khomeini in the early 1960s. Even though he was arrested by SAVAK agents several times, causing demonstrations in which hundreds of people were killed, Khomeini continued to preach against the Shah's dependence on America and developed a strong following (Axworthy, 2008). Khomeini was eventually deported and exiled in 1964, when he went to Paris. But his preaching did not stop and nor did the protests and the government's brutal reactions to them.

Meanwhile, in Iran the press was under government control, elections were rigged and left-wing political activists were imprisoned (Ansari, 2007). In addition, land-owning reforms and a growing mechanisation of agriculture caused a huge migration of people to cities like Tehran, where many lived in poverty in shanty towns and were strongly influenced by their religious leaders (Axworthy, 2008), causing large economic and religious divisions in society. On the positive side, Iranian economy and industry grew; employment, education, health and the birth rate increased dramatically. Income from oil increased fourfold in the 1970s, with much of the money, however, going to the USA and the UK in exchange for military equipment. But inevitably, as it was not based on real value, the economy failed. Inflation rose and there were shortages of vital items (Ansari, 2007).

A combination of many poor people, who had traditional religious values of honesty and justice going back to Zoroastrian and early Islamic times, and a high proportion of well-educated young people who understood the causes of the country's chaotic situation, led to a growing distrust of the Shah. Added to this was the increased detachment of the government from the general population, the strong influence of the USA and the West in general, and the Shah's exaggerated view of himself as a kind of emperor. The Shah's reaction to this hostility was defiance, especially against what he called the 'unholy red-black alliance' (Buchan, 2012, p. 203), a combination of left-wing and Muslim

activists. Moghissi (2008) blames the Shah's repressive regime for giving more power and influence to the clergy by allowing public gatherings only for religious purposes. The more conservative clergy were able to publicly preach on the negative (from a conservative Islamic point of view) effects of the Shah's 'feminist' reforms, while women's groups had little public voice.

The Revolution itself did not happen suddenly; it was a gradual process that took place over several months, if not years, perhaps starting with the preaching and exile of Khomeini in the 1960s (Buchan, 2012). However, two main events can be taken to mark the points where Iran changed from a monarchy to a theocracy. One was the departure of the Shah to the USA for cancer treatment in January 1979, never to return. The other was the homecoming of Khomeini to Tehran in February 1979, when he was greeted by huge crowds (Davison, 2013). This event provoked a sudden growth of anti-American feeling amongst his supporters, characterised by an invasion of the American Embassy in Tehran, where 44 American hostages were held for more than a year (Axworthy, 2008). Mohammad Reza Shah died in Egypt in July, 1980 and was buried in Cairo.

The effects of the 1979 Revolution upon women

After his return to Iran, Khomeini declared Iran to be a Shi'a state, true to the authentic Islamic traditions, and free of foreign influence. The universities were closed for two years, with much violence against faculty members, after Khomeini said that they '… are in the service of the West and have brainwashed our children' (Buchan 2012, p. 329). A general purge of political and religious dissidents and criminals involved in drugs followed.

To enforce conformity with Shi'a Islam, and to remove anything connected with the Shah, special 'purification' committees were set up. Many teachers, civil servants and military officers were dismissed. Women working for the government and those entering public buildings had to wear clothing that hid their hair and their bodies, although a year earlier Khomeini had said, 'Women are free in the Islamic Republic in the selection of their activities and their future and their clothing,' (Buchan, 2012, p. 232). This kind of 'promise' had made middle-class female anti-Shah agitators believe that they would not be restricted in a religious way after the Revolution. But many women were shocked and felt betrayed when they realised that the new laws introduced after the Revolution 'turned the clock back fourteen hundred years, to the early days of Islam's spread, the days when stoning women for adultery and chopping off the hands of thieves were considered appropriate sentences' (Ebadi, 2006, p. 51). The new penal code issued in 1979 made women's lives in the case of compensation and their testimony in court worth half that of men and women could

not initiate a divorce. Male domination had been reinforced and the role of women as mothers and home-makers increased (Moghadam, 2002). Contraception was prohibited, as was sex out of marriage, causing the birth rate to increase and sexual health education to be almost non-existent (Mahdavi, 2009). The age of legal marriage was lowered from 15 to 9 for females (Moghissi, 1991). The women's prisons were filled with up to eight times their normal capacity and the average age of female prisoners was 19, as young women and teenaged girls were often imprisoned for being 'counter-revolutionary' for not wearing a veil, or speaking out against the new penal code, for example (Buchan, 2012).

Feminism and protest in Iran after the Revolution

This situation was very different from how it had been seventy years earlier, when after the Constitutional Revolution women had grouped together without much hindrance and had achieved a greater degree of influence than previously (Afary, 1996). After the return of Khomeini, many women believed that they would be again be able to make progress in being treated more equally with men. As before, they formed *anjumans* (Farsi: 'group of stars'), female societies, and in March 1979 a demonstration of 100,000 women challenged the new leaders to support them. However, not only did Khomeini react with the call to wear the veil (with 74 lashes as punishment for defiance), but left-wing activists said that feminism was a 'bourgeois' concept and too 'Western' (Afary, 1996) (although it wasn't long before the clerics soon made the left-wing activists disappear (Moghadam, 2002)). The new Islamization soon made the existence of feminist groups impossible, not that they had been encouraged before (Rafique, 2017).

Women's roles before and after the Revolution

However, to say that all women had the same role before or after the Revolution is not a reality. Three very broad groups of women can be recognised (Moghissi, 1991): Middle class, well-educated women who had benefited from the less rigid society of the Pahlavi rule wanted to remove the Shah, wanted Iran to be free of foreign influence and tended to be nationalist or even socialist. They were not necessarily aware of belonging to a feminist community; they were not encouraged by the Shah, who made his decisions without consulting the people. Nor did they support the religious factions. These were the women who were the most shocked and badly affected by the aftermath of the Revolution. Another group, lower class women, wanted to improve the material aspects of life. Housing was a big concern for them, as was the cost of basic needs. They also wanted to share in the oil-driven prosperity of the country. After the Revolution, the lower classes became more integrated into Iranian society (Katouzian, 1989) and women from this stratum were used as support in the

eight-year Iran-Iraq war (Rafique, 2017), but were also, as during the Shah regime, confined to the traditional types of work lower-class women have done in all industrialised countries (Moghissi, 1991). A third group comprised mainly the wives of tradesmen and market traders and who took a traditional role in family life and respected the teachings of Islam on the position of women respective to that of men. They were very much against the liberal society created by the Pahlavi regime, were generally not well educated, supported the clerics and were submissive to their husbands (Moghissi, 1991). These women, mainly of a lower economic status (Rafique, 2017), were given what they wanted, a strict and traditional religious regime, probably not much different from the way they had led their lives before the Revolution, but now endorsed by the state. They were also considered the most employable by the new regime (Rafique, 2017) and women considered by the state to be ideologically sound were employed in the health and civil services (Moghadam, 2002).

Although many women, especially in the first broad category, had influential jobs and were not generally veiled, Moghissi (1991) suggests that, during the reign of the Shahs,

> '[…] the process of capital development and modernisation in pre-revolutionary Iran, despite the great potential and resources of the country, and the extensive efforts in social engineering, failed to bring fundamental changes in the status of women' (p. 208).

She says that the main reasons for the changes in women's status being superficial under the Shahs were that the culture of a male-dominated society and family structure was too deeply-rooted to be ignored, that Iranian women still saw themselves in their traditional stereotyped role as submissive wives and daughters and that the political situation in Iran during the Pahlavi period was oppressive and not the right climate for true liberation. The influence of religion was still powerful enough to stop the government from introducing big changes in women's status. Even if it is true that some changes in family law, such as making divorce and the custody of children for women possible, women could not leave the country or take jobs without the permission of their husbands, and husbands and fathers were still allowed to murder promiscuous or adulterous female family members. Iranian culture was still based on the patriarchal nature of the family and the women's role of sexual purity, submission and self-denial. Additionally, Moghissi (1991) stresses the huge gaps in social status of Iranian women and between urban and rural women and classes. Such a fragmented society could not provide enough cohesion to create an atmosphere of reform for women. In another text she generalises the idea of superficial liberation:

> 'Almost everywhere in the region [the Middle East] "women's emancipation" has meant the creation of a group of educated, middle-class, career-oriented women who were expected to participate dutifully in state building while simultaneously maintaining their nurturing role as mothers and wives.' (Moghissi, 2008, p. 243)

De Groot (2010) confirms this belief when she states that Reza Shah's offering more female education and banishing the veil were not at the forefront of women's demands and were mere signs of modernisation, not actual attempts to make life better for women and to give them more power.

Khomeini's stated reasons for reinstating the traditional, patriarchal roles of women were that the order of society had been threatened by the Shah's more liberal, western 'imperialist' ideas on gender roles (Chubin, 2014). Long before his exile he had protested against the Reza Shah's compulsory unveiling policy: 'This was one of the biggest betrayals of Reza Khan to this country.' (Khomeini, 1945, cited in Chubin, 2014). Chubin (*ibid.*) suggests that, 'Gendering of political narratives, as illustrated in Khomeini's anti-imperialist, nationalist and Islamic speeches and writings, can serve to mobilize masses through creating moral and sex panics out of changes in the meaning and relations of gender.' (p. 53). In other words, the control of gender roles was a political device designed to reinforce the standpoint of a leader. Of course, the same could be said about the Reza Shah's compulsory unveiling policy, designed to make Iran more attractive to Western powers.

During the initial stages of the Revolution, women in professional roles were liable to be demoted or fired. One such person was Shirin Ebadi, who, in her autobiography, *Iran Awakening* (Ebadi, 2006), describes how she was suddenly demoted from the position of judge to that of a legal clerk immediately after the Revolution. Instead she became a private lawyer who defended people, especially women, who were the victims of miscarriages of justice or who could not otherwise obtain justice. With many examples, she shows how the legal system, especially since the Revolution, has been heavily weighted in favour of men. She also tells the reader how the position of women slightly improved in the years following the Revolution and the Iran-Iraq war, and females were eventually allowed to be educated in gender-specific schools and colleges, but still could not take on professional roles where they would have authority over men, for example, as judges. However, Iran's rulers eventually realised that the country could not thrive without the participation of professional women. Once she was allowed to be a lawyer again, she set about using her skills to show how unjust Iran's legal system was: 'It was a system whose laws needed to go on trial before they could be changed' (Ebadi, 2006, p. 111). Shirin Ebadi won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her personal struggle for democracy and human rights, especially for the rights of women and children.

The Diaspora

It was after the Revolution, and during the war with Iraq (1980-88), that many supporters of the Shah, intellectuals, professionals (including university teachers, doctors and dentists) and non-Muslims, began to leave Iran because of the war, the severe restrictions of life, and religious and political intolerance (McAuliffe, 2008). The total number of the diaspora has been estimated to be in the range of 1 to 4 million (Ghorashi and Boersma, 2009). They went to countries such as the USA (Los Angeles in particular), France, Sweden, Canada and the UK. The stereotype of the Middle Eastern immigrant is that of a Muslim, but with religious intolerance being one of the main reasons for self-exile, a great proportion of Iranian immigrants were of other faiths, such as Baha'i, Christian, Jewish, Zoroastrian and atheists. The migrant Iranian communities that formed during the first diaspora tended to copy their original Iranian class and religious structure. Most of the women who were involved in this transmigration were from the middle- and upper-class strata, from the Tehran that existed before the overthrow of the Shah, who could afford to emigrate (McAuliffe, 2008; Buchan, 2012).

Whilst the diasporic Iranian communities in the world are quite widespread and not generally concentrated into particular places or areas of cities, as are Chinese and Pakistani, for example, the rise of globalisation caused by the development of the internet has caused a greater connection between groups of exiled Iranians and groups living in Iran (Ghorashi and Boersma, 2009). This ability to interconnect has given rise to a number of international organisations of Iranians, such as the Iranian Women's Scientific Foundation and the UK-based Science and Art Foundation, which have sought to bring the humanitarian conditions in Iran to the attention of the rest of the world. Because of the internet, these groups have supporters within Iran, who have been at risk of suppression and persecution, especially since the more conservative Iranian governments from 2004 and the negative perception of Muslims as a reaction to terrorism.

Summary of the chapter

I have made this account of Iran's history, with an emphasis upon its effects upon women, in order to provide a background to my participants' decisions to leave the country and their lives as Iranian women. Iran has been a nation continuously for at least 2500 years. People and events in that long history still influence life there today. The present regime is applying a similar pattern of laws and punishment that were in force several hundred years ago and women in particular have been affected by them. I hope that it will help to provide a perspective in the understanding of my participants' lives and the decisions they have had to make.

In the literature review that follows I shall introduce some of the concepts which lie behind the acculturation of immigrants, studying language as it applies to social studies and other issues which are relevant to forming a new life in a new country and, to make it relevant to my participants, examining gender concerns.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Iranian women interviewed for this study have been chosen because of their migration from Iran to the UK and their subsequent acculturation experience. Apart from the obvious practical and emotional problems of living in a new country (finance, housing, health, education, language and bereavement, for example), they brought with them a cultural background which was in many ways and to various degrees different from that of their new country. The fact that they are women is also important to my study and the way gender has played a part in their culture has also played a part in their experience of building a new life in the UK. Therefore, the theoretical background to this research will be concerned with acculturation, feminism, culture, its linguistic aspects, learning English and the specific experience of the Iranian women.

Migration has been a common phenomenon for many years, particularly in recent times, and the experiences of people who have, for various reasons, begun new lives in countries other than their land of birth has been subject to many studies in the areas of sociology and psychology in particular. In order to study the experiences of the women in sufficient depth it will firstly be necessary to examine the concept of acculturation, especially in terms of language, and other aspects, such as career, family, finance and interaction with the host society. I shall do this by defining what exactly is meant by the terms *acculturation* and its links with social inclusion and culture by referring to relevant literature. The terms associated with acculturation, such as *assimilation* and *marginalisation* will also be discussed, as will the study of acculturation by researchers such as Berry, and its links with language by linguistic anthropologists like Sapir and Whorf and their later counterparts.

After examining the more theoretical aspects of acculturation, I shall review some research that has been done in various parts of the world so that real situations which the Iranian diaspora has encountered can lead to an understanding of how the theories on acculturation apply to real situations, especially in respect of gender. The reasons for the international scope of my choice of literature are firstly pragmatic, because studies made in the UK are relatively few, and secondly, I want to detect general patterns and principles in the relationship between the women being studied and their host society and their own communities and families.

Finally, I concentrate on the gender issues facing this group of women and the role of feminism, in shaping their experiences. More specifically, I consider how feminism has manifested itself both within Iran and outside Iran, in the diaspora.

ACCULTURATION

The central thrust of this thesis is that of female Iranian immigrants learning English as a means of being able to live more easily in the UK, to be acculturated, and how they can do so within any restrictions of their original culture and generated by the culture and systems of the host country. This section is concerned with acculturation in terms of how it has been studied by anthropologists and others, and how it is strongly connected with language and with the women whose experiences are being studied in this thesis.

Definitions of acculturation

Whether a person voluntarily goes to live in a foreign country or is forced by circumstances beyond their control to do so, many changes are bound to occur in that person's way of life, and also in the lives of people in the receiving society. These changes, taken as a whole, are called acculturation. Over the years in which acculturation has been studied, many definitions have been given. For example, Rudmin (2009, p.4) has summed it up as: 'Cross-fertilization of cultures', while a less concise definition comes from the 1930s:

> 'Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups.' (Redfield, Linton and Herskovits, 1936, p. 149).

An interesting scientific analogy was used in a definition by Simons in 1901:

> 'Figuratively speaking, it is the process by which the aggregation of peoples is changed from a mere mechanical mixture into a chemical compound' (Simons, 1901, part 1, pp. 791-792 cited in Rudmin, 2009, p. 4)

But the same researchers also managed to define acculturation in two words: 'reciprocal accommodation' (*Ibid*.).

Another approach to defining acculturation is to put it in terms of two cultures meeting and the incoming people being affected by the receiving culture:

> 'The adaptation to, and adoption of, a new culture. This may occur simultaneously as two cultures meet, but occurs more often as an immigrant group takes to the behaviour patterns and standards of the receiving group.' (Mayhew, 2015, online source)

In this definition the term 'behaviour patterns and standards' includes language, amongst many other aspects of life.

In all the definitions of acculturation there are two main elements: change and its effect on both cultures, immigrant and host. The word 'change' as used here refers to the many differences between the immigrants' original habitat and society and their new environment and the adaptations they have to make in response to the differences. Examples of these differences are religion, gender issues, ethnicity, social norms and, perhaps most importantly, language (DEMOS,2014). Change can occur to both those who have come to live in a new country and to existing residents, who also adapt. For example, immigrants to the UK can eat the food from their own culture as well as traditional British food, while white British people are able to eat food from the immigrants' culture in restaurants provided by the immigrants (Berry, 2005).

In the case of the women of this study, a more bespoke definition of acculturation may also include the ability of the immigrants to participate in the host culture, for example by learning the host language and taking part in local politics or school governance. The amount by which the dominant host culture accommodates minorities by allowing them to access government services or partake in their own cultural activities using their own language is also a factor (Madood, 2007).

Of course, details such as these cannot be included in a necessarily concise definition, so in the course of this literature review I shall focus upon the many aspects of acculturation that relate to the women I am studying. At this point it will be helpful to develop some of the ideas that have arisen from the definitions of acculturation.

Social inclusion and exclusion

Social inclusion and exclusion are a pair of complementary concepts associated with acculturation. Social inclusion is defined by the United Nations as: '… the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.' (United Nations, 2018, p. 17). The UN believes that 'every person should reap the benefits of prosperity and enjoy minimum standards of well-being' (p. 17) and that 'lack of participation in society' (p. 18), not only economic deprivation,

is an important factor. The term 'social exclusion' was originally defined in 1974 by René Lenoir, a member of the French government. He was referring to the situation of people he regarded as 'social misfits', such as those who were handicapped, suicidal, abused, marginal, and Lenoir estimated that such people comprised 10% of the French population (United Nations, 2018). This means that it is a very general term, referring to people in a wide variety of situations, the common factor being that they are disadvantaged because of their inability to access the benefits of society for various reasons. Social inclusion, by implication, is the process by which social exclusion is minimised or even eliminated.

So how do these two terms relate to my participants? Were they disadvantaged? Were they 'social misfits'? Firstly, they are women, and in patriarchal societies they are disadvantaged by their expected behaviour: housework and looking after their children, for example, are isolating activities which limit freedom to participate in society (Oakley, 2005). Although they lived relatively well in Iranian society before the Revolution, afterwards it was a different story: Iranian women were officially deprived, through threat of severe punishment, of a voice, of opportunity and of basic freedoms; they were essentially excluded from society. They were forced by circumstances to leave Iran and, on their arrival in their host countries, it can be said that many of them immediately became 'social misfits' because of their lack of language, work, money and 'otherness'. They had to rectify or minimise their disadvantages by the various means described later in this study. Therefore, it is fair to state that they were socially excluded both before and after their migration and that social inclusion in their host country had to be gained.

Culture

I have used the term 'culture' several times in the preceding section, and the word 'acculturation' is obviously derived from it. It is important at this point to understand what 'culture' actually means in relation to the experience of the women of this study and how it applies to the changes that have occurred in their lives.

One possible definition of the term 'culture' as used by sociologists and anthropologists is: the shared behaviour of a group of people that has been learned by the individuals in that group (Duranti, 1997). Culture consists of behaviour and attitudes which help people to live together and to avoid a self-centred approach to life. It can be considered to be an organisation of knowledge about the world around people in terms of relating to others, how to behave, how to understand and interpret the life around them and the society in which they live (Goodenough, 1964). This

means that culture can be thought of as a set of concepts that people learn about the world around them and their behaviour which results from this concept. A definition of culture appropriate to this study is:

> '… a fluctuating embodiment of a group's products, practices and perspectives. Inseparable from language, culture is also impacted by issues of power as it can be used to marginalize or privilege.' (Muirhead, 2009, p. 244).

It is to be noted that Muirhead uses the word 'fluctuating', meaning that culture is not fixed; it is constantly changing with time and is affected by changes in population, by mass media, by events and by current politics, amongst many other influences. For example, the culture of the Iranian people was strongly affected by the Revolution of 1979. Another important word in Muirhead's definition is 'power': culture has the power to maintain or change the status of people within its environment and that status can change if the culture changes. The status of women in Iranian society changed considerably after the Revolution owing to the new culture that was enforced and their status changed again when they migrated to Britain (Moghissi, 1999). Muirhead's phrase 'inseparable from language' is also pertinent to this study, as it emphasises the importance of language in transmitting and understanding the culture of the society in which a person lives, and language itself is affected by the culture. I shall also study the work of Hall (2017) in some detail, as an important source for discussing the connection between culture and identity.

As individuals grow up in a certain culture they learn how to behave in relation to the community inside and outside their own family. A large part of this learning involves language which has evolved from and is closely connected with the culture of a particular group of people (Berry, 1999). Therefore, the study of a particular language can tell us a lot about the attitudes and behaviour of a particular community and this kind of study is called *linguistic anthropology*, which I shall discuss further in this chapter, as I will also do with issues of gender as they relate to culture.

Culture can be described in different ways, depending on how it is being studied. Duranti (1997), for example, describes culture from five different apects:

> ***Knowledge***. Since culture is learned, it can be considered to be a way of understanding how the world works. Duranti cites Goodenough (1964): '… a society's culture consists of whatever it is one has to know in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members' (Duranti, 1997, p. 36). However, this does not mean that people can achieve things merely by referring to a set of facts and rules, they must also know how to adapt and co-operate

with others. The application of culture as knowledge to the situation of the immigrants studied here is evident from their situation, in which they had little or no English on arrival, and language is a key factor in understanding the culture of the receiving society. My participants' knowledge of the host society's culture has been important in the process of their acculturation.

***Communication*.** Duranti refers to Lévi-Strauss's view that culture is the means by which nature is elaborated or transformed through people, making a distinction between what is natural (raw food, for example) and what is elaborated (cooked food). Lévi-Strauss believed that abstract, unconscious ideas are common to all people and they are elaborated and communicated by the particular culture of a person. Culture communicates the abstractions. Geertz (1973) describes culture as a continuous process of interpretation: people interpret what they observe and experience using whatever culture they have learned to do so. Language is an essential part of this process. Researchers such as Keesing (1972) have argued that figurative language, metaphors, for example, are important to the study of the linguistic aspects of culture, as they describe aspects of culture in relation to objects in another domain in a way particular to that culture. As it involves the use of language, this relates directly with the focus of my study.

A set of tools (mediation). Tools are used by people to affect and make use of their environment. A tool can be a physical object, such as a fork or a vehicle; it can be spoken or written language, or a gesture. In Duranti's words: '… people's ability to appropriate, exploit or control nature or the interaction with other human beings is augmented or simply modified by the use of tools' (1997, p. 40). The controlling of nature and other people is sometimes done directly, without tools, such as pushing someone out of a room rather than telling them to leave, but Duranti argues that even in these cases culture is present in a person's mind, and the tools provided by culture give people more power to control their environment. Culture is then a set of tools with which people can control and understand the world around them and one of the most important of these tools is language. Language can be a complex system of utterances or writing, or the simple act of knocking at a door (Sapir, 1949, cited in Duranti, 1997). As will be seen later in my thesis, if the women of this study learn English, they are then provided with a powerful tool to control their lives in their new environment.

A system of practices refers to the interpretation of culture in terms of what people do, their habitual activities, their routines, in the context of their environment. These practices include language, which becomes standardised within a community, meaning that language can be used to perform actions, as understood by the community, and to control the people within that community, but also to exclude outsiders. Therefore people who do not learn the standardised language of a community and do not participate in the practices become marginalised. The system of practices was developed by Bourdieu, a prominent sociologist in the latter half of the twentieth century. He introduced the idea of the *habitus*, a way of describing practices (language, rituals, traditions) in the context of both their present and historical forms (Duranti, 1997).

Participation. Viewing culture in terms of participation is to say that any activity, any system of practices, must be seen as having a connection with other people and with participating in society, which, as I have stated above, is an important element of social inclusion. Language, spoken or written, is appropriate to this aspect, as it is inherently designed to communicate our needs and knowledge to others. However, in the world there are at least 7000 distinct languages (Simons and Fennig, 2018), so the idea of participation in terms of language meets a barrier when people find themselves outside their own community for longer than a few weeks. If such people are to participate fully, or even partially, in a new community, and being socially included, learning the standard language of the new community is an important way of avoiding marginalisation. The level at which women are allowed to participate in a particular society is an example of this aspect of culture, and is especially noticeable when there are major changes, such as after the French Revolution when women were severely inhibited from participating in the new regime, and even blamed for the faults of the previous regime (Gal, 1991), and after the Iranian revolution of 1979, when their status was suddenly downgraded and their ability to participate was limited (Ebadi, 2006).

Cultural Identity and nationality

Hall (2017) has made some observations about the relationship between culture, identity, race, and the migration of people with a common culture, or diaspora. In his published lecture, *Nations and Diasporas* (Hall, 2017), he connects culture with personal identity, nationality and the global spread of people. Firstly he says that that ethnicity and cultural difference, although they are associated with each other, are not synonymous; they are respectively biological and acquired. Secondly, cultural difference is closely connected with identity:

> '… the signifiers of cultural difference – language, history, values, beliefs, customs, rituals, traditions, and worlds of meaning – are all key elements in the discourses in which identification is constituted, transformed, and contested.' (Hall, 2017, pp. 126-127)

Identity, according to Hall, is not a fixed, predetermined aspect of ourselves; it is '… shaped and transformed historically and culturally' (*ibid.* p. 127). Cultural identity is not an essential feature with which we are born, but it is the result of 'positioning' ourselves in relation to the many discourses and experiences of which we are made aware. Burr (1995) eloquently confirms this idea when she says,

> 'Our identity … originates not from inside the person, but from the social realm, where people swim in a sea of language and other signs, a sea that is invisible to us because it is the very medium of our existence as social beings. In this sense the realm of language, signs and discourse is to the person as water is to the fish' (pp. 53-54).

Hall's concept of positioning means that a person's cultural identity cannot be determined simply by that person's race, as a stereotype, such as the historical colonial polarised view of 'civilised' versus 'savage', but by a less rigid concept, that ethnicity or cultural difference is fluid and not simplistically polarised. Similarly, Fromm, the twentieth century social psychologist, said that human identity traits such as greed are products of the type of society in which a person lives and that the whole idea of people having distinct individual personalities comes from being brought up in a society in which competition is a major factor (cited in Burr, 1995).

Hall expands these ideas on cultural identity and cultural difference to relate to the concept of a 'nation'. National identity, he says, is one of the main discourses which shape our individual cultural identity. The nation-state of the Western world, a development of tribe and religion, is a relatively modern concept which has allowed homogenous communities of people to become literate, develop language and form symbolic allegiance and identity. Hall says that nations generally use a narrative of history, symbols, rituals and shared experiences such as disasters and successes in order to create a sense of national identity and destiny.

Suppression of culture

However, even within nations that seem to have a unified and recognisable culture, there are different cultures which can be suppressed by the dominance of the majority culture. An example of this contradiction of being a recognisable culture while still being culturally varied, is the United Kingdom, where the terms 'English' and 'British' are seen by many outside as more or less synonymous, due to the political and cultural dominance of England over Ireland, Scotland and Wales in the course of the last 1000 years. In the nineteenth century 'Englishness' became a term

used to denote the birth right of a group of people, all male, who seemingly deserved greater power and freedom than women and members of other races, especially natives of the countries which were colonies of Britain. The archetypical ideal English person was a man (not a woman) with 'virtues' of self-restraint and bravery, with a 'stiff upper-lip' and emotionally stable, and seen as the ideal type of person who should rule the world. Social class in nineteenth century England was particularly divisive in terms of power and position (Auerbach, 2010). Another example of this paradox, the United States, is a culturally heterogeneous nation state which prides itself upon its seemingly unified 'American' identity, and has done so only in spite of its plurality and division and the marginalisation of ethnic groups (Spillers, 1991). Hall says that national cultures should be thought of as 'discursive-like in their mode of constructing collective identity' (Hall, 2017, p. 143). They are often based upon the common ground of history and tradition and the idea of self-determination (exemplified by the UK's current process of leaving the European Union), and race. Hall refers to the loss of the British colonies and the subsequent mass migration of Caribbean and Asian people to the UK in the 1950s and 1960's, and, more recently, the globalisation of Western nation-states, as examples of the destabilisation of a national culture and cultural identity.

Migration

For thousands of years, people in large numbers have moved, or have been forced to move, away from their native countries to escape from poverty, famine, danger or repression. But in the last 70 years, since the end of the Second World War, there has been an unprecedented flow of people, generally from global south to north, and Hall associates this with the perceived challenge to the national cultural identity of the nations (the USA, Canada, the UK and other European countries) who receive the people. This challenge can be the cause of resentment from the host community, who see their real or imagined traditional culture disappearing or being corrupted by the effects of immigration (Fenton and Mann, 2011). Hall also asserts that the negative feelings of host communities towards immigrant populations is not based so much on genetic difference as on cultural difference. Reactions to the supposed cultural erosion of Western societies have taken the form of the revival of racism in European politics in and of, for example, the call for the teaching of 'Britishness' (Shakespeare, for example) in the UK National Curriculum. (The mirror image of these reactions, is 'political correctness', which Hall describes as 'that other version of fundamentalism' (Hall, 2017, p. 152)). Vertovec (2011), in his review of negative attitudes of UK society towards immigrants, is cautiously optimistic that cultural change will be eventually accepted. As evidence of this he cites a cites a UNESCO report of 2009 as saying,

> ‘ … conceived in terms of fixed representations the Organization's longstanding concern has been with the conservation and safeguarding of endangered cultural sites, practices and expressions, it must now also learn to sustain cultural change.’ (p. 251).

The use of language when referring to immigrants is also a significant factor in showing host attitudes. Gullestadt (2002), surveying the effects of the attitude of the host community towards the immigration of Pakistanis into Norway, mentions the use of language in referring to immigrants. The Norwegian word for immigrant is *innvandrer,* which carries with it the connotation of a people forcibly entering a country, uninvited, unwelcome and aggressive, and this word is often used by those who believe that their Norwegian cultural values are being eroded.

Britain has traditionally had the reputation of being a humanitarian country for offering sanctuary to refugees (Ibrahim and Howarth, 2018). For example, the shrinking of the British Empire in the 1950s and 60s allowed the government to welcome and encourage many thousands of people from former colonies, various islands in the West Indies, for example, to settle there. Also vulnerable refugees such as European Jewish people around the time of World War II and Vietnamese families in the 1970s. More recently, and especially since the 2001 New York Twin Towers disaster of 2001, immigration in many countries, notably the USA, has been restricted by suspicion and distrust of immigrants – and even visitors – from certain parts of the world associated with extreme religious views (Poynter and Mason, 2007; Jones, 2011). Brexit is another event that has provided reasons for changing immigration policy and the general mood of the population regarding immigrants (Sumption, 2017). This inconsistency over time means that, in order to ascertain the attractive qualities that Britain had for my participants.

Asylum-seeking

What matters to the prospective asylum-seeker in the first instance is immigration policy, particularly that which is connected with asylum-seeking, rather than the attitude of sections of the general public, a problem the newcomer can deal with later. As I discuss in Chapter Five, the Geneva Convention, to which the UK has signed up, has been the driving force behind such policies. During the late 1970s and early 1980s the UK government (mainly under Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister) had experienced the mass migration of Vietnamese people escaping from the communist takeover of their country in the late 1970s. Many were given refugee status and were dispersed over the UK (Hatton, 2003; James, 2011). The Vietnamese diaspora occurred at about the same time as the beginning of the Iranian diaspora. However, none of my participants reported any major

problems with gaining entry or qualifying for asylum in the UK, neither those coming directly from Iran nor those coming indirectly from other countries, even those who found the journey difficult.

Cultural transformation

Hall's understanding of the cultural identity of the people of a diaspora is that their cultural traditions do not stay fixed as they were before the diaspora. The tradition they brought with them cannot be regarded as being static and unchanging, but is 'remade and transformed, … constantly recomposing as the relations of similarity and difference are repositioned – disarticulated and rearticulated – in new chains of equivalence' (pp. 170-171). In addition, the fact that diasporic subjects are in a kind of limbo, between the home to which they cannot return and their new home, means that they have to learn to adopt two or more cultures in terms of language and social norms. This complex cultural identity, forever changing and adapting, is described by Hall as 'taking part in an unfinished game' (p. 174). This means that the women who are the subject of my study have had to be flexible in their new lives, dealing with the many aspects of living in the UK that conflicted with their traditional culture, and with the patriarchal norms and gender restrictions of Iranian family life. Later in this chapter I shall review some research which illustrates the problems that people of the Iranian diaspora, particularly women, have had in dealing with the conflict between the host culture and their own traditional values.

Culture, socialisation and language

Culture is also imbricated in early childhood through socialisation. When children are born, they immediately begin to be socialised by everything they experience, whether it be by what they see and hear, by how they are treated and by how they have to modify their behaviour to fit in with the culture of their society or group (Colman, 2015). Recently (since the 1980s) it has been realised by anthropologists and sociologists that socialisation varies considerably within different ethnic and cultural groups in different parts of the world, and that a very important aspect of socialisation is that of language (Kulik and Schieffelin, 2004). It was also realised in the last 20 years or so that socialisation does not stop at the end of childhood; it continues throughout life (Pessin and Arpino, 2018; Kim and Cheung, 2015). This is especially so when major changes happen to people and they have to adapt to the new situation, as in the case of the women of this study. They and their families were uprooted from the society and culture in which they had grown up and had to begin new lives in places with cultures very different from that of Iran, mostly very mixed ethnically and culturally. Immigrants such as these women find themselves in cultures where not only the practicalities of life,

such as money, housing and food, are different from what they are used to, but also the general attitudes and values of the culture can also be very different. These values include attitudes to gender, politics and social behavioural norms, which require language to make newcomers to society aware of them (Modood, 2007). Therefore, socialisation has to be experienced by immigrants in order for them to be assimilated into the new culture, and learning the language of the dominant group is essential for that to happen. But, what happens when socialisation does not take place?

Marginalisation

There are several reasons for individuals and cultural groups to experience social exclusion. Examples are colonization, military invasion, migration, and travel (tourism, international study, and overseas posting in work, for example) (Berry, 2005). However, one common effect can occur in Note that Scott's definition is not essentially different from the aforementioned Lenoir's description of social exclusion.

most cases of acculturation: marginalisation. The group of people who have to migrate because of difficulties or political opposition are marginal in their country of origin; those who live or temporarily stay in a new country are marginal there too.

Marginalisation has been defined as:

> 'A process by which a group or individual is denied access to important positions and symbols of economic, religious, or political power within any society. A marginal group may actually constitute a numerical majority—as in the case of Blacks in South Africa—and should perhaps be distinguished from a minority group, which may be small in numbers, but has access to political or economic power.' (Scott, 2014, online source)

So marginalisation does not necessarily depend upon the size of a group, but on its status in society. It can be applied to immigrants or to people who were born in the country, to people of a particular religion, to those who have little economic power and to those of a particular ethnic background (Capetillo-Ponce and Abrer-Rodriguez, 2010).

There are complications and subdivisions to marginalisation: for example, an immigrant from a certain country who is of one particular religion may marginalise those from the same country of another religion or no religion (Rudmin, 2009). The negative psychological state of marginalised people who exist between two cultures can be detrimental to their acculturation, but the acquisition of the language of their new country is an important factor in helping them to assimilate (La Framboise, 1993). Women and men who migrate from countries such as Iran can have different

experiences in assimilating with their host society. Women can feel shame and guilt at having to become the 'breadwinners' of their families, gaining educational qualifications, which conflicts with their traditional roles in the family, and men feel shame at their inability to find work and become dependent upon their wives and daughters (Rashidian *et al.*, 2013). Female immigrants can also feel guilty about departing from their old cultural practices and norms and for 'having natural human inclinations, for being female and for being the targeted reason for real or imagined family dishonour.' (*ibid.* p. 869), which can result in a type of marginalisation caused by shame and the need to behave secretly. The difference between their old culture and their new environment can make them more aware of their ability to be more independent.

Cultural resistance

Moghissi (1999), having observed and interviewed abused Iranian women in Canada, draws attention to a phenomenon that occurs in immigrant communities known as *cultural resistance.* This can occur when immigrants feel rejected by the host society, causing an exaggerated sense of the importance of their own culture and traditions and the immigrant community turns in on itself. 'Resentment against the dominant culture and the values it represents turns the indigenous culture into a pole of resistance' (*ibid.* p. 208). Features of traditional culture such as patriarchal power, misogynist views, racism and the suppression of individualistic views are given even more strength than they would be in the native country, especially within the family. Women in particular are disadvantaged by this form of marginalisation, as they can be forced to avoid contact with the host society and its culture by the rigid application of regulations within their own community, depriving them of the chance to study for qualifications and learn the host language, amongst other things.

Double standards can also be evident within Iranian immigrant families and communities, as women who attempt to gain educational qualifications and learn the host language are not seen by their families as fulfilling their traditional roles while, at the same time, those women who prefer voluntarily to stay at home and behave in a traditional way, are criticised by their husbands as being 'lazy' (Saghedi, 2008). Moghissi also found that Immigrant men can also be marginalised, especially if they lose their role as the breadwinners of the family, and in their host countries they often cannot obtain work at the same level of pay they previously had in Iran – or any work at all. They can have low self-esteem and do not assimilate with the host society. She found that women are not affected as much as the men in terms of mental health and assimilation with the dominant society because they can better tolerate lower work status.

Acculturation, adaptation and assimilation

Another factor of acculturation is that of time. Acculturation is a process that can take decades, or even centuries to develop in the case of cultural groups. In the short term, when the immigrant is a newcomer, there is a lot to learn in a little time. However, the process of acculturation can go on for a lifetime, and, for immigrant communities, for centuries (Berry, 2005). This long-term process is called *adaptation,* which can involve learning the host population's language, adopting their style of dress, their food preferences and their social behaviour. The host population can also adapt to the immigrants' culture by encouraging diversity and cultural pluralism. Another similar term, *assimilation*, is used to describe an outcome of acculturation in which the immigrant group has adopted many of the cultural traits, behaviours and values of the dominant society and has reached a point where they can fully participate in the life of their new country; they have achieved social inclusion. This applies to both individuals and whole groups (Guarnaccia and Hausmann-Stabile, 2016).

In reality perfect assimilation, where the immigrant population would completely adopt the cultural; values of the dominant one, for various reasons, rarely happens, and should not be expected. The ideal of the 'melting pot', (or 'straight line immigration framework') where people are completely assimilated in such a way that they have few traits which can be identified as belonging to any cultural group other than the dominant one, is rarely achieved and is not necessarily desirable (Kao *et al,* 1995; Berry, 2005; Steinberg, 2013). One of the reasons for its rarity is that the cultural traditions of a particular ethnic group are never completely forgotten, even in further generations of that group (Rumbaut, 1997). Physical traits, such as skin colour and facial appearance, can also inhibit the assimilation of certain groups and individuals. Studies conducted in the USA have shown that levels of exogamy (marriage outside one's own race or cultural group) are much lower amongst people with distinctive ethnic appearance, such as African-Americans and Asians (Steinberg, 2013). Another factor concerns the reasons for immigration. African-Americans in the USA were in the peculiar position of not having originally entered the country voluntarily, and so had neither the incentive nor the support of the dominant culture to assimilate; they had, as slaves, been there since the foundation of the USA and have in general been repressed and marginalised ever since (Capetillo-Ponce, 2010) . However, even if African-Americans have little original culture to identify with, they have developed their own very distinctive cultural identity, especially in music, which has given them a certain amount of eminence in the West (Steinberg, 2013), but this is not a 'melting pot' situation.

Although acculturation can generally considered to be a positive outcome of immigration, it does have some negative aspects, which I shall explore in the next section.

The drawbacks of acculturation

Rumbaut (2008) and Saunders *et al.* (2015) have noted that acculturation can have its drawbacks: the children of *new* immigrants to the USA, for example, generally have better health, birth rates and lower crime rates than those of the host culture, but these advantages are lost once they become assimilated. This effect has been referred to as the 'immigrant epidemiological paradox' (Baker *et al,* 2015). For example, Kao and Tienda (1995) found, in their review of American eighth-graders' (13-year-olds') educational results, that the children of first generation immigrants in the USA had greater educational achievement than that of the children of later generations, in spite of the former group's lower English skills. This advantage is attributed to the relative optimism of new immigrant parents and their high aspirations and plans for their children, causing them to be more interested in their children's education than are more acculturated parents, and to encourage it. However, this advantage is lost once immigrant groups become more assimilated with the dominant society and become more like the general population in life style (Rumbaut, 2008). Nevertheless, research has shown that this effect is not always true, as acculturation is complex and depends upon many factors (David *et al.,* 2018; Baker *et al.,* 2015).

The connection between acculturation levels and birth outcomes is not very clear. Fuentes-Afflick *et al* (2014), studied the retrospective experiences of 1,243 ethnically diverse female immigrant subjects who had had postnatal depression in Northern California in terms of their birthplace, English proficiency, length of time in the host country and age at entry. Noticing that there was a tendency for less acculturated immigrant women to have better birth outcomes than women in the dominant society and more acculturated women, they suggested that this was connected to the socially vulnerable women reporting better prenatal care than the reference group, but also that the women could have found the prenatal care in the USA to be better than that in their countries of origin. However, David *et al.* (2018) found, in their study of Turkish immigrants in Berlin, that there was no significant difference between birth outcomes and prenatal care in the immigrant population and the dominant group. The results of such studies suggest that the issue of birth outcome is complex, and depends very much on the origin of the immigrants (Wiking *et al.,* 2004) and the access to medical services available in the country of residence.

The myth of immigrants and crime

One important aspect of the acculturation process is the way in which immigrants are perceived in the minds of the host population, especially negative views such as supposed criminal behaviour. This effect has been attributed to the strain felt by immigrants between their original culture and their new one (Knight *et al,* 2009). It is a common myth that immigrants are more likely than people in the host society to commit crimes in their host country (Kardel and Martens, 2013; Vaughn and Salas-Wright, 2018). This myth could be part of a moral panic fuelled by the media: Burchner *et al* (2015), studying the media and voters in 12 European countries, found a strong positive correlation between the media coverage of immigrant-related crimes and voters choosing anti-immigrant parties in elections. The connection between crime and acculturation is complex, as immigrants come from many different cultures and legal systems and from different levels of society, but some researchers have found a rise in the number of arrests and convictions among immigrants as the length of time after arriving increases (Alvarez-Rivera *et al*, 2013; Kardel and Martens, 2013). and also to the amount of discrimination experienced as immersion in the culture of the new country increases (Smokowski *et al,* 2009). It has also been noticed that general crime levels, especially lethal violence, tend to reduce in areas of cities where there has been a recent influx of immigrants (Alvarez-Rivera *et al*, 2013). This has been attributed partly to self-policing within tightly-knit ethnic communities (Kardel and Martens, 2013). One of the reasons suggested for this reduction in crime is that two-parent families are more common in immigrant populations and this is known to have a positive effect upon the reduction of crime amongst young people generally (*ibid*).

Stress

Another factor in the level of acculturation achieved is that of stress, which can occur, for example, when an individual feels inferior to another culture in the same place, incompetent to deal with life, uncertainty about the future, lacks achievement and a lack of identity (La Framboise, 1993; Kelly, 2016). These feelings of stress can result in an individual or group not being socially included enough to do things like taking part in politics, resulting in underrepresentation in government or learning the language of the receiving society. Kelly (2016), studying the underrepresentation of Hispanic people in Texas, found that this effect can result from the idea of there being a long established and self-sustaining ‘power elite’ in the host country, often formed upon racial grounds, giving racial minorities the false perception that they should not even try to take part in the running of the country. Greater knowledge and understanding of the power structure of the host country on the part of the minority population can help to alleviate the problem of underrepresentation (*ibid.*).

As will be appreciated from the various effects just described, acculturation is far from simple. Every combination of factors, such as ethnicity, culture, expectations, means and health, has a different effect, and the role of language adaptation is another factor that is explored in this study of one particular group of immigrants. Because it is a global phenomenon which happens to many people, the process of acculturation has been of great interest to sociologists, psychologists and researchers in other fields of study. The next section will describe some of the methods used in analysing and studying acculturation.

The study of acculturation

The study of acculturation has been carried out ever since colonisation has occurred because of an interest in the process and effects of different cultures coming together, and it has been useful for the colonisers in maintaining control (Berry, 2013). An example of this type of control was during the Raj period in India, where the British colonised a country with a very different culture from their own (Ashcroft, 2009). More recently, acculturation studies have been concerned with the migration of people and the reciprocal effects upon both cultures and individuals and also with how people from different ethnic backgrounds interact with the dominant culture (for example, Wiking *et al,* 2004, who found a strong connection between ethnicity and low self-reported health in Sweden, Rashidian, 2013, studying the self-perceived gender roles of Iranian woman in the USA, and Saunders *et al.,* 2018, who studied the correlation between quality of health and duration of residence of immigrants in Canada.)

Acculturation can be studied from both a psychological and sociological point of view, as it concerns society as a whole and also the individual. Every immigrant person's experience is different, which is why in this research I am asking a number of women about their personal experience as well as studying the literature to gain a wider picture of the process and to put the experience of the women into context.

The study of the acculturation of a certain set of people must take into account their background before they migrated. What was their culture in their country of origin? What were the circumstances that caused them to migrate? Also important is the situation that existed in the country to which they moved, since acculturation produces changes in the dominant culture too. The relative compatibility of the dominant and non-dominant cultures must be examined as well as

the nature of the contact relationships (domination, mutual respect or hostility, for example). Studying this aspect of acculturation would involve a comparison of the immigrants' culture with that of the dominant culture. Discourses or discussions on this theme can include strong religious faith versus strong secularism (as in France, for example), perceived differences in society (for example, the Muslim idea that Western society is decadent) and the traditional suspicion of 'foreigners' amongst the dominant society (Madood,2007). In order to understand the relationship between the immigrant and host societies, it is essential also to assess the changes that have taken place in both societies in the light of the acculturation and adaptation processes (Berry, 2013). In the present study, it is important to assess both the general changes in Iranian culture in the UK and the specific changes that have occurred in the lives of the immigrant participants. All these aspects of acculturation study can of course be applied to both the society and to the individual. In my study of a particular set of Iranian immigrants, all of these aspects of study must be considered, but of particular importance is the contrast between the culture in Iran as they grew up, the new culture which arose before they left Iran and the situation in the UK when they arrived

Describing and measuring acculturation

Berry's fourfold paradigm

Some researchers have devised systematic methods or models for classifying the different ways in which acculturation can occur (Ward and Kus, 2012; Schwartz *et al*., 2014). One method that has become a standard in acculturation research is called 'the fourfold paradigm'. This classic model, devised by Berry (2005; 2013) describes the degree and quality of adaptation from the points of view of both the dominant (host) and non-dominant cultures and he uses a diagram to illustrate the model (figure 1).

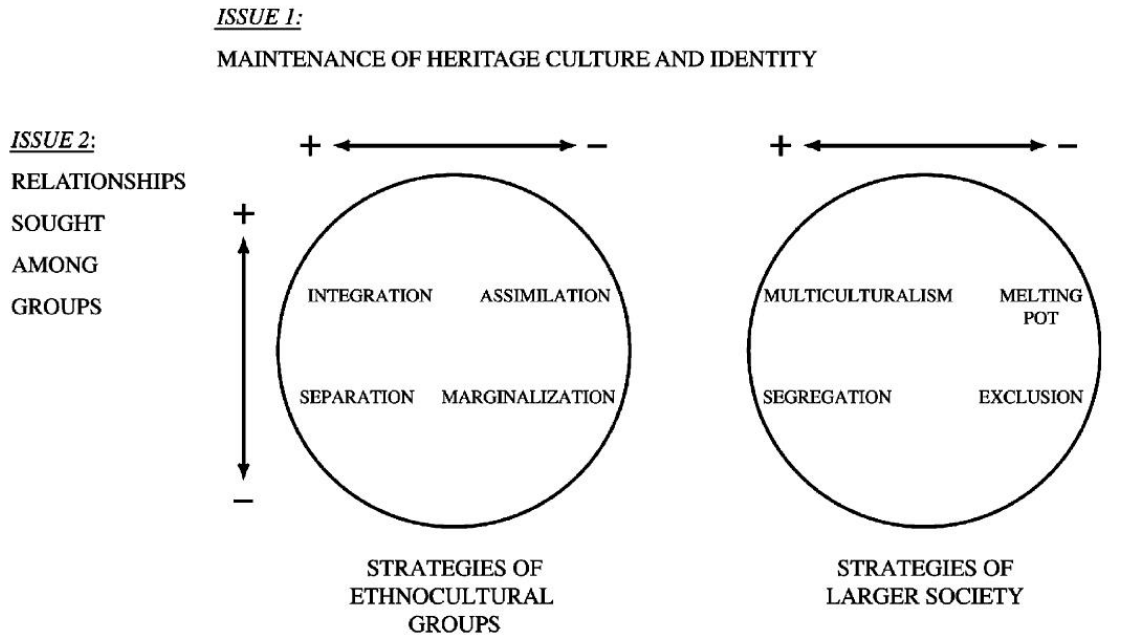

Figure 1: Berry's fourfold model of acculturation (Berry, 2005)

In this diagram Berry uses eight terms to describe the various stages or degrees of adaptation that can occur in the acculturation process, four concerning the immigrant group and four from the viewpoint of the host society. Travelling from left to right, a person or group is identified less with their own culture and more with the dominant one, and going from top to bottom, they are less determined or able to seek a state of acceptance by the dominant society. The term *integration* means that different cultures keep their cultural identity while also being able to participate in the wider society, while *assimilation* is the same but with the loss of the immigrant's culture (Modood, 2007). *Separation* occurs when a group or individual wishes to take no part in the dominant culture and keeps their original culture, but when someone is neither able to hold on to their heritage culture nor are they able to take part in the dominant culture, then *marginalization* occurs. A marginalized person exists on the edges of society, often not by choice and not always part of a minority; black South Africans, for example, were denied full access to the general society by the government, a legacy of colonialism (Scott, 2014; Modood, 2007). The historical British links with Iran in the late 19th century and most of the 20th century may have some effect on the attitudes of the government in the UK, but Iran was not a colony of Britain and it is doubtful if this would be directly relevant to this study (Ansari, 2007). If the dominant group is controlling the degree of acculturation of a particular set of migrants, then other terms are used because the viewpoint has shifted. Berry (1999) warns his readers against assuming that those who are new immigrants to a

country can always choose the type and degree of acculturation they want: '… integration can only be "freely" chosen and successfully pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity' (p. 14). It is this dynamic relationship and contrast between the requirements of the host society (and their government) and the needs and desires of the immigrants that produces the particular terms, such as *multiculturalism* and *integration*, used in the study of acculturation to show different points of view. Berry (*ibid.*) cites the Canadian government's policy of Multiculturalism (see below) as an example of a dominant group having strategy of helping, not necessarily forcing, a particular mode of acculturation upon immigrants.

Multiculturalism is a loose term, considered in the present context to mean the state of being a member of a recognised distinct group of people who also have a shared citizenship and national identity with the dominant society (Modood, 2007). A multicultural society as has also been defined as:

> A society characterized by cultural pluralism—as in the cases of the United States and post-war Britain. As an ideal, multi-culturalism celebrates cultural variety (for example linguistic and religious diversity), and may be contrasted with the assimilationist ideal assumed in many early studies of race, ethnicity, and immigration. (Scott, 2014, online source)

As this definition states, multiculturalism differs from assimilation, as it implies that different groups keep their particular cultural identity (language, religion, food, for example), but at the same time are accepted into the dominant society. An example is that of French Canadians in Eastern Canada, who officially retain their language. Multiculturalism is seen politically to be a 'liberal' idea and also as being difficult to implement in the real world because of the perceived paradox of having very different cultures existing together (Ghender, 2016). Attitudes towards immigrants in general and those from the Middle East in particular have changed negatively since the various terrorist attacks in London and elsewhere in Europe in the first 20 years of the 21st Century, and multiculturalism has been regarded with suspicion by the host populations and even by scholars (Abdelaaty and Steele, 2022). Foster (2012), writing about the new, official multiculturalist policy which began in late twentieth century Canada, argues that multiculturalism must involve a large amount of compromise or trade-off between '… freedom and tyranny, with the exact positioning on the sliding scale flowing out of the history of the consciousness that is the state itself' (p. 150). He adds that the freedom and tyranny thus created are shared equally by all: 'The state is an equal-opportunity friend or bigot' (p. 150). However, Foster is well aware of the legacy of the French and English colonial history of the country, which has produced a society socially and racially stratified along the lines set down by the colonists, but he sees the official policy of multiculturalism as a form of self-determination and a way

of freeing Canada from this legacy. It is worth noting that this official policy encompasses gender equality in addition to that of race (Sachar, 2016).

The term *melting pot* is defined by Berry (2005) as 'the powerful role played by the dominant group in influencing the way in which acculturation would take place.' In other words, the dominant society wants the immigrants to join in its society and to lose their original cultural identity. This policy is often associated with the USA, which wants immigrants to lose their culture and language in favour of the host culture (Safdar *et al,* 2009). *Segregation* and *exclusion* are similar to *separation* and *marginalisation,* but are imposed by the dominant society (Berry, 2005).

Although Berry's two-dimensional schematic has been found to be useful by many acculturation researchers, his model has been criticized for being too simplistic and theoretical (Tadmore *et al,* 2009). It can also be considered to have ignored the reality of the acculturation process by not taking account of self-reported behavioural information (Ward and Kus, 2012). However, there are other methods of measuring and describing acculturation.

Alternative ways of measuring acculturation

Acculturation research has grown a lot in recent years, and many different measures of acculturation have been developed (Ward and Kus, 2012). For example, researchers such as Schwartz *et al* (2014) have devised a method of measurement involving three domains: practices, values and identifications under two dimensions: receiving culture acquisition and heritage-culture retention. *Practices* are aspects of behaviour such as language use, types of food eaten and choice of entertainment. *Values* are connected with how much importance is felt by an individual or a social group, and *identifications* is a measurement of solidarity felt within the country and social group and the relative amounts of individualism and collectivism experienced. This type of measurement is associated more with psychology than with sociology, as it is concerned more with feelings and behaviour than with external measurements.

Additionally, the focus of research has shifted from more objective reporting of acculturation situations towards a more individual self-reporting of behaviour, attitude and experience in acquiring English language skills, which I intend to be the focus in my study. Therefore both Berry's sociological model, in conjunction with Schwartz's more psychological, participant based approach, is useful here because it looks at acculturation from both the outside and the inside, from the researchers and from the participants' points of view.

The role of language in acculturation

> 'A significant fact about the behaviour of human beings in relation to their social environment is that a large part of it is linguistic behaviour' (Halliday, 1997, p.31).

The importance of language in being able to function as a member of society is not to be underestimated. Anything people need to do within a society, whether it be bureaucratic, political, work, shopping, dealing with government services or learning about the culture requires some form of language to make it work (Duranti, 1997). 'Language is not just a representation of an independently established world. Language is also that world' (*ibid*., p. 337). Therefore, if people are to spend more than a few weeks, or the rest of their lives, in a new country, it is both practical and desirable for them to learn the language of the dominant society. Otherwise they are likely to become marginalised individually or as a group, using only their own language and isolated within their own culture, socially excluded from the host society.

The Sapir-Whorf hypotheses

The idea that a person's language controls or influences his or her way of thinking has been around for at least 200 years. For example, Humboldt (1767 – 1835) indicated a connection between language and outlook on life (Sidnell and Enfield, 2012). One of the first anthropologists to realise that the study of the language of a community as it was used was a way of understanding the culture of that community was Boas (1858 -1942) (Mithun, 2004). He studied the language of Native Americans, their grammar in everyday conversations in particular, because it was very different from that of European languages. Boas taught his students in New York how to use this to describe the culture of the people being studied. One of those students was Sapir (1884 – 1939) who in his turn taught Whorf (1897 – 1941). Sapir and Whorf separately stated their basic ideas as follows:

> 'It is quite an illusion to imagine that one adjusts to reality essentially without the use of language and that language is essentially a means of solving specific problems of communication or reflection. The fact of the matter is that the "real world" is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group.' (Sapir, 1949, quoted in Duranti, 1997, p.60).

> 'Users of markedly different grammars are pointed by their grammars toward different types of observations and different evaluations of externally similar acts of observation' (Whorf, quoted in Athanasopoulosa and Albright, 2016, p. 666).

The observation by Sapir, based upon his study of Native American culture and languages, that language and cognition are closely linked, inspired his pupil Whorf to produce two hypotheses in a 'strong' version and a 'weak' one. The strong version says that language *determine*s thought and that particular forms of language limit and *determine* thought while the weak version says that the use of a particular language only *influences* thought and decisions. This pair of hypotheses is known as the 'Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (although Sapir and Whorf did not work together) and comes under the heading of 'linguistic relativity'. As an example, when studying the language of the Hopi native American Indians, Whorf observed that their concept of number was different from that of speakers of European languages. While the Hopi had a concept of ten men, they had no way of talking about ten days. 'Ten men' can be seen with the eyes, but 'ten days' exists only in the imagination. They had to use a construct such as 'He stayed until the eleventh day'. Other differences, in nouns of physical quantity, seasons of the year and verb tenses, for example, were also seen by Whorf to have an effect on the way the Hopi thought (Duranti , 1997; Whorf, 2001). However, the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, especially the weak version, does not necessarily mean that if there are no words in a language to express a particular thought, then that concept does not exist for those speakers; it is not deterministic but relativistic (Athanasopoulosa, 2016).

The concept of linguistic relativity as proposed by Whorf and Sapir has inspired a great deal of empirical research into the connection between language and culture (for example, Boroditsky, 2001; Athanasopoulosa and Albright, 2016), but it has not been without its critics. A minor criticism was that Whorf's use of the Hopi language as an example was found to be not always accurate in its details (Duranti, 1997). A more fundamental objection was put forward by Berlin and Kay (1969) who saw a consistent pattern in the naming and hierarchy of colours in at least 20 different world languages. The number of colour names present in a language can show the level to which the language has evolved and the order in which the colours appear is universal, even amongst unrelated languages (namely, [black/white], [red], [green/yellow], [blue], [brown], [purple/pink/orange/grey].) They considered this to refute the idea that each language has its own peculiar connection with world view; there are basic patterns which are universal. However, others in their turn have criticised Berlin and Kay for misinterpreting Whorf's ideas. Whorf himself said that such universal patterns exist because that is the way that the world presents itself, that universal patterns exist below the level of language and that we are free to choose words to fit them or not (Lucy and Shweder, 1979).

Another kind of criticism of Whorf's hypotheses concerns the basic connection he makes between language and thought. Pinker (1994) strongly denounced linguistic relativity, as a 'conventional absurdity' (cited in Casasanto, 2008) and brushes it off as an idea created when the study of thought was in its infancy. But Pinker's criticism is considered by Casasanto (2008) to be the result of his confusion between two different concepts: *language equals thinking* and *language shapes thinking*. Pinker seems to equate Whorf's hypotheses with George Orwell's idea, from his book *1984*, that people think in a particular language. Casasanto argues that linguistic relativity does not state this. Rather, it states that language *influences* thought. Whorf's basic principle was that there is a strong bond between language and culture, which must be studied together, as they affect each other (Coupland and Jaworsky, 1997).

In the present study, the women have spoken and written Farsi all of their lives. If Whorf's hypotheses are valid, they will have a different way of thinking than those brought up using English. For example, the Farsi language has no masculine and feminine pronouns, leading to puzzlement in the mind of an Iranian emailer quoted in Alavi (2005): 'Why is it then that our ancestors did not feel the necessity to distinguish between the sexes when it came to our language? So where did we inherit this chauvinistic present-day culture from?' (p. 168).

The effects of language levels and acculturation

Research has suggested that acculturation and the difficulties in learning a new language are strongly linked in a reciprocal way. For example, Jiang *et al* (2009), in studying Chinese students in an American University, discovered that the more the students were assimilated with the dominant society, the better their oral proficiency and, in its turn, oral proficiency helped with their acculturation while still spending a significant amount of time in their own culture. While it seems obvious that learning a second language is made easier by immersion in the society which speaks that language, the result suggests the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis that language and culture are interdependent.

The use of participant-observation (Malinowsky)

Besides Sapir and Whorf, other people, such as Bronislaw Malinowski (1884 – 1942), have had ideas about the purpose of language in society (Duranti, 1997). Malinowski, an anthropologist mainly studying the native people of islands near Papua New Guinea, believed that to do this work properly one should thoroughly learn the language of the people being studied, be able to converse with them fluently and share their lives to get a deeper understanding of their culture (Saville-Troike,

1989). This way of studying different cultures is known as 'participant-observation' (Duranti, 1997). After more than ten years of research in the 1920s and 1930s, Malinowski arrived at the notion that 'the main function of language is not to express thought, not to duplicate mental processes, but rather to play an active pragmatic part in human behaviour.' (quoted in Duranti, 1997, p. 216). In other words, the purpose of all languages is connected with achieving results and interacting with others. Culture is thought of as the environment in which the individual can choose, through language, a range of options dependent on the particular context (Halliday, 1997). Language and culture are thus closely connected.

Linguistic relativity

The ideas of Whorf, Malinowski's hypotheses were seminal to the study of linguistic anthropology and other researchers, such as Stephen Levinson, have further developed the pragmatic principle originated by Malinowsky. However, as with Whorf, Malinowski's writings have not avoided criticism. For example, Tambaiah (1968) has pointed out some anomalies in Malinowski's work on the language of magic, in that he failed to connect different uses of language with an overall concept (Duranti, 1997). Even so, Tambaiah, in his study of magic rituals (1968), supported and praised Malinowski's ideas and methods. In the study of linguistic relativism, the relationship between language and ritual is seen as an important link between a view of life. Ritual, even in so-called 'advanced' societies, is often an important way of controlling thought. For example, in an interesting study by Bara (2013) of interactions between American doctors and children and adults with HIV in Botswana, the doctors trained the patients in using ritual speech, words and phrases such as 'bad guy', instead of 'AIDS' because the latter word was associated in the patients' minds with inevitable death. This kind of ritual carries with it the power to alter viewpoints, and perhaps immigrants such as my participants, may find that learning English can free them from being trapped in thought processes that could inhibit their acculturation.

When immigrants have been arriving in their new country for several generations, such as Pakistanis in the UK and Italians in the USA, there is a typical pattern in their acquisition of a new language. In the first generation of immigrants, the parents speak their own language to their children, who learned English at school and in contact with other children. When the children become parents, they prefer to use English with their children, but still retain the mother tongue within their community, but their children, the third generation, speak only English. So it typically takes three generations for a monolingual community to be formed (Fellin, 2014). However, the Iranian women with whom this study is concerned were first-generation migrant adults who may or may not already

have had some level of skill in English, and brought their own culture and language to the UK. (Borjian, 2013). I continue this chapter with a survey of the present state of English language learning in Iran, the educational opportunities my participants may have had before they left the country and the effects that this may have had upon their English language abilities in arrival in Britain.

English language learning in Iran

At the present time, English language learning and usage is encouraged, or perhaps tolerated, in Iran as a useful tool in the modern world to encourage tourism, to allow university students to study scientific and technical subjects and in media such as advertising, in spite of the current trend of the government to steer the country away from links with the West and the East (Baumgardner and Brown, 2012, Kennedy, 2015). Before the Revolution, English was an official second language, with English language newspapers and radio stations, and used even by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Immediately following the Revolution English language teaching and usage were prohibited. At that time there was a period of 'indigenisation', when the new leaders wanted to turn the country away from reliance upon and influence by 'western' nations such as the USA and European countries. The leaders aimed to create a self-reliant nation which had a culture based entirely upon the principles of Islam. This meant also that they did not believe in nationalism, as the idea of separate and distinct nations is not considered to be Islamic, so they envisaged links with the larger Islamic world, and which also meant that anything associated with their 'enemies', mainly in the English-speaking world, was to be avoided and repressed. So every foreign language (English, French and German) school was closed, foreign teachers were ousted from the country, foreign textbooks removed from schools and universities and an indigenous publishing house established (Borjian 2013).

As a contrast, today in Iran, English language teaching (ELT) is considered by the authorities and students to be of great importance and English is again the official second language of the country (Mirhosseini and Badri, 2018). However, the suspicion by Iran that the USA and other western powers are trying to promote their ways of life through ELT persists. In fact, the US Government has publicly let it be known that ELT is one of the methods they have generally been using to promote the American culture and way of life (US Government, 2010). This means that there is a conflict between the utility of learning English and taking care not to cause dissatisfaction with the Iranian culture in the minds of students. In a study by Mirhosseini and Badri (2018) of the attitudes of

Iranian students at an Iranian ELT school to learning English in Iran, one student said, 'We basically like to live like the Westerners. Western lifestyle is so interesting to us. … It's the same in the case of their language. We like being able to talk in their language.' (p. 293). The study found that most of the 855 students in higher education questioned (by interview and questionnaire) gave answers suggesting that they regarded learning English as an instrument for widening their interests in life, gaining employment, being able to emigrate and being able read texts that helped them with further education. Of course, it could be that the participants were guarded in their answers for fear of reprisal, even though the study was presumably done anonymously. With regard to the discussion of politics in Iranian ELT institutes, in an earlier study by Mirhosseini *et al.* (2017) it was found that, in spite of the official disapproval of criticising Iran and learning about Western lifestyles, the teachers in the ELT institute where the study was conducted felt free to introduce their own views into class discussions. Even the strict dress code (wearing the *hijab*, for example) was criticised by students and teachers. It was not seen by the teachers as a problem then, during the lessons, by reading English texts, middle-class students of both sexes were made aware of life in other countries, even though words referring to alcoholic drinks, for example, were edited out. As a consequence, the students expressed to the researchers feelings of dissatisfaction with life in Iran. It seems that learning English can provoke feelings of dissatisfaction with Iranian life in the minds of students, but at the same time the authorities in Iran are promoting it as a tool for enriching the country.

The participants' levels of English on arrival

Since the women of this study grew up in pre-revolutionary times, it is highly likely that they had some basic knowledge of English and British/ American culture, as there were many opportunities to learn English before the Revolution, at least for those who needed it for work, travelled abroad or were studying at a higher level (Mirhosseini and Badri, 2018). (The ability level of my participants' English when they arrived in Britain is described in detail Chapter Seven.) Since the early 1950s, English had been the main foreign language taught in Iran. In Tehran there were American and British schools where English was the main language, the British Council and Iran-American Society ran classes and had libraries; the oil companies taught English to their workers; there were English language newspapers and a radio station broadcasting in English; and it was taught in schools at a secondary age, replacing French (but not always very well, as there was a shortage of school teachers for the subject) (Baumgardber and Brown, 2012, Borjian, 2013).

It is likely then that the close link between language and culture can cause problems when the regime of a country abruptly changes, as in the case of Iran, and also when migration to other countries occurs as a result. The initial level of English brought to the UK by the professional women of this study, their specific learning experience in Iran, as well as the general state of language education in the UK, will be revealed when I analyse the interview data I have collected in Chapters six, seven and eight.

Studies on migrant Iranian women's acculturation

Although many of the women and men who emigrated from Iran did so because they were vulnerable and unable to participate in society as they had previously after the hardening of religious and political attitudes resulting from the 1979 Revolution (Buchan, 2012), they still took with them much of the culture in which they had grown up, and an examination of a selection of studies made on both female and male Iranian immigrants in various parts of the world will reveal some of the important factors and general patterns in their acculturation in the light of the cultural attitudes about gender still present in their culture. It is also useful to find out how strong a factor learning the host language is in these cases of acculturation. Because the vast majority of these Iranian migrants went to the USA and Canada (Shahim, 2007), that is where most studies have been carried out, leaving the UK open to more research. However, Sweden and The Netherlands are also well represented. Not all of the studies I found were purely centred on women (Ghaffarian, 1998; Sadeghi, 2008; Rashidian, 2013), but the contrast in acculturation between women and men was examined in most of the papers. It is not surprising to discover that, in many of these studies, the authors themselves are professional women with a high level of education who fled from Iran not long after the Revolution and use their own experience to verify and validate the research and to create trust in the minds of the participants.

The effects of the host culture on immigrants

Rashidian *et al* (2013) made a study of 24 first generation Iranian-American women in Southern California, who had emigrated from Iran between 1977 and 1985. The age range was from 26 to 70 and the mean age 47.8 years at the time of the study. Rashidian, the principal author, was herself such a person, a fact which helped her to gain the trust of the participants. (I discuss the effect of a researcher and her participants sharing similar experiences in more detail in the Methodology chapter of this thesis.) Rashidian used a qualitative/narrative method, with the participants being

interviewed between 2006 and 2008, and audio recorded in both Farsi and English. The main focus of the study was to analyse the women's experience in terms of the concept of their sexual-selves and gender roles.

Rashidian *et al*'s analysis revealed that there was a great amount of tension between the women's original culture and their new freer social environment, leading to feelings of fear, shame and guilt. One of Rashidian's participants said that the culture of her homeland '… moved with me … it was haunting me.' (p. 871). With the opportunity to be more independent of their husbands in America came difficulties in actually achieving a degree of independence while maintaining the gender roles in which they had been brought up. The concept of an Iranian woman being a *khanoum*, a person responsible for the honour of the family, proved to be an enormous challenge to the women in their host country. Men did not have this role. Other prescribed roles of women in Iranian culture are *delssooz* (compassionate) mother, *sar-be-zeer* (submissive) daughter and *najeeb* (chaste) wife (p. 872). The traditional patriarchal Iranian culture of the immigrants was severely tested by the relatively egalitarian society (in terms of gender) in which the immigrant families found themselves. Another factor was that, in many cases, in the host country the Iranian women had lower social status than they had had in Iran and in America they had to work in minimum wage jobs. Their husbands, finding it difficult to be employed, feared losing their role as prime breadwinners, which led to strife within the family. Keeping traditional gender roles in the family was hampered by this tension between Iranian culture and the culture of the host country, as the women suddenly realised how much they had been suppressed in Iran, even before the Revolution.

However, with there being a difference of 44 years between the youngest and oldest of the Rashidan's participants, there was a corresponding difference in their levels of acculturation. In general, the younger women (the youngest was about 5 years old when she entered America) had had less exposure to traditional cultural values than the older ones and, by the time they reached their late teens, felt less controlled by these values, and some even had the confidence to marry outside the Iranian-American community. Of course, those who were children on arrival went to American schools, learnt English and had more connection with life outside their home culture. There was also a difference in acculturation between those who were already married and those who were single or divorced at the time of arrival; the unmarried women felt less influenced by traditional values, and the divorced women had tended to be marginalised by their own community, in Iran and the USA, because of the female-oriented stigma of divorce. The main focus of the study was on the sexual self-awareness of the participants and it is interesting to note that they found it

easier and less shameful to talk about such matters with their peers in English, rather than Farsi, which had strong connections with traditional values, so the learning of English became an important factor in the acculturation process. The authors do not discuss the age difference in relation to learning English, but record it as a factor in acculturation.

The trauma of migration

Migration is a traumatic experience because, amongst other reasons, the people involved are uprooted from the culture and society in which they were brought up, their self-identity is challenged and they often find themselves in a very different environment where they have to struggle to make their lives at least tolerable. A study conducted by Hormozi *et al* (2018) explored the stress and trauma experienced by a small group of Iranian immigrants who went directly to the USA after leaving Iran because of the after-effects of the 1979 Revolution and who were 18 or over at that time. As in the study by Rashidian, the author herself fitted these criteria, but had not known the participants prior to the study. In order to minimise bias, she took a transcendental phenomenological approach to the research, using interviews lasting from 60 to 90 minutes. (The transcendental phenomenological approach, very basically explained, is done without any preconceptions and studies the link between an action and its effect (Sheehan, 2014)). The ten participants, five males and five females, were aged between 25 and 76 and had left Iran mainly because of religious persecution. The main reason for the study was to assist family therapists in understanding Iranian clients and their background.

Four main themes were derived from the analysis of Hormozi's interview data: the reasons for fleeing Iran, 'culture shock' in the USA, acculturation and resiliency, and the strength to overcome barriers to acculturation. Most of the participants were not Muslim and had had trouble with finding employment and having to conform to Muslim practices in Iran. Culture shock, a controversial term for the stress felt when changing environments (Bochner, 2003), refers in Hormozi's study to the initial stages of acculturation, when many aspects of life are very different from the country of origin. Life in the USA to all of the participants was a major change from life in Iran, especially after the Revolution, not just in everyday experience but also in general attitudes, such as freedom of dress and speech. In terms of acculturation, much stress was laid by the participants upon learning English, which was seen as a positive factor. Some of them found their existing basic knowledge of English to be inadequate, especially in educational circumstances, and that the schools in the USA did not teach English in a way appropriate to someone whose first language is not English. The resilience of some of the participants in combatting drawbacks was felt by themselves to be due to their personal

religious faith, and generally to being ' … flexible and optimistic about where they were headed without a plan.' The results showed 'characteristics of refugees utilizing strengths rather than focusing on their pitfalls .' (p. 281)

The effects of migration upon marriages

I have previously stated that, as the roles of men and women can change within the Iranian immigrant family, marital strife is more likely to happen. Darvishpour (1999) studied Iranian male and female immigrants in Sweden because of a noticeable rise in their divorce rates and a relatively high proportion (20%) of single mothers in the Iranian community, three times greater than in the host community. He wanted to find out why this was happening and what had changed within Iranian families since they had emigrated to Sweden by interviewing 30 divorced immigrant Iranians (17 women and 13 men) using unstructured and in-depth techniques. Darishpour found that there was a considerable difference between men's and women's experience of living in Sweden. The men said that, since arriving, they had felt to be of lower status both in the family and in Swedish society. One man stated that on arrival he first thought that Sweden was a 'paradise' compared with Iran, but soon discovered that the lifestyle there did not fit in with his ideas of the traditional Iranian patriarchal family. He had problems with feminist views on freedom for women, with bringing up their children and with his wife's socialising with 'loose women' (p. 24). His wife divorced him and he felt powerless to stop it, and at the time of the study he was receiving mental health care. On the other hand, some of the women believed that they had more power within the family than they had had in Iran. One of the women said that she had been physically abused by her husband while in Iran, but in Sweden she had more power in the relationship, even though her husband threatened to go back to Iran with their children. In general, Darvishpour's study found that the men would readily return to Iran if the political and religious situation there were to improve, but the women felt, with one exception, much freer in Sweden and did not wish to return.

Darvishpour discovered another significant factor in the acculturation of the Iranian immigrants: education. About one third of his Iranian participants had a college education gained in Iran, a higher proportion than that of native Swedish women and five times that of Turkish immigrants. Not only that, the Iranian women found that the opportunities for education there gave them more freedom to control their own lives, especially if they learned Swedish, and were able to support themselves after a divorce, which would have been highly unlikely in Iran. For men, however, the opposite was true, as they depended more upon a patriarchal family life and found it difficult to get work; the women depended more on the state and what it could offer them and less on their husbands.

However, this gender difference in favour of women is partly contradicted by Ghaffarian (1998), who found, in her 1989 questionnaire-based study of 238 Iranian immigrants, of indeterminate socio-economic status, living in Los Angeles that the women were significantly worse in mental health than the men, that they had lower levels of cultural shift and were more resistant to acculturation. Ghaffarian pointed out that the women found it much harder to come to terms with the difference between gender attitudes in American society and those of their original culture; they 'had to go through great changes in order to adapt to U.S. society' (p. 651). However, confirming Darvishpour's gender difference findings, Moghissi (1999) found that married Iranian women were more used to displacement than were men because in Iran they often had to move in with their husband's family and adapt to that for a time after marriage. Additionally, when they emigrate, they have no problem with taking jobs such as cleaning, as they are used to domestic work within their families. The men, however, often have to take jobs with much lower status than they had in Iran, which has a negative impact on their sense of well-being and their status within the family, a situation which conflicted with the traditional patriarchal male role in the family. Moghissi argues from her findings that the women have more opportunities to advance their lives and are, to contradict Ghaffarian's findings, healthier mentally, and 'demonstrate enormous resilience and moral courage in coping with change' (p. 210).

Women's cultural roles and education

As I have already stated, women in the traditional Iranian family have various roles to play and boundaries to be aware of (Rashidian, 2013). These boundaries can be stronger in displaced communities, where original cultural values are maintained or even strengthened, in order to protect those cultural values against contamination by the host culture (Moghissi, 1999). On the other hand, those who have fled Iran often did so because of pressure from those very cultural and religious limitations, so the displaced community could also feel at liberty to adapt. The importance of education and literacy and how they affect these boundaries and the adaptation of women makes a relevant study. Sadeghi's (2008) study of Iranian immigrant women is very close in nature to my own, so I shall describe it in some detail. Sadeghi explored the relationship between cultural roles and boundaries and educational aspirations and opportunities, especially in literacy, in a study of six Iranian women living in Montreal, Canada. The women had arrived in Canada in the mid-1990s in their late teens and early 20s and their ages at the time of the study ranged from 28 to 37; four were married with children and five already had gained higher educational qualifications in Iran. Again the

author was, like myself, an Iranian immigrant, having arrived in Canada some 20 years before carrying out her study. She says,

> 'I still feel deeply connected to my earlier schooling experiences in my country of birth. These experiences have had a significant impact on my desire for learning throughout my life in the two countries that I have called home. My learning experiences in Iran and in Canada speak of two different realities, parallel but with shared points of juncture: Both have left me with feelings of contentment, competence, self-esteem, but also with grief and discontent' (p. 218).

She goes on to make a more general point:

> Whether aiming for socio-economic advancement, or aspiring to gain autonomy within the family, or seeking for greater recognition and voice within the host society, learning and the pursuit of educational aspirations have shaped many immigrant women's decisions to participate in higher and continuing education and to engage in learning practices in diverse learning contexts. Whether formal or informal, immigrant women are benefiting from and taking advantage of the newly found opportunities in their adopted countries. (p. 218).

Sadeghi sought in her study to find out and understand how women's education and the traditional Iranian gender roles were connected in the immigrant Iranian community in Canada. She used a series of qualitative interviews conducted entirely in Farsi, transcribed, translated into English before being analysed. Sadeghi's main findings were basically that the participants' experiences were powerfully influenced by traditional Iranian cultural values and assumptions; that the opportunities provided by the host country allowed the women to 'redefine their roles as women, mothers, wives, daughters and educated individuals' (pp. 221-222), but also that learning and dealing with the culture of the host country presented both problems and opportunities. The women also found that they could be marginalised within their own families because they wanted to be educated, breaking the traditional role of subservient mother and wife, and they had to fight for the right to take advantage of the educational opportunities available in Canada.

The attitude of the women towards the importance of education was also investigated by Sadeghi, in her study. She found that the women regarded literacy (learning English) as being just as important and it would be instrumental in learning other subjects. They thought of education as a way of achieving the goal of being a 'somebody', as one of them put it (p. 222). This principle was inherited from the Iranian culture of their youth; educated people were highly respected in Iran (even just appearing to be educated), which was also true of the Canadian-Iranian community, where there was a considerable amount of pressure upon women to gain qualifications and to work, in spite of risking the marginalisation within the family, mentioned above. The greater opportunities for women to obtain higher education in Iran today, however, does not mean that they are any

nearer to gender equality, but they are better off in this respect than those who are not well educated, and they have a voice (Haghighat, 2014) (although, in recent years this voice has been stifled, as I have noted in Chapter Eight).

One of the participants in Sagedhi's study raised an important point which illustrates some of the women's difficulties in being able to choose between what they wanted to do and what they were expected to do. She said that the pressure for women in the Canadian-Iranian society to be educated and to work meant that women often found that they had no choice but to do that. If a woman wanted only to stay at home and look after her children she could be accused of laziness by the elders of the family. She attributed this to the desire of Iranian society to imitate the West without understanding the more flexible nature of Western society. Other participants were critical of the Iranian education system; they said that it was based more on rote-learning than it was on understanding and developing critical thinking. They contrasted the Canadian education system favourably, comparing it with that of Iran: 'In Iran, you wouldn't learn anything, you would memorise and immediately forget [it] … But here you really learn.' (p. 225).

The women of Sadeghi's study were very conscious of their lower status within the family. Their enthusiasm for and involvement with education did not change this. The traditional gender roles meant that the women could not neglect their family duties, even if they were working outside the home or going to college. Their studies could still be interrupted to accommodate their husband's and families' wishes and obligations, and they also had to have 'permission' from their husbands before they could take part in education. However they believed that education was absolutely necessary and that it had led to greater financial independence through better jobs and gave them more control over their own lives. As one of Sadeghi's participants said, 'I didn't come to Canada to flip burgers' (p. 230).

Attitudes about the host society

To obtain a more general view of the acculturation of Iranian migrants, comparisons between the experience and attitudes of immigrants in different host countries can be useful. A study by Safdar *et al* (2009) compared the acculturation strategies of Iranian emigrants in three countries: the USA, the UK and The Netherlands. Using questionnaires, with options to choose either Farsi, English or local language versions, to gather the data, Safdar's purpose was to test a measurement of acculturation, multidimensional individual difference acculturation (MIDA). This measurement examines acculturation experience in three main areas: Psychosocial Resources (resilience, cultural

competence, and social support), Connectedness (ethnic identity, and social support from the immigrant community) and Hassles (negative experiences). Safdar and her colleagues also included the two dimensions of acculturation, Own Culture Maintenance and New Culture Acquisition. In the UK, 73 Iranian women and men (mean age 33) participated, with most participants filling in the Farsi questionnaire. In the USA 61 Iranians from across the country responded (mean age 36), all of whom chose to answer the English version of the questionnaire. 46 Iranians (mean age 37) living in the Netherlands answered the questionnaire, half of them in Dutch and the rest in English or Farsi.

In principle, Safdar and her colleagues were studying the relationship between the attitudes of the participants towards their own and the host cultures and the results of these attitudes in terms of their levels of acculturation and assimilation. They compared these factors in the three countries so that more general patterns could be seen. The results in essence were that, firstly, in the UK they found that having a positive attitude towards communicating with the host society did not lead to actually engaging with it. Also, having a positive attitude towards their own culture did not mean that they have more contact with their own community. By contrast, in the USA, the opposite was found: positive attitudes to the host society and their own society led to more contact with both. In the Netherlands, there was a more mixed result: contact with their own society was raised by positive attitudes to heritage culture but lowered by positive attitudes to the host culture.

Safdar *et al* put these differences between the countries down to two main factors: the levels of social support from the host society and the cultural competence of the participants. Learning the host language is obviously an important element in cultural competence and, as seen by the questionnaire language chosen by the participants, all those in the USA had enough competence in English to do the English questionnaire. I am surmising that this may be connected with their more positive assimilation levels. As for the apparent lack of assimilation in the UK, Safdar and her team attributed this to the 'low level of education and socioeconomic status of the sample' (p.485) which resulted in less opportunity to mix with the host society.

Conclusions gained from the studies

After examining the studies regarding Iranian refugees, I have arrived at several conclusions concerning the acculturation of female Iranian immigrants. Firstly, in terms of gender, the women generally found it very important to take advantage of the educational facilities available in their host countries in order to gain a higher status both within their family or community, in spite of their traditional roles within those groups, and in the wider host society, and to be more financially

independent. However, they still had to struggle against the traditional roles that women had to occupy in the family; they still needed their husband's permission and, as in Rashidian *et al*'s study, they felt guilt and shame as a result of the contrast between traditions with which they had grown up and the host culture. It seems also that many Iranian men suffered from low self-esteem because they found it hard to get work equivalent in status to what they had had in Iran and their wives became more independent of them. Younger, unmarried and divorced women found it easier to connect with the host society.

Secondly, from Safdar's study (Safdar *et al*., 2009), the women's opportunities for education and learning the host language depends upon the host nation's ability to help them to be acculturated and its attitude towards immigrants. The USA seemed to provide the most pressure and encouragement to learn the host language, while a mixed result in this respect comes from studies made elsewhere.

One major factor in the acculturation of the participants in the studies I have described is learning the host language. Although one participant of a study in the USA found her local English teaching facilities to be inadequate (Hormozi *et al,* 2018), the evidence suggests that most of them, especially the younger ones, had serviceable levels of English or other host languages (Saghedi, 2008). Growing up in Iran, they had a great amount of opportunity to learn English and to experience its use. Before the Revolution, the English language was on its way to being the official second language of Iran, in spite of ideological protest from traditionalists (Baumgartner and Brown, 2012). There were English language schools, libraries, newspapers, radio stations and even a television station. English was commonly used in universities and in the Foreign Ministry. Within months of the start of the Revolution, all of the media organisations and schools were shut down. Nevertheless, Iran today puts more importance on studying English, as it is instrumental in participating in trade, technology and, given its modern global nature, higher education (Mirhosseini and Badri, 2018). However important the learning of the host language is, it seems from these studies that great barriers of traditional roles of gender and patriarchy have to be broken before any learning can be done. The next section will examine these gender roles and how they are affecting the ability of women in the Iranian diaspora to live full lives.

FEMINISM AND THE WOMEN OF THIS STUDY

Feminism has been defined as 'the broad goal of challenging and changing gender relations that subordinate women to men and that thereby also differentially advantage some women and men relative to others.' (Ferree, 2006, p. vii). More specifically, it can be defined as, '… a general concern with women's issues, an awareness that women suffer discrimination at work, in the home and in society because of their gender, and action aimed at improving their lives and changing the situation' (Mir-Hosseini, 2011 p. 68). I have already cited some cases of women living in situations where their aspirations are inhibited by their roles in the family and the community in the Iranian diaspora and are living in countries where women in the host population, to a certain extent, have greater equality with men (Rashidian, 2008; Sadeghi, 2013, etc.). The status of women in particular ethnic cultures is made more obvious to themselves when they and their families migrate and live in countries where the host society has very different standards and norms. This disparity, as in the examples in the previous section, can cause many problems, especially for the immigrant families, but also in their original countries.

Feminism is a global movement, as women are, to various degrees, subordinated in most societies of the world (Feree, 2006) and the social oppression and inequality of women globally is the subject of a great deal of feminist research (Taylor *et al,* 2016). In this section I shall concentrate on the feminist issues which arise from the experience and cultural background of the women I am studying here. But firstly, I shall discuss feminism in general, how it has developed in the Western society to which the women migrated, how gender issues applied to the culture of Iran both before and after the 1979 Revolution and how they were still affected by this culture once they were living in the UK. The particular aspects of gender I shall consider here will be concerned with the power that immigrant women and men respectively have in determining their status and roles within marriage and within the culture in which they live. This kind of gender asymmetry has been shown to be extreme in some cultures, especially within families (Chen *et al*, 2009), and being able to (or being allowed) to learn and use the language of the host country – and to be educated more generally - is a factor of this power (Saghedi, 2008; Liversage, 2009). I shall begin with some general and fundamental concepts in the study of feminism.

Sex and gender

When people consider the differences between women and men, they do so in two main ways. They can talk about the biological differences (reproductive organs, skeletal formation, hairiness and hormones, for example) or they can discern differences in psychological and cultural behaviour, (work, role in society, role in the family, emotions, for example). The terms used to differentiate the biological sexes are 'male' and 'female', while those for cultural situations are 'masculine' and 'feminine' (Oakley, 2005). People often use both these pairs of terms interchangeably. It also assumed that being 'male' or 'female', 'masculine' or 'feminine' are absolute terms referring to discrete conditions. But it is not only biological attributes that define being a man or a woman, it is also behaviours such as the way people dress, the jobs they have, their social life and personality which position people in somewhere within a whole spectrum of individual differences.

Using the word 'gender' in relation to sex differences is a recent occurrence. It was originally a grammatical term used to describe words which are specifically used in relation to male or female people and for objects, as for example in Latin-based languages, But in the 1960s it was taken up by psychiatrists in the USA in order to talk about the different ways of living and experiences of people differentiated by sex: 'gender differences' rather than 'sex roles' (Oakley, 2005). In the 1970s the word was also used by feminists to allow them to argue against discrimination in terms of culture rather than nature: ' … gender is not simply a property of individuals, but a set of interactive processes whose influence needs to be accounted for in any research process' (Oakley 2000, p.50). However, since then, the word 'gender' has come to be associated more with women ('gender studies') than with men, and is therefore problematic in that it can create a stronger differentiation between the sexes and defeats the object of feminism. Even as long ago as the 1990s some commentators on feminism suggested that this kind of differentiation has much in common with patriarchy and essentialist thinking (Waugh, 1992, cited in Bradley, 2014).

The differences between men and women, whether 'male and female' or 'masculine and feminine' are often attributed to biological and physical or chemical factors. Hormones, substances that circulate around the body of animals (all vertebrates and some invertebrates) are used to control various processes such as growth, metabolism and reproduction. They influence behaviour as they are produced in response to certain stimuli, such as when an animal needs to flee from danger, as they have various effects on the brain and sensory organs (McFarland, 2014). Physical differences

between females and males in terms of primary and secondary sexual characteristics, especially prenatally and at puberty, are some of the effects of certain organisational hormones, but researchers are also considering the power of hormones to change behaviour as well as physical attributes. The two main hormones involved in change in behaviour are oestrogens (associated with females) and androgens (associated with males). In a review of studies made into the effects of hormones on differential gender behaviour, Bernbaum and Beltz (2011) found that 'there is compelling evidence that prenatal androgens have large masculinizing effects on activity, leisure, and occupational interests across the life span' (p. 196), although the authors modify this by saying that most of the studies they reviewed were on females with congenital adrenal hyperplasia, a condition that causes a greater than normal level of male hormones to be produced in a female during the prenatal stage of life. Other differences suggested between the sexes that have been attributed to prenatal left hemisphere/right hemisphere organisational factors in the brain are that females are better than males at language and algebra and males are better at spatial awareness and geometry (Fennema and Carpenter, 1997). But Oakley (2005) has no faith in such suggestions because the research is contradictory and skills such as these are not necessarily located in the brain hemispheres in question.

Another suggested difference in congenital female behaviour is that males are more physically aggressive and violent than are females (Oakley, 2005). This has more credibility, as the production of the male hormone testosterone has been scientifically linked to aggressive behaviour in humans and other mammals, especially when males are under real or perceived social provocation (McAndrew, 2009). However, it is not the mere presence of testosterone which causes the aggression, as physical aggression is known to be a learned behaviour, manifesting, in sex difference terms, at the ages of two or three years old, which some researchers have ascribed to girls being more proficient in language than are boys at an early age and therefore able to become less frustrated in dealing with their problems (Alink *et al,* 2006). That is not to say, however, that there is a distinct boundary between the sexes in relation to physical aggression:

> 'In almost every group that has been observed, there are some women who are fully as aggressive as the men. Furthermore, an individual's aggressive behaviour is strengthened, weakened, redirected or altered in form by his or her unique pattern of experiences' (Moccoby and Jacklin, 1974, cited in Oakley, 2005, p. 17).

There are sociological as well as biological reasons for the supposition of perceived male superiority. One of the main ones is that of the supposed importance of the family, as opposed to the individual. Oakley (2005) says, 'Reifying 'the family' is hard-core antifeminism'. She explains that is 'one of the

most effective ways of disenfranchising women' (p. 44) and relates strongly to patriarchy, where everyone has their assigned and hierarchical role, such as women doing all the housework.

It is clear from what I have discovered so far in this section, that much of the differences attributed to sex, especially those that have played a part in downgrading the status of women, have been caused by social, cultural and biased attitudes rather than on biological differences. Similarly, the problems and barriers women of this study have faced, have been mainly due to culture and particular discourses. I shall now consider one of these cultural discourses in more detail.

Patriarchy

> 'A system of social organization where men dominate both the public and the private spheres. Women are considered secondary and dependent on men within patriarchal societies, and in consequence lack power, authority, and resources. Inheritance usually takes place through the male line, and women may be viewed as men's possessions rather than as people in their own right. Many feminists, particularly radical feminists, regard patriarchy as the source of women's oppression. Striving for publicly sanctioned equality has been one measure designed to eliminate patriarchy.' (Griffin, 2017, online source)

Patriarchy is a technical term used to describe a society which has specific, usually traditional rules which govern the behaviour and status of both women and men in different ways, with women having a decidedly inferior status. These rules may be encapsulated in law, religion, or passed down by practice. In some societies, such as those of North Africa, the Muslim Middle East, China and India, patriarchy is of a 'classic' type, where the family unit consists of a senior male head who has authority over everyone else, male and female, and where females have subordinate roles, and seniority, irrespective of gender, holds sway (Kandiyoti, 1997). These family units have existed in that form regardless of the religion or culture in which they occur. In the classic patriarchal family, girls do not get to choose their husbands but are given away at a very young age to prearranged husbands from other families, where they then have to live and are deprived of rights and inheritance. Only having male children can gain them any status, and they then have to nurture loyalty and respect from their sons to hold onto any power over their own lives, thus perpetuating the patriarchal system, but at least giving them security (*ibid.*). In Muslim societies, especially rural ones, the fear of losing such a secure position can result in women having to display modesty markers, such as wearing the veil, in order to avoid poverty and lack of position and respect. The use of the word 'patriarchy' by some feminists is seen by Kaniyoti as an oversimplification: '… the term patriarchy evokes an overly monolithic conception of male dominance, which is treated at a level of abstraction that obfuscates rather than reveals the intimate inner workings of culturally and historically distinct arrangements between the genders' (1997, p. 86).

Kaniyoti's phrase, 'distinct arrangements between the genders', prompts me to mention that patriarchy, although ubiquitous in its various forms, is not universal; matriarchal societies are also to be found. Examples are the Khasi of north-eastern India and the Mosuo of south-western China (Goettner-Abendroth, 2018). However, such societies are not mirror-images of patriarchal ones; they are much more egalitarian in structure and neither sex dominates with coercion. Goettner-Abendroth (*ibid.*) points out that the '-archy' part of 'matriarchy' does not necessarily mean 'rule by', but can also be interpreted as 'beginning'. As a system of government, matriarchy is as old as patriarchy and comes naturally to the people who accept it: 'In today's politically aware climate, many Khasi men consider their matriarchal system to be the strength of their culture, one that has survived many thousands of years and holds the key to their ethnic identity.' (*ibid.* p. 12*)*. The practical benefits provided by the egalitarian nature of a matriarchal society were found by Sirisai *et al.* (2017), studying the Karen people of Sanephong, Thailand. They found that the successful production and distribution of food (mainly rice) was largely a result of the conjunction of this type of social structure and Buddhism: 'Equal access to communal resources, complementary gender roles, and a balance between humanity and nature help to shape an egalitarian society—a harmonious society that fosters biodiversity conservation' (p. 8).

Patriarchy and women's status in Iran

In Iran, the degree of adherence to patriarchy has fluctuated, especially in the 20th century. I have already, in my introductory chapter, described the gradual liberalisation of traditional attitudes to women's status during the reigns of the Shahs, father and son, from the 1920s up to the 1979 Revolution. This rise in women's status in Iran went in parallel with the decline of patriarchy and religious power, at least as far as middle-class families were concerned. Ebadi (2006), writing about her personal experience of being brought up in Iran in the 1950s and 1960s, portrays the typical Iranian family, even at that time, as being heavily biased towards sons: 'In Iranian culture, it was considered natural for fathers to love their sons more; the sons were the repository for the family's future ambitions; affection for a son was an investment' (p. 11). Boys, as they grew up, had more and more freedom, while the girls had less and less, in order to preserve their traditional *najeeb,* upright and refined, status. Ebadi's own family, although she didn't realise it at the time, was much less gender biased than most others, and she was given freedom and independence not usually given to female children, leading to her opportunity to be well educated and to eventually become a lawyer and a judge - for the time being, at least.

From the beginning of the 20th century and especially during the time of the Shahs, when the power of religious leaders had been weakened, traditional patriarchy still had some hold on Iranian society but was not officially enforced. Women became more militant and vocal: from 1910 they had access to education, including learning foreign languages; laws making women wear the veil were repealed in 1936; women had the vote in 1962; in 1974 free abortions on demand were allowed and there was a ban on polygamy in 1976. (Afshar, 1997; Alavi, 2005). However, in the aftermath of the 1979 Revolution, laws that had given women and men more equal legal status, that had been fought for during the Shah's reign, were immediately repealed (Alavi, 2005). The secular courts were replaced by religious ones and suddenly women, seen by the ruling clerics as unruly and emotional, were downgraded in status: 'a woman is practically considered as subhuman' (Tohidi, 2016. p. 79). Women's evidence was valid only if supported by a man; women could not travel without their fathers' or husbands' permission; they were worth half the value of men in the courts, and death by stoning was the penalty for female adultery. 'Western' traits, such as feminism and women's equal status were outlawed, and the wearing of the veil was compulsory (although both pre- and post-revolutionary Islamic and even secular Iranian feminists have considered the veil, or *hejab,* to be a way of protecting women against being thought of as sex objects and allowed them to feel freer when in public (Alavi, 2005)). Arguments in favour of this relegation of women's status were completely based on the idea of the 'God-given' superiority of men who had an inherent right to 'control and curb the hiatus caused by the unruly passion of women' (Afshar, 1997, p. 319).

Feminism in Iran

The new religious Iranian leaders from 1979 onwards portrayed the liberalisation of women's status in the West as unnatural and cruel, making them work outside the home, forcing them away from their true environment of the home and their 'true nature' as child-rearers, thus denying children of a proper upbringing and hence creating a disaffected and unsettled society, as they described the West (Afshar, 1997) (even though Iranian courts generally gave the custody of children to the father in the event of a divorce (Ebadi, 2006)). They also saw feminism and the idea of women's rights as unsavoury, anti-Muslim western phenomena. Even today this is so. There is a campaign driven by conservative powers in Iran that sees feminism as 'a western plot that is aiming to destroy Islamic principles of Iranian society and the Islamic regime' (*Feminism and the War Against the Family,* 2009*,* an Iranian television programme cited in Mouri and Batmanghelichi, 2015, p. 339). Conservative rulers deny that any women's movements exist, and the ideas behind any such movements are either regarded as 'harmful feminist deviations' from the West or as attempts to change the Iranian regime by Zionists and the USA (Tohidi, 2016). The Revolutionary Guards Corps, the military

organisation responsible for protecting the basic principles of the Islamic system, and who are able to arrest and punish those who are seen as acting against those principles, have an agenda that is against feminism, secularism and liberalism (Mouri and Batmangehelichi, 2015). Feminism is seen by those who stand up for traditional values, religious or not, as a violation of women's honour in the family and an affront to the 'manhood' of husbands (Alavi, 2005).

With all of this official opposition to feminists and the dangers of being seen as such, it is remarkable that, since the Revolution, there have been active feminist movements in Iran. Immediately after the restrictions on women's rights by the theocracy of Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979, women held street rallies to protest against the sudden changes. The women, who were mainly non-Muslim and from both sides of the left/right political divide, were, to put it mildly, discouraged, even by the non-religious left- wing factions of Iranian society, who saw feminism as an 'imperialist' evil (Alavi, 2005). Since that time, however, and especially after the 1988 Iran-Iraq war and the death of Khomeini in 1989, there was a gradual relaxation of the oppression of feminism in Iran, but nowhere near to western standards (Mouri and Batmangehelichi, 2015). This more relaxed attitude at that time allowed, for example, the launching of a feminist magazine, *Zanan* (Woman) – although the original editor, Shahla Sherkat, was sacked later for leaning too far westwards – and secular feminist activity and organisations were tolerated in the 1990s and early 2000s. Unfortunately, this leniency was not to last. With the election of president Ahmadinejad in 2005 came a complete turnaround of official attitude. Secular feminist groups were shut down, activists were imprisoned, barred from practising law and many of them exiled (*ibid*.).

These actions, of course, do not directly affect the women of this study, as they had left before they took place, but many of them still have relatives and friends and other connections with Iran and are thus concerned with and affected by what happens there. The continuously growing diaspora of intelligent Iranian women in Western Europe and the USA, in combination with global communication technology, still very concerned with the cause of women's rights in Iran, has produced a powerful influence upon the politics of the country (Tohidi, 2016). I provide this information about gender issues in post-revolutionary Iran because I believe it is relevant to the experience of my participants and to feminism in the Iranian context.

Islamic feminism

In spite of this recent reversal, feminism of a religious, as well as a secular, kind has existed as an undercurrent in Iran, particularly since the Revolution. What might be termed 'Islamic feminism' by

outsiders, is seen as a watered-down, relativist concept by western feminists and an affront to Islam by religious conservatives, and it is more of an attempt to interpret the Islamic religious scripture from a female and gendered point of view, to apply an independent reasoning to the aspects of gender status and hierarchy (McDonald, 2008; Duderija, 2015). It has been simply defined as 'a critique of patriarchy as a system' (Mir-Hosseini, 2015). Ebadi (2006) explains the basis of Islamic feminism thus: '… fundamentally, Islam, like any religion, is subject to interpretation. It can be interpreted to oppress women or interpreted to liberate them' (p.122). But she adds that theological debates on interpretation have been happening for centuries and that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible to come to any unanimous conclusions.

Islamic feminism is a global movement, but has had a specific manifestation in Iran, especially since the Revolution, since that was a turning point in the status of Iranian women. Mir-Hosseini, a prominent Iranian writer on Islamic law and gender studies, explored Islamic feminism in her 2011 paper, *Beyond 'Islam' vs 'Feminism'.* I give the title here because of her use of quotations marks around the main words. She uses them in order to emphasise the fact that the words 'Islam' and 'feminism' do not have fixed meanings shared by everyone, but have differing meanings according to the points of view of those who use them. Additionally, she separates them with 'vs' (versus) because some regard the two terms as mutually exclusive. Mir-Hosseini's paper is very useful to anyone studying gender in an Islamic context, as it begins by clarifying the meaning of various terms often used when discussing it. Firstly she distinguishes the words 'Islamist' and 'Islamic' by saying that the former refers to the political manifestation of Islam and the latter, when connected with 'feminism', to 'finding inspiration and even legitimacy in Islamic history and textual sources' (*ibid*., p. 68). She also distinguishes between the words 'religion', manifested in a system of laws, practices and institutions, and 'faith', the fixed, basic concepts, beliefs and values inherent in the minds of believers. She says that if these distinctions are not understood then it results in '… either glorifying a faith without acknowledging the horrors and abuses that are committed in its name, or condemning it by equating it with those abuses' (p. 68). Then Mir-Hosseini explains the meaning of *Shari'a*, a term that to some, particularly westerners, is associated with patriarchy, cruel punishment and polygamy, while to most Muslims it is simply means 'pure justice'. But traditionally, it refers to the essence of the sacred will of God as revealed to the Prophet. In a recent lecture at Oxford University, Mir-Hosseini (2015) said that the Islamic feminists 'want to reclaim the justice and equality that the Qur'an and the Prophet brought for everybody, including the women … [and] the source of legitimacy for their demands is Islam.' She added that '… the Qur'an gives us the trajectory to justice.'

There is some debate, even amongst themselves, about whether or not such people as Mir-Hosseini are really 'feminists.' Mouri and Batmangehelichi (2015) cite various participants in the movement as saying that the concept of Islamic 'feminism' is a foreign import and is an intellectual construct that does not reflect the reality of their activities. They prefer to use the term 'religious egalitarians' instead of 'Islamic feminists'. But, since they are arguing for gender equality, it is hard to understand why they are not seen as falling into the broad category of feminism. There are others who say that Islamic feminists have not achieved as much as their secular counterparts: it is argued that Shahla Sharkat, who founded *Zanan,* the Iranian feminist magazine, could not have done it without secular contributors such as Mehrangiz Kar (*ibid*.). Iranian secular feminists, such as Sadr, have criticised Islamic feminists for being ineffective, having had no official legitimacy to change scriptural interpretation, but that secular feminists have succeeded in modifying the Iranian laws on the stoning of adulterous women, for example (*ibid*.). It is also true that, in the years immediately after the Revolution, many 'Islamic feminists' were in fact secular, an identity they hid because of fear of oppression (Ghorashi and Tavakoli, 2006). Mir-Hossein herself admits that 'Islamic feminism has become so loaded with disputed meanings and implications, so enmeshed in local and global political struggles that it is no longer useful in any kind of descriptive or analytical sense.' (Mir-Hosseini, 2011, p. 1). She concludes her paper by saying that that, in spite of the diversity of approaches, 'We are all heading in the same direction.' (p.76).

Other commentators, such as Bayat (1997), an Iranian sociologist living in the diaspora, have dismissed the possibility of a truly active women's movement, one that holds demonstrations and has strong leadership and organisation in modern day Iran. However, he does admit that women's activism has been made possible there by what he calls 'the power of presence', by defying the restrictions on women's daily activities in a quietly subordinate way: 'The effective power of these practices lies precisely in their ordinariness' (Bayat, 1997, p. 162). Nevertheless, in more recent years, due to the concerns of Iranian women in the global diaspora, a loose network of women's activism has been developing both inside and outside Iran (Tohidi, 2016). I know that Iranian women living in Britain, some of whom are my participants in this study, are active in such organisations. Many are in regular contact with relatives and friends who still live in Iran and consequently have direct knowledge of the treatment of women there. In Chapter eight I describe in more detail the current situation regarding the treatment of women in Iran.

Women's activism in the Iranian diaspora

During the dozen years immediately after the 1979 Revolution, because of political, religious and gender-based oppression by the Iranian state, travel and communication from and into Iran was severely restricted. Those who were vulnerable to direct oppression found it difficult to escape, but many did, and did so without legal travel documents, forming a diaspora mainly in Europe and the USA. Iran was isolated and technological development did not thrive. Members of the diaspora hated the Iranian regime from the outside, while those left inside struggled to overcome the limitations imposed by the state, but there was little meaningful discourse between these communities (Ghorashi and Tavakoli, 2006). It was not until the end of the 1990s that the Iranian rulers realised that such isolation was not in the interests of the country and the borders were gradually opened up. At that time the internet was beginning to become a global tool for both interpersonal communication and the dissemination of information, so the opening up of Iranian borders became possible more than just physically. As I have described, feminist activism inside Iran began to grow. However, there was a distrust between activists within Iran and those in the diaspora; those inside the country believed the diaspora to be out of touch with the oppression they were experiencing, so there was at first a lack of communication between the two groups (ibid.). (The authors of this source of information, Ghorashi and Tavakoli, are respectively a member of the diaspora since 1988 and an activist who stayed in Iran during the years of isolation). Today, technology has greatly improved communication between these two groups, and has allowed Iranians in the diaspora, such as my participants, to share information.

In the last 25 years, the internet has become a powerful means of communicating ideas globally. Feminist groups have been able to use it promote social change: it is relatively cheap; it is very fast and, with some exceptions, it eliminates physical borders. Feminist groups have been positively affected by its use in spreading ideas and organising action, even though there are many women, particularly those who are poor or living under severe forms of patriarchy, who are unable to access the internet, allowing only middle class women to benefit from it, thus potentially creating a division (Vogt and Chen, 2001). Another negative aspect of the internet is the enormous amount of information it contains and the consequent lack of reliability in its validity (ibid.). The power of the internet and social media has meant that Iranian women living outside Iran can communicate with others, both outside and within the country. They can exchange opinions, share ideas, and discuss topics which would otherwise be dangerous in a face-to -face situation, and avoid censorship (Nasirpour, 2016). As an example, a book by the Iranian author Bakhtiarnejad, living in Iran, on the subject of honour killings, was banned from publication in Iran, but was later published on a website

in the diaspora, which made it available to all. Iranian human rights activists, living in Iran, such as Ebadi have also used the internet to share their views on Iranian women's legal rights (ibid).

Women who suffered the oppression of the aftermath of the 1979 Revolution and who eventually managed to escape speak of their experience as 'paradise' and 'hell'. Firstly, they were elated when they thought that the Revolution had brought a new freedom to their lives, and for the first year or so, it had, and they were able to be more active than before the Revolution in campaigning for women's rights (Ghorashi and Tavakoli, 2006). However, with the change in power in 1981 came the sudden shock of harsh oppression, and women in Iran no longer had a voice. Once they had left Iran, most of these women whose opinions had been suppressed began to be very active in human rights campaigning as a reaction to that suppression. But, as I have already mentioned, there has been a rift between those who stayed in Iran and quietly worked for women's rights within the regime and those who escaped, or were born later, and have had the freedom to express their views, and between left-wing secular protestors and Islamic feminists (*ibid*.). The internet has played a part in reducing this schism. The Iranian Women's Studies Federation (IWSF), a forum for women's views in the diaspora, hold conferences where the internet has made it possible for women's activists living in Iran to have a virtual presence, overcoming travel restrictions. Where previously there was conflict, there is now a more co-operative atmosphere at the IWSF conferences *(ibid*.). This greater understanding between women in the diaspora and those who have stayed in Iran and worked from within has been hade even easier by websites and social networking systems, which have allowed more focus on the main issues of challenging patriarchy and religious restrictions on Iranian women's lives both inside and outside Iran (Nasirpour, 2016).

Chapter conclusions: what I have learned from the literature

Although my study is based upon the experience of Iranian immigrant women specifically in relation to learning English and its effects on their lives in the Britain, there are broader issues which I have needed to address in this review chapter in order to understand these experiences and effects. My participants were immigrants, and they migrated to a country with a very different culture from that of Iran. The process of acculturation which they had to undergo has been a complex mixture of practical and emotional adjustments to the host culture and social inclusion issues. From the literature I have learned and understood several relevant and interesting ideas which relate to the experiences of the women I am studying here.

Hall's (2017) lecture on culture and identity has taught me that culture, identity and nationality are interrelated and that people in a diaspora are in the difficult position of being neither completely connected with their host culture nor people of their original culture. Duranti's notions of culture are based on his interest in its linguistic aspects and he stresses the importance of communication and language, exemplified by different aspects of culture such as knowledge, communication and mediation. The different aspects of acculturation have been explained by researchers such as Berry, who defined several dimensions of acculturation, from both the immigrants' and the hosts' points of view, in his fourfold model. Of great relevance to this study are the linguistic anthropologists, such as Sapir, Whorfe and others, who found a strong relationship between language and culture, each being affected by the other. This conjecture impacts strongly upon the level of English learnt by the women and their general levels of acculturation and their ability to advance educationally in the UK. Today in Iran the government realises the necessity to connect with the wider world and so English has become a widely used language there, although they are still wary of Western influence, thorough the medium of language learning. This, however, did not help the women of this study, as they came here at a time when the teaching of foreign languages was banned in Iran, even though they had had the opportunity to learn English before the Revolution.

From my reading of many studies made on Iranian immigrants in various parts of the world, I was able to understand and empathise with women in the diaspora who felt shame when behaving in a more 'western' way. There was a tension in their minds that reflected the differences between their original culture and that of their host nation. This tension also had an impact on their marriages, where the women often became the sources of family income and the men, in a patriarchal family, felt inadequate. Patriarchy also meant that studying for qualifications was difficult because they had to have permission from husbands and still had to run the home. Learning the host language was very important to most of the women in these studies, as it led to greater independence.

Finally, from my research on the gender aspects of life in Iran and its impact on women in the diaspora, I have learned that discrimination against women is not so much biologically, as culturally based, patriarchy being one of the main aspects of culture causing this discrimination. In Iran, since about 1900, it has been a roller-coaster ride of rigid adherence to tradition and religion and freedom from discrimination. The women of this study came from what started as a relatively free time, and, after the 1979 Revolution, a very oppressive time, which caused most of the diaspora of Iranians. Feminist activism is still alive in Iran and especially in the wider world, where the ease of

communication of ideas through the internet has been of enormous value to Iranian women's causes. The ability to communicate is the main subject of my study.

The following methodology chapter describes and explains the techniques I have used to collect and analyse the data I have collected from my participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

My aim in this study is to examine the experiences of acculturation, especially in terms of learning and using the English language, of a number of Iranian women who came to the UK as part of the general diaspora of Iranians which happened as a result of the Iranian Revolution of 1979. I want to obtain, during face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, an in-depth understanding of their experience and their feelings about what happened to them.

At its most general level, research can be defined as 'a scholarly, scientific and systematic investigation to establish facts or principles, or to collect information on a subject to be presented in a detailed and accurate manner' (Habib *et al,* 2014, p.3). Data can be obtained from secondary sources, such as academic papers, books and other media, or from primary sources, such as eyewitness accounts, personal experience, scientific experiments and observation of phenomena. Interpretation is important in research, as there is little point in merely presenting a mere list of facts, so logical argument and reflection or statistical analysis can be used in the interpretation of the data gathered and seeing general patterns therein. In the case of my study, the data I shall gather from interviewing the participants will be analysed qualitatively and any general patterns I find will be presented in my conclusions.

In this chapter, after firstly discussing the theoretical aspects of qualitative research, I shall discuss and justify the methods of collecting and analysing the data for my study and then consider the important ethical aspects of the study, particularly in respect of the participants' point of view.

Qualitative Research

The social sciences are often regarded by other 'natural' scientists, as being vague, difficult to pin down with rigid laws and inflexible classifications and rules and not open to rigorous deductive reasoning (Schensul, 1985; Oakley, 2000, 2005). Nevertheless, social life is indeed subject to a degree of regularity, and underlying patterns of behaviour or tendencies can be interpreted from

what at first seems to be very disorderly or vague data (Berg and Lune, 2014). In the social sciences, theories are explanations of these interconnected ideas and can be used to explain or even predict patterns of behaviour. For example, the Sapir-Whorf theory, which suggests that language and culture are closely connected, represents a pattern derived from the observation of people's behaviour (Duranti, 1997). 'Research […] performs at least four major functions which help shape the development of theory. It initiates, it reformulates, it deflects, and it clarifies theory.' (Merton, 1968, cited in Berg and Lune, 2014, p. 24).

According to Taylor *et* al (2016), qualitative, as opposed to quantitative research, can be viewed as having eight main aims and approaches, paraphrased here:

1. The qualitative researcher will attempt to get into the minds of the people they study and try to feel what they feel so that they can understand their viewpoints, and investigate 'the meanings which people attach to things in their lives' (p.7) without any presuppositions or regard to their own views and feelings.

2. The qualitative researcher will try to induce theoretical ideas about the data they collect, rather than try to make them fit pre-existing theories, even though she will be working within theoretical frameworks.

3. The researcher will view situations and people holistically, rather than as discrete variables. She will study the participants' lives as a whole, their inner lives, their life histories and interactions with society.

4. With as little interference as possible, a qualitative researcher will study the thoughts and actions of informants.

5. The qualitative researcher will not judge people by their wealth, position in society, nationality, race, gender or morality. Everyone is eligible to have their views considered.

6. Qualitative researchers are concerned more with the meaning of their data rather than seeing it filtered through methods of measurement. They are concerned not so much with reliability of results, but more with first-hand empirical knowledge.

7. Every possible situation, setting or group of people is worthy of study; none is barren of meaning.

8. There are no standardised rules to follow in qualitative research, which is a craft in which methodology frameworks and guidelines are adapted for use in the particular situation to be studied. Flexibility is paramount.

Although all of the above aims are relevant to my study, some are particularly so. The first aim, that of getting into the minds of the participants, is clearly apt, as I want to discover how they view their experiences and how they perceive them, and to do that without imposing my own presumptions. The third objective is also relevant: acculturation is a rich and complex process and involves many aspects of life so a holistic approach must be used so that I can get to the heart of the experiences of the women. As my study involves the use of semi-structured interviewing, flexibility, as mentioned in the eighth aim, is an important aspect of the process; it will allow me to discover the differences amongst the lives of the women in addition to any common patterns.

Oakley (2000) sees a gender dimension in the difference between quantitative and qualitative methodology: 'What we have in the contest between the paradigms is another form of war between the sexes, or rather the genders' (p. 42). She observes that quantitative research can be seen as 'hard, reliable, masculine, public: they are about objectivity', while qualitative is 'the soft, the unreliable, the feminine, the private – the world of subjective experience' (p. 42). This dichotomy is highlighted by Burr (1995) when she connects discourse with identity:

> 'Science and masculinity pose few problems for each other. Science is thought of as logical, objective and value-free. Masculinity embodies rationality and the ability to keep one's emotions out of one's reasoning. […] But for women there is a potential area of conflict or confusion. Prevailing discourses of femininity speak of emotionality, illogicality and intuitiveness – not the stuff of science' (p. 53)

This gender contrast brings to attention the inherently gendered nature of different methodologies and also means that qualitative research is better for studying the experiences of disadvantaged or marginalised people. Oakley explains that these contrasting views on the difference between quantitative and qualitative research are, of course, stereotypes; they are not mutually exclusive. She discerns another perceived difference between the two methods, that of validity and reliability. She defines validity as how close the findings of the research are to the reality of the situation being studied. Reliability is measured as the 'repeatability of the findings' (p. 47): will the same patterns of behaviour be found if the study is repeated?

Theoretical approaches

When using terms relevant to this study, such as 'acculturation', 'assimilation' and 'society', it is essential to be clear about what exactly what is meant by them. The idea of ensuring that the terms we use are clearly defined is called ontology (literally, from Greek: 'the study of being'). Closely related to ontology is epistemology, the study of knowledge, which can be neatly expressed as *how*

do we know what we know? (Crotty, 1998). Maynard (1994, p.10, cited in Crotty, 1998. p. 8) has provided a fuller explanation:

> 'Epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate.'

In epistemology there are two main approaches: objectivism and constructionism. Objectivism sees knowledge as already existing without human consciousness being applied to it. '… understandings and values are considered to be objectified in the people we are studying.' (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). However, with the other approach, constructionism, meaning is in the eye of the beholder and is 'constructed' by the observer. Social constructionism uses this approach in order to understand, for example, that human behaviour is governed by culture as well as culture being created by human behaviour (Crotty, 1998). Thus the study of society involves a complex interaction between the social world and its observation and interpretation. The relevance of social constructionism to my study is that I am interviewing a set of participants in order to discover their experiences and interpreting them in the light of various theoretical concepts, such as acculturation and marginalisation.

An alternative way of thinking about the collection and interpretation of information about behaviour is to divide it into two main approaches. *Positivism* is an approach that regards facts about and causes of social behaviour as objects which influence people from the outside. It does not consider the feelings or subjective states of individual people and it applies to quantitative research. Oakley describes positivism, when applied to sociology, as 'the work of the devil' (2000, p. 31) because its reliance upon total detachment of the observer and its close relationship with quantitative natural science methodology made it unsuitable for studying oppressed sections of society. She says that positivism, and quantitative study in general, is '… deeply oppressive towards women and anything to which they seem to be attached … ' (p. 101). Her reasons for saying this are perhaps explained in her later work in which she opposes the use of biological explanations (hormones and menstruation, for example) to denote differences in female and male behaviour (Oakley, 2005). Conversely, the *phenomenological*, interpretive approach to social research understands social behaviour from the individual's own viewpoint and considers his or her feelings, attitudes and motives, rather than treating people as the mere objects or groups, and tries to ignore any preconceptions and presuppositions of the researcher herself, as far as this is possible. Nothing is to be taken for granted; I shall not make assumptions, especially those based upon my own experience, about their experiences and perceptions. In my study I shall be using a life history

method, because I am trying to discover any general patterns in the personal experiences of the participants and their perceptions attached to their experiences. Fundamentally, I have not taken a purely phenomenological approach to interviewing and interpreting the testimony of my participants – as I explain below, it is too unrealistic in this case. For these reasons I have decided upon a semi-structured, life history approach that includes enough flexibility to take into account the particular nature of an individual participant's experience.

Since the aim of life history research is to discover and describe the world of experience of participants (Crotty, 1998), it can transform the minds of both researcher and participants. The researcher, having witnessed the participant's experience, and the participant, having had the opportunity to give voice to his or her problems, are changed in some ways, perhaps in their attitudes to their experience, perhaps therapeutically (Finlay, 2011). Such research can also benefit society indirectly by changing the minds of educators, medical professionals, the general public and, very importantly, policy makers. In the case of my study, my experience of life in Iran during a period of major changes has affected me in many ways and I will have to ensure that I do not let this influence the way I conduct this research. My positionality with regard to my connection with my participants is discussed in the next section.

Positionality

Although, as Zigon (2021) states: '… both anthropology and phenomenology share an essential methodological strategy — the holding in abeyance of the researcher's own situated knowledge, beliefs, norms, and expectations when describing the lives of others.' (p. 7), I have, in my opinion, good reasons for finding this approach difficult. In my literature review I have described some studies carried out on women of the Iranian diaspora. I have pointed out that many of the authors were themselves diasporic Iranian women. In one particular case, the principal author found that, because she was a member of the Iranian diaspora, the participants trusted her and felt freer to report their experiences than otherwise: 'The principal researcher, being an Iranian-American immigrant herself since 1978, provided the credibility needed for facilitating the level of trust needed for the participants to share their life stories.' (Rashidian *et al,* 2013, p. 868). Rashidian views this position as a positive factor and does not express any concern about it adversely affecting the ethics or positionality of the research process. Perhaps she is asking her readers to take it for granted that, in spite of her involvement, she was scrupulously impartial in interviewing her participants and analysing her data. Sadeghi (2008) also identified herself with her female participants, but, as she makes no mention of it in respect of her positionality, lack of objectivity in

this respect does not seem to be an issue for her. But I believe it is reasonable for me, indeed my duty, to think about the negative and positive consequences of my sharing a large amount of common ground with the participants of my research. The validity of my research and its findings is dependent upon it. If I have not been rigorous in providing consistency (for example, asking each participant the same basic questions) or in interpreting the data I have collected, or I have been putting too much weight on my own opinion (being too subjective), then I cannot expect my study to be credible, consistent or transferable. In other words, it would not be dependable (Thomas and Magilvy (2011); Planel, 2016). (It is important to add that I discussed this issue with my supervisors, who have agreed with the arguments I give here to justify my positionality.)

One of the main precepts of the phenomenological approach to qualitative research is that the researchers themselves must make it very clear what their beliefs and assumptions are in relation to their connection with the subject matter of the study and to the participants – and to minimise any bias or judgement that could occur. Husserl, the main founder of the phenomenological approach, used a mathematical analogy in describing this minimisation of researcher influence as 'bracketing'. It is also termed 'purification' or 'phenomenological reduction', using the experience of others rather than that of oneself, thus taking a more objective stance and reducing bias (Finlay, 2008; Hopkins *et al,* 2017). This stance is now termed 'reflexivity'. However, in my case, my own experience was the main reason for my choice of topic for this thesis, and as such is difficult to ignore, thus creating tension between objectivity and personal involvement.

Heidegger comes to the rescue. He relished the idea of personal involvement with participants because it is more in line with reality: experience of the world is reciprocal – we observe other people's experiences through our own attitudes, which are in turn shaped by these observations. He coined a phrase: *being-in-the-world*, meaning that we cannot detach ourselves from the world around us when we want to interpret it (Hopkins *et al,* 2017).

Finlay (2008) puts the researcher's predicament well, in my view, when she says,

> 'In a context of tension and contradictory motions, the researcher slides between striving for reductive focus and reflexive self-awareness; between bracketing pre-understandings and exploiting them as a source of insight. Caught up in the dance, researchers must wage a continuous, iterative struggle to become aware of, and then manage, pre-understandings and habitualities that inevitably linger. ' (p. 1, Abstract).

Finlay is saying that the phenomenological researcher does not have to take one stance *or* the other; she or he can move in a continuum between the two extremes, as long as the current attitude is

made clear and self-consciously applied. Because I cannot express it better, I shall again use Finlay's own words: 'Naïve openness and self-aware criticality become intertwined—a dialectical dance indeed. The challenge for the researcher is to remain focused on the phenomenon being studied while both reining in and reflexively interrogating their own understandings.' (p. 29). I now explain how I have addressed this challenge.

Another way of looking at the problem of pure objectivity versus self-involvement is to characterise the researcher as being an 'outsider' or an 'insider' in the world of the participants. Archer (2008) has found that researchers often have problems of authenticity and identity within academia in terms of race, gender and class. She discovered a feeling of inauthenticity amongst younger academics in relation to their identity within the institution where they worked. Additionally, they tend to resolve these identity issues by relying upon traditional, established discourses. Writing in the early 1970s, Merton (1972) alludes to an attitude to ethnic research existing at that time which he calls the 'insider doctrine', where the only valid and meaningful study is done by people who share the same ethnicity, background and other attributes with those whom they are studying. He points out the ridiculousness of this way of thinking by saying that if this principle is applied to all social research then 'only women can understand women – and men, men. … youth alone is capable of understanding youth, just as, presumably, only the middle aged are able to understand their age peers.' (pp. 12-13). To extrapolate this principle, breaking groups into subgroups, white women cannot understand white men, young black men cannot understand middle-aged black men, and so on. The logical conclusion of this attitude, carried to its extreme, is that researchers can validly study only themselves. But Merton argues that firstly, even if they do share ethnicity, gender or age, researchers and their participants still belong to different groups, academics and non-academics, for example, and secondly, that findings from an insider-orientated situation can be distorted by ethnocentric bias, believing in the superiority of one's own group and the inferiority of others. In an attempt to summarise the debate about the differential between the researcher and her participants, I think that it can be encapsulated as the need for flexibility in the approach of the researcher. If the researcher's position is too close to that of her participants then she may struggle with keeping a disinterested stance; if she is too far removed from their experience, then her lack of empathy with the participants may discourage them from responding openly (Brooks *et al,* 2014). In my case, although I have a certain amount of experience in common with my participants, there are also many differences in our experiences, enough to allow me to be objective in my approach.

It follows that it is extremely important for social researchers to be aware of their own prejudices in order to minimise their effects. This self-aware attitude is supported by the findings of Savvides *et al* (2016), who say such carefully controlled, flexible methods '… reinforce the methodological benefits of rigorous and critical reflexivity as this enables researchers to frame and problematize the impact of their subjectivities on the research environment' (p. 125). I believe that this rigorous, self-aware approach can be achieved by asking the participants open-ended, non-leading interview questions, by asking them to review the transcripts and my subsequent analysis for accuracy, thus co-constructing the knowledge, and to ask my supervisors to advise me on the data analysis and theorisation. Nilson (2017) found that self-awareness was important when she, a white European woman, studied Australian aboriginal women: 'The development of my self-awareness affected directly on my relationship with the women and lessened the hierarchical nature of my position, which was critical and central to the social experience of the field.' (p. 125) As an example of her self-aware attitude, Nilson noticed that she tended to discard ideas which were not in line with what she took for granted as being correct. She countered this way of thinking by deliberately delving into many aspects of her life, for example, cultural beliefs, religious belief, lifestyle habits, her feelings of guilt towards colonialism and her intolerance to other people's behaviour. She found that this reflexive, self-critical attitude paid off in gradually gaining respect from her participants.

To me it seems that each case of researcher/participant, interviewer/interviewee is so complex in respect of positionality that they are unique in every case and cannot be resolved into a pure, simplistic dichotomy. Khan (2016) found a positive outcome of a complex mixture of stances when she discovered, in her study on the self-value of Pakistani primary school teachers, that ' … my position as a bicultural person who shares both insider and outsider perspectives added to my ability to ask basic questions, while also having an understanding of the social, cultural and organisational contexts' (p. 157). Song and Parker (1995) stress the importance of realising that simple and discrete insider/outsider standpoints 'have not only tended to obscure the diversity of experiences and viewpoints between and within various groups, but these categories have also obscured the diversity of experiences which can occur between the researcher and the researched' (p. 243). They also say that 'Dichotomised rubrics … are inadequate to capture the complex and multi-faceted experiences of some researchers … who find themselves neither total "insiders" not "outsiders" in relation to the individuals they interview.' (p. 243).

The experiences I am studying here are the result of several factors in the participants' lives: they are immigrants, refugees, women, Iranian, in most cases mothers and wives, and having learnt English

and other career-related subjects, they are students. So it is not possible to apply a simple and single methodology to the study of their experiences; it is more appropriate to take a more holistic and intersectional approach:

> 'Social life is considered too irreducibly complex—overflowing with multiple and fluid determinations of both subjects and structures—to make fixed categories anything but simplifying social fictions that produce inequalities in the process of producing differences.' (McCall, 2005, p. 1773).

I have acknowledged this complexity by firstly making the interview questions as open-ended as I can and covering as many different aspects of the participants' lives as possible, and then analysing the resulting data with a number of approaches that reflects the complex nature of their experiences.

Although my experience is broadly similar to that of my participants, it is not exactly the same; I am an insider in the general sense, but an outsider when it comes to individual experience. My participants and I are women, Iranian, have been forced to migrate and have lived for several decades in London, away from Iran. Beyond that, we are different, each with our own unique story. Being an 'insider' should help me to gain the trust of the women and have some empathy with them, but being an individual who is an 'outsider' should make me be, at the same time, an objective, disinterested observer who nevertheless shows some understanding of these women's lives.

Using Interviews

> 'In-depth interviews are the face-to-face method *par excellence,* and so have been the chosen method for feminist researchers. Interviews imitate conversations; they hold out the promise of mutual listening.' (Oakley, 2000, p. 47).

Oakley's enthusiastic statement expresses some key points about the nature of the interview as a means of gaining information from people. Firstly she uses the term 'face-to-face', which implies that there are two people speaking to each other in real time (either physically present or using some direct communication device, such as a telephone or online conferencing tools), making the interview different from a questionnaire, where the questions are answered in writing at a different time from when they are asked. She says that interviews 'imitate conversations', in other words, they are social instruments, where people interact verbally, as they would in normal life. Oakley's use of the term 'mutual listening' is also important in that it highlights the flexibility of the interview in that the interviewer is able to tune their questions to the responses of the interviewee. Indeed, the word *interview* literally means 'an interchange of views' (Kvale, 2007, p. 5). It carries with it the presumption that it involves two sides, the interviewer and the interviewee, and there is a subject of

common interest at the heart of it. Of course, an interview is unlike most everyday conversations. With interviews there is a predetermined goal of discovering specific information. There are very specific uses for the interview, for example, police enquiries, legal trials, psychotherapy, job-seeking and mass media (where interviews of politicians and entertainment figures are prevalent (Silverman, 2005)). In sociological research, it has been argued that the interview is by far the main way of eliciting the experiences and attitudes of people (Brinkmann, 2012). In my study, I am trying to discover the experiences of a specific set of people, their feelings and attitudes, and therefore doing an interview with each or the participants would seem to be the logical and most effective choice to make, allowing me to interact with them and to be flexible in my questions in response to their answers. I see the interviews I have conducted as akin to conversations in which I can apply my own cultural knowledge to my participants' experiences, referencing my already stated views on positionality.

However, if interviews 'imitate conversations' (Oakley, 2000), it might imply that there would be too much complexity, emotion, power imbalance and lack of consistency amongst the different interviews. Analysing the conversation afterwards, given the unstructured nature of a 'chat', would be very problematic, and comparing the results of conversations with different participants even more so. Unlike conversations, qualitative research interviews and their consequent analysis should be carefully planned and thought about in advance (Brinkmann, 2012). It follow from this that, even if the interviews are to be only partly structured, some kind of planning is required, so that each interview has a point and the results can be more easily analysed and compared. Brinkmann complains that 'too much time is spent on interviewing, while too little time is devoted to preparing for the interviews, and subsequently to analysing the empirical materials' (2012, p.4). He also argues that sociological research interviewers are not always aware of the specific nature and the finer details of interviewing technique and how to make it work in respect of the overall method of obtaining the knowledge in the context of the specific study being made: '… a well-designed interview project has a thread that runs through the entire process and connects the research question with what goes on in the interview and also with subsequent transcription, analysis, and reporting.' (*Ibid.* p. 46).

Therefore, it is very important to design an interview approach that fits the focus of the study and elicits the right *kind* of information from the participants. My study is based upon experiences – what they are and how the participants feel about them – so the questions must be designed to

obtain personal experiences and feelings, and the interviewer must be flexible enough in approach to change the questions to fit the responses and to create new questions if needed (Kvale, 2007).

Consequently, in order to be flexible in my approach to a complex subject, while still retaining a degree of control over the nature of the data, I believe that a semi-structured interview technique is required in this study.

Semi-structured interviews

My participants' life-world is that of their experience before, during and after the 1979 Iranian Revolution in and their subsequent acculturation experience in the UK, especially in terms of learning the language of their host culture. However, acculturation is not a simple mechanical process; it involves subjective aspects and does not apply in the same way to each person. Therefore questions concerning their backgrounds and their families, skills, attitudes and feelings must also be asked. So a flexible approach would seem appropriate, one that allows the interviewer to respond in different ways, depending upon what is being said by the participants, but also one that has a definite aim connected with the main focus of the study. I also believe that an extremely important aspect of this study should be the subjective experience of my participants. Given that semi-structured interviews are 'designed to ascertain subjective responses from persons regarding a particular situation or phenomenon they have experienced' (McIntosh and Morse, 2015), I have chosen the semi-structured interview (SSI) to be my interview technique.

Adams (2015) neatly sums up the characteristics of the semi-structured interview as follows:

> 'Conducted conversationally with one respondent at a time, the SSI employs a blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions. The dialogue can meander around the topics on the agenda—rather than adhering slavishly to verbatim questions as in a standardized survey—and may delve into totally unforeseen issues. Relaxed, engaging, in-person SSIs can be longer than telephone surveys, although they seldom last as long as focus groups. About one hour is considered a reasonable maximum length for SSIs in order to minimize fatigue for both interviewer and respondent.' (p. 492)

He also mentions two main disadvantages of semi-structured interviews. Firstly, if there is a large number of participants, say more than thirty, this type of data gathering would be inefficient and would require a large number in interviewers and an enormous amount of time in conducting the interviews, and in transcribing and coding them. Secondly, the interviewers themselves need to be 'smart, sensitive, poised, and nimble, as well as knowledgeable about the relevant substantive issues'

(Adams, 2015,p. 493), so they would all have to have a deep knowledge of the subject areas of the study.

Kvale (2007) has put forward a number of guidelines that typify an ideal semi-structured interview method and its subsequent analysis. He stresses the importance of allowing the participants to talk about their 'life world', their situation as seen from their own perspective, and in their own words. The interviewer must try to understand the meaning of what the participants say in relation to the central theme of the study, sometimes needing to 'read between the lines'. As for the interpretation of the interview data and the formulation of questions, the researcher should quash any presuppositions he or she has in relation to the study and be open to any surprising responses. I have already discussed the issue of positionality, and Kvale calls this avoidance of presuppositions 'qualified naïveté' (p. 12). Silverman (2005, p. 257), citing Weber (1946), points out that '… all research is contaminated by the values of the researcher' and that 'even the commitment to scientific (or rigorous) method is itself … a value.' Recalling what I have already discussed in the Positionality section of this chapter, it means that the interviewer has nowhere to hide his or her own presence in preparing the interviews, talking to the interviewees and in analysing the data, but must be aware of what influence he or she has upon the process. However, the interviewer should have some understanding of and sensitivity to the issues involved, but, at the same time, being careful to maintain an objective stance. Only specific situations should be elicited, not general attitudes. Most importantly, the interviewer should be aware of the mood of the participant in order to make the interview a positive experience. For example, certain painful memories may be brought to the interviewee's mind. The interviewer should be sympathetic with this and be sensitive in choosing the questions that follow and even pausing the interview to allow time for the participant to recover.

In order to provide a framework and direction for the interviews I created a planned list of questions (See Appendix D for a copy of my *aide memoire*). During the interviews I enabled the interviewees to tell me their individual story by asking them spontaneous questions which are based on their responses. The effect of this was to elicit information which is unique to each participant and to avoid purely factual responses.

Once the interviews had been transcribed I realised that I had made an omission in the list of questions: I had not asked the participants about how their children's lives had developed in terms of educational progress and career. I amended this omission by doing some further interviewing by telephone.

Because interviews involve people, it is ethically important to ensure that they are not adversely affected by the interview process. These ethical concerns will next be considered.

Ethical issues of social research

> 'Social scientists do not have an inalienable right to conduct research involving other people. That we continue to have the freedom to conduct such work is, in large part, the product of individual and social goodwill and depends on us acting in ways that are not harmful and are just.' (Israel, 2015, p.2)

Why are ethics important?

The careful and thorough consideration of ethical issues connected with social, and indeed any kind of research involving living participants, is extremely important. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, if people trust researchers not to endanger them or make life difficult for them, then they are more likely to want to help those researchers by imparting their knowledge, experience and attitudes and to make a contribution which they feel is worthwhile. Any mistakes in this area, any callousness of attitude, any lack of sensitivity by researchers can adversely affect the goodwill of the public and limit the availability of participants generally, quite apart from the upset caused to individuals or groups. Unethical practice can also badly affect the funding of research by governments and other sponsors (Israel, 2015). Secondly, within the academic community, lack of integrity, for example fabricating data and plagiarism, causes problems with validity. It can damage whole areas of research because of false findings and can create doubt in the mind of students and others, even at the international level (*ibid.*).

When conducting sociological research, the aim of that research should lead to results that benefit society, otherwise there would seem to be no point in doing it (Brunel University, 2016). Social science research is essentially concerned with people, most often with people in a certain context; in my particular study, they are Iranian women who left Iran to come to the UK. If the findings I gain from this study are beneficial to society and help in the understanding of the situation but the participants suffer in some way as a result of participating, this would be considered to be extremely unethical. In my case, the participants left Iran mainly because they were in a vulnerable position and were in danger. To some extent, they are still in danger and some of them are prominent in the Iranian diaspora, meaning that they must not be placed into any more danger by their participation

in my study by being identified, even if they are anonymous. There is then a contrast between the beneficial aims of the research and the potential danger to the participants. I believe that, in my study, attention to ethics is neither excessive nor intrusive. My participants are vulnerable because many have suffered trauma and reviving the memories could be upsetting. In the next section, I discuss the ethical considerations related to my own particular study.

Ethics as applied to the present study

In relation to the use of participants, the BERA (British Educational Research Association) guidelines stress the need for voluntary informed consent, for them to understand the research and why it is being done, transparency, and how the data is to be used (BERA, 2018). The participants should also have the right to withdraw their contributions and to be free from harm resulting from the interview experience and possible identification. Additionally, 'Researchers should consider the impact of their research on the lives and workloads of the participants, particularly when researching vulnerable or over-researched populations.' (p.20).

Since I carried out this study under the umbrella of Brunel University, I needed to refer to the Brunel University Code of Research Ethics (Brunel University, 2016, Appendix 2), in particular the section involving the use of human participants. The first general requirement is that 'Compliance with this good practice will provide assurance that the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of research participants are of primary importance in any research study, that they are protected and that the results are credible.' (p. 41, point 1). This is very much in line with the basic principles of the BERA guidelines concerning the treatment of participants, including the mention of research integrity (Brooks *et al,* 2014). The second requirement concerns the balance between ethics and scientific progress. It comes down firmly on the side of ethics: 'The advancement of knowledge and the pursuit of information are not considered by themselves sufficient justification for overriding other social and cultural values.' (Brunel University, 2016, Appendix 2, p. 41, point 2).

In relation to my study, most of the participant women have suffered trauma and are in some ways vulnerable, and could be subject to danger from their country of origin (NBC News, 16.11.2022). The Brunel requirements refer to this problem: 'Some research populations are vulnerable and need special protection' (p.41, point 7). This vulnerability is a 'predictable risk', as mentioned in the Basic Ethical Principles (p. 42, point 6) of which I, and indeed my participants, are aware, and of course, they are under no obligation to take part. Since I am already acquainted with many of them, I was extremely careful not to let that connection with me influence their decision to participate (p. 43,

point 11). Also, it requires much care on my part to avoid any questions of which the answers could make them identifiable, or give any information about them with that effect. It is even possible that their very participation in my study will be known to members of their families and, because of the subject matter of my inquiry, endanger them. Of course, I have created pseudonyms for my participants throughout the study. They will be given the opportunity to read the final draft of my thesis, giving them the power to redact the whole or any part of their contribution.

Hammersely and Traianou (2012) complain that the application of morality to social research can be excessive in that it can demand that the research must have a moral purpose, say to benefit the groups who are being studied or to give them voice, rather than merely obtaining knowledge. Their complaint is that such demands could narrow the scope of research. However, the Brunel University requirements state that 'research should be an active process of supporting improvements in people's lives and services.'(p. 41, point 2). Later on, the Code reiterates this point: '[research] which is not of sufficient quality to contribute anything *useful* to existing knowledge is itself unethical' (p.42, point 3). In my case, I hope that the knowledge I have gained and present in my study will contribute by helping immigrants in general to have easy access to English language learning, to undergo successful acculturation and add new insight to the body of knowledge that exists.

The Research Ethics Committee at Brunel University, where my research is being overseen, requires researchers to apply for ethical approval via the Brunel Research Ethics Online (BREO). In addition to giving details of the research and the type of participants being used, the researcher has to construct a consent form and a participant information sheet to give to the participants in order to allow them to decide whether or not to participate. They must know exactly what their participation entails (being interviewed in this case) and what control they will have over the data they give and the findings gained from this data. Once approval was given by the Ethics Committee, I was able to contact the women who fitted my criteria and arranged for them to be interviewed by me, after their having read the participant information sheets and officially given their consent (See Appendix B for the Participant Consent form template).

The interviews

Over a period of about 11 weeks between 2nd October 2019 and 24th January 2020, I was able to interview 17 participants, all Iranian women who had been refugees who had, directly or indirectly, arrived in Britain because life in Iran was no longer safe for them and who have made Britain, London in particular, their homes. I interviewed them mostly in my home, some in their own homes, one in a parked car and another in a café. I had prepared a list of about 80 questions, which, after a pilot interview, was cut down to about 60 (See Appendix D). The questions were grouped into categories which I announced to the participants before asking each group of questions: leaving Iran, arriving in Britain, English language abilities on arrival, English language abilities now, education and career path in Britain, and general questions. On average, each interview took between about 60 and 90 minutes and was recorded on a digital audio recorder. The recordings were transcribed into text and I coded the transcriptions using a table of topics in which I recorded the code number of participant who had given data on each particular topic (See Appendix C). I could then analyse their responses and thus answer my research questions.

Using a semi-structured interview technique, I did not ask every participant every question, missing out some which were irrelevant to her or which she had already answered. I also asked spontaneous questions which arose from the participants' answers. As I have already mentioned, I have a personal interest in the subject of this thesis, which occasionally led me into expressing sympathy with the participants' experiences, especially if they were showing signs of distress. Additionally, I was already acquainted with some of the women, since I share a similar background with them. As I have stated previously in this chapter, I hope these factors have not adversely affected the objectivity of my study, particularly with respect to conducting the interviews.

The participants

I chose the women who had, mainly as a result of changes in their lives, directly or indirectly due to the 1979 Iranian Revolution. Either I was already acquainted with them, or those I knew told me of others. Although they all had one aspect of all their lives in common – they all had been refugees from a country in which they could no longer safely live – they were very different people with unique experiences, both when in Iran and when they lived in Britain. To avoid identification, I created a pseudonym for each of the women for the purposes of this study. Appendix F comprises short descriptions of each of the 17 women.

As can be discerned from the descriptions in Appendix F, the women of my study are mostly from the well-educated middle-class sector of Iranian society. Before the Revolution, from my own experience, it was quite normal for young women of the richer families to be given a good quality of education, many going abroad to university, and to have had the prospect of professional careers in, for example, the law, in government, in the media and in education. It could be argued that women in such positions were more badly affected by the after-effects of the Revolution than women of a lower economic status, who had less skilled jobs or were homemakers, did not have prominence and did not have the resources to leave Iran. Therefore, the participants of my study do not represent a cross- section of the Iranian female population. They represent a particular group of well-educated women of a certain class who were affected by changes in their country's culture and had to leave as a result of those changes.

How the responses were coded

Once I had the transcripts of the recorded interviews, it was necessary for me to discover on which particular themes each participant had made a significant response and to encapsulate this information in such a way that I could easily pinpoint these responses when I was writing the data analysis chapters. The first stage was to mark by hand on the transcripts labels for each aspect of their experience, for example, 'career path in Iran', 'survival in the UK' and 'reasons for leaving Iran', against the appropriate responses. This method allowed me to identify the responses which were relevant to the particular aspect I was covering.

My method of coding the transcripts was unconventional, but I found that it made it easy for me to find relevant responses. I created a table (see Appendix C) upon which I correlated each theme with the page numbers on each the 17 transcripts where responses concerning that theme were to be found. Each column refers to a particular participant, represented by number, and each row gives the transcript page numbers for specific topics. Although this method is proprietary, I found it to be extremely useful when I was writing the data analysis chapters, because it allowed me to find at a glance all of the responses applicable to the topic I was writing about.

Chapter summary

This study is concerned with the experiences of a set of people who have four attributes in common: they are female, they are Iranian and, owing to certain events in their country they experienced forced migration from Iran and have found new homes in Britain. However, each individual

participant has had a unique experience, and my intention is to elicit these unique experiences and analyse them. In doing so, I have used qualitative methods, commonly used in sociological research,. These methods include the use of face-to-face semi-structured interviews and careful, in-depth analysis, while maintaining as objective a stance as possible, even though I am personally acquainted in varying degrees with each of my participants. My positionality in this respect is that my personal connection has given my participants confidence in imparting their experiences and feelings, a factor which outweighs the potential lack of objectivity inherent in these circumstances. I have carefully considered the ethical considerations in doing such personal research and have gained the approval of the appropriate authorities.

In the following four chapters I present my findings from the analysis of the interview transcriptions and state the conclusions at which I have arrived, following the chronological scheme resulting from the life history interview data. The next chapter concerns my findings on the family circumstances of my participants, their experiences before, during and after the 1979 Revolution, the ways in which the women learnt English in their early life and why they had to leave Iran. Chapter Six is about acculturation: it covers my participants' arrival in Britain, how they managed to survive in a very different environment, and how they created a career path there. In Chapter Seven I describe the ways in which the women, once they had arrived in the UK, improved their proficiency in English and how this helped them to acculturate. Additionally, I discover how much they interacted with the British Iranian community and their own families. Chapter eight, the fourth and final data analysis chapter will be concerned with the application and implications of my findings to the lives of female Iranian immigrants, how my study will affect and benefit the experiences of future forced immigrants. It will also contain my recommendations as to the ways in which asylum seekers are provided with facilities to aid their acculturation progress.

CHAPTER FIVE
DATA ANALYSIS

THE PARTICIPANTS' REASONS FOR LEAVING IRAN AND THEIR ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION PRIOR TO LEAVING

The purpose of this chapter

This chapter covers the first and third of my research questions, about my participants' lives and their learning of English before they migrated to Britain (see Chapter 1). One of the main themes of this study is to examine the importance of the English language in the acculturation of female Iranian immigrants in the UK. It is therefore useful to find out from the data I have collected how my participants learnt English in the period of their lives before they permanently left Iran and what standard of English they perceived they had achieved. Additionally, because it is assumed that the women left Iran mainly because they had little choice but to do so, it is useful to know what had changed in their lives in that country to cause them to leave and also what their social and financial status was before that time. This knowledge is relevant to this study because it will provide an insight into their attitudes and feelings about leaving a country which they loved, often leaving their families behind and taking a challenging step in their lives.

Firstly I shall present my findings from the data I have collected on the various reasons the women had for leaving Iran, in other words, how their lives were affected by the changes that occurred in Iran after the 1979 Revolution. The second part of this chapter is about the English language education of my participants before they left Iran. I shall consider the role that English played in pre-revolutionary Iran and how, and to what level of self-identified proficiency the women of my study would have learned the language. The woman's experiences in using and learning English in the UK will be examined in Chapter Seven. In this chapter I focus on the ways in which they learned English and the level attained by them prior to leaving Iran.

Reasons for leaving Iran

> 'The refugee regime as we know it was created as a safeguard against the inevitable limitations of the state system, to ensure that even when someone's own state was

> unwilling or unable to provide most of its citizens' most basic rights, there would be an alternative provider of those rights.' (Betts, 2013, p. 12)

The Geneva Convention, originally established in the 19th century, has been modified and expanded, notably in 1949, after the Second World War and also in 1992. The Convention has made it possible for people living in a certain country who have '… a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group' to claim asylum in another country which has adopted the convention (Geneva Convention, 1992, cited in Rodrigues Araujo, 2014, p. 541). Additionally, the 1951 UNHCR Convention on the Status of Refugees defined the rights of refugees and how states which have signed up to this Convention are obliged to behave towards them (Betts, 2013). The women of my study became refugees and either left Iran because they were, or were liable to be, persecuted, or they had already legitimately left Iran and could not return there for fear of persecution. They did not all go directly to Britain, but have eventually ended up there. I shall study their reasons for choosing Britain in particular in the next chapter.

Earlier in this study I have described the effects of the 1979 Revolution and the repression upon women it produced. After interviewing my participants face-to-face, the reality of their situation at the time has become much more vivid to me than the second-hand experience of reading the accounts of other researchers' studies. Many of my participants are still emotionally affected by their experiences, which they can still remember in great detail. A few of the women became distressed during the interviews when recollecting their ordeals. Although ethical guidelines make it clear that researchers should conduct their studies in such a way that participants are not negatively affected, for example when recollections of past experiences cause emotional distress, if this happened, I was able to give my participants time to recover and continue with the interview only if they wished to do so. Since all of the women came from families that had relatively high status in pre-revolutionary Iranian society, such as having fathers who were army officers or government ministers, having connections with the regime before the Revolution, or being well-educated, the negative effects of the new constraints upon their lives were great. But, being in well-paid jobs, or coming from richer families, unlike people of a more limited financial status, they had the ability to leave Iran, even though it was in several cases a struggle to do so.

All of my participants had at least a graduate level of education, either at university level or at a vocational college where practical subjects, such as nursing and teaching were taught. Being well educated is a traditionally highly respected attribute in Iranian society. But since the 19th century

there has been a realisation by the authorities in Iran that female education, at least in terms of literacy, is beneficial to society (Najmabadi, 2005) and this trend continued up to the 1970s, with women in prestigious jobs, such as judges. It has to be borne in mind that, even under the Shah's rule, women were not considered by the authorities in any way to be the equal of men, not necessarily in the eyes of the law, but certainly by the social norms of Iran at the time. The apparent liberation of women and the official ban on veiling have been shown to be nothing but factors in the Shah's attempts to gain respect from Western powers and to minimise religious influence within Iran (Rafique and Butt, 2017). The Shah was represented by himself and his supporters as an 'ideal' male figure. Although he was a believer in women participating in society, he disliked the idea of woman 'who tried to imitate men', he hated feminism and had respect only for women who were both beautiful and 'moderately clever' (Sadeghi, 2007). This attitude is exemplified by one of my participants, Pari, who said that at the only high school in her small town she was not allowed to study mathematics, as it was not considered to be a subject for females to study at higher levels. This was not an official policy but had force mostly by the Shah's and his supporters' powerful influence.

However, after the 1979 Revolution the role of women in society became officially modified and controlled by the constitution. The concept of the 'New Muslim Woman', as laid down by the constitution, was created, mainly by means of an educational system which was highly influential in forming attitudes in young minds (Rezai-Rashti and Moghadam, 2011). The term 'New Muslim Woman' did not mean that woman were expected to fit the traditional model of domesticated person, isolated from public life. Nor did it mean that she was allowed to behave as freely as 'western' women. It was more of an apparent contradiction: she had to be a good wife and mother, a homemaker, a controller of what happened domestically, but at the same time be active socially, politically and culturally, in theory at least (Mehran, 1999). Nevertheless, this officially designed and imposed conceptualisation was still very restrictive to those women who had previously had high level jobs, and women were arguably viewed as only 'half a human', as one of my participants put it, and were being officially treated as inferior people by the law, not only by tradition. Not long after the 1979 Revolution, the new Islamic government decided to cancel the emancipation of women and other liberal concessions that the Shah had previously introduced, and imposed *shari'a* law. This, amongst other restrictions, prevented women from being in a position of authority over men and severely reduced their legal status (Axworthy, 2013). During the interviews I wanted to find out how these changes of status and restrictions affected my participants, why they left Iran and what were the circumstances that forced them to have to do so.

While generally the women of my study experienced great difficulties within Iran, the reasons for leaving differed in specific ways. Here I give two very different specific examples, chosen because the particular women involved went into some detail about their experience. During the Revolution, Pari was doing medical work in Kurdistan (in the west of Iran), which was under military attack from Iran, and she had to flee to a safer area and later to Britain. Additionally, the religious controllers in charge of seeing that people behaved in approved ways often overrode and contradicted her medical decisions, regardless of the fact that she was medically qualified and they were not. She says, *'To be honest, it wasn't my choice. I didn't want to leave.'* Her desperation to flee meant that she even had to leave her young son behind; he was able to join her in the UK two years later. Teia provides an example of a different reason for deciding not to continue live in Iran. She was working in Iran for an American film company and as a television director before the Revolution: *' … at that time I was one of the first group of women who could achieve that position in Iran,'* she states. While she and her English husband, working for the same film company, had gone to the UK to spend a few months with his family, the Revolution occurred and they were advised not to return to Iran. She never did.

Each participant had her own unique reason for having to leave the country which she loved (and still does) but, on analysing the interview transcripts, I have identified several broad categories of causes: gender barriers to education and career path, the effects of the Iran-Iraq war, family connections with the previous regime, political activism and non-conformity, and being a member of an ethnic or religious minority. In order to convey the emotional effects of their experiences I have also included a section concerning my participants' feelings about their lives at the time when they left Iran.

Gender barriers to education and career path

Educational opportunities for both female and male students increased somewhat during the reign of the Pahlavi Shah (r.1941-1979), especially at the higher educational level. Universities accepted female students and there were jobs available for women who were qualified, in the law and medicine, for example. However, this increase in opportunity did not mean that there was a corresponding rise in the quality of education, nor was the type of tuition suited to the nature of free-thinking, well-educated people (Borjian, 2013). Its aim was to create the type of society envisioned by the Shah and his government, and the teaching was provided mainly by non-Iranian staff and influenced very much by American educationalists. Because the autocratic Shah wanted to

prevent dissent, which was more likely to come from university students than from any other source, the teaching was characterised by non-critical rote-learning which did not encourage free thinking, nor did it produce graduates who had the mental skills useful to work in Iranian society (Hamdhaidari, 2008).

During the Islamic Cultural Revolution, which happened soon after the new revolutionary government was created, there was a three-year closure of universities and some secondary schools, during which there was a complete revision of staffing and curricula on ideological grounds. Co-educational schools were abolished and only state-run schools were allowed at first, although some private fee-paying secondary schools and universities, catering for about half of the 3.5 million students at that time, were later permitted (Axworthy, 2014). Women were removed from high governmental office and retired or demoted (Rezai-Rashti and Moghadam, 2011). Although women in Iran were employed mainly as schoolteachers, nurses and social workers, women represented less than 20% of the labour force (as compared with the world average of 45% at that time) even as late as 2006, and the proportion of female university teachers was considerably less than in many other countries in the middle east. Only 4% of senior, executive and managerial positions were held by women (Mehdizadeh, 2012). Twelve of my 17 participants reported that their promising careers and educational prospects begun under the Shah's regime had been thwarted by the new system. After the Revolution, highly educated women were treated with great suspicion by the guardians of Islamic law and could be harassed, imprisoned and even, sometimes unlawfully, given corporal punishment, just for being intelligent and educated. They certainly could not obtain jobs that gave them authority over men (Ebadi, 2006).

But even before the Revolution, traditional gender attitudes could get in the way of education. For centuries in Middle Eastern and North African countries women, especially in rural areas, had been seen as wives and mothers who were traditionally not considered to be in need of an education (Najmabadi, 2005). One of my participants, Dora, explained that, while poverty was a barrier to education, gender was also an issue. She says,

> *'… because also, in addition to poverty, of course they thought women specially cannot do or were not allowed [to] go for education and learn to write and read. And sometimes the culture. They thought women would learn to write so they will start writing letters to boys. And of course it was very much related to honour and honour-based violence to women.'*

Many older people in the Kurdish area of Iran, where she lived, both women and men, were illiterate, including Dora's own mother. Because her father was a baker, a highly respected and relatively lucrative craft in Iran, Dora was able to be educated and trained as a teacher. She used her own

educational opportunities to become a primary school teacher and she also devoted herself to helping the educationally starved adults in the rural areas of Iranian Kurdistan: *'So for me education was a way of helping them to gain information and open another world for them … '*. She eventually had to leave Iran after the Revolution because of her involvement in political activism.

I do not want to make it appear that *all* education for females in post-revolutionary Iran has been less available than before; the opposite is true. Literacy education, especially for female Iranians, has been a high priority of the Iranian government during the decades since the Revolution. Primary education, even in rural areas, has been developed extensively, the main reason being that literate women were useful as part of the workforce (Mehran, 1999). This realisation of the value of female education has meant that female literacy levels have gradually risen (at an average rate of 2.1% per year since 1979) and the provision of women's life-long education has increased, with 71% of the learners being women (Mehran, 1999).

The effects of gender discrimination in Iran upon the participants

Even if they did have access to education and find high status work, women who previously had important positions found themselves being demoted. As in my participant Pari's experience (see below), they were often controlled by men who were qualified to do so only because they were agents of the religious authorities and who had the power to arrest and punish people who flouted the ideological rules laid down by the official interpreters of Islamic law. Before the Revolution, Khomeini proposed that there should be a religious government which should be separate from and have precedence over the secular government. This system (*velayat-e faqi*) was established in Iran after the Revolution (Axworthy, 2015). It meant that there was an authority which enforced the Iranian interpretation of Islamic laws and had priority over and above any secular authority and it strongly affected the lives of women in Iran. I have already mentioned Pari, who had qualified as a doctor before the Revolution, and describes herself as being under the control of an agent of such an authority:

> *'When I finished my studying I worked in a small city and a small surgery in order to promote health of poor people, but they wouldn't let me. I mean, my boss […] was a person not professional and he was the one who told me what to do, what to write. I didn't have a choice; I couldn't say no to him.'*

The 'boss' she refers to was the manager of the surgery in which she worked in a poor area of Kurdistan. He was a member of the *Hezbollah* ('party of Allah'), not medically qualified, but controlled the provision of medicines, for example, overriding the doctors' decisions on whether or not to prescribe such medicines as antibiotics to the patients. Pari eventually left Iran after two years,

not just because of the *Hezbollah* interference in her work, but also because Kurdistan became under attack by both the Iranian and Iraqi governments.

Poran, in addition to getting a degree in political science in Tehran and an MBA in the USA, trained in law and was preparing to realise her ambition to work in Iran as a family solicitor when the Revolution made her qualifications redundant: *'So the change was about I couldn't practise, for they have said woman cannot be lawyers anymore.'* She also had strong feminist views, incompatible with the new regime. She left Iran for Germany, where she studied medicine and in 1988, four years later, arrived in Britain where she continued her career as a doctor. As I have written in Chapter Three, the post-revolutionary leaders in Iran viewed feminism as a negative, anti-Islamic, western influence which would force women away from their natural domestic environment and make them unsettled. Feminism was also considered to be against the Islamic idea of the family and an insult to manhood. However, during the months before the statutes of the new regime had been fully established, peaceful feminist protests against the new restrictions were held in the streets, but these were quickly and violently quashed (Alavi, 2005). As I have already discussed in my Literature Review, since those early days there have been various feminist organisations in Iran, but mainly connected with feminist interpretations of Islamic scriptures, rather than the more secular Western style of feminism. This approach has been taken mainly because the religious authorities are less likely to view such feminism with hostility than if it were perceived from a secular point of view (Ebadi, 2006; Mir-Hosseini, 2015).

Fariba expresses her attitude to the general position of women in Iran after the Revolution powerfully when she says:

> *'… generally, freedom is very important. Part of it, being a woman in Iran … I left Iran because it was different for a women to take a job. You know, after a time I left Iran, they were forcing women back to their homes … and because I had three girls - my third one was born in Iran – and I cried, not because she was a girl – I don't have any differences. But I thought, if they grow up in this country, what can become of them? So their future was one of the main factors, as well as the political factors.'*

It wasn't just a simple matter of her own situation. Fariba did not believe in a society in which women were subjugated, especially to the extent that it was in post-revolutionary Iran. As a mother she wanted to make sure her children would not grow up under what she considered to be a highly restrictive system and leaving Iran for a relatively liberal and democratic country such as Britain was the solution she chose. Gender discrimination as a reason for leaving a country is one of the major reasons for doing so amongst female migrants. Ruyssen and Salamone (2018), in their review of

data from studies of migration attitudes in 148 countries between 2009 and 2013, found that '… perceived gender discrimination forms a strong and robust incentive to migrate.' (p.236), but also that these intentions were turned into action only when other determinants, such as income and family ties, were not considered to be drawbacks to migration. Interestingly relevant to my study, Ruyssen and Salamone also discovered that 'women's migration intentions are found to be stronger when gender inequalities are more severe.' (p. 236), as was the case in post-revolutionary Iran However, they add that the correlation between gender inequality and migration is complicated by the fact that gender inequality can prevent migration, by restricting the movement of women, for example, and at the same time causes the need for it. In Fariba's case, she had the extra incentive of protecting her daughters from the perceived threat of the post-revolutionary system. Daughters were especially vulnerable to legal punishment because, while the age of criminal responsibility for boys was fifteen, for girls it had been reduced to nine. This difference came about because girls were perceived as maturing earlier than boys (Axworthy, 2013). Even though punishments such as the stoning and whipping of women were now possible under Shari'a law, society in general was not in favour of them and they have been rarely used. Even so, Iran is second only to China in having the most executions in the world – and the most executions of minors.

Being educated in a foreign country was common in pre-revolutionary times amongst middle class families, and studying abroad was allowed if the subject was a speciality that was not taught in Iran. But when people are abroad during a revolution in their home country, it naturally creates a problem. Although Azee studied electronic engineering at college in Iran in the early 1970s, she later went to Britain to study fashion design with finance from Iran. After the Revolution, as the new government was decidedly against Western influence and in women studying abroad, the funding for her education dried up and Azee was stranded in London without money. She was unable to study fashion design anymore but could not return to Iran because her gender made her vulnerable. Similarly, Ahoo was studying with a scholarship for a PhD in criminal sociology at the Sorbonne in Paris when the Revolution occurred. She says, *'… but unfortunately, after the Revolution, everything had changed and I couldn't go anymore.*'

Being another educational casualty of the Revolution, Hanna did not manage to complete her further education in sociology and anthropology until a few years afterwards. In the period when she was waiting for her education to continue, she took a job in a hospital, helping with social care for disabled children. After her graduation she could not get any job in Iran because to do so required a letter of recommendation from the Islamic organisation of students: '*I couldn't get such a*

letter and I couldn't find any job after that.' After spending five years in prison apparently just for being a young, educated woman, Hanna had little choice but to leave Iran. She states her reason for going to Britain: '*…[if] I lived in Iran as a woman I would be under repression more than men. Women are under double pressure in Iran*.' This 'double-pressure' felt by Iranian women meant that, while both women and men were being forced to behave according to the religious interpretations of the new regime, women had extra limitations upon their lives: severe punishments if they flouted the law. Their status was much lower than that of men and were more likely to be punished than were men (Ebadi, 2006). This extra pressure on women is exemplified by the ostracising of women who do not conform in their belief to the repressive ideology of the state. Such women are under double pressure: the first caused by the laws with which all women have to conform and the second caused by their non-conformity with those laws (Mohammadi, 2007).

Shaleh, a university lecturer, had a complex relationship with her employers at Tehran University after the Revolution. The academic hierarchy highly valued her work and pleaded with her to work as a lecturer for them, but to do so she had to comply with the religious law and wear a *hajib*, which she reluctantly did. However, because she was a woman, the religious authorities at the university still had a problem with her and kept dismissing her and then the academic staff, in their turn, reinstated her. This division of authority was a result of the post-revolutionary binary, religious/secular nature of Iranian government to which I earlier referred when I described Pari's experience as a doctor. Finally Shaleh left the country with the university owing her three years' salary.

I have chosen these above seven examples of my participants' experiences of post-revolutionary gender discrimination because they were the ones who described them to me in the interviews. The others, I believe it is safe to assume, also suffered similarly, but they did not mention any specific occurrences.

The Iran-Iraq War

Another factor in the forced migration of my participants, especially those living in the west of Iran, was the Iran-Iraq war, which lasted from 1980 until 1988. Commentators believe that the war was initiated by Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, because he was afraid that Iran's Islamic Revolution might have spread to Iraq and also wanted to secure territory strategically important for access to the Gulf (Nilsson, 2018). He also considered himself to be in the role of a warlord. Not only that, for hundreds of years there had been a tradition of prejudice between Persians and Arabs (Axworthy,

2013). There was a façade of anti-Persian and anti-Shi'a ideology behind Hussein's cause, matched by the Ayatollahs' belief that the Shi'a branch of Islam should be spread outside national boundaries and he cast Saddam as a despotic villain (Ebadi, 2006). Saddam expected the war to last only a few weeks, but due to a combination of the weakness of his own forces, his underestimation of Iran's defences and the country's leadership believing in divine help, it lasted for almost a decade and resulted in many deaths on both sides (Axworthy, 2013).

Three of my participants were directly affected by the war. For example, Fariba, in her account, describes the effects upon her family: '… *I was counting there about 23, 24 members of my family who had been either executed or imprisoned*'. Her education was curtailed by the war: '*I could not continue with my education because it was at the war time and it was very emotionally difficult for me.*'

Dora, a Kurdish primary school teacher, was teaching adult women to read in poverty-stricken areas of Kurdistan, trying to help them out of their traditional gender role of illiteracy. The area where she worked came under attack by both Iraqi and Iranian forces during the war. She joined the group who were fighting against this repression, but, after 12 years she eventually had to flee Iran and was smuggled to Britain. Pari was a Kurdish doctor who came under similar pressures to Dora. She was working in the poor areas of Kurdistan, finding it difficult enough under the supervision of Hezbollah control, and when the war began there were further problems. She and her husband had to be smuggled to Britain.

Family connections with the previous regime

Having parents or other relatives closely connected with the pre-revolutionary Shah's regime was another reason for strong disfavour from the new government. Ahoo, whose father had been an officer in the army under the Shah, had to curtail her studies abroad after the Revolution. She describes the general position of Iranian women since that time: '… *being a woman you are half a human.*' Not only that: because of her father's pre-revolutionary connections, she and her family were extremely vulnerable: '*As my father was an army officer, and after the Revolution everyone was against our family – and frankly, no-one liked army families of the Shah*.' She worked as a newspaper reporter but even that had to stop when her newspaper building was burnt down after the Revolution. Moving to the UK was a course of action she did not regret: '… *when I came here it was the best thing that happened in my life. I wasn't any more half human. I was a real human here, and it happened*.' Her attitude to life serves as an example of fortitude in difficult circumstances:

> *'I have been very strong, always I believe in myself. The first part of my emigration also made me stronger. I must admit it. As long as I was in Iran I started losing my confidence, because they didn't allow me to do what I liked to do. I wanted to serve my society, I would like to serve women, but it was all against the new Iranian government rules. So as I left Iran I went to Pakistan. I became again the same strong woman which always I have been. And then, by coming to the UK, this thing continued until today I am sitting in front of you.'*

Ahoo's positive attitude here illustrates the strength of mind and the frustration that refugees such as she felt under the circumstances. Before the Revolution she had been a well-educated woman, using her resulting position in society as way of helping and supporting women's causes. No longer able to do that after 1979, she had to go to another country to continue her support remotely, and she had the strength of mind to achieve her goal of leaving Iran and reaching Britain.

An interesting study by Lemus-Way and Johanssen (2020) of the mental strengths and resilience of migrant women was carried out by interviewing 10 Central American women travelling through Mexico, trying to reach the border with the USA. The study was based on strengths perspectives and resilience theories. The authors, used the idea of internal mental qualities and external determinants to describe resilience. The internal qualities were: spirituality and religion, endurance, courage and goal setting, while the external factors were: helpful persons, organisations such as charities, and family, including children, husbands and siblings. The conclusions were that the various external strengths, especially social support, helped to promote the internal resilience of the women; that migrant women should be seen as 'protagonists of migration' (p. 761), not just as people seeking to reunite with their families, and that 'some of them have the capacity to face [challenging situations] and not only that, but also achieve the goals that they have no matter how difficult they appear.' (p. 761) The authors add that such women should be viewed by social workers, not just as victims of abuse on their difficult journeys, but also as people who have the resilience to overcome their challenges. This type of resilience was shown by all of my participants.

Another example of family connections with the Shah's regime was Nagme's father, who worked for the civil service under the Shah. He had worked for the Ministry of Labour and became the governor of a province in Iran. Nagme went to a fee-paying international school in Tehran and, because of her education, began to work abroad for the United Nations. Because she was vulnerable because of her father's connections, when the Revolution happened she was advised by her employers not to return to Iran, to switch careers, and she applied for political asylum in the USA, after which she went to the UK, where she married and started a business. She remembers some advice given to her by her grandmother when she was growing up: '*Listen. They can take everything away from you, but*

one thing you can always take away with you is what you have in your head and your heart, and how you behave to others.' This helped her form a positive attitude to any changes of circumstances she had undergone. However, those who tried to change those circumstances from within also had reasons to flee.

Political activism and non-conformity

During the years preceding the Revolution, Iranian universities were centres of political activism and it has been argued that their students, both female and male, were instrumental in the downfall of the Shah when he was seen as ignoring the needs of the Iranian people (Hamdhaidari, 2008). As I have said, after the Revolution, the Iranian educational system was shut down and remodelled, ending the career ambitions of many women. They were not only restricted from having a career but they were also vulnerable to severe punishment if they were seen to be in any way flouting the new rules or had any undesirable political connections. Nazee, for example, says, '*… at that time Iranian people, especially Iranian women, were under supervision for any movement, any activity, and it was kind of a scary situation. … my dad preferred me to stop going to work or to university because he was worried I might be arrested.*' Ten of the 17 women I have studied had been politically active, especially after the Revolution, when many educated women felt they should protest against the new conditions imposed upon them. Before the Revolution Ashti had been a teacher who was active in politics and a religious nonconformist and therefore, in the new regime, was not considered suitable for working under the Islamic regime. '*My life was in danger because I didn't want to wear the hijab and after that my husband's situation was not easy as well, so together we decided to come out of the country.*' Gender was an issue because ' *… women didn't have right to be a president, women didn't have right to be active in politics, women didn't have right to write, or to have impact in righting the rule of the country.*' Earlier I have discussed the contrasting social and political positions of Iranian women before and after the Revolution. One important change was the post-revolutionary repealing of the Family Law of 1967 in which women were allowed to petition for divorce and to have custody of children after a divorce (Axworthy, 2014). Another significant change was the cancellation of voting rights for women.

Zeba's reasons for leaving were more concerned with human rights in general than with gender in particular. Before the Revolution she was studying in London and joined a group of Iranian students protesting against the Shah. Directly after the Revolution, like many Iranians living abroad, she and her new husband went back to Iran, believing that it would then be a better place to live, only to find that it was not the paradise she expected: '*So in 1979 I went back home, and then I was an activist*

against the regime, a human rights activist. I was involved in left-wing politics there and I was arrested … and it affected my life very, very strongly.' She was imprisoned for over three years. It wasn't until 1993 that she was able to leave Iran and decided to escape to Britain.

Three of my participant Iranian women, such as Teia, whom I have already mentioned, were abroad at the time of the Revolution and did not go back to Iran, realising that it would be dangerous for them. Shaleh had already begun a career in broadcast journalism in Britain before the Revolution, but really wanted to be a teacher of politics in Iran. However, when she returned to pursue this career path she had become friendly with a group of armed dissidents. Fortunately for her she did not join them, and when she returned to Britain the dissident group in Iran used her as a scapegoat, telling the authorities that it was she who had supplied the weapons. They warned her of this, so she wisely stayed in Britain. '*That's why I couldn't go back to Iran at all … I never blamed them. I told them that I was pleased that I could be a scapegoat for them so they wouldn't get into trouble. But that stopped me.*' It would also have been dangerous for her to return because her family in Iran had been heavily involved in left-wing politics. Shaleh's career path in Britain was diverted to journalism.

Before the Revolution, three of my participants already had a history of political activism. Poran had been involved, together with her husband, in political activity as an international student well before the Revolution. Not only that, her father had been a minister in the Shah's government. She explains her reason for leaving Iran in the 1980s:

> *'I had been part of the International student movement of the sixties and seventies and as a political activist I was caught up in the Iranian Revolution in the early 1980s. Following the disappearance of my husband, still I feel sad. When our baby was born, only 45 days old, and received the news of [my husband's] execution 18 months later, I had to go underground … After three years in hiding, in the autumn of 1984, I was forced to flee Iran with my two-and-a-half-year-old son.'*

Non-conformity with the mandatory dress code in the years after the Revolution was also an issue for six of the 17 women. Fariba could not even register her children with a school because she did not wear the correct *hijab* and was wearing a dress rather than trousers. To continue living in Iran she had to change her identity because of the behaviour of other members of her family. Another participant, Dora, mentioned the threat to women whose dress did not comply with the regulations when she compares living in Britain to living in Iran:

> '*… [in Britain] you will not be imprisoned for doing a demonstration; you will not be beaten up because you have not got you hijab; you will not executed for having a boyfriend. I mean the whole situation is different. In Iran, this is a dictatorship and it is all government – ideological … I don't know what to tell them … very religious group in power in Iran, and they have got the power over the people.*'

Shaleh, Ashti, Zeba and Pari also allude to problems with dress code after the Revolution.

It did not matter if a person was not a Muslim, the dress code was imposed upon all women, irrespective of their religion. But dress code was not the only problem for non-Muslims.

Being a member of a religious or ethnic minority

With the Revolution came a regime which had a much more uniform policy about what was acceptable and unacceptable in behaviour and religious affiliation than had the previous administration. Iran was not – and still is not – a homogenous country in terms of ethnicity or religion. Various administrations since the Revolution have had varying degrees of hostility towards minorities, especially in religious terms (Choksy, 2012). For example, the most recent regime recognises the Jewish, Christian and Zoroastrian religions as official minorities with certain rights (for example, limited representation in parliament) and some ethnic minorities, such as Armenians, Chaldeans and Assyrians, are also officially tolerated. However, other large religious minorities, for example, the Baha'i, have suffered persecution (Milani, 2016) and even Sunni Muslims have had such problems from the presiding Shi'a authorities (Choksy, 2012). Another important minority are the Kurds in Western Iran, representing about 12-15 percent of the Iranian population.

Even if the officially recognised non-Muslim religions are tolerated in Iran, at best they are treated as 'quaint specimens, with archaic customs and traditions' (Choksy, 2012, p 273). As an example, even though Iranian (Apostolic) Christianity, originating in Armenia, is one of the officially recognised religions of Iran, its adherents are not always accepted by the Muslim community. An example is Ada, who came from an Armenian Christian background, and, even though her family were not religious, their Muslim acquaintances regarded them as being different. As she said, '*There are different minorities in Iran. When you're treated differently from childhood, when you go to a Muslim school, you're always different because you're not a Muslim.*' This, in itself was not the main reason for her leaving, as this intolerance existed long before the Revolution, but her lack of compliance with the post-revolutionary Islamic laws, for example, not wearing the *hijab*, landed her in prison, and after her release she felt unsafe enough to force her to leave Iran.

Three of my 17 participants, Dora, Nada and Pari, were Kurdish. The Kurds mainly inhabit an area of fluctuating size that is divided amongst four countries, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. They have a distinct common culture and language, and for a long time have struggled to keep their identity as a

nation, with different consequences in each country (Ylziz and Taysi, 2007). The role of the Kurds in Iran (where they originated) has generally been one of opposition to the government, and this being particularly so after the Revolution, when they campaigned and fought for a secular, democratic government (Axworthy, 2014). Being a mixture of Sunni and Shi'a Muslims and non-religious people, the Iranian Kurds have been discriminated against on both ethnic and religious grounds (Taysi, 2007). The Kurdish women of my study have suffered, directly or indirectly, for that reason. Dora relates how both her education and her ambition to become a journalist were disrupted by the attacks upon Kurdistan by post-revolutionary Iranian forces and their subsequent occupation. As she says, '*So it was a very difficult situation, especially after they took over Kurdistan. They started to execute many people and there were no afterwards any freedom … especially women and children were the first victims.*' She joined a resistance group and also the socialist party and her career prospects came to nothing: '*So all my dreams had gone, just like that, because of war and changes. Things were out of my control. I couldn't go anymore after my dreams. So we had to fight for our lives and safety now …*' Leaving Iran was the only choice for Dora because: '*… as a human being our life had not any values from our government.*'

The family of another participant, Nada, was also Kurdish, and that had given them problems during the Shah's regime: '*Well, before the Revolution we had the background. We were all in a political family because my father was sent into exile a few times – we're coming from Kurdistan*.' She describes how the population of Kurdistan was discriminated against by the Shah's government and attacked by post-revolutionary forces. She tells of activist groups protesting about their treatment under the Shah and how the situation of the Kurds was even worse after the Revolution.

> *'... when this regime came into power and the Shah left, well, it was more and more serious. I can remember most of the young people in this area, they started this activity with the Kurdish issue … In 1980 the regime attacked Kurdistan in Nowruz. They attacked Kurdistan very badly and killed hundreds of people …'*

Not only were they badly affected by being Kurdish, but also Nada's father had been a colonel in the Shah's army and her brother was an activist, and the family were exiled to Iraq. It was from there that, helped by the Iraqi government of Kurdistan, and in spite of it being during the Iran-Iraq war, Nada was able begin a new life Britain.

One feature of being Kurdish at the time of the Revolution was that Kurdistan was spread over four different countries and it was possible for the Iranian Kurdish to travel to the Iraqi part of the territory. When the post-revolutionary Iranian forces attacked Kurdistan, Pari was able to move to

the Iraqi region. Eventually she was forced to leave for Britain: '*I went there and at that time I had to leave. There was no choice – it was bad*.'

The Revolution of 1979 had brought about many unforeseen and unwelcome changes in Iranian society, especially for women. A number of these changes brought danger to women, especially if they stood out in some way – being in a prestigious job, having connections with the previous regime and being politically active, for example. All of the women of my study were affected by these changes and in this section I have tried to give a representative sample of their way of escaping from them. Now I shall attempt to describe how the women felt about leaving the country of their birth.

The participants' feelings about leaving Iran

In the next chapter, I shall, amongst other things, investigate my participants' experience of living in Britain and the challenges they faced. Here I am studying their emotions on leaving behind the country in which they had been brought up.

According to their testimony in the interviews, all of the women displayed mixed feelings about leaving Iran. On the positive side they were out of danger, away from the clutches of what was to them a hostile regime which devalued the status of women. However, parents, siblings, friends and even husbands and children were left behind. Career paths and education had been curtailed. The country and its way of life in which they had grown up was now gone and they faced an uncertain future. At the time of their leaving and entry into their new country they would naturally feel insecure in a their new environment because they grew up in a country with a broadly uniform culture, especially if they were Muslims, and they would have little sense of belonging in their new country (Fathi, 2015). Additionally, the women had moved to a place where religious observance or conformity to certain clothing or behaviour was not demanded of them, so a sense of freedom could be felt. '*I felt as a new person*,' Zeba told me. '*I felt was able to do anything … so I am empowered*.' Shaleh, like most of the other women I interviewed, emphasised that freedom from fear was a significant factor of living in Britain: '*The most happiness is freedom, democracy and the culture … I live free of fear. Freedom from fear is extremely important. All my childhood, my adult life in Iran I lived under fear*.'

Nada also sees a sharp contrast between life in post-revolutionary Iran and in Britain when she says:

> *'In Iran, as a woman, especially following the Islamic rules, you don't have any rights to express yourself, to choose your wearing, to travel without a male, one of the males in your*

> *family. You do not have access to many things which the men have as guardians of society. When you come here [Britain] you will be seen as a human being … whether you are male or female. Everyone here, more or less, they have the same rights.'*

However, Azee would disagree to a certain extent with Nada's statement about British gender equality, when she describes her experience in Britain: '*… you are not treated well as a woman because a man and a woman are different, because you get a salary – if you work anywhere you don't get the same amount as a man.*' So In Britain she noticed and experienced another kind of gender inequality, that of the gender pay gap, which probably surprised and disappointed her, unless she was a realist who did not expect Britain to be the absolute opposite of Iran.

Dora expressed her mixed feelings well when she said, *'In one way I was very happy that, with my daughter, we had arrived in a very safe country, but I was very worried about our future because I didn't know anything. What would happen to us?*' Azee, when asked what she missed the most about Iran, said: '*The love, the climate, the affection – everything – because it was completely different, completely different, the emotional and the … everything was different – family support and all the love they give you*.' Homa expressed a similar sentiment when she said, '*I miss Iran every day, even after so many years, but however I most miss to see Iranians or listen to the language, or having a shop where I can buy Iranian food.*' Before moving to London she had lived in the north of England where Iranian immigrants were scarce, which made her feelings of homesickness even worse than they might otherwise have been. She expressed her mixed feelings when she said, '*… I had a better time here, but obviously I lost part of my culture by being here.*' Later on the interview Homa conveyed the two sides of her migration more succinctly when she said, '*Somehow I am happy, somehow I am not.'* Zeba faced her refugee situation with a positive attitude: *' … because of my experiences in Iran, this was an opportunity for a new life and to become a new person. So all of this makes me very happy.*'

In spite of the repressive post-revolutionary regime in Iran, which was a major factor in their leaving, most of the women still had positive feelings towards the country itself and missed some aspects of their lives there. For example, Azee, after saying that she missed the family and community support with which she had grown up, said,

> '[…] *if the situation was normal in Iran, I would have preferred to go back to Iran, because I would have had a different life, a different career, different opportunity. I would have been happier because I would have the support of the family, the culture, the language, everything.*'

Even though various degrees of patriarchy exist in many western countries, it was not a system that was missed in the extreme form found in countries like Iran by female Iranian migrants. Rashidian *et al's* study (2013) of 24 first-generation Iranian women in the USA showed that in Iran they had been deeply conditioned to think and behave subserviently to men and consequently had problems with feelings of guilt when they realised they were under less obligation to conform. '*My culture haunts me no matter where I go*', spoken by one of their participants, is quoted in the title of that study.

Nonetheless, none of my participants expressed any feelings of guilt in respect of having being liberated from their patriarchal past. Rather, nostalgia was a common theme. When asked if she felt at home in Britain, Ashti said, 'I feel quite comfortable in the UK, however I miss my country every day of my life.' As Tehranian *et al.* (2006) say: 'Exile is a rupture in the bond between a person and her/his habitat. Exile encompasses feelings of estrangement, emotional and psychological sense of loss and, almost always, sense of marginality and otherness.' (p. 414).

Fariba also missed Iran but her feelings of relief at no longer being repressed were much stronger: '[I miss] family and weather, but freedom is more important than that.' Expressing her love for her home country, Shaleh said, 'I was extremely homesick, and there were three of us. I was very much, how can I say? I loved my country very much and I was very much a nationalist.' But, like Fariba, she values the freedom she now has in Britain: '*The most happiness is freedom, democracy and the culture. … I live free of fear. Freedom from fear is extremely important. All my childhood, my adult life in Iran, I lived under fear. Every move that I had I was worried that somebody is going to put me in prison or kill me or do something wrong with me.*' As she is perhaps one of the more articulate of my participants and had more to say about her feelings than the others, I shall quote Shaleh at length when she describes her thoughts on what she missed the most about Iran:

> *'… I must say that what I missed were my friends, friends and family only. And also I missed the northern part of Iran where my family came from. I mean it's nostalgic, you know, and that very deep feeling of belonging was missed. Immigrants have their roots. This is a poem from – I've forgotten the name – a Latin American poet who says that an immigrant's roots are in the air, not on the ground.'*

Homa gives a particular example of her lost culture when she compares the Iranian attitude to food with that of the British: '*… I think in Iran our culture is around food. All the people gather and eat together or you cook for other people … [but in Britain] all the culture is just socialising … the people just socialise by having a drink together … I think that this part was always very important for me because it was something that was familiar to me.*' Ada also has a sense of nostalgia about the people she knew and her country of birth: '*I missed people I loved. I grieved for people I lost – I'm still*

grieving. I still miss some foods, some nature that I don't see anywhere else, but I cherish the lovely memory I have.'

According to some researchers, such as Vingerhoets (2005), homesickness as a factor in the adaptation of migrants in the host society is a neglected aspect of acculturation studies. Working with clinical psychologists, she came across a way of distinguishing two main types of homesickness: the 'cat' type, in which people have a strong attachment to places and cultures, and the 'dog' type, where people, rather than places, are the focus of attachment. I have just mentioned my participants Homa and Shaleh, who expressed homesickness in respect of the country and culture they had left, showing the 'cat' type, and Ada, who missed the people she had known, illustrating the 'dog' type. This is not to say that these types of homesickness are mutually exclusive; both can be felt at the same time. Vingerhoets also distinguishes between 'normal' homesickness, which is healthy and only to be expected in the circumstances of migration, and pathological homesickness, which is much stronger and more debilitating in the long run. If the level of homesickness is high enough then severe depression and physical illness can result and adaptation to the new culture can be impaired. The circumstances in which a migrant is placed when first arriving in the new country can also affect the degree of homesickness felt. Teia, for example, was in a '*very, very, dark, very damp, very small place*' when she first arrived in Britain and she badly missed her family back in Iran and her job in the film industry which had been curtailed.

Fisher (2005) considers four main theories which help in understanding the negative effects of migration: attachment and loss, interruption and discontinuity, lack of control over one's life, and role change and self-consciousness. All of my participants had left behind people to whom they were attached: parents and siblings in particular, but children also. The discontinuity of having one's career curtailed, as in the example of Teia above, or if a person has ceased to live in the culture in which she has been brought up, as with all my participants, homesickness and depression can result. When people whose lives have been going well and are in control of it suddenly find themselves unable to control what happens to them, feelings of loss or disturbance can occur. Similarly, when someone who had a position of authority, say a head teacher or a judge, in their home country has to start again at the bottom of the ladder after migration, there can be threats to their ego, causing anxiety and distress, and also more self-preoccupation which, in its turn, reduces her capacity to adapt. An example taken from my participants is Teia, who had an important role in the film industry in Iran and could not continue that in Britain. However, from interviewing the women of my study, I believe that they were strong, resilient and positive people and any strongly negative effects of their

migration were only temporary (even if they still showed signs of distress during the interviews); they rose to the challenges they faced and struggled for better lives. In fact one of the women, Poran, dismisses homesickness by her attitude to life: '*I don't get homesick about home. I learn that you carry your home with you. You make your own home. And my belief is that wherever you live and work, that is your home and you're a citizen of the world*.' Her only regret is that she was not with her Iran-based parents at the end of their lives.

Three of the women of my study explicitly expressed unhappiness because they could no longer do the work they had been doing in Iran to help less fortunate people or to take part more generally in society. This produced the sense of frustration evident in Nada's account: '*It's a big jump, a big difference, and then it will make you sad because you can't do anything from here for the millions of women in such a society – they can't do anything. They don't have a social life*.' Although Ada was happy to have escaped from the persecution produced partly from being in an ethnic minority in Iran - '*I was in prison and managed to get out somehow*.' - she also managed to avoid the sort of frustration felt by Nada by helping disadvantaged women of the Iranian community in Britain. Ada did feel comparatively fortunate because she was not short of money when she left: '*… I see myself as lucky and privileged compared to a lot of women I work with and who I'm acquainted with, friends and people I know. They suffered a lot*.' Similarly, Ashti felt frustrated by her inability to take part in society: '*As a person who wanted to be a very active member of society, sometimes I was crying because I didn't want to be a refugee and then to leave my country to go to another country.'*

I feel at this point that, by discussing the mental effects of migration, I am verging upon territory which really belongs in the next chapter, so I shall wait until then before I delve any deeper into this topic. Instead I shall closely examine the facilities for learning English in Iran which were available to my participants before they had to leave and begin to survey the levels of English they had achieved before leaving, which I shall continue in Chapter Seven.

Learning English in Iran

> '… governmental policy in respect of languages has the potential to inform decisions that can determine the fortunes of particular languages and indigenous cultures by, for example, influencing the choice of national and official languages and the basis on which schooling is organised so as to achieve high levels of bilingualism or multilingualism for minority and dominant groups and/or promoting the learning of particular foreign languages.' (Moghaddam and Murray, 2019, p. 97)

During the forty years after the Revolution the Iranian authorities have had the opinion that, paradoxically, English is 'the language of enemies' but is also a 'tool for progress' and their respect for its usefulness has consequently fluctuated in its official acceptance in Iran (Davari and Aghagolzadeh, 2015, p.13). The revolutionary leaders believed that the use of English in Iran was a method by which the English-speaking West could influence the Iranian people in undesirable ways and consequently, for a few years, suppressed the teaching and usage of the language (Moghaddam and Murray, 2019).

Before that, however, during the time of the Shah, American and British influence upon the Iranian educational system meant that in the twenty years before the Revolution most of the Iranians (including females) who could participate in education were exposed to the English language as an officially approved second language. It was taught by the British Council (in a mixture of free and fee-paying roles), the Iran-American Society, in state schools and in numerous private language schools. Training for Iranian English language teachers was also available (Davari and Aghagolzadeh, 2015). People working for oil companies and other foreign-owned industries had free English tuition provided by their employers via the British and American governments and there were English language radio and television stations in Tehran (Moghaddam and Murray, 2019). Additionally, from 1972 onwards, showing that the importance that the pre-revolutionary regime had seemingly placed upon education, ambitious plans were being made to create an immense library, the Pahlavi National Library, designed as an international resource (Steele, 2019). This project could be thought of merely as a grand gesture of the type that the regime was known to offer, but it was also an attempt to emphasise that education and scholarship were important attributes in Iranian culture. Ironically, because of the elitist nature of education at the time, in 1976 only 26% of women and 59% of men in Iran were literate (in Farsi), and it was only after the Revolution that serious attempts were made to increase these levels in adults, albeit in a largely gender insensitive but segregated way (Mehran, 1999). The Pahlavi National Library never got past the planning stage.

In pre-revolutionary Iran, four of the 17 women of my study had the advantage of having been educated in Britain or the USA and also had been required to use English and other European languages in studying other subjects in Iran. Ahoo had a scholarship to study in Paris, Poran studied for an MBA in Los Angeles, Zeba went to the UK to study film and Ada was sent to a fee-paying preparatory school in London. It is therefore not surprising that these particular participants were more confident in communicating in English. All of the women in my study, since they had undergone at least a secondary school education, migrated to Britain with at least a very basic level

of English language. When I asked my participants to choose a level of English from a range I suggested, four of the 17 women confessed to a very basic level of English, whilst eight said they had moderate skills and the other five had good levels. (See Table 4 in Chapter Seven.) The close connection between culture and language, as suggested by linguistic anthropologists Whorf and others (Duranti, 1997), is also an important aspect of the mind-set of the women as they made a decision to leave Iran. Their exposure to the English language must have given even those who hadn't travelled abroad at least a very basic idea of the culture of English-speaking countries.

One of my participants, Zeba - and her family - benefitted from British influence in Iran:

> *'Then, after [secondary school] I went to the university and studied English language for teacher training. When, as a kid […] all my siblings they used to go to the English Institute, which was affiliated with the British Embassy in Tehran, and they all studied English in there. Apart from the school, they also learned English as a sort of outside the school. So I think our English was a kind of medium level when we were there.'*

It is unclear from the literature or the participants' responses whether or not tuition was free of cost at the English Institute in Tehran.

During the interviews it was clear that, while all of the participants spoke comprehensible English, some were more fluent and had better grammar and vocabulary than others. Both Donya and Ashti, for example, told me that in Iran they had had two or three hours per week of English lessons as part of the curriculum at secondary school, much as British pupils learn French or Spanish. Similarly, Pari reported that she learned English at secondary school and in the first year of university, and Teia also. However, 12 of the participants reported that the English they learned was insufficient for use in the real world. Homa, for instance, stated that she '*learned very little* [English] *at high school and more at university. But when I came, I could read and write very well, but it's speaking* …' She added, '*Well, I had English as a second language from the fifth grade to the end of the higher school, as a second language, and that was all. I didn't do anything on top of that*.' Pari reports that, '*Even when I went to university we didn't study English, but I read my medical book in English*.' But she couldn't communicate in normal English conversation unless it involved medical jargon. A study made by Hormozi *et al* (2018) into the acculturation of 10 mixed gender first-generation Iranian refugees in the USA verifies that the Iranian high school methods of English teaching were too academic in nature and inadequate for use in real life.

The reasons for these differences in English language proficiency are complex but can be related to several basic factors. The first and main factor is the amount of exposure to the language a person

has had, meaning that learning only grammar and vocabulary at school and speaking in a 'textbook' way is not enough; regular social communication is required in order to gain a useful level of skill (Stevens, 1992). Those of my participants who had previously travelled to English-speaking countries or who had interacted with others in English, say at an international school, would have an advantage over those who had not, in terms of fluency on arrival in the host country. The level of education a person has gained in their country of origin can also be a factor in the level of skill foreign languages (Tubergen and Kalmijn, 2009). Someone who has studied at university, for example, may have had to use at least their reading skills in English, a dominant language in global academia. A third factor is the prevalence of English language in the country of origin (*ibid.)*. English was an officially accepted language in Iran during the decades in which the Shah had close relations with the USA in particular, so before the Revolution the women of my study had the chance to be involved with the language, at least in its written form, with impunity.

As I have said, although the women I interviewed had undergone some form of English language education at school and in higher education, it had been insufficient for living in an English-speaking country, being based more upon reading and writing and grammar than upon conversation. Ashti said, '*I could read and write English language but conversation was the most difficult part for me*.' Most of the participants, on arrival in the UK, realised that their English language education in Iran had been inadequate. Nazee says, '… *I had 12 years English language in that school, but I couldn't express myself because of the feelings. I felt like I was a mute; I couldn't talk; I felt dumb. I couldn't communicate. No-one could understand me. I couldn't understand people*.' Mehra reports that she had a '*very, very basic*' level of English when she left Iran. Before entering Britain, she had also learned Danish, which caused her some confusion. Dora also admits to a very low level of English when she migrated. On being asked what was her level of English on arrival, she said, '*Zero, actually … In Iran we studied ; it was just one hour per week English classes we had … so not much.' She described her English level as 'Basic or less. Unable, I think*.'

In contrast, Ahoo was motivated to learn English to a higher level than most people by her love of languages and was able to study beyond the limits of the state educational system: '*In Iran, always I have been in private English courses because I loved it. I loved to read books in other languages. I loved to integrate with foreigners to learn more about their cultures, countries or whatever*.' Azee also found that she could learn English to a satisfactory level in Iran, mainly because she was studying telecommunications before the Revolution, although she had problems with vernacular idioms in her first few years in Britain. Not long before the Revolution, Ashti was a secondary school

teacher and was also studying social science at university, which meant she had the motivation and desire to improve her English by taking lessons.

Because pre-revolutionary Iran was a country with many strong international connections, Iranian people were relatively free to travel to other countries to study and to work. This meant that before the effects of the Revolution forced them to leave Iran and become refugees, four of the women had previously lived and studied in English-speaking countries and therefore had fewer language problems than those who had received only a basic grounding in English. Fariba, for example, told me that in 1970 she had gone to Britain with her English husband to study and, of course, had learned English more thoroughly than those without such connections. Similarly with a great deal of English-speaking experience, Ada had gone to secondary school in London between the ages of 13 and 18 and returned to Iran before the Revolution. Another participant who had been immersed in the English language before the Revolution, Nagme, had attended the International School in Tehran, where the students communicated in Farsi, French and English. Subsequently she worked for the United Nations in the USA and then, with her husband, worked in the media and for charities in Britain. Information about the financial resources required for these English language studies at that time is obscure.

Chapter Summary

All of my participants, who were compelled to permanently leave Iran, had sound reasons for doing so, whether it was immediate danger from war or the regime, the inability continue their education, being of the 'wrong' faith, the 'wrong' gender, or anxiety about the future of their children. I have given many examples of why they were justified in leaving. I have also described their feelings about leaving, their homesickness and their sense of bereavement at having left the country in which they grew up and having left family members behind. An aspect of their lives in Iran highly relevant to this study is my participants' English language education in Iran at a time when English was officially considered to be important and useful language.

From my participants' self-assessments of their English language abilities it seems that the majority of those who had never before left Iran had learned some English, but not enough to be useful in real life. These women had had little incentive to learn the language in any way other than as a compulsory school subject, especially if they hadn't lived in big cities such as Tehran. In Chapter Seven I shall be studying their experience of using and improving their English as part of their

acculturation process. For the time being, in the next chapter I shall concentrate upon their more general experiences of adaptation to life in Britain.

CHAPTER SIX

THE PARTICIPANTS' ADAPTATION TO THEIR NEW LIVES IN BRITAIN

The purpose of this chapter

This chapter relates to my third research question: *In what ways have the experiences, both before and after migration, and especially of gender issues, affected the acculturation of my female participants?* I shall firstly discover the women's reasons and hopes for choosing Britain as a place where they would continue their lives as refugees, if indeed they had a choice. Then I shall explore the extent to which these reasons were justified by their experience and how living in Britain matched up to their expectations. I shall examine their experiences during the first five years or so of living in Britain in terms of finding housing, finance, education, career, work, bringing up children and all of the factors which are involved in making a new life in a new country. Some already had academic or vocational qualifications and financial resources which went some way to helping them do this, but others had been forced to curtail their education and career paths or had financial difficulties, causing them to have great challenges in adapting to their new situation and developing successful careers. Each of the seventeen women had a unique experience and I aim to place these experiences within a theoretical framework, that of acculturation theory, in order to better understand how the women have managed to reach the social position at which they have now arrived. I begin by describing the reasons for my participants choosing Britain, if they actually had a choice, as the place where they might spend the rest of their lives.

Why they chose Britain

When refugees are forced to flee from their home countries in order to escape from persecution and other hazardous circumstances, they may have a certain amount of choice in their destination - or no choice at all. Studies of the criteria migrants use in choosing the location of their new host country have been made. For example, Tucker (2018), investigating Palestinian asylum seekers' reasons for choosing Sweden as a suitable destination, found that the main criterion was the ease by which they would be able to secure permanent residency and citizenship in the new country. My

participants reported no major problems in being allowed entry and eventual citizenship to Britain, nor did any of them mention that factor as an explicit reason for choosing that country. However, after the 1980s there was a gradual increase of restrictions placed upon asylum seekers in Britain, which have caused a rise in people-smuggling (Turner, 2015). My participants went to Britain mainly free of such problems, apart from the two of them who were forced to rely upon smugglers.

The participants' explicit reasons

In response to the interview question 'Why did you choose Britain?', the main explicitly stated reasons given by the women of my study are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The main explicitly stated reasons given by the 17 participants for choosing Britain as a destination.

REASON FOR CHOOSING BRITAIN	NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	PARTICIPANTS
Familiarity with the English language	6	Nazee, Fariba, Hanna, Shaleh, Ada, Mehra
Lived in or visited Britain before revolution	6	Teia, Ahoo, Shaleh, Ada, Azee, Fariba
Friends or family members already in Britain	4	Ashti, Hanna, Poran, Nagme
To continue career / education	4	Homa, Teia, Zeba, Shaleh
Positive and attractive features of British culture	3	Nazee, Ahoo, Poran, Nada
(Had no choice)	2	Pari, Dora

A list such as this does not completely reflect the complexity of the situation it describes (Van Heelsum, 2007), nor is it comprehensive, but it can be useful for the purposes of analysis. More than one reason was given by all but one of the women (Mehra, who simply answered, '*For language*', but I suspect she had more unstated reasons).

Nazee's testimony shows a number of motives:

> *'The only hope I had when I moved to England was freedom, and I thought I'm going to have opportunity to study, to work without any worries. And this helped me.'*

And later, she said:

> *'Well, I thought British people were familiar with Iranian country and they know where we come from we weren't economic asylum seekers … and I found them more conservative and the language was better and it was a nice diverse society.'*

These statements illustrate four main reasons for choosing Britain: freedom, culture, continuing with education, acceptance by the British people and the English language. Nazee's reference to the familiarity of Iran to British people was the result of the country having been very much in the news in Britain during the time of the Revolution and that they must have been aware of the resulting

need for some sections of the Iranian population to flee (Tran, 2009). Similarly, Poran gave three reasons: her brother lived in Britain ('… *so there was someone I can lean on emotionally*'); she could already speak English, if not fluently; she thought she would be able to do a conversion course for her law degree, but she had no opportunity to do this as her son's education '*became a priority, so I focussed on him*.' This statement brings up another motive for the women choosing Britain, that of their children's future. In Chapter Five I quoted Fariba, who was anxious about her daughters' future in Iran under a discriminatory regime. She had been forced to leave them behind when she fled and one of the reasons for her anxiety was that girls as young as nine were considered to be criminally responsible in Iran after the Revolution (Axworthy, 2003), so she was afraid that her daughters were vulnerable in this respect: '[…] *I thought if they grow up in this country* [Iran]*, what can become of them? So their future was one of the main factors, as well as the political factors, that I left Iran*.'

Nada, who had been a human rights activist in her Kurdistan homeland, gave a detailed answer when asked for her reasons for choosing Britain:

> '*Well, there are some advantages here, rather than the other countries. For example, first of all, the language, which is the global language. And after that it was a big country with different cultural aspects and a society full of everyone. I can remember when we came here in April, a friend of mine said, "Oh, that's a nice country because we don't feel we are other."*'

She went on to say that, as a child, she had learned a lot about Britain, its history and culture and that her English was '*very good*'. So in her case, Nada had a predetermined choice, even from childhood.

Othering

Nada's friend uses the word 'other' presumably to refer to a feeling of social exclusion, or indeed rejection, from the host community because of their refugee status or their alien status. Huot *et al* (2016) list some of the discourses in talking about negative attitudes of the host community and towards refugees, or 'forced immigrants', who are thus socially excluded. Firstly, the migrants are seen as a threat and therefore must be restricted in their movements and opportunities. Secondly, they are seen as uninvited guests who are 'jumping the queue' in receiving benefits, and thirdly, they are depicted as overloading social resources. All of these judgements, say Huot *et al*, can give governments a reason for holding back on support for refugees. Nada and her friend felt that these attitudes were negligible in Britain, but Homa, as explained below, encountered hidden prejudice.

Career

When it came to choosing Britain as a means of continuing with a career, the women told different stories. Zeba wanted to continue her career as a human rights lawyer when she fled Iran in 1993. Her English was good and she had a choice of destination between Canada and Britain. She chose the latter because she had siblings in London and she had been forced to leave her eight-year-old daughter behind in Iran, so the ability to be nearer to Iran and to connect with her daughter through her family determined her choice. Zeba was able to carry on her legal work in London and, within a year, her daughter was able to join her in London.

After leaving Iran, medically-qualified Homa did not go directly to Britain but spent 13 years in Germany studying to be a doctor and practising medicine. However, she felt uncomfortable in Germany and experienced prejudice against foreigners there, so she decided to continue her career in Britain:

> *'I was pleased that I am somewhere I am welcome, and I don't need to fight for my position. From a cultural point of view, I am not comparing with Iran, I am comparing with Germany. I was pleased as well, because somehow I felt as a foreigner. I felt more comfortable here than in Germany.'*

Her sense of being treated as 'other' was much less in Britain than in Germany. Harris *et al*'s (2016) exploration of the concept of someone being considered to be a 'stranger' in relation to one setting but not in another generalises this situation. At that time the NHS was short of doctors, so apart from the more tolerant attitude towards foreigners, Homa was persuaded by the better career prospects in Britain, and she also knew basic English from her school days. Another participant, Shaleh, experienced disappointment in continuing her career. To pay for her studying for a Master's degree near London before the Revolution, Shaleh had worked for the BBC in their Persian service, but, because of the BBC's gender discrimination, which has only recently been officially investigated (UK Government, 2021a), she had a short contract and a casual job rather than a more secure post. This lack of permanence caused Shaleh to give up the idea of doing a PhD but she bought a house anyway with family-provided finance. After the Revolution she went back to Iran for seven years for family reasons, but because of the impossibility of working in broadcasting and journalism there, she was forced to return to Britain, hoping to continue her career at the BBC. Unfortunately, the BBC was still discriminating against women, but she managed to continue studying and had parallel careers in independent broadcast journalism and helping Muslim women, although she was not a Muslim herself. (There is more about equal opportunity problems at the BBC later in this chapter.)

Friends and family support

Four of the participants had friends or family members in Britain, another reason for choosing it as a destination. Ashti said, '*First of all, my friend was in London and I didn't have any members of my family abroad. I wanted to be close to my friend.*' Hanna's brother had been in Britain for some years, so the choice was easy for her. Similarly, Poran had a brother who had preceded her: '*… but I knew I had a brother, so I could lean on him emotionally.*' Nagme, who had first gained asylum in the USA, went with her husband to Britain.

English language and Prior experience of Britain

Any level of ability in the English language was certainly a reason for choosing Britain for six of the women, but it is not the only English-speaking country in the world. However, Canada, the USA and Australia are much further from Iran, so distance from Iran may have been a factor, as in the case of Zeba whom I have already mentioned as having a daughter left behind there. I analyse the importance of the English language in the acculturation of my participants in Chapter Seven.

As for those who had already had lengthy experiences of being in Britain, Fariba , Shaleh, Ada and Azee had studied there, either at school or university, Teia had married an Englishman and was trapped in Britain after the Revolution, unable to return to her home country. Ahoo had been a tourist in Britain; she '*liked the discipline and polite people*.' Familiarity with the culture, the language and the people was certainly a deciding factor for them to avoid marginalisation and problems of identity (Duranti, 1997; Hall, 2017). Ada appreciated the historical democracy of Britain, a positive and attractive feature in her eyes: '*I do respect the democracy that British people gained, based on 200 years of the work, basically people's working class work. I don't think that history existed anywhere in the world*.'

Having no choice

Two of my participants, Pari and Dora, had no choice of destination country. Pari, was forced out of the Iranian part of Kurdistan into the Iraqi governed area by attacks from the Iranian army, from where she escaped on an aeroplane which happened to be going to Britain. Dora, another Kurdish woman, had to be hurriedly smuggled out of Iran with her young daughter because of her freedom fighter role: '*It was not my choice, actually, it was the smuggler's choice. I said, "Anywhere safe, please," so they brought us to the UK*.' She and her daughter successfully applied for asylum there.

Mental strength

I have described the main reasons for my participants' choosing Britain as a suitable destination, but did it turn out to be the right choice? Given that all of these women now appear to live in comfortable circumstances, it was obviously a good choice in the long term. The mental strengths of migrant people are very important in achieving their goals in arriving where they aim to go and in continuing and developing their new lives once they get there. A study by Lemus-Way and Johansson (2019) on the resilience of Mexican migrant women in transit to the USA showed that many of the women used various types of internal and external strengths to achieve their goal. Personal strengths such as endurance, courage and a strong sense of purpose helped them. If they were accompanied by their children, that was an additional incentive not to give up. They were also able to use the assistance of family members, and institutions, such as shelters. Hormozi *et al* (2018), studying a group of Iranian refugees in the USA, discovered that their self-identified resilience factors were 'flexibility, adaptability, persistence, staying strong, religious convictions, maintaining good connections, education and language ability' (p. 280). The women of my study showed similar strengths. As one example of this strength of character, Ahoo said,

> *'I have been very strong. Always I believe in myself. […] so as I left Iran I went to Pakistan. I became again the same strong woman which always I have been. And then, by coming to the UK, this thing continued until today I am sitting in front of you'*

However it will be interesting to explore their experiences during the crucial initial period of their new lives in Britain, as compared with their aspirations.

Was the participants' choice of Britain justified by their experience?

My discussion of the main reasons for my participants' choosing Britain as a destination brings up the question of whether or not their decisions were justified in practice. Also, I have been curious about any problems, such as financial and marital ones, they had in their initial settling in period, not necessarily directly related to their choice of country. I deal with learning English in the next chapter, as it is a major theme of this study.

Robeyns (2007, cited in Van Heelsum, 2017) has created a list of basic fields of life which apply to the realisation of aspirations of newcomers to a new country after arrival, with Van Heelsum's additional factors in italics (quotes from p.2138).

> **Health**: including clean water, freedom from infection, access to medical facilities and knowing how to remain healthy;
> **Food**: 'sufficient, clean and varied'; knowing how to keep well nourished;
> **Income**: 'access to income under acceptable working conditions', *access to information*.
> **Education**: good quality, with teachers, learning materials and 'possibilities to advance', *learning the host language*
> **Justice**: 'rule of law, real political participation';
> **Community activities**: help with daily life and social connections;
> **Culture**: 'the possibility to live with tradition, cultures and common norms, '*the right to practise one's religion.'*

This is a list which is necessarily broad and does not cover every possibility, but how does it apply to my participants' aspirations? Iran at the time after the Revolution was not a third world country. Owing to the Shah's modernisation policies, its facilities were reasonably sufficient to meet the needs of most of the people (Sheikhzadegan, 2018). Except for certain areas during the Iran-Iraq war, there were hospitals, doctors, schools at least up to secondary level; there was food. However, owing to the new laws, women's access to justice was severely limited, as was access to work and higher education. In contrast, Britain could provide all of these facilities, at least in principle. My participants' reasons for leaving Iran were not generally shortage of food, money or health, but that they were in danger from the authorities, deprived of work and felt very vulnerable, particularly because of their gender. Leaving Iran to a safer place was much more important to them than the nature of their destination country, but, as can be seen from Table 1, all but two of the women used a preconceived notion of what Britain was like in comparison with Iran at the time and used that as a deciding factor.

Shishehgar *et al* (2016) in their review of the literature have found that refugee women are disproportionally prone to mental health issues compared with the general population and that they also find resettlement challenging. They suggest that this vulnerability is the result of shortages of material, social and health needs. Social isolation, lack of language proficiency (leading to difficulties in communication and hence to inability to find a job), sudden immersion into a new culture (especially in respect of their children), problems in finding suitable accommodation and feelings of isolation can all hinder acculturation. I shall examine my participants' extended acculturation in the next chapter. Additionally, and perhaps the most damaging, mental health problems are associated with leaving behind family members in their country of origin can cause distress. My participants, amongst them, experienced all of these problems. Shishehgar and her colleagues also found that arrival in the host country at a younger age was a positive factor in the acculturation process, as younger people are more adaptable. Although I did not ask a specific question about the age of my

participants at the time of arrival in Britain, I can estimate from their present ages that their age range lay between roughly 18 and 30 years, meaning that they could be classed as 'young' in terms of Shishehgar's findings and therefore were more easily adaptable.

Freedom and safety

On interviewing the women I discovered that the overriding feeling they had was that, in spite of generally difficult financial circumstances, they had arrived in a country which gave them freedom from being repressed and persecuted because of their gender and the possibility of improving their lives with fewer barriers. Given their reasons for leaving Iran, it is not surprising that they appreciated the contrast between their previous lives of suppression, danger and restriction as women in their home country and the relative freedom and safety in Britain. Ashti stated this feeling in terms of gender: '*Well, I came here … everything for women and men was the same. The law and culture were not stopping me*.' Homa agreed: '*As a woman, being able to be yourself*.' She had not come directly to Britain, but had spent several years as a doctor in Germany. She said that Britain was superior to Germany in terms of racial tolerance. However, after some experience of living in Britain, she found it was not the utopia she had first imagined: '*My greatest challenge has been the system, the British system. I found it an extremely rigid system, somehow traditional, somehow difficult to fight, or just because things are not expressed clearly – things are hidden. The racism and sexism are hidden*.' Another participant, Nada, stated that life for women in Britain was not completely perfect: '*There is still not 100 percent equality between women and men here, even in Britain, but comparing with the past it's better than before*.' On the other hand, Zeba had a very positive experience: '*I was fascinated that I had the freedom. I have come somewhere where I could do whatever I wanted to do. I felt as a new person. I felt able to do anything it all had difficulties in Iran*.' She contrasts life in Britain to that in Iran: '*As a woman, you live here, you are free, especially after the Revolution. If you were living in Iran … you had to wear a scarf, hijab and all that, but life here is not.'*

The sense of freedom and safety in the host country experienced by forced migrants is naturally to be seen as relative to their experience previous to their flight. Hauck *et al* (2014), who studied the acculturation of three sets of forced immigrants (Burmese, Bhutanese and Iraqi) to the USA, found that their senses of socioeconomic status, safety and freedom, were dependent upon the relative level of these factors in their previous lives in their original countries. Socioeconomically, the Burmese and Bhutanese found themselves better off in the USA because they had lived at a low standard of living in their original countries and had been living in refugee camps before they fled.

However, as with the Iranian women of my study, the Iraqi immigrants, who had lived relatively well financially in Iraq, reported that they felt impoverished, living in Britain at a lower economic status than they had done in Iraq. Not only that, they were now living in a country which they considered to be one of the reasons for their need to escape because of British involvement in the wars with Iraq. Both the Burmese and the Iraqis were happy with their freedom in the USA and the Iraqis in particular had experienced violence and trauma in their home countries and now felt much safer. Similarly, my participants, had experienced violence, racial prejudice and lack of freedom in various combinations in post-revolutionary Iran, and, although life in Britain was not perfect and, after a few years, the novelty might have worn off for some, they all expressed appreciation of their new social environment and showed fortitude in dealing with any obstacles they encountered. Once refugees are in a position of safety in their new country, then they need to be able to deal with the practicalities of living there.

Finance and housing

The amount of money to which a migrant has access can be a key factor in her experience of living in the new country. Accommodation, food, clothing, transport and energy supplies all require money. The amount that immigrants have when they arrive, the access to paid work and her ability to use formal financial institutions, such as banks, can influence their initial acculturation experience. Asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable in this respect as they tend not to be able to take much money with them (Datta, 2012). London is, and was at the time of my participants' arrival, an expensive place to live. Nazee, for example, came from a wealthy family but had very little money on arrival in London. She was pregnant and had to share a studio flat with three other people. She suffered depression and a much lower quality of life than she had had in Iran. But her and her husband's strong characters gave them the potential to work and to study English. Nazee and her husband were also in difficult circumstances in terms of money and housing and in the first few weeks, had no access to the NHS as her visa had not yet been confirmed.

Even though, since the 1980s, the British state benefit system applying to refugees has had varying degrees of restriction imposed upon it (Turner, 2015), refugees in Britain, once registered with the authorities, could apply for benefits, such as housing and disability, but not all of the women applied for them. Fariba, for example, said, '*Although I knew there was such a thing as social housing and there was a social fund and everything, but I couldn't bring myself to apply for it and benefits*.' Fariba did not elaborate on the reasons for this reluctance, but stigma and shame attached to poverty and receiving benefits is a recognised phenomenon. Jun (2019) studied the feelings of lone mothers in

Britain and found that those who are claiming benefits can be stigmatised by the general population and negatively branded, so that, once they have internalised the stigma, they can feel shame at receiving benefits. A feeling of pride in being self-sufficient can also be a factor in a reluctance to apply. Additionally, as reported by Baumberg (2016), the actual process of claiming benefit can feel demeaning to applicants and represents a powerfully-felt stigma of shame and guilt.

Apart from finance, housing is an important factor in the integration process of refugees, as it helps to form their feelings of security and fitting into the host society and indirectly affects healthcare and education (Philips, 2006). During the 1990s, a period which is relevant to my participants, the UK government introduced legislation which provided housing in the form of two Asylum and Immigration Acts (1993 and 1999) and a Housing Act (1996). The Children's Act of 1989 also legislated for the provision of housing for families with or without children (but not single asylum seekers). At that time, asylum seekers and refugees were treated differently from each other in respect of housing, mainly in favour of refugees, but the 1999 Act secured housing provision for asylum seekers too. (The distinction made by the government between refugees and asylum seekers was that the former belong to a planned and invited system, as with the Vietnamese diaspora, whereas asylum seekers were individuals who had travelled to Britain on speculation of being accepted. Before the 1993 Act, both groups were treated equally.) Only two of my participants reported that they had had difficulties in finding suitable housing.

In London, because of the higher pressure on housing than in other parts of the country, the availability and quality of accommodation can be much lower in both the public and private sectors (Carey-Wood, 1997). While Dora had been living in very difficult and dangerous circumstances in Iran, being a Kurdish human rights activist, her circumstances in London were far from ideal. She had been housed in a council flat that had been a 'squat' and was in a very bad state of repair, with water leaking from above. It was in an area plagued by armed drug gangs, who had intimidated her and her daughter and burgled her flat. She found that neither the police nor the council would do anything to help. Dora spent five years in those conditions, not realising that, had she known the system, she could have extricated herself and her daughter from that situation. Eventually, improving her English and learning how to deal with the benefits and housing systems helped her to finally do that. As she said: '*So it was very difficult for me. I didn't feel much – still, I was strong. But specially, I didn't know the system and I was put there. It was really very difficult.*'

Mehra arrived in Britain as a single mother, having managed to separate from her drug addict husband in Iran, and spent the first few months in a bed-and-breakfast provided by the Home Office. Members of her family already living in Britain at the time told her not to mention them to the authorities, as they would have been expected to accommodate her. She related how she became a stronger person and set up her and her children's lives in the first few years in Britain: '*Little by little … When I set up my life with my children and had to talk to a school to send them to, the elder one, to a school, and little did I realise I can understand I can study more here, and I can do many things. It was a little better relaxing for me*.'

In order to create a new life for more than a few years in their host country, it is important to be able to learn new skills or to become professionally qualified, immigrants, whether refugees or not, need to have access to the educational system of that country. I now explain how my participants dealt with this need.

Education and career prospects

It has been proposed that asylum seekers and refugees compared with other immigrants, tend to be at a disadvantage in finding work or continuing their original career (Bakker *et al*, 2017). The reasons are that, generally, refugees have suffered trauma in their home countries and in the journey to the host countries and they need to await the decision to be officially accepted, having fewer rights than the host population in the meantime, and hence feel insecure which can result in mental health problems. This effect can last for as long as 15 years. However, all but one of my participants did not report any particular difficulties in this respect, even though, with three exceptions, they had felt lonely, disorientated and homesick. One had suffered torture in Iran and had treatment for mental health problems in Britain. It did not take the women very long to find work, voluntary or paid, even if it was not necessarily the kind of work they expected. In my opinion the strength of mind and positive attitudes of the women helped them to become usefully employed, to improve their English and to take part in education.

As an example of a positive outlook, Zeba's energetic attitude in her first few years in Britain helped her to make the best out of her life there. She immersed herself in the educational and recreational facilities that were available to her, not applying for benefit and working in low-paid employment until she qualified as a solicitor. Another example of positivity and energy is Mehra, whom I have already mentioned with respect to accommodation when she first arrived in Britain as a single parent of two children. She managed to study at both the London College of Fashion and Middlesex

University. She eventually opened a successful bridal shop. Hanna used her training in statistics in Iran to get a part-time job in Britain as an electoral statistician. The earnings from this job helped her to get a Master's degree in social policy (with the aid of an English/Persian dictionary).

Teia, who had followed a successful career in the film industry in Iran had gone to Britain with her English husband for a holiday in late 1978, staying with his family. While she was in Britain the Revolution occurred and, unable to return to Iran, she was trapped there. She then discovered that she could not work in the British film industry because she had no work experience in Britain and could not be a member of the appropriate union, even though the director had specifically chosen her to work with him. As an alternative she trained as a beautician, eventually buying a salon and starting her own business. She also worked to promote the education of disabled children and work in other charitable ventures. As suggested by Hormozi (2018), this flexible attitude shown by Teia is an important aspect of a refugee's adaptation in their new country.

It has been found that qualifications and experience gained in the country of origin are often not recognised or trusted by host country employers and immigrants either have to start at a lower level in their profession and retrain or have to be adaptable enough to find other, less skilful work (Campion, 2018).Two of my participants had studied medicine in Iran and continued their career path as doctors in Britain. Pari had very limited finances at first: '*… I should start from zero, as a doctor, a female doctor, and I didn't have any resources, any money*.' However, her qualifications gained in Iran were only partially accepted by the UK medical authorities and she could work in hospitals, albeit at the lowest level at first. Ada, also medically qualified in Iran, was not in immediate need of money and began working voluntarily in a London hospital soon after her arrival. She was fortunate in being able to retrain at the hospital, although at first she was not earning an amount commensurate with her position: '*When I worked in the NHS I was supervising my supervisor but my salary wasn't half of his because I had to go through certain examination things and passed – which as I had children I had to take time to do it. But that is what I call it: modern slavery. But still it's lucky; it's better than a lot of people*.'

Shaleh's approach to being employed in work that is below the level of one's qualifications is one of being grateful for the positive benefits of having freedom and opportunity: '[…] *don't have the attitude that you're entitled. Be grateful that this country has given you the opportunity to experience freedom and opportunity to build your life and build up yourself. And don't think that you could be a doctor in your country and here you must be a nurse. It doesn't matter.*'

For those of the women who had children, the traditional role of mothers could slow down their educational progress in learning English and studying other subjects. (of course, this role can affect all women, not just those from heavily patriarchal societies.) Nada, for example, said: '*Well, naturally women in general, especially mothers, they spend a lot of time for the others – for the husband, for the children, for housework, for something that does not belong directly to yourself*.' She added more specific details of the problem:

> *'When you have children, and as I said, most of the time I have been a single mother, so the problem is sometimes … I couldn't do my homework properly and you should go back to the college. It was not a good feeling to go back to the class without doing your homework properly. Maybe I was lazy or something, because I didn't have time.'*

Azee also found having children was not completely compatible studying and work-seeking: '… *when you have children, when you are a mother, you cannot work and you cannot get a job because of the children and because you have a responsibility with your children, and financially you are worse off*.' However, having children can have a positive effect on career development, as it motivates parents by giving them a reason for doing the best they can to obtain work on behalf of their children, because, as found by Wehrle *et al* (2018) studying refugees in Germany, providing for one's family gives an incentive. As one of Wehrle *et al's* participants stated, 'If I were 22 years old, I could say that I want to study legal studies again, because I'd have the time and I'd still have the future in front of me. But when one marries and has a family, one thinks differently.'

In order to show how some of the women of my study either kept or had to change their careers, I have listed their careers or educational stages of the participants both before and after migration in Table 2 below.

Table 2: The participants' careers before and after migration
(Participants in bold font changed careers after migration.)

Participant	Work or study before migration	Work or study after settling in Britain
Ada	student (medicine)	doctor
Ahoo	student (sociology)	lawyer
Ashti	teacher (secondary schools)	college lecturer (IT)
Azee	electronic communications engineer	fashion designer
Dora	teacher (primary schools)	administration of women's rights organisations / writer
Fariba	student	administration of minority and women's rights organisations
Hanna	student (sociology/anthropology and economics)	statistician / teacher (primary schools)
Homa	student (medicine)	medicine (doctor in Germany and Britain)

Mehra	teacher (college principal) / ran import-export business	fashion designer and clothing shop owner
Nada	teacher	administration of human rights organisations
Nagme	worked for United Nations	journalist
Nazee	student	teacher
Pari	medicine	medicine (microbiologist)
Poran	lawyer	psychologist
Shaleh	broadcasting	broadcasting (Farsi language)
Teia	film industry (script supervisor)	beautician
Zeba	student (English language teaching)	solicitor

Acceptance by the host population and authorities.

The Race Relations Acts of 1968 and 1976 were attempts to stamp out racism in public institutions, such as schools, and employment and other public functions (Solanke, 2013). But this legislation at that time did not protect people from racial abuse by the general public, and the women of this study had entered Britain under these conditions. However, when asked about any times they felt unwelcome in Britain, only three of my participants reported specific incidents. Dora had racist remarks made to her by a hospital doctor who, when she complained about bad service, asked her why she did not go back to her 'own country' if she thought she would get better service there. Ahoo said she and her daughter had been called 'pakkies' and had been physically assaulted by neighbours. When the police did not help her, even taking the side of the attackers, she complained to a higher authority and then she received some protection. She told me: ' … *the next door neighbour, because they believe we don't deserve to live in a house like they do, though I was working. I was paying rent, but because we haven't been British*.' Her daughter had also been bullied at school. Her attitude to these incidents was illustrated in her state of mind:

> *'I didn't want to stay as a victim for life here, I stopped it at some point and I proved that, ok, I am a refugee but it doesn't mean I should be a victim. I will be much more useful than many people who were born here, as my children are now, and myself.'*

The other participant who told me of a specific incident where she had met with racism was Nada, who had eggs thrown at her by neighbours and racial remarks were made. However, she was not bitter about it this incident and was generally pleased with the attitude of the general public in Britain and the authorities:

> *'The people here are more or less kind and helpful and tolerant. And then English people, because of the influence from other cultures living here, they are not one-sided, most of them anyway.* […]*They are very nice to other people coming from other countries.'*

Seeing a more negative aspect of British life, Azee, perceived a general atmosphere of racism in the background. When asked about feelings of being unwelcome, she said, '*Yes, I did – because of the language, because I'm not one of the people from here. Although you feel that they welcome you and*

are friendly with you, but deep down you know that there is something they don't accept you and you have to be one of them.' Mehra felt a similar threat: '*… I know English people don't like foreign people, as any job you have, you feel it. They don't like us. Any job, anywhere we go* […] *but it's not just this country*'. Discrimination threat like this can affect the self-worth of a person from another country and undermine their ability and motivation to find work (Wehrle, 2018; Campion, 2018).

The effects of moving to Britain upon marriage and family

As can be seen in Table 3, seven out of the 17 women of my study (about 41%) became divorced in the period after arrival in Britain. They were Nada, Pari, Teia, Ahoo, Zeba, Azee, and Dora.

Table 3: The participants' marriage status

MARRIAGE STATUS IN BRITAIN	NUMBER / 17
Single, already divorced or widowed on arrival	5
Already married or married in Britain and not divorced or separated	5
Became divorced in Britain	7

Divorce in Iranian culture is, to put it mildly, not taken lightly (Hojat *et al,* 2000). Marriage is seen as a lifelong commitment binding both individuals and families together and divorce is strongly stigmatised, especially with respect to women. But, as I mention later in this chapter, married Iranian refugees living in countries such as Britain and the USA are subject to great tension as they perceive the sharp contrast between their own traditional concept of marriage roles and that of the host society. It is very difficult for Iranians living in such countries to retain their own cultural norms without completely socially excluding themselves. In a study on Iranian male and female immigrants in the USA, Hojat *et al* (2000) discovered that the attitudes to relationship issues, such as premarital sex, arranged marriage, family and work were different between males and females. They found that the women were much more likely to be influenced by the cultural attitudes of the host population than were the men and, because of marketable skills (such as tailoring, cooking and hair styling), women could more easily find work, have more financial power and be exposed to the culture of the host country through contact with people. This difference was explained by the oppressive constraints upon women in Iran making them, in a new setting, more eager than men to react against their own cultural standards. Additionally, the situation is made worse by many Iranian husbands' belief that any untraditional behaviour shown by their wives is due to 'a stereotypical tendency of women to easily change colour and to the women's superficiality in judgement that is deeply rooted in Islamic culture.' (*ibid.* p. 430-431) and wives could be labelled as *gharbzadeh* (poisoned by the West). The husband of such a wife is thus, in the eyes of traditionally-minded

Iranians, stigmatised as an *akhte* (a castrated chief). These circumstances inevitably create conflict within a marriage. Divorce becomes more likely and it is easier for women to instigate divorce proceedings in Britain than it is in Iran, but still prone to difficulties, especially at the time for their arrival in Britain. For example, children and property have to be negotiated between the parties of the divorce.

In Chapter Three I referred to research by Darvishpour (1999) in which he studied a group of Iranian women and men who had become refugees in Sweden and had been divorced there. Darvishpour had been puzzled by relatively high divorce rates and number of single mothers within the Iranian community compared with the general rates in Sweden. He found that this high level of family disruption was mainly caused by differences between men's and women's expectations of family life, the upsetting of the traditional patriarchal relationships within the family and the newly found freedom for the refugee women in Swedish society. The women felt they had more power within the marriage and, as one might expect, given their post-revolutionary repression in Iran, they relished life in their host country and, as much as they were able, took advantage of the educational facilities and work opportunities there. The men however would have gone back to Iran but for the adverse circumstances there. They did not thrive in an environment in which there was much less certainty and rigidity of social structure than there was in Iran. As will be seen, the marital relationships of seven of my participants were affected in much the same way.

A similar study by Liversage (2021) describes the marital experiences of a set of 35 female immigrants from patriarchal societies living in Denmark, all of whom had been abused in some way by their husbands in their original countries and in Denmark and all but four became divorced in their host country. Many of them had been married in their teens to men they had hardly known and abuse had often started immediately after marriage. Liversage makes the general point about the importance of immigrants' host language skills, that access to information about legal and social services as applied to immigrants and the general cultural norms of the host country depends mainly on such skills. One of Liversage's participants said: 'From [the Danes], I have learned the word "no". I come from a society where you really are not allowed to say "no".' (p. 15). She found, for example, that if the women could independently obtain Danish visas, they were more confident about obtaining a divorce without the fear of being deported. The less they were embedded in the patriarchal society, the freer they became. Detaching themselves from their husbands was far from easy, but older women were so used to marital abuse that they were no longer afraid of their husbands and had more confidence in obtaining separation and divorce.

When asked 'Has your marriage status changed since you arrived?' those of my participants who had divorced or separated in Britain replied with a varying degree of detail, but all described similar root problems. Pari merely said, '*Yes, yes, it changed. After a few years I separated from my husband. You know, when you come, a different culture and … specially … I mean, I can't explain it*.' Her phrase 'a different culture' is very telling, especially in respect of the findings of Darvishpour and Liversage described above.

Teia also attributed her divorce to cultural differences:

> *'The marriage was OK because I had to accept whatever it was. I didn't have any choice. I was dependent upon him. I didn't know any … And then of course the children came. I got involved in bringing the children up. I was helping with his business. But … the difference … it was a cultural difference. The problem occurred because of the culture, and then things happened and the marriage didn't last.'*

Ahoo goes into more detail about her feelings and the reasons for them than did Teia, when explaining her divorce:

> *'You know, we have been always strong women, but when you're in countries like Iran you can't exhibit it. So always man things. I am everyone to you. When I left Iran, when we went to Pakistan and I managed to prove how strong I am, my husband gradually became angry, unhappy. He didn't want to believe that I am stronger, I am the one who is earning, I am the one who is bringing bread. So our problems started, and then I divorced. I had to divorce.'*

She describes the unhappiness of her husband caused by the manifestation of strength by his wife and her capacity, rather than his, to provide income in their new social environment. Even in another Muslim country like Pakistan, where they were temporarily housed, she was able to exhibit her natural strength of character which was brought out by her new circumstances. As Burr (1995, p.53) explains, 'Our identity therefore originates not from inside the person, but from the social realm.' The new social realm in which Ahoo found herself was an important factor in allowing and encouraging her to have a more independent identity than she had had in Iran. Ashbourne, *et al.* (2021), studying Syrian and Iraqi refugees, both male and female, in Canada, found that men's and women's roles in the family changed when women realised they had much greater gender rights in Canada than they had had in their country of origin:

> 'Some women reported that they used their legal rights to address marital conflict, initiating marital separation in response to violence or threats of violence from their husbands. Among the participants interviewed, it was the women who had made these decisions to separate, not men. Consequently, participants have experienced drastic changes in the family composition within the post migration context.' (p. 121).

Ashbourne and her colleagues also discovered that their participants were distressed by the lack of the extended family and the support they offered that they had previously had. This lack, together with the cultural norms and laws of the host society, made the women's identity change from being submissive to having a more prominent and independent role in the family. This change of identity was the result of the families' experiences during the war that was the cause of their migration, the effects of living in a society in which gender roles were different and the lack of extended family support. Unfortunately, in some cases, husbands became aggressive and violent in response to their beliefs that their wives could become more independent.

Azee got married to an Iranian man after arrival in Britain but her marriage lasted for only three years. She explains, '… *we didn't get on well because, for him, the woman is nobody. And I didn't have any family here so he didn't treat me properly, and he was always … against study or work or anything; he always put me down*.' These limitations imposed by the husband upon his wife again illustrate the patriarchal traditions at work within a traditional Iranian marriage, in which women are not expected to expand their horizons beyond the home and have to be dependent upon their husbands (Adisa, 2018). But in Britain, because women are legally free to initiate divorce proceedings, Azee was able to be liberated from a patriarchal relationship. In the next section I go into more detail about the cultural circumstances which can affect the relationship between wife and husband in a migrant family.

The roles of husbands and wives

I have already discussed the marriage problems arising from cultural incompatibility and leading to divorce for seven of the women in the early period of their lives after migrating. However, five of my 17 participants (Ashti, Nazee, Fariba, Poran and Hanna) have managed to stay married during their time in Britain and it would be interesting to examine what they had to say about the roles their husbands – and themselves - played during the period when they were settling into life in their new country.

In Iran, the patriarchal family structure is much stronger than it is in Britain, and under law, religious observance and unwritten social rules, fathers and husbands are in charge of the family. Women are responsible solely for 'housewifery and motherhood'. However, in reality, these roles can vary, ranging from a western style of equality between husband and wife to extreme strict adherence to the traditions and Shari'a Law. In fact, today many young people in Iran risk being arrested by ignoring the rules on gender roles in marriage and partnership (Shirpak *et al*, 2011; Ceasefire Centre

for Civilian Rights, *et al.,* 2019), but my participants come from an older generation and had grown up in times when traditions were much more strictly observed. The patriarchal system comes under attack when families migrate to places where there is a much more relaxed and egalitarian atmosphere with respect to roles within the family than in their countries of origin (Ashbourne *et al.,* 2021). The traditional relationship embedded in the family before migration is put under considerable strain by, for example, the need for wives to study the host language in order to deal with everyday life, work outside the home, vocational studies and also by the general lifestyle of the host community. It has also been found that employment helps immigrants adjust more easily to the host society and is important in encouraging a positive mental state; it is also the major goal for refugees, in spite of the difficulties in obtaining work legally (Cheong and Phillmore, 2014). However, apart from the general difficulty in obtaining the sort of work suited to particular skills, married men from patriarchal societies often have difficulty in accepting that it is necessary for their wives to work. Some married couples deal with this situation less successfully than others, hence the high divorce rate amongst my participants. Shirpak *et al* (2011), studying the marital relationships of 15 Iranian refugees living in Canada, found that the most successful at adapting were those who, while retaining Iranian cultural values, also took in the more liberal features of the Canadian way of life, a bicultural approach. In other words, they adapted to the host culture but retained some of their traditions. Shirpak also found that 'For our participants, it was specifically the emotional and financial stresses posed by both men's and women's search for appropriate employment that were credited with straining the marital relationship (p. 766).' This cause of stress on marital relationships can also come from Iranian husbands' unease with their wives going to college or university and studying (Moghadam, 2017).

From their testimony, the five of my participants who were married had to do much more than their husbands in order to survive and look after their families. Ashti, for example, when asked her feelings about how her gender had affected her, said:

> *'… when I came here my son was about six years old, I had to take him to school, so I had to talk to teachers, to people, and if we needed I had to go to hospital I had to prepare myself to find those vocabularies I need. Then if I wanted to go shopping I had to go to learn to speak English and then do my shopping. … if you want to compare with my husband, my husband was looking for a job, but for me, because I had a child, I had to struggle.'*

and later, referring to her husband, she added, '*I had to look after him as well*.'

When asked the same question ('Has your marriage status changed since you arrived?'), Nazee said that she had emotional support from her husband, but ' … *I suffered more than him*.' With the dual

responsibility for working both inside and outside the home, Nazee had double the pressure that her husband had. As Oakley (2005) reports from her study of 40 American women: 'The women experience and define housework as labour, akin to that in any job situation.' (p.63). Thus housework, including the care of children, and work outside the home are equally demanding. However, the expectation, even in the general British population, by both male and female partners, that women, rather than men, do housework and care for the children, even if the women are also working outside the home, has still been prevalent (Gregory and Lowe, 1993; Schulte, 2014).

Fariba made a more general response than that of Nazee:

> *'As a woman I think we have more responsibility towards your family, the life of your children - they are human beings. I think, as a woman, women feel more responsible, to nurture and bring up your family. Men want to go outside, do their job, bring money in, but the rest of the responsibility falls on the woman's shoulders.'*

Both Nada and Poran reported happy marriages. However, in Poran's case it was a short one, as tragically her husband died two years after they arrived in Britain:

> *'I was just in my early thirties when I became widowed. But in reality I was so preoccupied, and my two-year marriage with my husband, was so, to my eyes, perfect.'*

None of the five women who stayed married was complaining about her husband's behaviour; they were merely reporting that were doing what was necessary under the circumstances and did not let it strain their relationships. This ability to withstand the pressures of living in an environment where the cultural norms are somewhat different from and more liberal than what was previously learned and experienced is perhaps due to personal character of both partners in the relationship. As I explain next, the difference between the two cultures is not necessarily the cause of relationship problems.

The effects of gender bias in Britain upon the participants' experience

Even though the women of my study were unanimous in seeing Britain as representing freedom from oppression and freedom of opportunity for women, they were comparing it with a country in which the opposite was true, so this freedom was relative rather than absolute and some of them did experience gender bias in Britain. However, Wang (2018) has suggested that low labour force participation rates amongst certain *immigrant* women in Britain are largely due to traditional gender roles within the particular cultural norms of the community concerned, rather than by the bias of the host culture. Pessin and Arpino (2018), in a review of the literature, found that first generation immigrants to European countries from a variety of original countries were more likely to experience gender bias than those in the second generation, who were more influenced by bias from the host

society. Otherwise, any gender bias experienced by my participants seems, from their interview responses, to have been no greater than that experienced by women of the host society, showing them to be more independent of their own culture than suggested by Pessin and Arpino.

Only three of my participants expressed issues with negative cultural attitudes towards women in Britain. Earlier in this chapter I described Shaleh's experience with gender discrimination at the BBC in the 1970s and 1980s, and such discrimination has recently come to public attention, for example, the Iranian journalist Samira Ahmed took the BBC to court for sexual discrimination (*The Financial Times*, 23.10.2019). My participant Homa learned that strength of mind was an important factor in overcoming discriminative attitudes: '*I think this culture is really, really tough. I feel … they expect you, as a woman, and also as a human being, to become really tough*.' Although she did not report any particular instances of sexual discrimination, she did state that '[…] *since Brexit I've felt unwelcome in Britain*'. Earlier I have mentioned her belief that sexism and racism exist in Britain, but are hidden. Pari found the British culture to be '*male dominated'*. Dora founded a women's rights organisation in Britain as a result of the police being unwilling to intervene in a case of the 'honour killing' of an Iranian woman by her husband because the authorities did not want to upset the Iranian community.

Although Nagme, as she told me, '… *always felt lucky to be a woman*,' she experienced gender bias when she worked in Britain, with her husband, as a director of their company in the 1980s:

> *'Here I was, a director, alongside with my husband, in a company, but men would come in would immediately treat me as a secretary, for coffee and tea. British men!'*

Like the above-mentioned Homa and Pari, Nagme's experience illustrates the unofficial patriarchal attitudes of British society (as illustrated in Bagihole and Goode, 2001). She contrasts this treatment with the more egalitarian way of life she experienced when she worked in the USA, where she worked for a women's group lobbying for equal gender rights. Traditional 'Victorian' roles for women in the workplace, according to Gatrell and Swan (2008), still persist today in Britain and even more so when '… organisations continue to base their expectations about gender roles and behaviour on what used to happen in the past. … women were employed only at the lowliest levels in organisations, meaning that "classic" texts on managing and decision making never mentioned gender, assuming that "management" meant "male", and partly because the male "norm" of "rational" decision making and behaviour was regarded as the one best way of managing.' (Gatrell and Swan, 2008, online source).

Next I investigate the role of social networks in providing the means to make the process of acculturation easier.

Social capital: help from the Iranian community and friends

Social networks are extremely important factors in the nature of a refugee's experience, especially at the beginning of their resettlement. They help with decisions on where to migrate, how to navigate the host society and its systems and provide a link between their homeland and their new country (McMichael and Manderson, 2004; Stewart *et al*, 2008). Having friends, acquaintances or relatives already living in the host country can ideally help a new immigrant to avoid isolation, to provide material help and useful information gained by experience. McMichael and Manderson (2004) made a study of Somali refugees in Australia. They found that, although the refugees were helped in the positive ways I have just mentioned, '… social capital is neither necessarily portable nor easily established on migration.' (p. 96). There could be a level of distrust and even animosity based upon social and cultural differences in the previous lives of their participants in their original country, especially when there had been a civil war there and the diaspora may contain people from each opposing side. They suggested that these negative aspects of social networks can induce depression caused by the interaction between nostalgia for their life in the country where they grew up and the current fractured network.

The women of my study, however, did not report any problems with these negative features of Iranian social networks, except for some feelings of isolation when they were unable to find any such help and companionship. However, from interviewing them, I perceived that they generally had very limited access to Iranian friends and relations who could help them in Britain. Indeed, Chong and Phillimore (2014) found that social capital is not the most important factor in integrating into the host society but language proficiency is much more significant. Having links with friends and relations in the host country helps more emotionally, although those of my participants who had such links did find them useful in some practical ways, such as helping them to understand the culture and systems of the country.

Zeba was one of my participants who was fortunate in having some personal support from an Iranian friend during the initial period of settling in Britain.

> *'… even before I came this time, 1993, there was a friend of mine who – she's Iranian – and she's already settled in here very much. She helped me, she found a room for me before I came. She invited me to her house. She spend a lot of time for the first year … to be with me and help me. Definitely I had loads of support from friends.'*

Similarly, Nada had help from the Iranian Kurdish community: '*When I came here I knew some Kurdish families here. They could help me to settle in here and help me with some basic things when a refugee comes here and doesn't know anything about the new country or new society*.' Hanna also had extensive help from Iranian friends who were already in the UK: '*They told me how I can open my case with the Home Office and they supported me, and also going to college, starting the course, helping me to learn about address and things about my rights, and supported me emotionally and giving me advice for settling in this country.'*

It also helped if the refugee had lived in Britain previously, as they could have already established a network of friends and acquaintances upon whom they could call. Ada was one such person who had a friend whom she had known from her previous stay in Britain and who helped her with accommodation. Others, such as Fariba, sought help from more official channels: she got a temporary job with the Iranian consul and also with Iranian community women's charity organisations that eventually led to her working with the council in the London borough where she lived.

However, as far as social capital was concerned, much depended upon exactly where the new immigrant settled. Feelings of isolation were experienced by Homa. Before going to Britain she had lived in what was then West Germany, where there was a relatively high proportion of Iranian refugees scattered over the whole country. She could easily find Iranian food and Iranians to socialise with. However, when she went to Britain she initially settled in the North West, where there were very few Iranian people and shops: '*So I really struggled with that*'. Once she had moved to London, where she had the support of the Iranian community, she felt less isolated and could acculturate much more easily.

Chapter Summary

The women of this study went to Britain, directly or indirectly, because of personal and general vulnerability caused by highly restrictive and repressive gender related laws and war with Iraq in Iran in the period after the 1979 Revolution. This meant that escaping from Iran was the primary motive for moving to almost any other country. They reported various reasons for choosing Britain as a destination, but the main reasons were their ability with the English language, however basic, and having lived in the country previously, and the relative freedom from repression and a democratic

political and social system. In two cases, the distance of Britain from Iran, as compared with the USA or Canada was also a key factor, especially if they had left children in Iran. Having relatives or friends already in Britain was an additional attraction.

In answering the question as to whether or not the women's choices of destination was justified, I matched their expectations with their actual experiences in the early years of settling in. I found that, as far as freedom and safety were concerned, all of the participants felt relief and gratitude that they had been able to legally settle in Britain, in spite of any practical of emotional problems they encountered at the beginning of their residence. However, one of the major problems suffered by a substantial proportion of the women was that of having a husband who had a difficulty in accepting the changes in power balance in the marriage, as their wives began to relate more to the host culture, to work and study. The identity of the women as independent individuals, as opposed to wives fully dependent upon their husbands, affected their behaviour and, in seven cases, resulted in divorce.

Difficulty in communicating with the host population and its administrative services is naturally a major problem in settling into life in a new country. As I have said, the level of English spoken and understood by my participants on arrival in Britain was far from uniform and in most cases, very basic. In the next chapter I shall analyse the data I have collected from them by interview in order to discover their experiences with communication and learning English in Britain. Also I shall be considering how the women's lives progressed and the legacy of their migration, how their children's education and careers have developed in Britain.

CHAPTER SEVEN
DATA ANALYSIS: LANGUAGE AND LEGACY

Now that I have made an analysis of my participants' experiences in the early period of their acculturation in Britain, I am going to discover how, up to now, their lives have progressed in terms of career, family and general satisfaction with life, to learn about the legacy of their struggles and the choices they made earlier in life. I have gathered this information from the original interviews and some additional telephone interviews and shall present it in the form of short biographical updates on a selection of the participants. These will include the educational and career paths of their children, which can be used as an indicator of the level of success of their parents' acculturation and integration into the host society (Laurijssen and Glorieux, 2014). However, before doing that I shall investigate the central topic of my thesis, the ways in which the women's English language abilities have affected their lives in Britain and how what they have done to improve their aptitude in English since arrival. Of course, an immigrant's level of English has a strong influence upon their possibilities for education and career, making a link between the two topics of this chapter. These two areas of focus are related particularly to the second and third of the research questions I asked in the Introduction to this thesis. I repeat my research questions below, as a reminder.

1. *How has the learning of English affected the lives of my participants in terms of their acculturation, perceptions and experiences since they arrived in Britain?*

2. *How has learning the English language, and the opportunities gained by doing so, influenced the participants' relationships of with their families and the Iranian community?*

3. *In what ways have the experiences, both before and after migration, and especially of gender issues, affected the acculturation of my female participants?*

4. *In what ways understanding the lives and experience of immigrants help to improve the lives and acculturation of future female Iranian immigrants in Britain?*

The participants' English language skills after arrival in Britain.

One of the most essential aspects of an immigrant's acculturation after arrival in their new country is that of being able to speak and understand the host language. It is especially beneficial to the immigrant for accessing education, work, earning power and gaining citizenship (Chiswick and Miller,

2003) and for releasing themselves from abusive marriages (Liversage, 2021). It is also important to the host country, because dominant language acquisition is known to increase the productivity of immigrant workers (Dustmann and van Soest, 2002). Furthermore, the level of proficiency in the dominant language (measured by instruments such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)) is widely considered by sociologists as an indicator of integration level (Jiang *et al.,* 2009; Kim *et al.,* 2011). Those who do not wish or need to integrate with the host society tend to have a high proficiency in their native language and a minimal proficiency in the host language, suggesting that relative language ability is a factor in the level of integration (Berry, 2005).

Another benefit of host language acquisition for immigrants themselves is that it helps to avoid the feeling of being 'other' (as explored in Chapter Six), as poor language acquisition can lead to an immigrant being stereotyped as a 'perpetual foreigner', thus undermining their self-confidence and their aspirations to integrate with the host society (Lou *et al.,* 2018). This stereotyping can also result from speaking the host language with a strong foreign accent, no matter how advanced the level of fluency (Jiang *et al.,* 2009; Kim *et al.,* 2011; Campion, 2018). More generally, non-native speech patterns (for example, a strong 'foreign' accent or using bad grammar) can both discourage immigrants from participating in the host society or, conversely, encourage them to improve their linguistic conformity, especially if they have a strong desire to associate with the host society (Birney, 2014). Additionally, proficiency in the host language helps immigrants in finding suitable work by giving them a wider range of contacts who can help them (Campion, 2018). Both the incentive and opportunity to learn the host language can depend upon how much the immigrant is under the influence of her particular ethnic community: the more conformity to traditional behaviour, the less interaction with the host society and the less incentive to learn the host language (Liversage, 2009a).

The participants' views on host language ability

During the interviews I asked my participants to comment on their own perceived levels of English language on their arrival to Britain. Table 4 below demonstrates how they replied to this question.

Table 4: The participants' self-reported English skills on arrival in Britain.

Participant	Self-reported level of English on arrival in Britain
Ada	'*Fluent academically but spoken language poor'* (Had gone to school in London before the Revolution)
Ahoo	'*I was fluent. I had no problem'*
Ashti	'*I could read and write* […] *but conversation was the most difficult part for me*.'
Azee	'*Moderate*' (Had learned English in Iran because of her job in technology)
Dora	'*Zero, actually' 'Basic or less. Unable, I think*.'
Fariba	'*… I could read and write very well, but it's speaking …*'
Hanna	'*I can say moderate*' '*At least I could understand an address and not get lost*.'
Homa	'*Moderate*.'
Mehra	'*Very, very basic.*'
Nada	'*Even less than basic*.'
Nagme	'*Excellent*' (Had worked for the United Nations)
Nazee	'*Because I had emotional problems, I can say basic*.'
Pari	'*Basic, and I was really struggling, struggling to find a word*'
Poran	'*It was good enough.*' (Lived in the USA for several years before the Revolution)
Shaleh	'*Not perfect*.' (She had worked for the BBC World Service before the Revolution)
Teia	'*Moderate.*'
Zeba	'*Moderate, between basic and moderate*.'

The benefits coming from having a command of the dominant language, in terms of being able to participate linguistically in the host society – and the consequences of the opposite - were not lost on all 17 of my participants and were borne out by their experience. When asked what they considered to be the most important thing to learn when settling into Britain, they all said that learning English was the key skill. Ashti in particular was vehement in her emphasis of its importance:

> *'I believe speaking English is essential and important for clear communication, integration, empowerment – especially empowerment for women – and improvement of opportunities and employment opportunity in the UK.'*

She later added: '*I think language is one of the major barriers to immigrants settling down in the host country. If you learn it then there are many opportunities to use and to learn the British culture*.' Ashti's statements reflect the general view of research that successful acculturation and command of the dominant language, especially fluency, pronunciation and accent, are very closely intertwined (Jiang *et al.,* 2009).

My participant Azee connected the ability to communicate effectively with the host society with the capacity of refugees to obtain work, no matter how well they had been trained in Iran: '*Work here, very difficult because, first of all, you don't know the language […] because you can't get a good job*

because of your language. And you can't carry on doing the job you were doing in Iran.' This connection was confirmed once her English ability had improved: '*When I learned the language it was very important for me. I could get a better job and a hobby and everything*.' As Bloch (2002) states: 'Lack of the language skills of the country of asylum often limits the range of available employment opportunities to those within the community or those, which are often low-skill jobs, that do not require a fluent command of the language of the country of asylum.' (p.10).

In response to being asked what advice would she give to a young Iranian refugee on first entering Britain, Pari said:

> *'Well, she should adapt herself in the new culture.* […] *The first thing is to learn English, because, in order to learn the culture and go to the society and be able to get a job, to carry on studying, the first thing and important thing is language, isn't it? It's very important here.'*

Zeba showed concern about the connection between acculturation and language:

> *'I think I'm going to say it's very important. I don't think anybody should force anybody to learn their language, but obviously if they talk about settlement, about how you can make this country your own home.'*

Ahoo, who already had a good level of English on arrival, said much the same:

> *'Oh, that's very important. Integrating in society is the first step of success here. I think those who come here, immediately they try to learn the language. So, of course, easily they can integrate in the society, find jobs, find friends of other cultures. That's the most important thing, the most. I would give the top number to that.'*

Her attitude was justified by her experience: '*Knowing English helped me to find a volunteer job and learn more and more about the culture. And I had to respect the culture that I am living*.' The culture Ahoo had brought with her from Iran had been of two contrasting types: the westernised, relatively secular culture that had developed in the period before the 1979 Revolution, with much contact with and reliance upon the USA, Britain and other western societies, and then the post-revolutionary indigenised, self-sufficient, religion-based culture, with 'absolute truths' rather than relativism, pervading both the public and private lives of the population (Borjian, 2013). When she arrived in Britain she was relatively free from the bounds of gender-based control and patriarchy and the fear of persecution and punishment she and her compatriots had experienced in post-revolutionary Iran. Ahoo's statement that she felt obliged to respect the culture of her new country in the context of learning English carries with it a sense that she was grateful for her freedom and she felt that she should show her gratitude by immersing herself in British life. As I have described in the Literature Review, the idea of being aware of and trying to adapt to the culture of the host society in order to make acculturative progress is generalised by Duranti (1997). He categorises culture as 'a set of tools'

which acts as a mediator through which people can control and understand their environment. Understanding the host language is a key skill in making this mediation happen.

Hung Ng (2007) found that, in the context of Chinese settlers in New Zealand, '… acquiring the English language … may enhance effective functioning in the host culture.' (p. 88) Mitchell *et al.* (2017), studying international nursing students in Australia, found that the advantage of language acquisition also applies to the work and study environment, using the terms 'expressing myself' and 'finding my place' as key objectives in acculturation.

Every other of my 17 participants expressed similar views, especially the view that understanding British culture and integrating in the host society are heavily dependent upon being proficient in English. By 'proficient' I mean the self-perceived sense of power in being able to obtain and do work, to deal with everyday situations, to achieve social integration, and to the objectives of 'expressing myself' and 'finding my place', as used by Mitchell *et al.* above. Ada, for example, is a doctor who has treated many immigrants and has observed what happens to those who had poor English language ability and who lacked the necessary proactive spirit:

> *'… they stay at home; they become depressed and they get unhappy about everything. And that's not going to help them; it is sort of self-inflicted, unconscious inflicted. But if you get engaged in the community, you have to treat it as your new society, as hard as it is. […] It's wake up, pick up, go and do.'*

Similarly, Poran said, '*I think languages are the door to other people's culture and connect them*'. I have explored this connection between language and culture in the literature review (Chapter Three) where I examined the work of linguistic anthropologists such as Duranti (1997), who wrote:

> 'The idea of culture as a system of participation is related to culture as a system of practices and is based on the assumption that any action in the world, including verbal communication, has an inherently social, collective and participatory quality. […] to speak a language means to be able to participate in interactions with a world that is larger than us as individual speakers (p. 46)'.

My participant Nada agreed:

> *'I think, as a human being, when you go to any place in the world you have to try to learn something so that they'll be able to understand you. […] The human being is basically sociable and has to make at least some link and some relations with other people. So without language you will not be able to do so. Language is a very important equipment for social life.'*

My participants' main motivational factors concerned with host language ability were basic social integration, being able to find suitable employment and understanding the culture of the host

society. The participants of my study certainly understood these connections with society by means of experience. They were aware of their own level of efficacy in being able to communicate with the host society by being confronted with problems caused by a lack of proficiency (Bandura, 2012). Their experience made them understand their own competence, or lack of it.

Problems with poor English language ability

Difficulties caused by *lack* of language ability are illustrated by Homa when she told me:

> *'The first difficult part was obviously, I was struggling with the language. I had to start a job that was quite responsible. But having only basic language skills from back home, in the school, I didn't do enough to learn more English, but that was difficult.'*

Nazee, who considered her own English to be 'basic', said that she had a significant weakness: *'I could read but I couldn't speak. Speaking was very hard*.' She attributed this weakness to the way in which English had been taught in Iran: '*Grammar and writing, but communication, speaking, we hadn't got*.' Her problem with speaking ability affected her other studies, such as mathematics:

> *'The lesson was maths, and I was perfectly fine, better than my 19-year-old classmates, but I couldn't express myself because of the English language, and I.T. was difficult for me.'*

Poor host language skills can badly affect the chances of a refugee to obtain work (Bloch, 1999; 2002). Firstly, in seeking employment, the host language is needed to understand job advertisements, filling in forms and speaking on the telephone. Secondly, the kind of employment available is limited to the types of work that do not require language fluency, such as cleaning. Inability to find work limits refugees' exposure to the host language, thereby depriving them of useful practice in learning it. Azee exemplified the reality of this situation when she said, '*You cannot do the job you were doing in Iran because your education is different. Because of the language barrier you have to do different things.'*

The difficulty in obtaining employment is also illustrated by Hanna:

> *'Physically I wasn't able to work, for example in a restaurant or those types of jobs, you don't need good English. And also my English wasn't good enough to find another job, which physically I was able to do it.'*

In other words, she wasn't physically able to do the jobs that did not require good English, nor was she able to do less physically demanding jobs because her English was not good enough.

Even Fariba, who had a Lower Cambridge Certificate in English before she arrived, found that she lacked confidence in speaking: '*I was shy to speak', and also in writing official letters.*'

Only two of my 17 participants, Ahoo and Nagme, did not report any problems with the host language.

Such difficulties can be considered to be part of a range of challenging life events which can motivate individuals to adapt and act to modify their behaviour and abilities (Sam and Berry, 2010), for example, by adopting various strategies to cope with their deficient language skills. Naturally, this adaptation to acculturative stress depends very much on the individual characteristics and circumstances, such as personality, age, gender and wealth.

Mental health and language ability

The connection between language ability and mental health is another factor that can affect the acculturation process, especially for asylum seekers who are very likely to have been already traumatised by their experience before arrival (Salvo and Williams, 2017). Distress caused by adverse post-migration factors, such as poor living conditions, legal barriers and poverty, only serve to increase the chance of poor mental health. Good host language proficiency can obviously help in this respect, allowing asylum seekers to express themselves and understand what is said to them. Interpreters provided by the authorities can help. Dora, one of my participants, greatly appreciated the service provided by hers. However, it has been found that UK health services can overestimate the language abilities of asylum-seeker and refugee patients and not provide an interpreter when one is needed, and interpreters provide only a short-term solution (*ibid.*). Further on in this section of the chapter one of my participants shows concern that EFL/ESL teachers did not always recognise the need to accommodate their teaching to people who had recently suffered trauma.

Homa said that her low level of language skills caused another problem, social isolation: '*The place where I started working I didn't know anyone. I haven't had any friends and I didn't really speak the language properly.*' The effect of social isolation caused by lack of host language ability was highlighted by Emami *et al* (2000) in their study of elderly Iranian attenders at a Swedish day care centre. They found that low host language ability was a major contributor to their participants' feelings of isolation from the host society. However, while they considered it to be too late in their lives for them to learn Swedish, participation in a wide range of communal activities, such as exercise, arts and crafts and communal games, was very beneficial to the mental state of the Iranian attendees. Another of my participants, Nazee, also had problems with communication in the initial period of her living in Britain: '*… at that time it was so frustrating at the beginning, when I arrived in England, even after one year. Well, when I came here, I could read but I couldn't speak. Speaking was very hard.'*

Other problems and strategies for communicating

Nada, who said that at first her level of English was 'very primitive', told me that she had a strategy for dealing with situations in which she could not understand what was said to her:

> *'Well, the problem was I couldn't understand them and sometimes I just repeated myself. I was repeating myself on something. The reason was because I didn't know what they were saying back to me, and you know, it was very funny.'*

Showing that the English she had learned in Iran had been directed at writing, rather than for speaking, Azee used that skill to communicate:

> *'I used to write things on my hand to remember to phone to rent a room, and then I had to talk to the landlady. I knew a bit of English but couldn't speak . I had to write what I had to say.'*

Dora's difficulty arising from having only a very basic understanding of English from one hour a week at secondary school in Iran resulted in a what could have been serious health issue and certainly a very frustrating experience during her first years in Britain:

> *'I remember once one of my doctors wanted to give me a letter about my daughter's asthma to give to the council because we were living in a damp house. The doctor told me, "It will be ready. You can come and take it tomorrow." And the next day I went to the GP asking for the letter, and I couldn't explain it. I tried to tell them that the doctor write, but they didn't understand. And it took me about half-an-hour and I started crying. So it was really difficult.'*

Shaleh pointed out that not being able to speak and understand the host language can cause other people to become frustrated: *'If you go to somewhere and you have broken English, you can't express yourself. You make people tired of you and then you get angry and then you can't progress*.'

Accent and otherness

> 'Belonging is inherently linked to identity and is created through perceived ideas or experiences surrounding a particular geo-cultural place.' (Tehranian, 2006, p. 414)

There are many factors which can affect a sense of belonging in a person who has been separated from the country in which they grew up. Being able to communicate effectively in the dominant host language is one of these factors. However, the way someone speaks, their accent, can affect the way they are perceived as a person who 'belongs' or otherwise, and can create discrimination in terms of intelligence, social class and other personal attributes (Fuertes *et al.,* 2002), and, as a consequence, can inhibit the process of social inclusion. Accent in speech can be considered to be a way in which people can be identified as not belonging to the particular community in which they live, and this alienation can result in a lack of freedom to participate fully in that community and difficulty in

finding suitable employment (Kayaalp, 2015). This problem affects especially first-generation immigrants, who learn the host language as a second language, bringing with them the flavours of their first. Accent discrimination can bring rejection and exclusion fear and feelings of otherness and marginalisation to the immigrant and possible suspicion and fear on the part of the host community (Ahmed, 2000). It is therefore important for language teachers to recognise the importance of accent when teaching in order to minimise the negative effects of their students having a strong 'foreign' accent (Kayaalp, 2015).

The problem of feelings of 'otherness' caused by lack of language ability and having a strong foreign accent was brought up by Zeba: '… *whatever success you have here, you always feel that there are times when you feel you are not part of the country because of your accent, because of your level of language.*' Ada had a good level of English but still had a problem with her accent influencing other people's perception of her: '*Because I have an accent in English, people initially think … it's interesting how psychologically people think if your English is not perfect in their mind that therefore you are academically a lower standard*.' She was dismayed by some her classmates expressing surprise at her high grades because she spoke with a strong accent.

Of course, everyone has an 'accent'; it is a matter of context and often a matter of identification within that context as to how that accent is interpreted (Lippi-Green, 2012). Listeners can make various judgements, such as race, class and educational competence, about a person from their style of speech and from their accent. Anderson (2007) conducted a study of the attitudes of American university students to recorded samples of African-American and European-American women's conversations. She states: 'Implications from this study highlight how language ideologies mediate our making sense of others' identities based on how they talk. […] Language use is reflexive and does not just disseminate information but also creates and shapes social relations, assumptions, and judgments (p. 193).' The assumption of Ada's abilities made by her classmates is an example of basing a judgement of someone on her accent.

However, one of my participants, Shaleh, differs from this view. She believes that having a foreign accent is not a drawback and is irrelevant : '*This country [Britain] is very familiar with different accents – that's not an issue*.' Perhaps an immigrant feeling that her accent is a detriment to her assimilation into the host culture is largely due to self-perception and discourages her from speaking with members of the host population. Shaleh had the confidence to disregard this aspect of communication. The effects of self-perceived othering due to accent was studied by Suárez

Büdenbender (2009) amongst Latin American immigrants in the USA. Amongst other findings, she discovered that having a 'foreign' accent was a cause of linguistic insecurity, that there was a link between accent and listener perceptions and that, even amongst Latin Americans from different countries (Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, for example) there was a perception of class differences due to difference in accent.

Understanding slang, accents and dialects

Mehra, who had studied English at university in Iran, brought up a particular difficulty in understanding the host language, that of understanding idiomatic expressions and slang:

> *'The language, because I was at university, my second language was English, but it wasn't the English we studied there. When I was asking the shop, "How much is it?" they used to say to me, "Two quid", "a fiver". I didn't know what "fiver" was; what is "fiver"?'*

She had the further problem of having lived in Denmark after fleeing Iran and consequently regularly became confused between Danish and English. Her unfamiliarity with local slang and dialect is a common problem faced by immigrants being exposed to non-standard forms of the host language. For example, Diskin and Regan (2017) studied the effects of Irish English host language upon a group of newly-arrived Polish immigrants in Dublin. There was a degree of shock amongst them on first encountering Irish English for those who had already a fluency in English, and they took longer to become accustomed to it than those who had only a very basic level of English, because it did not match the 'standard' version they had learned. Diskin and Regan also found that their participants had problems with understanding the accent and the speed with which the Irish spoke. Within Britain, English is spoken in a large diversity of local forms; my participant Mehra said that she still cannot understand Scottish people.

My participant, Azee, also had problems with non-standard English speakers: '*I had to listen very carefully to some of them. I had to ask them to repeat especially if they had a different accent, cockney or Scottish or Irish. It was difficult.*' Another case of difficulty in accent comprehension was Teia, who, although she had a good level of proficiency in English, could not understand the northern accents of the people where she lived and worked when she first arrived.

Ada, doing psychological work in London, reported an experience she had with not understanding a teenager speaking in a strong cockney accent when she was asked by the police to interview him: '*For three hours I was interviewing this young boy, seventeen years old, and after – believe me – almost after an hour, I understood one sentence he was saying*.' She had to ask the police for a copy

of the tape so she could study it more carefully at home before making her report. Up to that point, Ada's experience of spoken English had been with more standard varieties, such as in news reports and language classes.

How the participants improved their English language skills

As I have found, my participants had a wide variety of self-reported proficiency in the English language when they first arrived in Britain. However, whether for work, study or for dealing with life in general, even those with a relatively high level of skill were still in need of improvement as they progressed through their new lives. As might be expected, the English they had learned in Iran as young people was inadequate for use in the real world. During their schooldays, the opportunity to speak and listen to English in its everyday form would have been very limited, even though America and Britain had a strong influence in Iran when they grew up before the Revolution (Moghaddam and Murray, 2019).

The English language ability levels of the women of my study were entirely self-reported. Since I am studying a period of time in their lives several decades ago, I do not consider it practical to make any assessments or measurements in this respect at this stage in their lives. The judgements they have made upon themselves relating to their self-efficacy in learning and using English have been made in relation to their experiences, some of which I have described in this chapter. Self-efficacy in general is bound up with experience, overcoming obstacles, self-belief, motivation and resolve (Bandura, 2012). It is also associated with a person's self-awareness of their own strategies and proficiency in learning - their metacognitive knowledge (Wang and Bai, 2017). I have already indicated that the stress caused by deficiencies, such as poor language ability can motivate people to adapt. With my participants their motivation to learn English depended very much upon their determination to obtain work and their resolve to integrate with the host society.

EFL Classes

In Chapter Eight, as part of a survey of the present day situation for immigrants, I shall discuss the state and availability of English language tuition as it has been in recent years, especially in terms of government provision and funding. But here I am mainly exploring the provision of tuition at the time when my participants were finding their feet in the years following their arrival.

It can be said that my participants were perhaps fortunate that they had arrived in Britain at a time when English language teaching had experienced an improvement, or at least received more attention to developing unified methods and measurements. In 1971 the Council of Europe, a human rights body, created a specification in English language learning known as Threshold Level English. This established goals in proficiency levels and also produced a more practical mode of learning called 'English for Specific Purposes' which related the language to real world situations in which students could find themselves, as opposed to the former, more abstract methods (Howatt and Smith, 2014). None of my participants mentioned that they were aware of the particular method or scheme followed by the classes they attended, and it probably would not have been obvious to them at the time, as they had nothing with which to compare it.

They were also fortunate in arriving when, according to their reports, English tuition for refugees was free or inexpensive and educational grants were available. Thirteen of my seventeen participants have reported that, at the time of their arrival in Britain, immigrants had plenty of opportunity to improve their English in state-run educational institutions, and much of it was free. For example, according to Zeba, '*At that time there were a lot of classes. Even now, I suppose if you are on benefit or something you might be able to get free classes, but at that time it was a lot easier*.'

Fariba, doing voluntary work helping refugees, has discovered from them that in the past 20 years it has been more difficult to acquire such tuition. She found that voluntarily staffed classes in the British Asian community provided very basic tuition, too basic for Iranian refugees, who were mainly from an educated group and mostly had at least a basic knowledge of English, a limitation that is also a feature of 21st century government initiatives. This difficulty reported by Fariba in acquiring language lessons occurs in spite of the UK Government requiring that, since 2005, refugees and asylum seekers have to pass an English language test as part of their citizenship process, and also the 2001 *Skills for Life* literacy, numeracy and language skills Government improvement initiative (Morrice, 2007). Fariba has also noticed that, from working with immigrants, it currently takes much longer to gain refugee status than at the time she arrived, so during the waiting period neither work nor study is officially available, at least for three years (*ibid.*). She says, '*I think the whole policy is wrong, because when I came as a refugee I was treated as a human being. You had every right, like a white person. […] It does affect education*.' Mehra too found EFL lessons easy and free to access at her time of arrival. She also studied fashion and had to learn the vocabulary and jargon associated with dressmaking and tailoring.

Problems with EFL classes

Three of the women of my study stated that they were unhappy with the quality of the instruction they had in English classes. Ashti, for example, perceived two aspects of her English language tuition that were inadequate: insufficient time and quality: '[…] *in terms of quality, I think they need to rewrite or update subjects of English courses for refugees, what exactly they need. I found it is not enough*.' This is obviously not in line with the English for Specific Purposes scheme mentioned above. Based upon her own experience, she also put the blame for poor progress in learning English upon the individual students themselves not putting enough time into their study:

> *'When I wanted to study English […] I had two to three hours a day to learn English. After that I didn't study anymore. After a while I realised that if I could manage to do five or six, maybe seven or eight hours a day, […] most likely I could learn the language quicker than that time.'*

Mehra had the unpleasant experience of being taught English in a class by a teacher who resented immigrants: '*I remember one of the teachers at that time was very jealous of foreign people, very jealous.*' But this attitude does not seem to have been common, at least as experienced by my participants.

Trauma

Ada brought up another aspect of English as a second language (ESL) classes that applies especially to refugees, that of teaching people who have suffered recent trauma: '*To understand if somebody doesn't get it is not because their IQ is wrong; it's because the trauma is populating their minds*.' She had learned this from her contact with patients who were refugees. Salvo and Williams (2017), in their study of asylum seekers in Britain, found that their participants regarded ESL classes as not having been designed for their needs as people who had been through trauma. One of their participants said, 'My mind is not in peace to learn.' (p. 740). Although they appreciated the value of learning the host language, that it could give them autonomy, a feeling of achievement and of belonging, there was a sense of shame in having to use an interpreter and having to go to 'school' when they were past school age. They also felt that there was a vicious circle in their inability with English, making them socialise only with people who spoke Farsi, so they had difficulty in learning English informally in the wider society. Salvo and Williams suggest that there should be more awareness of these problems in the educational and social services and that asylum seekers being supported in learning English could result in better mental health. None of my participants said that she felt ashamed of going to language classes, presumably because they were sufficiently motivated to improve their English, although they had all been through various degrees of trauma. In Chapter

Eight I describe more recent government English teaching schemes, unavailable to asylum-seekers, and of variable quality.

Gender considerations

In the case of my study, ten of my participants were single or divorced and thus were more at liberty to spend time learning, even though they had children. Also, the women were generally well educated and started with both a basic knowledge of English and the academic ability to learn more easily. Additionally, I propose that the prevalence of English in the world, as compared with Danish, is another reason for my participants' having an advantage over those in Liversage's study. I am not suggesting that my participants had an easy time, only that they are perhaps atypical.

In respect of gender difference in acquiring the host language, Liversage (2009a) suggests that, according to research, immigrant women in most ethnic groups tend to be 'persistently disadvantaged with regard to second language learning' (p. 230). She concludes from her own research (on Turkish women in Denmark) that this disadvantage is due to the locations at which women in patriarchal marriages and with children tend to spend more time: at home, speaking mainly with family members in their own language; at low level work, where, due to their lack of host language skill, they and their colleagues use very little host language – 'a vicious cycle of having few language skills , thus being able to get work only where little language learning is possible' (p. 243). Liversage reports that none of the Turkish participants had even one Danish friend. Another factor is that of difficulty in attending language classes because they have to work long hours and have gendered domestic responsibilities. Bloch (2002) mentions problems relating to gender in accessing English language classes. She remarks upon 'the failure of some language and training programmes to recognise the diverse needs of refugee women and their failure to provide appropriate services (p.11).' For example, women with children may require crèches and women of certain religions and cultures need to have female-only classes.

Informal learning

In spite of the existence of easily obtained formal ESL learning facilities, most of an immigrant's host language acquisition is gained through experience outside the classroom (Morrice, 2007; Han, 2009). Hanna, one of my participants, gives a good example of this. She already had a good basic skill in English, but still found that she needed classes. There she found that her proficiency improved, not only through the tuition, but even more through informal interaction with the other students. The teacher was surprised that, during a break, Hanna and her fellow students were speaking English

with each other with confidence, in spite of their relative inability. Hanna explained that, '*You didn't mind to talk to a Japanese or a Spanish person with the wrong words in English* […] *We learned from each other and exercise and also communicate, not to be lonely, was to talk with my classmates*.' The stress of having to speak 'correctly' in class was absent in the informal setting of a cafeteria. The confidence gained by using the host language with other foreign people, as opposed to native speakers, can be a positive factor in the level of language acquisition and acculturation experienced by immigrants (Beaven and Spencer-Oatey, 2016).

Informal or incidental learning, as opposed to formally structured lessons leading to qualifications, has been regarded by language educators and governments as inferior and unimportant (Cameron and Harrison, 2012). However, it is more realistic and useful to regard the two types of learning as complementary and part of an integrated, holistic approach (Morrice, 2007; Marsick, 2009), and what is learned in the class needs to be practised in the real world. Incidentally, informal learning differs from 'non-formal' language learning, where learners are purposely placed in an environment where the object is to learn a second language through a programme of social activities, rather than formal lessons. Feuer (2009), for example, describes summer camps in the USA where young people of different ethnic backgrounds acquire the host language in a social setting rather than in classes.

Ashti, who, as I have already mentioned, found classes to be inadequate, discovered that contact with other people and the broadcast media were more helpful:

> *'I went to college for a few years, I talked to English people and I listened to TV and in a short period I cooked and did shopping for a disabled English man to speak English with me.'*

But she has never considered herself to have finished learning the host language:

> *'So we can't say we are … I am perfect. Always we have to continue to improve the level of English.'*

Using the media to assist with learning English

All of my participants, including those who attended EFL classes, improved their English, by using an eclectic mix of sources, learning it from their studies in other subjects and from their general exposure to the English language, such as in shopping, dealing with the authorities and using the media, including listening to radio and television and reading newspapers and magazines. This approach to learning the host language can be a way of preventing marginalization, as it necessitates immersing oneself into the host culture (Modood, 2007). Adumuti-Trache (2013), found that, in her study of immigrants to Canada, the media were the main source of informal learning, being used by

77% of poor speakers and 60% of good speakers, and especially by younger immigrants. Additionally, she discovered that poor speakers and women were particularly reliant upon family and friends for acquiring language skills, and those who worked developed language skills in their work environment.

My participants had similar experiences. Nazee, with her moderate level of English, went to college to study for a BTec degree but did not study English specifically until later; she relied partly upon broadcast media: '*I was listening to the BBC news and it helped me a lot.*' Later, when she wanted to train to be a teacher, she was forced to obtain a GCSE in English, a course of study made difficult by raising children at the same time. Fariba too found that, although she already had a grounding in English gained from her Lower Cambridge Certificate obtained in Britain during a visit before the Revolution, she still required improvement, and was motivated to involve herself in the host community to advance in colloquial conversation. Nada used *The Guardian* newspaper to provide her with useful reading material, especially for building her vocabulary. She also had a realistic attitude to her level of attainment: '*I think that when you come to a new country, not as a child, as an adult you come, you never learn it properly. That is my feeling. Always you have some weak points.*' – which brings to mind Bandura's studies in self-efficacy that I have already mentioned. Mehra used children's animated cartoons as a source of clearly spoken English: '[…] *it was useful because children are talking very, very nicely in cartoons*.' It has been commonly found that listening is the most difficult and important skill when learning a foreign language and listening comprehension is a key component of any language course (Abdi and Makiabadi, 2019; Vandergrift and Baker, 2015) Television and radio give the language learner the opportunity to listen to spoken language in many varieties in an informal way.

It is true that all my participants had been able to learn English at various levels in Iran before the Revolution, so they had at least a basic working knowledge of the language. However, as they discovered, this did not necessarily allow them to communicate effectively with people in everyday life. The impression that I have gained through interviewing my participants and analysing their responses is that they all had a proactive and positive attitude to improving their English. During the time after arriving in Britain they realised that in order to make the best of their new lives, they had to integrate with the host society, and that improving their English was an important factor in doing so. They achieved this through a range of approaches: EFL/ESL classes, working in an English-speaking environment, listening to radio and watching television, reading newspapers, and generally interacting with society. They learned through experience, making mistakes, having problems,

working and generally communicating with people in everyday life. Now I shall study their lives in their later period of being in Britain: bringing up children, having careers – the legacy of their initial acculturation into British culture.

How the participants' lives have progressed since arrival

Acculturation is a dynamic process that does not occur suddenly; rather, it evolves over a long period of time, often decades (Sam and Berry, 2010; Schwartz *et al*. 2016). Therefore, to study the acculturation cross-sectionally of a set of people during a relatively short period of their lives does not provide a complete picture of their lives in their new environment. In this part of my thesis, as far as it is possible, I shall explore the lives of my participants and their families longitudinally up to the present day. Since the interviews I conducted were more concerned with my participants' early acculturation experiences than on their more recent lives, the longitudinal data is not as rich as the cross-sectional. However, I did ask some questions regarding their children and have re-interviewed some of them more recently about their children's and their own careers, so I shall use the data I have gathered as best I can.

Career

On arrival in their new country, many adult asylum seekers and refugees bring with them the qualifications and work experience gained during their lives before their forced migration. For example, in a 2004 UK Home Office survey, 40% of asylum seekers migrating to the UK had qualifications of various types, about 28% had university degrees and 37% had been in managerial or professional work (Morrice, 2007). However, this does not necessarily mean that refugees are able to continue in employment of the kind of or at the level in which they had experience in their country of origin, or even find work at all. A UK Department of Work and Employment survey in 2002 found that the unemployment level for refugees was approximately 36% and that 80% of employed refugees were working in occupations such as catering and cleaning (Bloch, 2002). There are various reasons for this disparity, including overseas qualifications not being recognised in the UK, low English ability, ignorance of the educational and employment systems and a general lack of confidence due to racist attitudes of employers (Morrice, 2007).

The important question at this point is: How much does this disparity between previous employment and education and post-migration difficulties apply to the women of my study? In other words,

considering the above figures, how typical are my participants in terms of them having been asylum seekers? I shall consider this question using short biographies of a random selection of six of my participants by examining the data in more detail than previously in respect of any disparity between their employment or educational status before and after migration and how this has impacted upon their lives in the years since. (Appendix F comprises very brief biographical descriptions of all my participants.)

Children

This proactive spirit also filters down to the children of immigrants, who have the advantage of being bilingual in their parents' language and the host language and also have closer contact with the host culture than their parents. Out of my 17 participants, 14 of them had children who are now either at university or in a career. The other three had no children. Hartmann (2016) has found that the levels of education and status of employment of second generation immigrants vary significantly according to the original status of and the level of assimilation achieved by their parents. Similarly, Farley and Alba (2002), in their study of immigrants to the USA, showed that the second generation's economic security and educational progress was higher than that of their parents, but that these measurements varied according to ethnicity. As I have just mentioned, second generation immigrants have learnt the host language from an early age and they are more familiar with the host culture than were their parents. But these advantages can be outweighed by, for example, the racial discrimination of employers (Laurijssen and Glorieux, 2015). In the case of my participants, their children all have degrees or professional qualifications and all but one (who is still studying at a prestigious university) are involved in managerial work or professions in fields such as science, the legal profession, the arts, architecture, film making, engineering and charity work. To show the heritage of the women's life stories, I include information about my participants' children in the short biographies.

Biographical examples

So far, in order to illustrate particular points, I have selected only small snapshots of the lives of my participants which have been relevant to the topic in hand. With the following six biographical examples I can follow the various phases of their lives and describe their life stories in much more detail and give voice to their attitudes. I can demonstrate the ways in which they have used their opportunities in positive ways and have included my own comments upon the relevance to this study shown by each example.

Teia

A striking case of disparity between life before and life after migration is that of Teia. She had a flourishing pre-revolutionary career as a script advisor in the television and film industry in Iran but could not find similar work in Britain after she became trapped there during the Revolution. The reasons she gave for her inability to continue her career in Britain were threefold: firstly she was living in the north, far away from where most of the film studios were located; secondly, the English she spoke and understood was too 'standard' for communicating with northern English people; thirdly, although a television producer wanted to hire her, she was not allowed to work as she was not a member of a particular union. As she became very emotionally upset when she talked about this problem during her interview, it is obvious that she still feels strongly about having been unable to continue in the work she loved and the lifestyle she lived: '*From being in the situation that I was, very high in society and very, very free, I came into the situation that I was nothing. I was nobody*.' The legacy of her thwarted career in the film industry is that her daughter is now working in Hollywood as a film producer.

Although she could not continue her beloved career, Teia began to make an effort to become accepted in British society:

> *'[…] I started to make communications with the people, with the neighbours, with parents of children who were friends with my child. And that was the biggest challenge because I wanted to be accepted as I am and people understand … you know … OK I look different from them.'*

After having her second child, who had a disability owing to a problem at birth, Teia became involved in campaigning for the rights of disabled children to attend mainstream education and for Cancer Research, both of which she has been doing ever since. As for employment, she trained to be a beautician and for a time owned her own business in that field.

Teia's husband was English (the reason for her being in England during the Revolution) and, as I have previously related, they divorced '*because of the culture'*. When asked if she believed that being a woman had affected her life in Britain, she replied, '*To be honest, I didn't think of that. Though a good thing I've learned here, the opportunities most of the time have been equal. And I feel, for a woman, I had opportunities to achieve the things I wanted*.' But later she adds that being a woman her prospect of improving her English were inhibited by '*being a mother, a wife and looking after things.'*

Teia is an example of someone who has done what she could to make her life meaningful in spite of having had a major setback in her career. Unlike the medical, the scientific or educational professions, careers in the film industry rely not on academic or professional qualifications which can be recognised in different countries, but on experience and association with people and successful projects. Although she was qualified by experience, the closed shop attitudes of the British film industry in the 1970s and 1980s prevented Teia from continuing her career (Reid, 2008). Even so, and with difficulties in her marriage, she made the best of her life by engaging with the host society and doing charity work.

Homa

In contrast to Teia, Homa could not pursue her dream career in Iran, but managed to realise it once she had fled. When the Revolution occurred she had just left secondary school but the new regime did not allow her to study medicine, and then they closed the universities. Instead, she trained in architectural drawing and, for the next few years worked as a draughtsperson in Iran. Recognising that she had no chance of becoming a doctor there, Homa found that she could study medicine if she went to West Germany, as it was then. She left Iran in 1984 and, although, because of racism, she did not enjoy being a foreigner in Germany, she studied to be a doctor and spent thirteen years there. A six months' period of temporary medical work in Britain was serendipitous, as Homa found that she felt much more comfortable there. The attitude to foreigners in Britain was, to her, much more accommodating than in Germany. At that time the NHS was short of doctors, so she was able to procure a position in a hospital near to Manchester.

Although Homa felt more welcome in Britain than she had in Germany, there were some drawbacks. Iranians were much more prevalent and widespread in Germany than in Britain, where she felt starved of contact with her original culture (and still does, even in London). Homa was also disappointed with the British health and social services as compared with those in Germany: '*England was one of the most strongest, most powerful countries in the world, but the level of social system and difficulties was very similar to developing countries, so I still struggle with that*.' In spite of these problems, she has stayed in Britain as a doctor ever since.

From interviewing female Iranian doctors and dentists in London, Fathi (2015) found that an immigrant being in a prestigious professional career such as medicine is an antidote to feelings of 'otherness' or social exclusion, and gives them a sense of power which overrides any sense of not

belonging or otherness. It also helps with practical considerations such as accommodation and gaining citizenship. In this respect, Homa was a skilled immigrant to Britain rather than being a refugee and, as such, has found that her reason for being in Britain has given her more security and a sense of fitting in: '*I had a job and everything was explained around it*.'

Dora

The daughter of a baker, a high status occupation in the Kurdistan area of Iran, Dora was able to be educated and trained as a teacher. She began to work in primary schools in villages in Kurdistan at the time of the 1979 Revolution. Both before and after the Revolution, Kurdistan was marginalised and even attacked by the Iranian government, partly because the Kurdish had separatist tendencies (Axworthy, 2014). She felt the need to teach literacy to both children and adults because of the general illiteracy of this poverty-stricken area of Iran, but particularly to females of all ages, as it was not considered suitable by tradition and the religious authorities for women to be literate. She wanted to help the people of the rural areas so that they could read about and be aware of what was going on in their country. Because the people of Kurdistan did not agree with the new post-revolutionary regime, the area became under attack by government forces. Then the Iran-Iraq war caused even more danger to the Kurdish people and Dora became a campaigner for human rights and fought against the government and Iraqi attacks. Eventually, after 12 years of struggle, her life in imminent danger, she and her daughter were smuggled out of Iran to Britain. She was already separated from her husband, who did not join her.

I have already described Dora's experience of living unemployed as a single parent in a dangerous drug gang occupied area of London, and how, after a female interpreter was murdered by her husband in an 'honour-killing', she founded a women's rights organisation for Iranian and Kurdish women. She brought the government's attention to the hidden dangers, such as honour-killing, faced by female refugees from certain countries, problems about which the Iranian and Kurdish communities were in denial.

Dora feels grateful that, during her first years in Britain, she was able to receive financial assistance and accommodation from the government and could gradually progress in her life as a single mother and campaigner. However, she contrasts the co-operative way of life in Iran with the more isolated life in Britain:

> *'When I was in Iran, of course, when you are in your community and society, so people used to know me. We used to know people in the area in neighbourhoods, even during the war, we were so helping each other and we were there for each other. […] When I came to the UK*

> *there were different services that we hadn't got there, for example social benefit […] But on the other hand you haven't got that communication with community. It's so individualised and people even. I have been in the neighbourhood for nearly 20 years and I don't know many of them now.'*

She sums up her experience in Britain:

> '[…] *here it was a struggle for a few years because I used to live on benefit with … and being a single mother as well, it was quite hard to work. But later on, of course, I started to work* [as an advisor and campaigner for female immigrants] *when my daughter she grow up and I am working now, and I feel comfortable. It's OK. We are not rich but very comfortable*.'

Not only has Dora campaigned on behalf of Iranian and Kurdish women, she has also written a book about her struggles in Iran, won various women's awards for her campaigning work and was awarded honorary doctorates in law at two British universities. She comments: '*You can see we're in a country where they pay attention to your activities and considering your activities as a change for a better life for everyone […] I am very honoured and very happy that I feel I have been positive in society and I am very grateful*.' Her daughter, like her mother, now works for a women's rights organisation.

Although Dora was unable to continue her life in Iran fighting to protect her homeland, she took the initiative to campaign for humanitarian causes as a refugee in Britain. She could not have done this without the same type of determination she had displayed as a teacher and activist while she lived in Iran. Nor could she have achieved it without being able to communicate in English, which she learned mainly from ESL classes and the media.

Hanna

Just after the Revolution, in 1980, Hanna managed to complete her undergraduate course in sociology and anthropology at an Iranian university, but she was denied a degree because of her lack of suitable accreditation after the Revolution. She began to work with disabled children, tutoring them in hospital so that they did not lack an education. However, she was suspected of activism against the state and spent the next five years in prison. '*After I was released, I didn't have a good life there. I wanted to be somewhere not to be at risk to get arrested again*.' The authorities still continued to spy on her and she needed psychological and medical treatment because of the trauma of prison and her treatment there, so she decided to leave the country.

Encouraged by her parents to leave Iran, she chose Britain as a suitable destination, as her brother lived there, travelling there via France. Because of her physical and mental state, Hanna could not

find a job, even one which did not require more than the very basic English she had. At first she felt lonely, but eventually, with the help of the Iranian community and the Home Office, she began to study English. The improvement in language helped her to study for a master's degree in social policy. She also studied English literature and art. Then she trained as a teacher and had a teaching career in primary schools. Moreover, Hanna was able to receive treatment for her trauma and physical injuries with the aid of the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (hhri.org).

Hanna was one of the seven of my participants who became divorced in Britain: '*I was single when I came here but later on I married an Iranian man, which didn't last so long*.'

With fleeing to Britain, the life contrast experienced by Hanna was felt by her in terms of extreme danger versus safety and security. She had been imprisoned and tortured in Iran but in Britain she had a secure and fulfilling career in teaching and a son who has shown great progress in his education. At the time of writing, Hanna's son is reading politics at a prestigious English university.

Mehra

In Mehra's case, the contrast between her lives before and after the Revolution in Iran was sudden and enormous. Before, she had the parallel careers as principal of a college, running a flourishing import-export business and giving young people careers advice in the evenings. Immediately after the Revolution she was fired from her educational work and had her business closed down. Not only that, because her father had been an officer in the Shah's army, she was threatened with death. Pregnant with her third child, she escaped to Britain (via Denmark) with her two young children. Mehra was a single parent when she arrived in Britain because she and her drug addict husband had separated in Iran, but she had some help and advice from the immigrant parents of an Iranian friend and was eventually able to begin her new life.

Mehra appreciated the difference between her post-revolutionary life in Iran and her newly found life in Britain, particularly in terms of educational and career possibilities: '[The] *difference is, in here, if you have a talent or whatever you are active, whatever you want to do, you can do. In Iran it's not as here.*' She studied at the London College of Fashion, attending English classes at the same time, and then for 17 years ran a bridal shop in central London. She also became a television and radio guest expert on programmes concerned with fashion and helped to design the bridal gowns for a royal wedding. Another talent Mehra has is performing Iranian classical vocal music.

One of Mehra's sons studied aerospace engineering and is now a sales manager for a well-known aeroplane manufacturer in the USA. Her second son works as a motor engineer in Germany.

Mehra's life story demonstrates yet again how someone with enough strength, determination and intelligence despite losing everything she had in Iran, and even having her life threatened, can thrive in another place, given the right environment. Having children is an important aspect of resilience in such situations, especially for women, as they can focus their attention away from themselves and do what is necessary for their children, avoiding self-pity (Clare *et al.*, 2014).

Pari

Pari, like Homa, was a doctor and, like Dora, was Kurdish. She managed to complete her education and became qualified in Iran just before the Revolution. I have already recounted how, after the Revolution, she worked treating patients in the deprived areas of Kurdistan. Pari describes the conditions there:

> *'I mean, especially women over there, they were under pressure and they didn't have any rights, and they, you know, they want any plan for family planning […] And every year they had to bring another one child and there was a lot of diseases. The reason was the malnourishment and lack of hygiene, the cause of those diseases – which was preventable.'*

Not only that, her work was subjected to interference from the religious authorities. The pressure from this interference and also the prevailing danger to her and her family's lives caused Pari to relocate to an area of Kurdistan controlled by Iraq. They were unsafe there too, because, once the Iran-Iraq war started, she, her husband and one of her two children had no choice but to escape to Britain, a destination chosen by those who smuggled them.

Unfortunately, Pari and her husband had to leave their elder son behind in Iran for the next two years. Apart from the resulting emotional strain this caused, her first few years in Britain were a struggle: '[…] *at that time, when I arrived here, I didn't work. I didn't have money*.' She adds:

> *'There were a lot of problems in terms of housing , in terms of money and I should start from zero as a doctor, a female doctor. And I didn't have any resources, any money.'*

With the help of social assistance and people from the Iranian community, however, Pari managed to attend classes to improve her basic English and get her Iranian medical degree recognised so that she could begin work as a doctor. With some difficulty, she was able to arrange for her elder son to finally to join her in Britain. Pari, like another six of my participants, found that the cultural environment of British life was incompatible with a patriarchal marriage and she and her husband became divorced. Even so, she still found problems caused by their gender in British culture:

> *'When you come here as a woman, you have to study, you have to look after children […] even men. […] As I said, because of the culture, even an intellectual one, they don't take responsibility for … and you've got a double responsibility.'*

As Oakley (2005) says: 'Legal definitions current in our culture tie the status of "wife" to the role of unpaid domestic worker. The husband is legally entitled to unpaid domestic service from his wife and this is a right that the courts of law uphold' (p. 93). Oakley's research (*ibid.*) shows that, amongst the general British population there is a 'firm belief in the "natural" domesticity of women, and a corresponding belief that domesticity in men is "unnatural"' (p. 97). In Pari's view, this cultural norm was prevalent not only in Iranian family relationships, but also to some degree in British society.

In spite of her initial setbacks, Pari eventually had a successful career as a doctor and microbiologist. One of her sons gained a PhD in astrophysics and is currently working in that field, and her other son is working as a data analyst after obtaining a Master's degree in mathematics.

Conclusions from the biographies

What these six women have in common is that they were forced by circumstances beyond their control to flee their home country, or stay away from it, and used their personal strengths to make as good a life as possible in Britain. Bonnycastle (2017), in her study of Colombian women refugees in Canada, defined a 'good life' as 'the correlation between concomitant contentious topics of status of employment and perception of well-being (p. 660)'. This correlation was concerned with the status of the work the women were doing in Canada compared with their previous work in Colombia, or whether or not their qualifications were recognised in Canada. This disparity could affect their sense of well-being. Some of the women (an unspecified proportion) of Bonnycastle's study showed humility and pragmatism in recognising that, although their work was of a lower status, it was at least supporting their families and they had enough determination to learn English and improve the level of their employment. Bonnycastle suggests that

> '[…] refugee women should not be depicted simply as victims in need of humanitarian assistance, but also as agents who make use of their knowledge to transcend the limitations of their situations in order to succeed in a new society. (p. 663)'.

This statement could equally apply to the women of my study. They have created new lives in Britain by means of their determination and education to overcome their initial circumstances.

Chapter conclusion

The main theme of this chapter has been acculturation, especially applied to my participants' attitudes to and experiences of learning the host language in Britain. I have discussed their ideas upon the importance of learning English, their self-perception of their individual abilities and any problems they experienced with poor language skills. I also reported on the strategies they used to cope with communication in English and how they managed to improve their skills. My main conclusion from all of this data is that, as I have already said several times, is that they had the determination and strength of mind to overcome language barriers and were thus able to integrate well into the host society, building careers. I used biographical examples to illustrate in more detail both the contrasting experiences of my participants and what they have in common.

Now that I have considered the several different aspects of the acculturation of my participants, it is time to draw together all the analyses I have made of the data and conclude the thesis by answering the four questions I asked in the Introduction.

CHAPTER EIGHT
CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this thesis I have examined the life stories of 17 Iranian women, whose lives were abruptly and irrevocably changed by events in Iran, their country of birth. I did this in order to explore the various ways in which they were affected by these changes, especially in terms of their forced migration to Britain, their learning and use of English and their gender. I have interviewed these women face-to-face using a semi-structured method and accumulated about 150 pages of transcriptions of their responses to my questions. I have analysed this data according to various themes and undertaken my analysis in the previous three chapters.

The questions I have sought to address through my study are:

1. *How has the learning of English affected the lives of my participants in terms of their acculturation, perceptions and experiences since they arrived in Britain?*

2. *How has learning the English language, and the opportunities gained by doing so, influenced the participants' relationships of with their families and the Iranian community in Britain?*

3. *In what ways have the experiences, including their troubles in Iran, their migration and their problems encountered in the time after their arrival, both before and especially of gender issues, affected the acculturation of my female participants?*

4. *In what ways does understanding the lives and experience of immigrants help to improve the lives and acculturation of future female Iranian immigrants in Britain?*

I shall bring together the analyses I have made using the rich data elicited from my participants and form conclusions in relation to each of the first three questions. I shall also attempt to answer the fourth question, about the way in which my analysis can help in the real world because this study would not be worth doing unless it has some impact upon the experience of forced immigrants.

In my Introductory chapter I stated that the main reason for conducting this study was a personal one: I had to leave Iran mainly as a result of the 1979 Revolution and start a new and very different life in Britain. I was curious to know how other Iranian women of my generation who had undergone a similarly life-changing migration had dealt with the problems that resulted from their experience. Having interviewed 17 such people and analysed their responses, I have satisfied my curiosity and I am now in a position to draw some conclusions which I hope will help and even inspire others who

are in comparable situations and those who have some influence upon the policies which affect refugees

At this point I shall take each of my research questions in turn and, from my findings, attempt to discover any significant meaning relating to each of them.

Research question 1: The value of learning English

My first research question is : 'How has the learning of English affected the lives of my participants in terms of their acculturation, perceptions and experiences since they arrived in Britain?' It would seem to be self-evident that learning the dominant host language is essential to being able to have a basic existence in a host country, let alone thriving (Dowling, 2012), and research has shown that host language skills are closely connected with quality of employment and the avoidance of social isolation (Chiswick and Miller, 2003; Ellis, 2018). After analysing the responses of my participants on asking them how learning English has affected their lives, I found that they were unanimous in their opinion that, with hindsight, it was definitely a positive action, that it was essential to acculturation and it gave them the power to integrate with the host society, which itself was important to them. Right from their initial experiences of arriving in Britain as refugees they were aware of their linguistic inadequacy and consequently were motivated to improve their English. Even those who had previously lived in Britain or the USA and were otherwise confident realised that they had some linguistic deficiency, but those who had learned the language only at school as children in Iran were especially aware of their own lack of skill. Table 4 in Chapter Six acts as a summary of my participants' responses to a question about their self-perceived levels of English upon arrival in Britain. It illustrates the variety of proficiency amongst them. Only two of them seem to have had any confidence in being able to communicate in English, mainly because they had previously lived in Britain and other English-speaking countries. The rest judged themselves to be either moderately skilful or poor. See Table 5 in Chapter Seven for more detail of my participants' views on their own abilities on arrival in Britain.

Liversage (2009), in her study of Turkish economic migrants in Denmark, states:

> '[…] the women's poor command of Danish and limited educational skills combine to circumscribe their work opportunities in a labour market already segmented along lines of gender and ethnicity.' (p. 243)

I am citing this study to illustrate a contrast between my participants and those of Liversage, who were in Denmark due to labour migration. Although most of the Iranian women of my study had limited English skills on arrival and limited financial resources, they were escaping from danger rather than poverty, so they were refugees, and they had an abundance of educational skills, although not all of them were able to bring their financial assets with them. Additionally, Denmark at the time of Liversage's study was restrictive in access to host language learning whilst, according to my participants' reports, there was a profusion of English learning facilities available to them in Britain. None recalled any difficulties in obtaining tuition. It did not take them long to begin to improve their English proficiency, to study vocational and academic subjects and to develop fulfilling careers. They were able to gain more understanding of British culture and to assimilate because they understood that language improvement should be their first priority – and most were able to obtain language tuition and develop their skills with little difficulty and cost. The strong desire of female, as opposed to male, Iranian immigrants to integrate into the dominant society has been recognised by researchers such as Lewin (2001). As I have previously noted, the women of my study had a strong proactive spirit which encouraged them to want to engage with their host society, to continue with their careers or, failing that, create new ones and study English in formal EFL classes, through media and through interaction with English speakers.

In my Literature Review I described the work of Whorf, the pioneering linguistic anthropologist, who suggested that the language spoken by an individual or group can affect the way in which they interpret the world around them (Athanasopoulosa and Albright, 2016). Other more recent researchers, such as Bylund and Athanasopoulos (2014) and Cook *et al.* (2006), have studied the effects upon cognition caused by learning and using a second language and have found that, whilst the effects are dependent upon many individual variables, such as length of immersion in the second language and age, there are definite differences between single language users and bilinguals in their cognitive interpretation of shapes and colours, for example. However, whether or not this effect can be extrapolated to the changing of personal attitudes, is unclear from research. The common-sense approach would be to consider that the more proficient an immigrant becomes at learning the host language, the more are they able to understand the host culture and social values and therefore be able to deal with their new environment. This, indeed, has been verified by research, for example, Ugues *et al.* (2011), who found that host language proficiency has a positive effect upon the assimilation and acculturation of newcomers to a country.

Language skills and career

Learning the dominant host language is especially important for an immigrant in developing a career in their new country. There is an obvious connection, borne out by research (Hung Ng, 2007; Liversage, 2009a, for example), between host language skill and quality of employment in the host country. Shields and Price (2002), studying a wide ethnic range of immigrants to Britain, found that 'English language fluency is the second most important determinant of occupational success, after possession of a degree or equivalent highest qualification.' (p. 155). They additionally point out that improved proficiency in English helps immigrants to learn skills that could lead to better employment. Five of my participants explicitly stated their belief in the necessity of learning or improving their proficiency in English in order to be able to find professional work and to connect with the culture of the host society.

With this connection between host language proficiency and employment in mind, it is important to realise that, having left Iran, most of them with very little financial capital and only a basic facility in English, the women and their families had serious problems which needed to be solved. They needed accommodation, money and all the other necessities of life but they were not content to be passive and rely only on benefits. If possible, they wanted to continue the careers they had begun in Iran. To do this, they realised that one of the main stumbling blocks was their lack of fluency in English. Table 2 in Chapter Six shows how my participants' working lives continued or changed in respect of their careers.

It will be noticed from Table 2 that nine of the 17 participants, over a half, did something different from their planned careers after arrival in Britain. This disruption to their careers was not necessarily due to poor English proficiency. The reasons are a combination of the Iranian post-revolutionary authorities preventing them from continuing their work or studies, owing to their gender, their inability to continue them in Britain as a result of their qualifications not being recognised, racial discrimination, their gender, or family circumstances. Examples of these reasons were illustrated in Chapter Seven where I presented some short biographies of a sample of my participants. It will also be noticed that those who studied medicine were all able to continue their careers. The factors controlling career trajectory after immigration are many and complex: '… foreign-born immigrant college women experience complex and multi-layered interactions between individual influences and influences from both the social system and environmental–societal system.' (Sebleton, *et al.,* 2020, p. 22). The influences reported by my participants include family concerns (children, husbands), accommodation problems, financial problems, racial abuse and unrecognised qualifications.

Adaptiveness, the power to apply one's skills to activities other than what was originally intended, is an attribute that helped those women of my study who found it necessary to change their career paths. According to Campion (2018), this versatility is aided by the formation of social networks, which enhance wellbeing and provide support in relation to forming alternative careers, in spite of the barriers I have mentioned.

To answer this research question, from what I have stated above, I conclude that, owing to my participants' educational skills developed prior to the Revolution, their proactive spirit and their ability to adapt, they made sure that they could communicate in English and use that skill to develop their careers and assimilate well into British society. The women had a strong practical spirit which encouraged them to want to engage with their host society, to continue with their careers or, failing that, create new ones and study English in formal EFL classes, through media and through interaction with English speakers. This determination to make the best of their abilities to forge new lives and their understanding of the connection between host language proficiency and the ability to thrive helped them to ensure that they learned to communicate with their new hosts. I propose that learning English in Britain was a major positive contribution to the lives of my participants, and this was aided by their educational skills already gained in Iran and by their strong, proactive characters.

Research question 2: Effects upon families, community and personal life

My second research question considers: 'How has learning the English language, and the opportunities gained by doing so, influenced the participants' relationships with their families and the Iranian community?' and is concerned with personal and family life, rather than with career opportunities and other practical matters.

The importance of improving their level of English was obvious to all of the women at the time of their arrival. They all appreciated that it was a necessary skill in order to become integrated into British society and culture. This connection between language and culture is backed up by the study of linguistic anthropology, for example, Duranti (1997), Hung Ng (2007) and Mitchell *et al.,* (2017). However, the benefits provided by better host linguistic skills, the advantages of being better connected with the host society, less social isolation and a better career, can be offset by some negative effects upon family life.

Hall (2017) stresses the point that identity, whether it is sexual, ethnic or cultural, is fluid and can change according to the circumstances in which people find themselves. My participants lived in a highly patriarchal Iranian society which, quite apart from any official influence, held clearly defined rules about the behaviour and social status of women. However, in the decades before the 1979 Revolution, these rules were not all bound in law and some more liberal Iranian families felt safe in ignoring them (Ebadi, 2006), but the basic balance of power was still largely in favour of men. The 'rules' to which I am referring are particularly those concerning what women were allowed to achieve in terms of career. Once they began their new lives in Britain, even though it also has a patriarchal culture, but not to the same degree as in Iran, that balance of power was disrupted and the women's post-migration attempts to improve their English and integrate more with the host led to husbands feeling resentful of their wives' participation in anything that was not directly related to domestic and family life, such as bettering their education, or in any activity that could lead to their wives gaining a higher status or earning more money than their spouses.

Having fled from Iran mainly because of officially generated gender bias, my participants were still under its power within the family. Male hegemony, especially over the activities of wives and daughters outside the home, was still a basic principle of an Iranian marriage, both within and outside Iran. I have referred to research by Darvishpour (1999) and Hojat *et al.* (2000), who found that Iranian men could feel stigmatised and have their identity as head of the family threatened by being married to women who reached outside the home for activities associated with the host society and who were attracted to the more liberal values of the host culture. Seven of my 17 participants reported separation and divorce from their husbands as a result of their own more independent behaviour, their interaction with the host society and showing strength of character not associated with the traditional role of an Iranian wife and mother, perhaps resulting from greater confidence within their host society and being free from state influence of their behaviour (Darvishpour, 1999). The different attitudes of men and women could stem from an observation about Iranian immigrant families made by Nasehi (1994): that the men tend to live in yesterday, the women in today and the children in the future. In other words, the women are concerned with immediate practical necessities while the men are more concerned with tradition and resent becoming more dependent upon their wives to provide income and interact with the host society. Nasrabadi (2014) attributes Iranian women's feelings of empowerment to their participation in the Revolution, when many women in Iran protested against the Shah's regime alongside men. Lewin (2001) blames the relatively high number of cases of disruption of Iranian immigrant marriages on a

need to reconstruct an individual's identity and value system within an alien society. The five women who were able to stay married, in spite of coping with the asymmetric division of labour in the home, found that they were able to carry out their traditional 'duties' (housework, cooking, child care, for example) whilst still developing careers. Shirpak *et al.* (2011) learned that married couples from traditional patriarchal backgrounds tend to stay happily married if they compromised by keeping some traditional behaviour whilst simultaneously integrating with the dominant society, an approach akin to the category of *integration* in the acculturation model proposed by Berry (2005). Incidentally, Schwartz *et al.* (2010) have found that such a bicultural approach, as opposed to separation, assimilation and marginalization, generally leads to better all-round mental health for immigrants.

All but one of the women of my study had children, and learning English helped them to find better paid work which, in its turn, provided the means by which they could provide for their families. Having children gave them an extra incentive for improving their earning power and enabling them to bring up their families in better physical circumstances, especially if they were single mothers, as seven of them were (Wehrle *et al*, 2018). Except in two cases, they were able to obtain better accommodation and not have to rely on financial benefits. Additionally, even if the women and their children suffered racial abuse in Britain, they felt much safer than they had been in Iran and could benefit from treatment for mental health problems which had been caused by their traumatic experiences before – and after - migration. Once they discovered ways of improving their English, they could better understand the public and private systems of housing, education, benefits, employment and other services and amenities and therefore create a better environment for their children and themselves. They could also study for qualifications that could lead to better employment and careers. However, my participants found that having children could limit their ability to learn English, as it could inhibit their attendance at college or studying at home. According to my participants, facilities such as crèches were rarely provided in colleges at that time.

It is noteworthy that the patriarchal patterns of Iranian family life became diluted in the children of my participants. As Schwartz (2016) has found, children of immigrants tend to adopt the values of the host culture and distance themselves from their heritage culture. The extent to which this discrepancy occurs is mediated by the parents' abilities to raise their children in their heritage culture and the amount of the children's exposure to the host culture. The children of my participants were educated in the educational system of the host country and were encouraged and educated, regardless of gender, to develop careers as members of the general English society. They

retained their Iranian heritage at home by communicating in Farsi with their parents and other relatives and in English with the world outside their homes. I have collected no data on the outcomes of the children in terms of marriage.

As for the effects of learning English on my participants' relations with the Iranian community, three of the women became heavily involved in British organisations which dealt with Iranian and other Middle Eastern immigrants' human rights and one worked in broadcasting to the Iranian community. I suggest that learning English would have helped with these endeavours, especially in communicating with the British government.

What I have found in respect of this second research question is that immigrant Iranian women learning English – a sign that they are connecting with the host society and departing from their traditional role as wife and mother - could, in some cases, have a detrimental effect upon family life, especially in terms of marriage, because discrepancies between host and heritage cultures can interfere with the patriarchal nature of the Iranian family culture and result in strife within marriage and even divorce. From my participants' responses and the study by Shirpak (2011), I propose that compromise and accommodation, rather than alienation, results in marriages continuing rather than ending. Learning and improving English gave the women the power to help their children in the initial stages of acculturation. Although having children provided my participants with an incentive to better their communication skills, it also acted as an obstacle to their progress in this regard because it limited their time for attending classes and studying, especially for those who were single parents.

Research question 3: Experience before and after migration

I shall approach the third research question (In what ways have the experiences, both before and after migration, and especially of gender issues, affected the acculturation of my female participants?) by considering what I have learned about the lives and feelings of the women previous to their leaving Iran and after their arrival in Britain, and the way in which the particular qualities and strengths of the women contributed to their lives in Britain.

An extremely important aspect of having to start a new life in a new country is the post-migration mental state of the migrant. I have stated that my participants reported mixed feelings about being

in Britain. Many of them had been traumatised by their experiences in Iran. Once in Britain, the repression and persecution they had encountered in post-revolutionary Iran was at a much lower level, but at the same time, most of them were faced with all the challenges of restarting their lives with meagre physical resources. James *et al.* (2019) have concluded that it takes at least eight months after arrival for a refugee to consider themselves free of social deprivation and exclusion. One of the women reported continuing post-traumatic mental problems, a condition for which she was treated in Britain. In spite of being forced by circumstances to leave Iran, my participants still had positive feelings about that country and its traditional culture and they had left behind a way of life that some of them still miss to this day. Nostalgia was – and still is - commonly felt amongst the women and homesickness was a sensation that the majority of them experienced in the years following their arrival in Britain, but it was greatly outweighed by their feelings of safety which resulted from their migration.

Except for those who had been directly affected by the Iran-Iraq war, they had led comfortable and, in some cases, affluent lives there before the Revolution, but the majority of them had to cope with all the difficulties of starting a new life in Britain, not being able to bring with them any of their wealth. They were generally satisfied with the way they were treated by the British public and authorities, even though some had suffered racist comments and, in one case, physical violence. Additionally, many of them had left members of their families behind, mainly parents and siblings, but also children, if only temporarily.

After arriving in Britain there was also a transformation in my participants' lives in terms of gender status. In Iran they had been living under a traditional patriarchy, which was applied to their lives even more strongly after the Revolution. Although three of my participants reported an experience of gender bias after arrival and one perceived hidden bias in British society, the opinion of my participants in general was that they were no more greatly affected by prejudice than were the general host population and even that was at a much lower level than what they had experienced in Iran. But patriarchy and the gendered imposition of domestic duties are by no means absent from British society. As Oakley (2005) states, when discussing academic studies in family life: 'In family and marriage literature, women are entirely encapsulated within the feminine role. The psychoanalytical view has been very influential, leading to an implicit definition of women as wives and mothers to the virtual exclusion of any other life area.' (p. 198).

My findings relating to this third research question are that my participants naturally felt extremely relieved that they had escaped to a country in which they were free of repression and persecution, but still had positive feelings towards the country in which they had grown up. Those who had not already spent time away from Iran before entering Britain had feelings of homesickness and lack of belonging in their host society. However, they all had a strong desire to make a success of their situation and showed a proactive spirit which allowed them to do so. In general, the basic principle I have derived from the analysis of my participants experiences is that the quality of refugees' life in their host country in the long term depends very much upon the character and previous lives of the people concerned.

Research Question 4: Implications: The effects of this study upon the experience of future female immigrants

My fourth research question is: 'In what ways does understanding the lives and experience of immigrants help to improve the lives and acculturation of future female immigrants in Britain? I hope, by having done this research, that I have added to the understanding of the complex situation of immigration and acculturation, especially that of refugees.

In recent years (2015 onwards) there have been annually well over 100,000 people from countries outside Europe migrating, for various reasons, to Europe, hoping to start better and safer lives there (Pannia, 2021). Many countries, including the UK, have agreed, to various extents, with the Geneva Convention of 1951 and the more recent Common European Asylum System of 2003-2005. In other words, these countries have a legal duty to consider asylum-seekers' requests and accept them if they conform to the criteria set down in law. At the time of my participants' arrival, the 1980s and the early 1990s, the Vietnam War had recently ended in 1975 and, in the aftermath, about 800,000 Vietnamese had been forced by to flee to the USA, Britain and various European countries after the communist takeover of their country. At the time of writing, the situation in Afghanistan has caused the possibility of a need for Britain and other nations to accept refugees fleeing that country. Similarly, during the decades after the 1979 Iranian revolution, over 600,000 Iranians have since fled to similar host countries (Hakimzadeh, 2006). The similarity between these migrations is that they were caused by extreme changes in the way in which their countries were governed and also involvement in war. What I am pointing out is that there has often been a potential need for mechanisms and processes for coping with these types of situations to be put in place so that

refugees can be allowed asylum and subsequently be integrated into the host society. I hope that the experiences of my participants, as related and analysed in my thesis, can help to improve the acculturation of other refugees, especially women.

As I have stated, my participants were all well-educated and were from a higher social class than the general population of Iran and they had the ability to improve their situation as refugees by being able to learn new skills. I believe that it is possible to say that the women of my study have shown that they have all, after various lengths of time, integrated well with British society and become 'successful' citizens, in spite of the various problems they had after arrival. I also believe, from having met and spoken with them, that much of this success is due to their strong, proactive characters, their determination to improve their English proficiency and to otherwise educate and train themselves for their careers. As such, the act of studying their experiences and behaviour has provided an example of what can be done by refugees to achieve success and to integrate well. The main lessons I have learned from this study are that learning the host language is the most important action that can be taken by a refugee and that pre-existing learning skills, as well as strength of character contribute greatly to the process of integration with the host society.

Limitations of this study

I have made it clear from the very beginning that my own situation is very similar to that of my participants in relation to my refugee status, the time at which I fled Iran, my country of origin and my gender, so I expect that some degree of criticism of this study could, quite reasonably, be based upon my positionality, upon my objectivity as a researcher. I have explained in the Methodology chapter that my identification with the women whose lives I have studied has helped to gain their trust and allowed them to open up and be more confident in their responses. I understand their situation and therefore I could use my own experience to help frame the questions I have asked and to ask supplementary questions if needed. So, for these reasons, I can be confident that my positionality is not a limitation - indeed it can be seen as an advantage - as long as I have remained detached and objective in analysing the data.

With hindsight, when analysing the data, I found that I could have asked more questions about the current situations of my participants, particularly in relation to their families, their children and husbands. I also regret not having elicited more data about the marriages of those participants who became divorced in Britain. I feel that doing so could have given me more material to analyse in

relation to traditional patriarchy in Iranian culture. However, I did re-interview by telephone a small number of them to ascertain more details of their children's careers.

Additionally, I do not think that I have adequately dealt with the effects of trauma upon refugees and the subsequent treatment they had once they had started their lives in Britain, an omission which I discuss in the Further Research section below.

Further research

All of my participants left Iran because they felt some degree of fear that continuing their lives there would have been detrimental to their liberty, their mental and physical health or even their lives. Some had spent several years in prison and others had been directly involved in the Iran-Iraq war. Also, the trauma of leaving families and lives behind produced feelings of bereavement. At least one of the women needed intervention for mental health problems caused by trauma. One participant referred to the effects of trauma upon educational ability, saying that language teachers did not always understand that the reasons for slow progress might be connected with traumatic experiences. The effects of trauma upon learning ability could be a fruitful and interesting area of further study.

Children of refugees, especially if they were born and had lived for a significant time in their country of origin, can, as with their parents, suffer PTSD and can have negative identity issues in the host country (Drummond Johansen and Varvin, 2020). They can struggle with their relationship with their new environment and host population and are likely to have felt unsafe in and during their flight from their original countries. During the initial years of being refugees they can suffer racial discrimination, stereotyping and social exclusion. Even when they reach adulthood, such children can still feel that they do not fit in with the host society, although studies (mine included) have shown that this effect does not necessarily restrict the acculturation process of these children (Ossipow *et al.,* 2019). It would therefore be interesting to do further research into the lives and experiences of the children of adult refugees. They are usually bilingual and so can act as translators between their parents and the host society, with which they have much more contact than do their parents. It must also be borne in mind that some children of immigrants are first generation immigrants themselves (Zhou, 1997).

Recommendations

Women's rights in Iran

As I have stated previously, migration is a major issue in the world today. The governments of countries such as Britain, France, Sweden, Germany and the USA have had to cope with a large number of mainly economic migrants from poorer countries. However, there have been periods of time when the regimes of certain countries have changed and, for various reasons, have created conditions in which sections of the population have found life severely restrictive and dangerous, forcing those who are able to flee the country to do so. The relevant example here is Iran, when many people had little alternative but to escape. Although some progress has been made there during that last 40 years in access to education and health care, women are still heavily discriminated against in many areas of life, including employment, marriage and citizenship.

A report entitled *Beyond the Veil* (Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, *et al.,* 2019) was published in order to bring attention to the situation in Iran regarding gender inequality. It points out that, owing to the objections by conservatives in the Iranian Guardian Council, Iran is one of the few UN member states that has not signed up to The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The report states that conservatives in the government '… portray the concept [of gender equality] as a Western invention antithetical to Iran's "values", which for them are grounded in the state-sanctioned interpretation of Shi'a Islam which has been dominant since the 1979 Islamic Revolution.' (p.4).

The situation in Iran is that women are not protected against acts of violence, domestic and otherwise, and that there is a lack of legal instruments for dealing with them, the law being heavily biased towards men. There is also intersectional discrimination against women who are from minority backgrounds. According to *Beyond the Veil*, 15.9% of women in Iran are participating economically and are twice as likely as men to be unemployed (female university graduates are three times more likely to be unemployed than their male counterparts). Within marriages, husbands can bar their wives from occupations of which they disapprove, and prospective employers of married or engaged women require a certificate of permission from husbands. Only fathers have legal guardianship of children, which of course affects the mother's rights of custody in the event of divorce if the children are over two years old. Religious and ethnic discrimination are also factors in employment acquisition. If an Iranian women marries a foreigner, their children are

unable to obtain Iranian citizenship until they are 18, and even then it is dependent upon strict criteria.

The report mentions many other ways in which women are discriminated against in Iran, such as child marriage, compulsory *hijab* wearing and violence against women. The recommendations to the Iranian government of the report are that all the above-mentioned discriminatory practices are legislated against and that member states of the United Nations (of which Iran is a member) put pressure on Iran to encourage it to enact reforms, especially with respect to women's and girls' rights, the release from prison of peaceful protesters and the recognition of children of ethnically mixed marriages as Iranian citizens. I certainly echo and include this action in my own recommendations. 40 years ago, my participants experienced much the same discrimination as described in *Beyond the Veil*, even if some small improvements in women's status have since been achieved in the first decade of the 21st century, but have more recently been reversed.

The treatment of women and girls as second class citizens in Iran has also been the subject of a report made to the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHCR, 2021). The report, by the UNHCR Special Rapporteur on human rights in Iran, is particularly concerned with domestic violence and child marriage. With regard to domestic violence, it says that even if some reforms have been made, 'Existing protections against violence are insufficient to comprehensively safeguard women and children.' (p. 1) For example, before a woman can obtain a divorce on the grounds of abuse, her husband must have already been convicted of domestic violence three times. Also, the maximum penalty for murder is not applied to a husband or father when the victim is a wife or daughter or their own child or other descendant. This situation also applies to 'honour' killings, which are not treated as homicides. In the case of child marriage, girls can be married at the age of 13, and even younger with the consent of their father and a judge. The report gives a figure of 16,000 girls between 10 and 14 having been married in a recent six-month period. In this report, the UNHCR Special Rapporteur regards child marriage as being 'simply unacceptable' and states that 'It is clear that child marriage is harmful for the development and well-being of girls, including in terms of education, employment and to live free of violence.' (p. 1). He says that 'pressure must now be brought to raise the marriage age, in line with Iran's obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.' Naturally, I personally fully agree with the recommendations and exhortations of this report.

Another, perhaps indirect, example of women's rights being eroded in Iran is the 'rejuvenation of the population and support of family' law, in which the regime is setting out to increase population growth by banning contraception and giving extra benefits to pregnant women. This is seen by human rights organisations, such as Human Rights Watch, as a violation of women's rights (hrw.org).

Currently (2023) there is, according to the charity Amnesty International, 'a worrying trend of crackdowns against women human rights defenders in Iran' (www.amnesty.org.uk/actions/). For example, women who have protested against the compulsory wearing of the veil have been given long prison sentences and even harsh corporal punishment in one case for defending such women in court. The charity says, 'This cannot continue. We must show the Iranian authorities that the world is watching.' In the last few years there has been a co-ordinated diplomatic protest by France, Germany and the UK against the general trend of arbitrary punishment of Iranian and dual nationals in Iran by the current regime (*The Guardian*, 23.9.2020).

These, and many more examples of the erosion of women's rights in Iran during the last few years, show that the situation for women the country is worsening, possibly creating an even greater level of maltreatment of women than it was when my participants were forced to leave Iran.

As has been shown in this study, some of these restrictions to women's lives are carried over into the expatriate communities in Britain, although they are not part of law of the host country. The nature of the restrictions imposed upon an expatriate Iranian woman naturally depends upon her circumstances. If she is married or lives with parents, then it is likely that her life will come under the influence of patriarchy or religion, which implies that she will not be able to participate fully in the host society and will not have an independent personal identity but be subjugated into behaving in a prescribed way, especially in public. Mahfar (2011) points out that this self-sacrifice and division of identity can produce psychological problems and that seeking therapy for these problems is problematic because 'it inspires a sense of shame and disgrace in traditional Persians, who still hold the prejudice that therapy is reserved for the mentally retarded or psychotic' (p. 117). Even single or divorced women would not necessarily be free of such influence because traditional values have been ingrained in their minds during their upbringing.

I hope that the British Government understands that not all immigrants are economic; many are escaping from political and cultural discrimination and do not desire to meet further restrictions to their lives in the host country. However, even refugees who previously had had advantaged lives can

suffer from poverty after fleeing their countries of birth. Although the participants of my study came from relatively privileged backgrounds in Iran, not all of them benefitted from this once they arrived in Britain, as they had to leave their wealth behind. Two particular examples are Nazee and Dora, who had to start their lives in Britain living on benefit and struggling to cope with poor quality housing. The government must recognise that many refugees have had to leave behind any money and property they had in their countries of origin and provide benefit if necessary. Being women, especially single mothers, also influences their needs.

Host language learning

In this study I have emphasised that immigrants who are able to speak, read and understand English have an advantage in the ability to take part in British life, in obtaining employment and dealing with health and legal issues, over those who cannot. The current UK immigration rules specify that immigrants on certain routes of entry to the UK (such as students and skilled workers) are required to be qualified in all four aspects of language competence (reading, writing, speaking and listening) and that general applicants for citizenship need at least to be able to be able to speak and understand spoken English (UK Government, 2021). In the case of refugees, it is not unreasonable to expect that these requirements are supported by adequate and easily available facilities for learning English within Britain.

There seems to be no lack of willingness on the part of recent governments to address the issue of immigrant language learning, but financial constraints and ineptitude can act as hindrances to the implementation of any measures. In a current affairs television programme in 2013, Eric Pickles, then Communities Secretary, said:

> ‘Speaking English is essential to living in Britain. It's a passport to prosperity and without it people are very limited in what they can do, and in some immigrant communities learning English doesn't happen. This is not right. I believe that, if you want to live here, you must learn to speak the language.’ (Eric Pickles MP, BBC *Daily Politics Soapbox*, 11.7.2013)

He was speaking from a community centre in London where immigrants, women in particular, are taught English and other life skills to help them integrate into British culture. He also reported that the Census of 2011 found that about 770,000 people living in England speak little or no English. However, a 2017 report in the *Independent* newspaper said that migrants often faced a three-year wait for lessons owing to cuts in funding (*Independent* online 9.1.2017). A report by Demos, the cross-party think tank, listed many failings in the implementation of ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) (Demos, 2014). It criticised the ESOL policy in England and Wales for lack of clarity of purpose and for being too variable in its application because there was no centralisation of its

strategy. In other words, the policy was poorly implemented. In spite of the government's willingness to provide English classes for immigrants, the practical factor of funding can hinder actual realisation of this willingness. In an earlier statement in 2012, Eric Pickles made another point about the desirability of immigrants learning English: that, according to him, local authorities in 2006 had spent £100 million in providing translations into foreign languages of documents for the public, a situation that could presumably be alleviated by helping more immigrants to understand English (Demos, 2014).

More recently, similar opinions were expressed by Boris Johnson MP during his leadership campaign in 2019:

> 'I want everybody who comes here and makes their lives here to be, and to feel, British – that's the most important thing – and to learn English. And too often there are parts of our country, parts of London and other cities as well, where English is not spoken by some people as their first language and that needs to be changed. People need to be allowed to take part in the economy and in society in the way that that shared experience would allow.' (The Guardian online, 5.7.2019)

He was comparing the immigrant assimilation situation in provincial areas of the UK with that of London, which he used as a model for the rest of the country to follow: '… waves have come to London and slowly they have changed, they have adapted, they have made their lives, and they've helped to make our national culture and they've bought into it. And that's what I want for our country.'

In respect of host language learning, I am concerned about whether or not the free or inexpensive facilities, such as classes and online tuition, which my participants used are still available to immigrants who have little or no English. Searching the Web, I have found a wide range of courses for beginners available at the time of writing, some of which are free, and many are online courses. The British Council website lists hundreds of accredited language schools in the UK and also a much smaller list of free tuition facilities. Universities can provide free English courses. As an example, Nottingham Trent University offers free seven-month ESOL courses provided by supervised trainee language teachers (https://www.ntu.ac.uk).

Additionally, some local councils have begun to provide community-based free courses. In 2020 Robert Jenrick MP, the Minister of Housing, Communities and Local Government established a £6.5 million fund, giving the opportunity for 65 selected areas of England to provide English language classes which would take place in community centres and places of worship (using socially distanced

methods during the Covid pandemic). Jenrick said, 'We are committed to levelling up and uniting our country. And a successful, well integrated society requires everyone to be able to speak English.' (Government press release, 17.7.2020). As I have said, cuts in funding and poor organisation can prevent – and have prevented - ambitious policies to fail. However, according to information provided by the Ministry website and at least one local authority, this scheme, called *ESOL for Integration Fund* (EFIF), has already been implemented at the time of writing, so far with socially-distanced methods being used. 30 local authorities have actually started providing classes (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2020b). For example, a course provided by Tower Hamlets Council in London has the following criteria for entry:

> 'To join the programme participants will need to be:
>
> Living or studying in Tower Hamlets
>
> Have little or no English language skills who would most benefit from New to ESOL level (pre–entry to entry level one) support. Learners will be assessed to see if they are eligible for the pre-entry and entry level one programme.
>
> Not in employment and not actively seeking employment at this stage
>
> Adults over 19 years of age.' (towerhamlets.gov.uk)

They provide:

> '… 30 hours of free ESOL programme with fully qualified teachers. Learners get opportunities to practise new language skills and are provided with further social mixing activities. Support is also provided to progress onto further learning.' (towerhamlets.gov.uk)

This scheme is administered by the Ministry of Housing. The EFIF website states: 'This fund is for local authorities to enable individuals with little or no English language skills to fulfil their potential and increase their positive participation in their local area.' (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2020a). Their list of the 30 local authorities who have so far made use of the scheme at the time of writing contains eight authorities in the London area. The introduction to the EFIF prospectus states the aims of the scheme as follows:

> 'Britain is a diverse and inclusive country. We are committed to levelling up our country and strengthening communities to ensure everyone can progress, no matter what their background. This means empowering those who speak little or no English by boosting language skills and building confidence to unleash their potential, reduce isolation and ensure everyone can participate in their local community.' (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2020b)

It states that they have 'identified 65 areas that could most benefit from the fund by mapping the main factors that can affect integration for which we have the most reliable local area level data - lack of English language proficiency, economic inactivity and residential segregation' (p. 9). However,

the prospectus also says that 'The Department cannot support projects that are aimed at people currently seeking asylum in the UK.' (p. 10).

The method of teaching complies with the ESOL scheme. In addition to traditional classroom-based English language teaching, the Ministry expects social mixing activities to be provided, such as 'conversation clubs and language cafes.' to be undertaken by providers of the scheme as a means of avoiding too much formal learning and helping those who would otherwise be unable to socialise. This is reminiscent of the integrated informal holistic approach to language learning I described in Chapter Seven.

However, it will be noticed that these courses are available only to a very limited set of immigrants: the unemployed who are not seeking work and those who have already received permission to stay in the UK. Perhaps many who need it the most are being denied access to this essential skill.

My recommendation with regard to language teaching for immigrants is that they should have access to regular free or inexpensive classes, whether or not they are funded by the state, and that the system is properly organised and adequately supported financially. As the government has stated, it is recognised that English language tuition is an essential element in the integration of immigrant communities with the host society. However, it seems that it has finally begun to provide a limited number of free, community-based classes to immigrants – with the exception of asylum-seekers and those seeking employment - in areas of Britain which are considered to have the most need. The current COVID pandemic has impeded the provision of direct person-to-person teaching and, regardless of this, it is too soon at this stage to tell if the current scheme will have any success in helping refugees and other immigrants in their acculturation.

Trauma

The process of migration itself can by a harrowing experience, but it is clear that asylum seekers and refugees have experienced danger, or the threat of it, in one form or another; that is the main reason for fleeing their countries of birth. As Hanna, one of my participants explained, pre-migrational traumatic experiences can continue to affect them for years after arrival in the host country and this can hinder or prevent the acculturation process. For example, It can slow down language learning and the ability to obtain employment (Hormozi, 2018). She received treatment from a charitable organisation, The Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture (now known as Freedom from Torture), which can enable access to treatment for mental health problems

of those who have suffered from torture and maintain a database of torture and trauma related information which today can be publicly accessed from their website (hhri.org). However, this sort of information was not so easily obtained when Hanna arrived in Britain, and she was the only one of my participants who reported having received therapeutic treatment for trauma.

As is inherent in the reasons for forced migration, the women whom I have studied all suffered trauma in various degrees and they all showed a great amount of resilience and determination to succeed in their new lives in Britain, and this quality helped them to do this. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 8) of 1948 states, 'Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights granted him by the constitution or by law.' (https://www.hhri.org/thematic-pages-overview/torture/) This declaration implies that such remedies should be provided by the state, rather than relying upon charities. Today, mental health has been recognised as a more important aspect of health and treatment than it used to be and is more readily available than it was in the 1980s (Campbell, *et al.,* 2019). For example, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), often experienced by military service personnel and refugees, is now taken much more seriously than it was a few decades ago and is accepted as a condition that requires treatment by psychotherapy (ptsd.uk.org, 2021).

My recommendation in respect of treatment for the trauma suffered by refugees is that they all should be offered appropriate treatment if, on examination, PTSD is detected or reported. This provision of treatment could potentially be important because of the recent Taliban takeover in Afghanistan could cause another wave of forced migration.

My personal response to conducting this study

My personal involvement with the topics of this study, which I have previously mentioned, has been my main reason for undertaking it, and although I have, I hope, maintained an objective stance throughout, I cannot deny that it has been a cathartic and therapeutic experience. I understand and identify the emotions expressed by my participants because I have been through similar experiences myself, and the face-to-face interviews have allowed me to meet other Iranian women personally who have been through similar experiences as myself and have shared their emotions as they described their ordeals. However, I have also enjoyed the process of looking at their experiences with an academic rather than a personal approach, studying acculturation, education and forced

migration from a global perspective and learning about the various disciplines pertinent to my study, such as linguistic anthropology and acculturation theory, which have given me greater understanding and broadened my knowledge.

It has been a great sadness to me when I learn that the status of women in present-day Iran is no better – even worse, indeed – than it was before I left. Every day there is news of severe punishments applied to women who have peacefully protested or defended other women against injustice. I hope that in some small way, my thesis could have an effect upon the world view of Iran and help to improve the position of women in the country that I love.

REFERENCES

Abdelaaty, L. and Steele. L. G. (2022) 'Explaining Attitudes Toward Refugees and Immigrants in Europe', *Political Studies*, 70(1), pp. 110–130.

Abdi, S. and Makiabadi, H. (2019): 'Learning English Listening and Speaking through BBC VOA Podcasts: An App Review', *Teaching English with Technology,* 19(2), pp. 101-108.

Abu Ghazala, A. (1993) 'The Combat Tactics and Strategy of the Iran-Iraq War', *Small Wars Journal,* 4th December, 2012, available at: https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/ghazalah%E2%80%99s-phased-analysis-of-combat-operations-part-two-of-three

Adams, W. C. (2015) 'Conducting Semi-structured Interviews*',* in Newcomer, E. *et al* (eds.), *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation,* Hoboken NJ: Jossey-Bass.

Adamuti-Trache, M. (2013) 'Language Acquisition Among Adult Immigrants in Canada: The Effect of Premigration Language Capital', *Adult Education Quarterly*, 63(2).
doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/0741713612442804

Afshar, H. (1997) 'Women, Marriage and the State in Iran'*,* in Visvanathan, N. *et al.* (eds.) *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*, London: Zed Books Ltd.

Ahmed, S. (2000) 'Strange Encounters: Embodied Others in Post-Coloniality', Abingdon: Taylor and Francis Group.

Alavi, N. (Ed. and transl.) (2005) *We are Iran*, London: Portobello Books Ltd.

Alink, L. R. A. *et al.* (2006) 'The Early Childhood Aggression Curve: Development of Physical Aggression in 10- to 50-Month-Old Children', *Child Development*, 77(4), pp. 954 – 966.

Alvarez-Rivera, L. L., Nobles, M. R. and Lersch, K. M. (2014) 'Latino Immigrant Acculturation and Crime', *American Journal of Criminal Justice* June 2014, 39(2), pp. 315–330.

Anderson, K. T. (2007) 'Constructing "otherness": ideologies and differentiating speech style', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics,* 7(2), pp. 178-197.

Ansari, A. M. (2007) *Modern Iran*, 2nd edn., Harlow: Pearson Education.

Archer, L. (2008) 'Younger academics' constructions of "authenticity", "success" and professional identity', *Studies in Higher Education,* 33(4), pp. 385-403.

Ashbourne, L. M. *et al.* (2021) 'Arab Families' Stories of Migration from War Zones: Gender Roles and Family Relations in Flux', *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies,* 19(2), pp. 114-127.

Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. (2009) *Post-colonial Studies: the Key Concepts*, London, New York: Routledge.

Athanasopoulosa, P. and Albright, D. (2016) 'A Perceptual Learning Approach to the Whorfian Hypothesis: Supervised Classification of Motion', *Language Learning*, 66(3), pp. 666–689.

Auerbach, S. (2010) . '"A Right Sort of Man": Gender, Class Identity and Social Reform in Late Victorian Britain', *Journal of Policy History*, 22(1), (online edition).

Axworthy, M. (2008) *Iran: Empire of the Mind, a History from Zoroaster to the Present Day*, London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Bagihole, B. and Goode, J. (2001) 'The Contradiction of the Myth of Individual Merit, and the Reality of a Patriarchal Support System in Academic Careers', *The European Journal of Women's Studies,*8(2), pp. 161-180.

Bahramitash, R. and Hooglund, E. (2011) *Gender in Contemporary Iran: Pushing the Boundaries*, Abingdon: Routledge.

Baker, E. H., Rendall, M. S. and Weden, M. M. (2015): 'Epidemiological Paradox or Immigrant Vulnerability? Obesity Among Young Children of Immigrants', *Demography,* 52(4), pp. 1295-1320.

Bakker, L., Dagevos, J. and Engbersen, G. (2017) 'Explaining the refugee gap: a longitudinal study on labour market participation of refugees in the Netherlands', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43(11), pp .1775–1791

Bandura, A. (2012) 'On the Functional Properties of Perceived Self-Efficacy Revisited', *Journal of Management,* 38(1), pp. 9-44.

Baumberg, B. (2016) 'The stigma of claiming benefits: a quantitative study', *Journal of Social Policy*, 45(2).

Baumgardner, R. J. and Brown, K. (2012) 'English in Iranian Magazine Advertising', *World Englishes,* 31(3), pp. 292–311.

Bayat, A. (1997) *February. Street Politics: Poor People's Movements in Iran*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Beckley, A. L. (2015) 'Deterrence Versus Marginalization: Evidence from Immigrant Offending', *Race and Justice*, 5(3), pp. 278–300.

Begum, R. (2019): 'Iranian Women Rebel Against the Dress Code', *Human Rights Watch,* available at: https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/06/iranian-women-rebel-against-dress-code#

BERA (2018) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research,* 4th edn., London: British Educational Research Association.

Berenbaum, S. A. and Beltz, A. M. (2011) 'Sexual Differentiation of Human Behavior: Effects of prenatal and pubertal organizational hormones', *Frontiers in Neuroendocrinology*, 32(), pp. 183-200.

Berg, B. L. and Lune, H. (2014) *Qualitative Research methods for the Social Sciences*, Harlow: Pearson Education UK (e-book).

Berlin, B. and Kay, P. (1969) *Basic Color Terms: Their Universality and Evolution,* Berkeley: University of California Press.

Berry, J. W. (1999) 'Intercultural Relations in Plural Societies: Research Derived from Canadian Multiculturalism Policy', *Canadian Psychology/Psychologie Canadienne*, 40(1), pp. 12-21.

Berry, J. W. (2005) 'Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 2005(29), pp. 697–712.

Berry, J. W. (2013): *Acculturation Theory*, *Encyclopaedia of Management Theory*, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Berry, J. W. and Ward, C. (2006) 'Commentary on "Redefining Interactions Across Cultures and Organizations"', *Group and Organization Management*, 31(1), pp. 64-77.

Betts, A. (2013) *Survival Migration: Failed Governance and the Crisis of Displacement*, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Birney, M. E. (2014) 'An Investigation into how Non-native Language Patterns Shape the Relationship Between Immigrants and Host Country Natives', PhD thesis, University of Exeter.

Bloch, A. (1999) 'Refugees in the job market: A case of unused skills in the British economy', in Bloch, A. and Levy, C. (Eds.), *Refugees, Citizenship and Social Policy in Britain and Europe*, Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Bloch, A. (2002) 'Refugees' Opportunities and Barriers to Training and Employment', *DWP Research Report* , No. 179, January 2002.

Bochner, S. (2003) 'Culture Shock Due to Contact with Unfamiliar Cultures', *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture,* Article 7, Unit 8: *Migration and Acculturation,* Subunit 1: *Acculturation and Adapting to Other Cultures,* International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology, pp. 1-13.

Bonnycastle, M. M. (2017) 'What they bring to the new land: Stories of Colombian refugee women in Canada', *International Social Work,* 60(3), pp. 654-666.

Borjian, M. (2013) *English in Post-Revolutionary Iran: from Indigenization to Internationalization*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters / Channel View Publications.

Boroditsky, L. (2001) 'Does Language Shape Thought?: Mandarin and English Speakers' Conceptions of Time', *Cognitive Psychology*, 43, pp.1-22.

Brada, B. B. (2013) 'How to do things to children with words: Language, ritual, and apocalypse in pediatric HIV treatment in Botswana', *American Ethnologist,* 40(3), pp. 437-451.

Bradley, H. (2013) *Gender*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Brah, A. (1996) *Cartographies of Diapora: Contesting identities*, London: Routledge.

Brinkmann, S. (2012) *Qualitative Interviewing*, Oxford: OUP.

Brooks, R., te Riele, K. and Maguire, M. (2014) *Ethics and Education Research,* London: Sage Publications.

Bronstein, I. (2012) 'PTSD in Asylum-Seeking Male Adolescents From Afghanistan', *Journal of Traumatic Stress,* 25, pp. 551–557.

Brunel University (2016) *Research Integrity Code of Practice 2016*, London: Brunel University.

Buchan, J. (2012) *Days of God: The Revolution in Iran and its Consequences*, London: John Murray.

Bucholtz, M. and Hall, K. (2004): 'Language and Identity'*,* in Duranti, A. (2004), *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.

Burnett, A. and Peel, M. (2001) 'Health needs of asylum seekers and refugees', *BMJ,* 322(March, 2001), pp. 544-547.

Burr, V. (1995) *An introduction to Social Constructivism,* London: Routledge.

Burscher, B., van Spanje, J. and de Vreese, C. (2015) 'Owning the issues of crime and immigration: The relation between immigration and crime news and anti-immigrant voting in 11 countries', *Electoral Studies*, 38(6), pp.59-69.

Bylund, E. and Athanasopoulos, P. (2014) 'Linguistic Relativity in SLA: Towards a New Research Program', *Language Learning,* 64(4), pp. 952-985.

Cameron, R. and Harrison, J. L. (2012) 'The interrelatedness of formal, non-formal and informal learning: Evidence from labour market program participants', *Australian Journal of Adult Learning*, 52(2), pp. 277-309.

Campbell, J. *et al.* (2019) 'Community treatment orders and mental health social work: Issues for policy and practice in the UK and Ireland', *International Journal of Law and Psychiatry*, (64), pp. 230-237.

Campion, E. D. (2017) 'The career adaptive refugee: Exploring the structural and personal barriers to refugee resettlement', *Journal of Vocational Behavior,* 105 (April, 2018), pp. 6-16.

Capetillo-Ponce, J. and Abreu-Rodriguez, G. (2010) 'Immigration, Ethnicity, and Marginalization: The Maya K'iche of New Bedford', *Trotter Review,* 19(1), pp 59-80.

Carey-Wood, J. (1997) *Meeting Refugee Needs in Britain: The Role of Refugee Specific Initiatives*, London: HMSO.

Casasanto, D. (2008) 'Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Whorf? Crosslinguistic Differences in Temporal Language and Thought', *Language Learning,* (58) pp. 63-79.

Castro, J., and Rudmin, F. W. (2017) 'Acculturation, Acculturative Change, and Assimilation: Research Bibliography', *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 8(1), doi: https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1075

Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights (2019) Report: 'Beyond the Veil: Discrimination against women in Iran'*, Ceasefire Centre for Civilian Rights, Centre for Supporters of Human Rights and Minority Rights Group International*, September 2019, available at: https://www.ceasefire.org/

Chen, Z., Fiske, S. T. and Lee, T. L. (2009) 'Ambivalent Sexism and Power-Related Gender-role Ideology in Marriage', *Sex Roles,* 2009(60), pp. 765 – 778.

Cheung, S. Y. and Phillmore, J. (2014) 'Refugees, Social Capital, and Labour Market Integration in the UK', *Sociology,* 48(3), pp. 518-536.

Chiswick, B. and Miller, P. W. (2003) 'The complementarity of language and other human capital: immigrant earnings in Canada', *Economics of Education Review*, 22 (2003), pp. 469-480.

Choksy, J. K. (2012) 'Non-Muslim religious Minorities in Contemporary Iran', *Iran and the Caucasus,* 16(3), pp. 271-299.

Chubin, F. (2014) 'When my virtue defends your borders: Political justification of nation and order through the rhetorical production of womanhood in the 1979 Islamic Revolution of Iran', *Women's Studies International Forum*, (42), pp. 44-55.

Clare, M. *et al.* (2014): '"You Keep Yourself Strong": A Discourse Analysis of African Women Asylum Seekers' Talk about Emotion', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 15(1), pp. 83-95.

Colman, A. M. (Ed.) (2015) *A Dictionary of Psychology* (0nline version)*,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cook, J. M. (1983) *The Persians*, London: The Folio Society (Orion).

Cook, V., *et al.* (2006): Do bilinguals have different concepts? The case of shape and material in Japanese L2 users of English, *International Journal of Bilingualism,* 10(2), pp. 137-152.

Coupland, M. and Jaworsky, A. (1997) *Sociolinguistics: a Reader and Coursebook,* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Crapanzano, V. 2003. *Imaginative horizons: an essay in literary-philosophical anthropology*. Chicago: University Press.

Crossley, M. Arthur, L. and McNess, E. (2016) *Revisiting Insider-Outsider Research in Comparative and International Education,* Oxford: Symposium Books.

Crotty, M. (1998) *The Foundations of Social Research,* London: Sage Publications.

Darvishpour, M. (1999) 'Intensified gender conflicts within Iranian families in Sweden', *Nordic Journal of Women's Studies*, 7(1), pp. 20-33.

Datta, K. (2012) *Migrants and their Money: Surviving Financial Exclusion*, Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Davari, H. and Aghagolzadeh, F. (2015) 'To teach or not to teach: Still an open question for the Iranian education system' in Kennedy, C. (ed.) *English Language Teaching in the Islamic republic of Iran: Innovations, Trends and Challenges*, London: The British Council.

David, M. *et al.* (2018): 'Obstetric care quality indicators and outcomes based on the degree of acculturation of immigrants—results from a cross-sectional study in Berlin', *Archives of Gynaecology and Obstetrics*, 297(2), pp 313–322.

Davison, A. (2013) *From the Medes to the Mullahs: A History of Iran*, London: Penguin Books Ltd.

de Groot, J. (2010) 'Feminism in Another Language: Learning from "Feminist" Histories of Iran and/or from Histories of Iranian "Feminism" since 1830', *Women: a cultural review*, 21(3), pp.251-265.

Demos (2014) *On Speaking Terms: Making ESOL policy work better for migrants and wider society,* London: Demos, available at https://www.demos.co.uk/files/On_speaking_termsweb.pdf?1408395571)

Diskin, C. and Regan, V. (2017) 'The attitudes of recently-arrived Polish immigrants to Irish English', *World Englishes,* doi: 10.1111/weng.12253, pp. 191-207.

Dowling, J. A., Ellison, C. G. and Leal, D. L. (2012) 'Who Doesn't Value English? Debunking Myths About Mexican Immigrants' Attitudes Toward the English Language', *Social Science Quarterly,* 93(2) pp. 356-378.

Drummond Johansen, J. and Varvin, S. (2020) 'Negotiating identity at the intersection of family legacy and present time life conditions: A qualitative exploration of central issues connected to identity and belonging in the lives of children of refugees', *Journal of Adolescence*, Vol. 80, pp. 1-9,

Duderija, A. (2015) 'Toward a Scriptural Hermeneutics of Islamic Feminism', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* , 31(2), pp. 45-64.

Duranti, A. (1997) *Linguistic Anthropology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dustmann, C. and van Soest, A. (2002) 'Language and the Earnings of Immigrants', *Industrial and Labor Relations Review,* 55(3), pp. 473-492.

Ebadi, S. (2006) *Iran Awakening: from Prison to Peace Prize: One Woman's Struggle at the Crossroads of History*, New York: Random House; London: Rider.

Echterhoff, G. *et al.* (2003) 'Psychological Antecedents of Refugee Integration (PARI)', *Perspectives on Psychological Science',* (unedited manuscript).

Elliot, M., Fairweather, I., Olsen, W. and Pampaka, M. (2016) *A Dictionary of Social Research Methods*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Emami, A., *et al.* (2000) 'An Ethnographic Study of a Day Care Center for Iranian Immigrant Seniors', *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 2292), pp. 169-188.

Farley, R. and Alba, R. (2002) 'The New Second Generation in the United States', *International Migration Review*, 36(3) , pp. 669-701.

Fathi, M. (2015) 'I make here my soil. I make here my country', *Political Psychology,* 36(2), pp. 151-164.

Fay, M. A. (2008) 'Early Twentieth-Century Middle Eastern Feminisms, Nationalisms and Transnationalisms', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 4(1), pp. 1-5.

Fellin, L. (2014) 'The Italian New Wave: Identity work and socialization practices in a community of new Italian immigrants in America', *Forum Italicum* , 48(2), pp. 292–310.

Fenn, R. (1986) 'Magic in Language and Ritual: Notes on Augustine's "Confessions"', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 25(1), pp. 77-91.

Fennema, E. and Carpenter, T. P. (1997) 'New Perspectives on Gender Differences in Mathematics: an Introduction', *Educational Researcher,* 27(5), pp. 4-21.

Fenton, S. and Mann, R. (2011) 'Our Own People', in Modood, T. and Salt, J. (Eds.) *Global Migration, Ethnicity and Britishness*, Online version, New York: Springer Nature.

Ferree, M. M. and Tripp, A. M. (Eds.) (2005): *Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights,* New York: New York University Press.

Feuer, A. (2009) 'School's out for the summer: a cross-cultural comparison of second language learning in informal settings', *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism,* 12(6), pp. 651-665.

Finlay, L. (2008) A Dance Between the Reduction and Reflexivity: Explicating the "Phenomenological Psychological Attitude"', *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology,* 39(2008), pp. 1–32.

Finlay, L. (2011) *Phenomenology for Therapists: Researching the Lived World,* Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley and Sons.

Fisher, S. (2005) 'Geographical Moves and Psychological Adjustment', in Tilburg, M. A. L. and Vingerhoets, A. J. J. M.,(Eds.) *Psychological Aspects of Geographical Moves,* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Flick, U. (2007): Preface to Kvale, S., *Doing Interviews*, London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Foltz, R .(2011) 'Zoroastrians in Iran: What Future in the Homeland?' *Middle East Journal*, 65(1), pp. 73-84

Foster, C. (2012) *Genuine Multiculturalism: The Tragedy and Comedy of Diversity,* MQUP Online e-book, available at https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/brunelu/reader.action?docID=3332679

Fuentes-Afflick, E., *et al.* (2014) 'Maternal Acculturation and the Prenatal Care Experience', *Journal of Women's Health*, 23(8), pp. 608-706.

Fuertes, J. N., Potere. J. C. and Ramirez, K. Y. (2002) 'Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority', *Psychology*, 8(4), pp. 346–356.

Gal, S. (2001) 'Language, Gender, and Power: An Anthropological Review', in Duranti (Ed.), *Linguistic Anthropology, a Reader,* Oxford: Blackwell.

Gattrell, C. and Swan, E. (2008) *Gender and Diversity in Management: a Concise Introduction,* London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Geertz, C. (1973) *The Interpretation of Cultures,* New York: Basic Books.

Gericke, D., *et al.* (2018) 'How do refugees use their social capital for successful labor market integration? An exploratory analysis in Germany', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, vol. 105, pp. 46-61.

Ghaffarian, S. (1998) 'The Acculturation of Iranian Immigrants in the United States and the Implications for Mental Health', *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 138(5), pp. 645-654.

Ghender, F. (2016) 'Multiculturalism and the European Cultural Diversity', *Journal of Humanistic and Social Studies*, 7(1), pp. 157-168.

Ghorashi, H. and Tavakoli, N. (2006) 'Paradoxes of transnational space and local activism: Iranians organizing across borders,, *Focaal—European Journal of Anthropology,* 47 (), pp. 90-102.

Ghorashi, H. and Boersma, K. (2009) 'The "Iranian Diaspora" and the New Media: From Political Action to Humanitarian Help, *Development and Change*, 40(4), pp. 667-691.

Goettner-Abendroth, H. (2018) 'Re-thinking 'Matriarchy' in Modern Matriarchal Studies using two examples: The Khasi and the Mosuo', *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, 24(1), pp. 3–27.

Goodenough, W. (1964) 'Cultural Anthropology and Linguistics', in Hymes, D. (Ed.): *Language in Culture and Society: a reader in linguistics and anthropology,* New York: Harper and Row.

Gregson, N. and Lowe, M. (1993) .'Renegotiating the domestic division of labour? A study of dual career households in north east and south east England', *The Sociological Review* (Keele), 41(3), pp. 475-505.

Griffin, G. (2017) *A Dictionary of Gender Studies* (online edition), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Guarnaccia, P. J. and Hausmann-Stabile, C. (2016) 'Acculturation and Its Discontents: A Case for Bringing Anthropology Back into the Conversation', *Sociol Anthropol (Alhambra*). 4(2): pp.114–124.

Gullestad, M. (2002) 'Invisible Fences: Egalitarianism, Nationalism and Racism', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 8(1), pp. 45-63.

Habib, M. *et al.* (2014) *Research Methodology - Contemporary Practices : Guidelines for Academic Researchers*, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholera Publishing. e-book, available at: frhttps://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/brunelu/detail.action?docID=1819209).

Haghighat, E. (2014) 'Iran's Changing Gender Dynamics in Light of Demographic, Political, and Technological Transformations', *Middle East Critique*, 23(3), pp. 313-332.

Hakimzadeh, S. (2006) 'Iran: A Vast Diaspora Abroad and Millions of Refugees at Home, *Migration Information Source*, available at: https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/iran-vast-diaspora-abroad-and-millions-refugees-home.

Hall, S. (2017) *The Fateful Triangle: Race, Ethnicity, Nation:* Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press.

Halldenius, L. (2015) *Mary Wollstonecraft and Feminist Republicanism : Independence, Rights and the Experience of Unfreedom*, London: Pickering and Chatto.

Halliday, M. (1997) 'Language in a Social Perspective', in Coupland, N. and Jaworski, A. (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: A Reader and Coursebook*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Hamdhaidari, S. (2008) 'Education During the Reign of the Pahlavi Dynasty in Iran (1941-1979)', *Teaching in Higher Education,* 13(1), pp. 17-28.

Hammersley, M. and Traianou, A. (2012) *Ethics in Qualitative Research: controversies and contexts,* London, Sage Publications.

Han, H. (2009) 'Institutionalised Inclusion: A Case Study on Support for Immigrants in English Learning', *Tesol Quarterly,* 43(4), pp. 643-668.

Harris, C., *et al.* (2016): 'Attitudes towards the "stranger": negotiating encounters with difference in the UK and Poland', *Social and Cultural Geography,* October 2016, pp. 1-24.

Hartmann, J. (2016) 'Do second-generation Turkish migrants in Germany assimilate into the middle class?' *Ethnicities*, 16(3), pp. 368-392.

Hatton, T. J. (2003) 'Explaining Trends in UK Immigration', *Working Papers in Economics and Econometrics* (Australian National University), No. 440.

Hauck, F. R., *et al.* (2014) 'Factors Influencing the Acculturation of Burmese, Bhutanese, and Iraqi Refugees Into American Society', *Cross-Cultural Comparisons, Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 12(3), pp.331-352.

Hojat, M., *et al.* (2000) 'Gender Differences in Traditional Attitudes Towards Marriage and the Family: An Empirical Study of Iranian Immigrants in the United States', *Journal of Family Issues*, 21(4), pp. 419-434.

Hopkins, R. M., Regehr, G. and Pratt, D. D. (2017) 'A Framework for Negotiating Positionality in Phenomenological Research', *Medical Teacher,* 39(1), pp. 20-25.

Hormozi, T., Miller. M. M. and Banford, A. (2018) First-Generation Iranian Refugees' Acculturation in the United States: A Focus on Resilience, *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 2018, 40: pp 276 – 283.

Howatt, A. P. R. and Smith, R. (2014) 'The History of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, from a British and European Perspective', *Language and History*, 57(11), pp. 75-95.

Hoxhaj, R. and Zuccotti, C. V. (2020) 'The complex relationship between immigrants' concentration, socioeconomic environment and attitudes towards immigrants in Europe', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*,

March, 2020, doi: https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2020.1730926

Hung Ng, S. (2007) 'From Language Acculturation to Communication Acculturation Addressee Orientations and Communication Brokering in Conversations', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 26(1), pp. 75-90.

Huot, S., *et al.*(2016) ' Constructing undesirables: A critical discourse analysis of "othering" within the Protecting Canada's Immigration System Act, *International Migration,* 54 (2), pp. 133-143.

Iman, M. T. (2008) 'Acculturation of Iranian Migrants in Australia', *Sociation Today,* 6(1).

Israel, M. (2015) *Research Ethics and Integrity for Social Scientists : Beyond Regulatory Compliance* 2nd edn., London: Sage Publications.

James, P., Iyer, A. and Webb, T. L. (2019) 'The impact of post-migration stressors on refugees' emotional distress and health: A longitudinal analysis', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, issue 49, pp. 1359-1367.

James, S. S. (2011) 'Vietnamese Londoners: Transnational Identities Through Community Networks', MPhil thesis, Goldsmith's College, London.

Jiang, M., *et al.* (2009) 'Acculturation in relation to the acquisition of a second language', *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 30(6), pp. 481-492.

Jones, R. (2011) 'Border security, 9/11 and the enclosure of civilisation', *The Geographic Journal,* 177(3), pp. 213-217.

Jun, M. (2019) 'Stigma and shame attached to claiming social assistance benefits: understanding the detrimental impact on UK lone mothers' social relationships', *Journal of Family Studies,* 28(1), pp. 199-215.

Kandioti, D. (1997) 'Bargaining with Patriarchy'*,* in Visvanathan, N., (eds.), *The Women, Gender and Development Reader*, London: Zed Books Ltd.

Kao, G. and Tienda, M. (1995) 'Optimism and Achievement: The Educational Performance of Immigrant Youth', *Social Science Quarterly,* 76(1), pp. 1-19.

Karami, R. (2020) 'Mr. Hashemi and Family Dynamics in Iran', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 21(1), pp. 386-398.

Kardell, J. and Martens, P. L. (2013) 'Are Children of Immigrants Born in Sweden More Law-abiding than Immigrants? A Reconsideration', *Race and Justice,* 3(3), pp. 167-189.

Katouzian, H. (1989) 'The Political Economy of Iran Since the Revolution: A Macro-Historical Analysis', *Comparative Economic Studies,* 31(3), pp. 55-66.

Kayaalp, D. (2015) 'Living with an accent: a sociological analysis of linguistic strategies of immigrant youth in Canada', *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19(2), pp. 133-148.

Kelly, J. R. (2016) 'Applying Acculturation Theory and Power Elite Theory on a Social Problem: Political Underrepresentation of the Hispanic Population in Texas', *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, 38(2) pp. 155–165.

Kennedy, C. (Ed.) (2015) *English language teaching in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Innovations, trends and challenges*, London: British Council.

Khan, S. C. (2016) 'Multiplicities of Insiderness and Outsiderness: enriching research perspectives in Pakistan', in Crossley, M., Arthur, L. and McNess, E. (Eds.), *Revisiting Insider-Outsider Research in Comparative and International Education,* Oxford: Symposium Books.

Kim, S. Y., *et al.* (2011) 'Accent, Perpetual Foreigner Stereotype, and Perceived Discrimination as Indirect Links between English Proficiency and Depressive Symptoms in Chinese American Adolescents', *Dev Psychol,* 47(1), pp. 289–301.

Knight, G.P., *et al.* (2009) 'Acculturation and Enculturation Trajectories Among Mexican-American Adolescent Offenders', *J Res Adolesc*., 19(4) pp. 625–653.

Kriwaczek, P. (2002), *In Search of Zarathustra: The First Prophet and the Ideas that Changed the World*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

Kulick, D. and Schieffelin, B. B. (2004) 'Language Socialization', in Duranti, A. (Ed.), *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology,* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Kushner, T. (2003) 'Meaning nothing but good: ethics, history and asylum-seeker phobia in Britain', *Patterns of Prejudice,* 37(3), pp. 257-276.

Kvale, S. (2007) *Doing Interviews*, London, Sage Productions Ltd.

Kwon, R., Mahutga, M. C., Admire, A. (2017) 'Promoting Patriarchy or Dual Equality? Multiculturalism and the Immigrant Household Division of Labor', *The Sociological Quarterly,* Vol. 58, No. 3, pp. 373-404.

LaFromboise, T., Coleman, H. L. K., and Gerton, J. (1993) 'Psychological Impact of Biculturalism: Evidence and Theory', *Psychological Bulletin*, 114(3), 395-412.

Laurijssen, I. and Glorieux, I. (2014) 'Early career occupational mobility of Turkish and Moroccan second-generation migrants in Flanders, Belgium', *Journal of Youth Studies,* 18(1), pp. 101-117.

Lavalette, M. and Penketh, L. (2013) *Race, Racism and Social Work: Contemporary Issues and Debates*, Bristol: Bristol University Press.

Lemus-Way, M. C. and Johanssen, H. (2020) 'Strengths and Resilience of Migrant Women in Transit: an Analysis of the Narratives of Central American Women in Irregular Transit Through Mexico Towards the USA', *Journal of International Migration and Integration,* 2020(21), pp. 745–763.

Lewin, F. A. (2001) 'Identity Crisis and Integration: The Divergent Attitudes of Iranian Men and Women towards Immigration', *International Migration*, 39(3) , pp. 121-135.

Lippi-Green, R. (2012) *English with an Accent: language, ideology, and discrimination in the United States*, Abingdon: Routledge.

Liversage, A. (2009a) 'Life below a "Language Threshold"? Stories of Turkish Marriage Migrant Women in Denmark', *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 16(3), pp 229-247.

Liversage, A. (2009b) 'Vital conjunctures, shifting horizons: high-skilled female immigrants looking for work', *Work, Employment and Society,* 23(1), pp. 120-141.

Liversage, A. (2021) 'Having the Lower Hand – Investigating Interaction in the Life Course Narratives of Immigrant Women Exposed to Partner Abuse', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence,* 1(23), pp. 1-23.

Lou, Y., Neff, L. A. and Kim, S. Y. (2018) 'Language Acculturation, Acculturation-Related Stress, and Marital Quality in Chinese American Couples', *Journal of Marriage and Family,* 80 (April, 2018), pp. 555-568.

Lucy, J. A. and Shweder, R. A. (1979) 'Whorf and His Critics: Linguistic and Nonlinguistic Influences on Color Memory', *American Anthropologist, New Series,* 81(3), pp. 581-615.

McAndrew, F. T. (2009) 'The interacting role of testosterone and challenges to status in human male aggression', *Aggression and Violent Behavior,* vol. 14, pp. 330–335.

McAuliffe, C. (2008) 'Transnationalism Within: internal diversity in the Iranian diaspora', *Australian Geographer*, 39(1), pp. 63-80.

McCall, L. (2005) 'The Complexity of Intersectionality', *Signs*, 30(3), pp. 1771-1800.

McDonald, L. Z. (2008) 'Islamic Feminism', book review in *Feminist Theory*, 9(3), pp. 347-354.

McFarland, D. (Ed.) (2014) *A Dictionary of Animal Behaviour*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Mcintosh, M. J. and Morse, J. M. (2015) 'Situating and Constructing Diversity in Semi-structured Interviews', *Global Qualitative Nursing Research,* 2015(2), doi: https://doi.org/10.1177/2333393615597674

McMichael, C. and Manderson, L. (2004) 'Somali Women and Well-Being: Social Networks and Social Capital among Immigrant Women in Australia', *Human Organization*, 63(1), pp. 88-99.

Mahdavi, P. (2009) '"But What If Someone Sees Me?" Women, Risk, and the Aftershocks of Iran's Sexual Revolution', *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 5(2), pp. 1-22.

Marsick, V. J. (2009) 'Toward a unifying framework to support informal learning theory, research and practice', *Journal of Workplace Learning,* 21(4), pp. 265-275.

Mayhew, S. (Ed.) (2015) *A Dictionary of Geography,* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maynard, M. (1994) 'Methods, practice and epistemology: The debate about feminism and research', in *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective,* Maynard, M. and Purvis, J. (eds.), London: Taylor and Francis.

Mahfar, H. (2011) 'The Homeless Mutes: the Psychological Exile of Persian Women under the Patriarchy' (PhD thesis), *Pacifica Graduate Institute*, ProQuest LLC (2015).

Mehdizadeh, N. (2012) 'Beyond cultural stereotypes: Educated mothers' experiences of work and welfare in Iran', *Critical Social Policy,* 33(2), pp. 243-265.

Mehran, G. (1999) 'Lifelong Learning: New opportunities for women in a Muslim country (Iran)', *Comparative Education,* 35(2), pp. 201-215.

Mehregan, A. (2016) 'Islamo-Arabic Culture and Women's Law: An Introduction to the Sociology of Women's Law in Islam', *International Justice Semiotic Law,* 2016(29), pp. 405-424.

Merton, R. K. (1972) 'Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge', *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(1), pp. 9-47.

Mezirow, J. (1994) 'Understanding Transformation Theory', *Adult Education Quarterly*, 44(4), pp. 222-232.

Milani, S. (2016) 'Situation of the Baha'i Minority in Iran and the Existing Legal Framework', *Journal of International Affairs,* March 2016, available at: https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/situation-bahai-minority-iran-existing-legal-framework

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2020a) *ESOL English for Speakers of Other Languages for Integration Fund Prospectus*, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esol-english-for-speakers-of-other-languages-for-integration-fund-prospectus

Ministry of Housing and Local Government (2020b): *ESOL for Integration Fund prospectus*, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/esol-english-for-speakers-of-other-languages-for-integration-fund-prospectus#

Mirhosseini, S-A. and Badri, N. (2018) 'Perspectives of Iranian University Students on Learning English: A Practical Need and/or an International Policy-push?', *Changing English*, 25(3), pp. 286-299.

Mirhosseini, S-A., Sazvar, A. and Rashed, F. (2017) '"I love foreigners' attitudes towards life": Reproducing lifestyles in an Iranian English language teaching context', *Compare*, 47(5), pp. 756–772.

Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2011): 'Beyond "Islam vs Feminism"', *Institute of Development Studies Bulletin,* 40(1), pp. 67-77.

Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2015) 'What is Islamic Feminism?', (video lecture for the CILE Centre: Research Centre for Islamic Legislation and Ethics at the University of Oxford, June 2015), available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fzf2D43wcTc

Mitchell, C., Del Fabbro, L. and Shaw, J. (2017) 'The acculturation, language and learning experiences of international nursing students: Implications for nursing education', *Nurse Education Today, 56* (2017), pp. 16-22.

Mithun, M. (2004) 'The value of Linguistic Diversity: Viewing other worlds through North American languages', in Duranti, A. (Ed.), *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Modood, T. and Salt, J. (Eds.) (2011): *Global Migration, Ethnicity and Britishness*, London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Modood, T. (2007) *Multiculturalism: A Civic Idea*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

Moghadam, M. (2002) 'Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents: Toward a Resolution of the Debate' *Signs*, 27(4), pp. 1135-1171.

Moghadam, M. M., and Murray. N. (2019) 'English Language Teaching in Iran: A Case of Shifting Sands, Ambiguity, and Incoherent Policy and Practice', *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language*, 7(1), pp. 96-105.

Moghadam, Z. B., *et al.* (2017) 'Motherhood challenges and well-being along with the studentship role among Iranian women: A qualitative study', *International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being,* vol. 12, pp. 1-12.

Moghissi, H. (1991) 'Women, Modernization and Revolution in Iran', *Review of Radical Political Economics,* 23 (3 and 4), pp. 205-223.

Moghissi, H. (1999) Away from home: Iranian women, displacement cultural resistance and change. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 30(2), pp.207–217.

Moghissi, H. (2008) 'Islamic Cultural Nationalism and Gender Politics on Iran', *Third World Quarterly* 29(3), pp. 541-554.

Mohammadi, M. (2007) 'Iranian Women and the Civil Rights Movement in Iran: Feminism Interacted', *Journal of International Women's Studies,* 9(1), pp. 1-21.

Mojab, S. (2001) 'Theorizing the Politics of "Islamic Feminism"', *Feminist Review*, *No. 69*, *The Realm of the Possible: Middle Eastern Women in Political and Social Spaces*, Winter 2001, pp. 124-146.

Morrice, L. (2007) 'Lifelong learning and the social integration of refugees in the UK: the significance of social capital', *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 26(2), pp. 155-172.

Mouri, L. and Batmanghelichi, K. S. (2015) *Can the Secular Iranian Women's Activist Speak? Caught between Political Power and the 'Islamic Feminist'*, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.

Moustakas, C. E. (1994) *Phenomenological Research Methods,* Thousand Oaks: Sage Productions Inc.

Moztarzadeh, A. and O'Rourke, N. (2015) 'Psychological and Sociocultural Adaptation: Acculturation, Depressive Symptoms, and Life Satisfaction Among Older Iranian Immigrants in Canada', *Clinical Gerontologist*, 38(), pp.114–130.

Muirhead, P. (2009) 'Rethinking Culture: Toward a Pedagogy of Possibility In World Language Education', *Critical Inquiry in Language Studies*, 6(4), pp. 243-268.

Najmabadi, A. (1993) 'Veiled Discourse - Unveiled Bodies', *Feminist Studies*, 19(3) (*Who's East?*), pp. 487- 518.

Najmabadi, A. (2005) *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity,* Oakland: University of California Press.

Nasehi, V. (1994) ('Iranian women and the family abroad'). *Avaje zan*, cited in Ahmadi, F. (2002) 'Identity Crisis and Integration: The Divergent Attitudes of Iranian Immigrant Men and Women towards Integration into Swedish Society', *International Migration,* 39(30, pp. 121-135.

Naseri, S. (2018) 'A Study on Cultural Capital and High-Risk Behaviors of College Students in Iran', *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences,* 9(2), pp. 185-193.

Nasirpour, S. (2016) 'Iranian Women and the Politics of Diasporic Websites in the Digital Age', *Anthropology of the Middle East,* 11(2), pp. 76-90.

Nasrabadi, M. (2014) '"Women Can Do Anything Men Can Do": Gender and the Effects of Solidarity in the U.S. Iranian Student Movement, 1961–1979', *Women's Studies Quarterly*,42(3-4), pp. 127-145.

NBC News (2022) *Iran plotted to kidnap or kill at least 10 people in the UK, British domestic spy chief says …* , 16th November 2022, available at: https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/iran-plotted-kidnap-kill-people-uk-british-spy-chief-says-rcna57572

Nilson, C. (2017) 'A Journey Toward Cultural Competence: The Role of Researcher Reflexivity in Indigenous Research', *Journal of Transcultural Nursing* 28(2), pp. 119–127.

Nilsson, M. (2018) 'Causal beliefs and war termination: Religion and rational choice in the Iran–Iraq War', *Journal of Peace Research,* 55(1) pp. 94-106.

Oakley, A. (2000) *Experiments in Knowing: Gender and Method in the Social Sciences,* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Oakley, A. (2005) *An Ann Oakley Reader*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

Okin, S. M. (Ed.) (1999): *Is Multiculturalism bad for women?*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Ossipow, L., Counilh, A.-L. and Chimienti, M. (2019) 'Racialization in Switzerland: experiences of children of refugees from Kurdish, Tamil and Vietnamese backgrounds', *Comparative Migration Studies*, 7(19), pp. 1-17.

Pannia, P. (2021) 'Tightening Asylum and Migration Law and Narrowing the Access to European Countries: A Comparative Discussion', in Federico, V. and Baglioni, S. (Eds.) *Migrants, Refugees and Asylum Seekers' Integration in European Labour Markets: A Comparative Approach in Legal barriers and Enablers,* New York: Springer (IMISCOE Research Series).

Pedersen, M.A. (2020) 'Anthropological epochés: phenomenology and the ontological turn', *Philosophy of the Social Sciences,* 50(6), pp. 610-46.

Pessin, L. and Arpino, B. (2018) 'Navigating between two cultures: Immigrants' gender attitudes toward working women', *Demographic Research*, 38(35), pp. 967–1016.

Philips, D. (2006) 'Moving Towards Integration: The Housing of Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Britain', *Housing Studies*, 21(4), pp. 539-553.

Pinget, A-F., *et al.* (2014) 'Native speakers' perceptions of fluency and accent in L2 speech', *Language Testing*, 31(3), pp. 349-365.

Pinker, S. (1994) *The Language Instinct: How the mind creates language*, New York: Harper.

Planel, C. (2016) 'Mind the Gap: reflections on boundaries and positioning in research in international and comparative education', in Crossley, M. Arthur, L. and McNess, E. *Revisiting Insider-Outsider Research in Comparative and International Education,* Oxford: Symposium Books.

Poynter, S. and Mason, V. (2007) 'The resistible rise of Islamophobia: Anti-Muslim racism in the UK and Australia before 11 September 2001', *Journal of Sociology*, 43(1), pp. 61–86.

Rafique, S. and Butt, K. M. (2017) 'Position of Women in Iran: An Analysis of Pre and Post Islamic Revolution 1979', *South Asian Studies, A Research Journal of South Asian Studies* 32(2), pp.431-439.

Rashidian, M., Hussain, R. and Minichielloa, V. (2013) '"My culture haunts me no matter where I go": Iranian-American women discussing sexual and acculturation experiences', *Culture, Health and Sexuality,* 15(70), pp. 866–877.

Redfield, R., Linton, R. and Herskovits, M. (1936) 'Memorandum on the study of acculturation', *American Anthropologist*, 38(), pp. 149–152.

Reid, I. (2008) 'The Persistence of the Internal Labour Market in Changing Circumstances: The British Film Production Industry During and After the Closed Shop', *Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy*, London School of Economics.

Rezai-Rashti, G. M. and Moghadam, V. M. (2011) 'Women and higher education in Iran: What are the implications for employment and the "marriage market"?', *International Review of Education*, 57 (2011), pp. 419-441.

Robeyns, I. (2005) 'The Capability Approach: a theoretical survey', *Journal of Human Development,* 6(1), pp. 120-131.

Rodrigues, A. M. (2014) 'The Qualification for Being a Refugee under EU Law: Religion as a Reason for Persecution', *European Journal of Migration and Law,* 16 (2014), pp. 535-558.

Ross, W. D. (1951) *Foundations of Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford at the Clarendon Press.

Rubenfeld, S. Sinclair, L. and Clément, R. (2007) 'Second language learning and acculturation: The role of motivation and goal content congruence', *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(3), pp. 309-323.

Rudmin, F. W. (2003) 'Critical History of the Acculturation Psychology of Assimilation, Separation, Integration, and Marginalization', *Review of General Psychology*, 7(1), pp. 3–37.

Rudmin, F. W. (2009) 'Catalogue of Acculturation Constructs: Descriptions of 126 Taxonomies, 1918-2003', *Online Readings in Psychology and Culture*, 8(1), pp. 1-73.

Rumbaut, R. G. (1997) 'Assimilation and Its Discontents: Between Rhetoric and Reality', *The International Migration Review,* 31(4), pp. 923-960.

Rumbaut, R. G. (2008) 'Immigration's Complexities, Assimilation's Discontents', *Contexts,* American Sociological Association*,* 7(1), p.72.

Ruyssen, I. and Salamone, S. (2018) 'Female migration: A way out of discrimination?', *Journal of Development Economics*, 2019(130), pp. 224-241.

Sadeghi, F. (2007) 'Women and the Islamic Republic of Iran: A Story of a Muslim Woman', *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* , 11(1), pp. 92-100.

Safdar, S., Struthers, W. and van Oudenhoven, J. P. (2009) 'Acculturation of Iranians in the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands: A Test of the Multidimensional Individual Difference Acculturation (MIDA) Model', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology,* 40(3), pp. 468-491.

Salvo, T. and de Williams, A. C. de C. (2017) '''If I speak English, what am I? I am full man, me'': Emotional impact and barriers for refugees and asylum seekers learning English', *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 54 (5–6), pp. 733–755.

Sam, D. L. and Berry, J. W. (2010) 'Acculturation: When individuals and groups of different backgrounds meet', *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 5(4), pp. 472–481.

Saunders, *et al.* (2018) 'The Shrinking Health Advantage: unintentional injuries among children and youth from immigrant families', *BMC Public Health,* 18(), p 73.

Saunders, N. K. and Townsend, K. (2016) 'Reporting and Justifying the Number of Interview Participants in Organization and Workplace Research', *British Journal of Management*, 27(), pp. 836-852.

Saville-Troike, M. (1989) 'The Ethnographic Analysis of Communicative Events', in Coupland, N. and Jaworski, A. (Eds.) (1997) *Sociolinguistics: a reader and coursebook*, Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Savvides, N., Al-Youssef, J., Colin, M. and Garrido, C. (2016) 'Methodological Challenges: negotiation, critical reflection and the cultural other', in Crossley, M., Arthur, L. and McNess, E. (Eds.) *Revisiting Insider-Outsider Research in Comparative and International Education,* Oxford: Symposium Books.

Schensul, S. L. (1985) 'Science, Theory, and Application in Anthropology', *American Behavioral Scientist,* 29(2), pp. 164-185.

Schieffelin, B. S., Woolard, K. A., Kroskrity, P. V. (1998) *Language Ideologies: Practice and Theory*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schönpflug, U. (2002) 'Acculturation, Ethnic Identity, and Coping. Online Readings in Psychology and Culture', 8(1) doi: https://doi.org/10.9707/2307-0919.1068

Schwartz S J, *et al.* (2010) 'Rethinking the Concept of Acculturation: Implications for Theory and Research', *American Psychologist,* 65(4), pp. 237–251.

Schwartz S J, *et al.* (2014) 'Effects of Language of Assessment on the Measurement of Acculturation: Measurement Equivalence and Cultural Frame Switching', *Psychological Assessment,* 6(1), pp. 100 - 114.

Schwartz, S. J, *et al.* (2016) 'Testing the Parent–Adolescent Acculturation Discrepancy Hypothesis: A Five-Wave Longitudinal Study', *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 26(3), pp. 567-586.

Schaeffer, P. (2009) 'Refugees: on the Economics of Political Migration', *International Migration ,* 48(1), pp. 1-22.

Schulte, B. (2014) 'How my husband and I finally achieved equality at home', *The Guardian* 11th April 2014, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/apr/11/how-my-husband-and-i-achieved-equality-at-home

Scott, J. (2014) *A Dictionary of Sociology*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Seamon, D. (2013) 'Lived Bodies, Place, and Phenomenology: Implications for Human Rights and Environmental Justice', *Human Rights and Environment*, 4(2), pp. 143.

Seamon, D. (2015) 'Situated cognition and the phenomenology of place: lifeworld, environmental embodiment, and immersion-in-world', *Cognitive Processing,* September Vol. 16, pp. 389-392.

Shachar, A. (2016) 'Squaring the Circle of Multiculturalism? Religious Freedom and Gender Equality in Canada', *The Law and Ethics of Human Rights*, 10(1), pp. 31-69.

Shahim, S. (2007) 'Psychometric Characteristics of the Iranian Acculturation Scale', *Psychological Reports*, 101(), pp. 55-60.

Sheehan, S. (2014) 'A Conceptual Framework for Understanding Transcendental Phenomenology Through the Lived Experiences of Biblical Leaders', *Emerging Leadership Journeys*, 7(1), pp. 10-20.

Sheikhzadegan, A. (2018) 'A social revolution in the name of a religion? The Islamic Revolution of 1978/79 in Iran', *Sozialpolitik.Ch*, Vol. 1(6), pp. 1-21.

Shields, M. A. and Price, S. W. (2002) 'The English language fluency and occupational success of ethnic minority immigrant men living in English metropolitan areas', *Journal of Population Economics*, 2002(15), pp. 137-160.

Shirpak, K. R., Maticka-Tyndale, E. and Chinchian, M. (2011) 'Post Migration Changes in Iranian Immigrants' Couple Relationships in Canada', *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* ,42(6), pp. 751-770.

Shishehgar, S., *et al.* (2016) 'Health and socio-cultural experiences of refugee women: An integrative review', *Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health*, 9(4), pp. 1-11.

Shudak, N. J. (2018) 'Phenomenology', in Frey, B. B., *The Sage Encyclopedia of Educational Research, Measurement and Evaluation,* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Inc.

Sidnell, J. and Enfield N. J. (2012) 'Language Diversity and Social Action: a Third Locus of Linguistic Relativity', *Current Anthropology*, 53(3), pp. 302-33.

Silverman, D. (2005) *Doing Qualitative Research,* 2nd edn., London: Sage Publication.

Simons, G. F. and Charles D. Fennig (eds.) (2018) *Ethnologue: Languages of the World,* 21st edn., Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version, available at: http://www.ethnologue.com.

Sirisai, S., *et al.* (2017) 'Matriarchy, Buddhism, and food security in Sanephong, Thailand', *Maternal and Child Nutrition*, 13(S3), pp. 1-10.

Smokowski, P. R., David_Ferdon, C. and Stroupe, N. (2009) 'Acculturation and Violence in Minority Adolescents: A Review of the Empirical Literature', *The Journal of Primary Prevention,* 30(3-4), pp. 215-263.

Song, M. and Parker, D. (1995) 'Commonality, Difference and the Dynamics of Disclosure in In-depth Interviewing', *Sociology,* 29(2), pp. 241-256.

Spillers, H. J. (1991) 'Comparative American identities: race, sex and nationality in the modern text*',* in *Essays from the English Institute*, London: Routledge.

Stanley, L. and Wise, S. (2010) 'The ESRC's 2010 Framework for Research Ethics: Fit for Research Purpose?' *Sociological Research Online*, 15(4) doi: https://doi.org/10.5153/sro.2265

Stebleton, M. J., Diamond, K. K., Rost-Banik, C. (2020) 'Experiences of Foreign-Born Immigrant, Undergraduate Women at a U.S. Institution and Influences on Career–Life Planning, *Journal of Career Development,* 47(1) , pp. 11-28.

Steele, R. (2019) 'The Pahlavi National Library project: Education and Modernization in Late Pahlavi Iran', *Iranian Studies,* 52(1-2), pp. 85-110.

Steinberg, S. (2014) 'The long view of the melting pot', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 37(5), pp. 790-794.

Stepaniants, M. (2002) 'The Encounter of Zoroastrianism with Islam', *Philosophy East and West*, 52(2), pp. 159-172.

Stevens, G. (1999) 'Age at Immigration and Second Language Proficiency among Foreign-born Adults', *Language in Society*, (28), pp.555-578.

Stewart, M. (2008) 'Multicultural Meanings of Social Support among Immigrants and Refugees, *International Migration*, 46(3), doi: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2008.00464.x

Suárez Büdenbender, E.-M. (2009) 'Perceptions of Dominican Spanish and Dominican Self-Perception in the Puerto Rican Diaspora', *Pennsylvania State University* PhD dissertation, available at: https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/files/final_submissions/1917

Sumption, M. (2017) 'Labour immigration after Brexit: questions and trade-offs in designing a work permit system for EU citizens', *Oxford Review of Economic Policy,* 33(S1), pp. S45–S53.

Sundeen, R., Garcia, C., Raskoff. S. A. (2009) 'Ethnicity, Acculturation, and Volunteering to Organizations', *Nonprofit and Volunteering Sector Quarterly,* 38(6), pp. 929-955.

Tadmore, C. T,, Tetlock, P. E. and Peng, K. (2009) 'Acculturation Strategies and Integrative Complexity: The Cognitive Implications of Biculturalism', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 40(1), pp. 105-139.

Tambiah, S. J. (1968) 'The Magical Power of Words', *Man*, 3(2) pp. 175-208.

Taylor, S. J., DeVault, M. L., Bogdan, R. (2016) *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods : A Guidebook and Resource,* Hoboken NJ: Wiley.

Tehranian, K. K. (2006) 'Inhabiting Her Space', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 8(3), pp. 413-427.

Thomas, E. and Magilvy, J. K. (2011) 'Qualitative Rigor or Research Validity in Qualitative Research', *Pediatric Nursing,* (16), pp. 151-155.

Timmermann, J. (2014) 'What's Wrong with Deontology?, *Proceedings of the Meeting of the Aristotelian Society,* December 2014.

Tohidi, N. (2016) 'Women's Rights and Feminist Movements in Iran', *Sur: International Journal on Human Rights,* 13(24) , pp. 75-89.

Tran, M. (2009) 'The 1979 Iranian revolution: how the Guardian covered it', *The Guardian,* 3rd February, 2009, available at: https://www.theguardian.com/news/blog/2009/feb/03/iranian-revolution-archive

Tubergen, F. A. and van Kalmijn, M. (2009) 'A dynamic approach to the determinants of immigrants' language proficiency in the United States, 1980-2000'. *International Migration Review,* 43(), pp. 519-543.

Tucker, J. (2018) 'Why here? Factors influencing Palestinian refugees from Syria in choosing Germany or Sweden as asylum destinations', *Comparative Migration Studies,* 6(29), doi: https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-018-0094-2

Turner, S. (2015) 'Refugee Blues: a UK and European perspective', *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 6(1), doi: https://doi.org/10.3402/ejpt.v6.29328

Ugues, A., *et al.* (2011) 'Two-Cultures? Latino and Asian Language Assimilation along the U.S.-Mexico Border', *The California Journal of Politics and Policy,* 3(1), pp. 1-24.

U.K. Government (2021a): *British Broadcasting Corporation 2020/21 Gender pay gap report*, available at: https://gender-pay-gap.service.gov.uk

U.K. Government (2021b): *Assessing the English Language requirement* Version 4.0, (A guide for Home Office staff) , available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1019419/English_language_requirement.pdf

United Nations (2018): *Leaving No One Behind*, United Nations Committee for Development Policy, available at: https://www.undp.org

UNHCR (2021): 'Iran: Women and girls treated as second class citizens, reforms urgently needed, says UN expert', Media release, 8th March 2021, available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=26862andLangID=E

U.S. Government (2010): 'Engaging Foreign Audiences'. Report to the Chairman, Committee on Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives. United States Government Accountability Office. Available at: http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d10767.pdf

Vandergrift, L. and Baker, S. (2015) 'Learner Variables in Second Language Listening Comprehension: An Exploratory Path Analysis', *Language Learning,* 65(2), pp. 390-416.

Van Gervan, M. (2008) 'Converging Trends of Social Policy in Europe: Social Security Benefit Reform in the UK, the Netherlands and Finland', *European Journal of Social Security*, 10(3), pp. 207-225.

Van Heelsum, A. (2017) 'Aspirations and frustrations: experiences or recent refugees in the Netherlands', *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 40(3), pp. 2137-2150.

Vaughn, G. and Salas-Wright, P. (2018) 'Immigrants commit crime and violence at lower rates than the US-born Americans', *Annals of Epidemiology*, 28(1), pp. 58-60.

Vertovec, S. (2011) 'The Cultural Politics of Nation and Migration', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 40 (2011), pp. 241-256.

Vingerhoets, A.J.J.M. (2005) 'The Homesickness Concept: Questions and Doubts', in van Tilburg, M. A. L., Vingerhoets A.J.J.M. (Eds) *The Psychological Aspects of Geographical Moves,* Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Wallace, S. (Ed.) (2015) *A Dictionary of Education,* Oxford: Oxford University Press

Ward, C. and Kus, L. (2012) 'Back to and Beyond Berry's Basics: The conceptualization, operationalization and classification of acculturation', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 36(4), pp. 472-485.

Wang, C. and Bai, B. (2017) 'Validating the Instruments to Measure ESL/EFL Learners' Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Self-Regulated Learning Strategies', *Tesol Quarterly*, 51(4), pp. 931-947.

Wang, S. (2018) 'The Role of Gender Role Attitudes and Immigrant Generation in Ethnic Minority Women's Labor Force Participation in Britain', *Sex Roles*, No. 80, pp. 234–245.

Wehrle K. *et al.* (2018) '"Can I come as I am?" Refugees' vocational identity threats, coping, and growth', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, Vol 105 (2018), pp. 83-101.

Whorf, B. L. (1941) 'The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behaviour to Language', in Duranti, A. (Ed.), *Linguistic Anthropology: a Reader*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Wiking, E., Johansson, S.-E. and Sundquist, J. (2004) 'Ethnicity, Acculturation, and Self-Reported Health. A Population Based Study among Immigrants from Poland, Turkey, and Iran in Sweden', *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health*, 58(7), pp. 574-582.

Yilziz, K. and Taysi, T. B. (2007) *The Kurds in Iran: the Past, Present and Future*, London: Pluto Press.

Zandian, S. (2015) 'Migrant literature and teaching English as an international language in Iran', in Kennedy, C. (Ed.) *English Language Teaching in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Innovations, Trends and Challenges*, London: British Council.

Zhou, M. (1997) 'Growing Up American: The Challenge Confronting Immigrant Children and Children of Immigrants', *Annual Reviews Social*, No. 23, pp. 63-95.

Zigon, J. and Throop, J. (2021) 'Phenomenology', *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Anthropology*, doi: http://doi.org/10.29164/21phenomenology

APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Checklist – you should complete each of these headings in detail – see Participant Information Sheet Guidance

Study title
Invitation Paragraph
What is the purpose of the study?
Why have I been invited to participate?
Do I have to take part?
What will happen to me if I take part?
Are there any lifestyle restrictions?
What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
What are the possible benefits of taking part?
What if something goes wrong?
Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?
Will I be recorded, and how will the recording be used?
What will happen to the results of the research study?
Who is organising and funding the research?
What are the indemnity arrangements?
Who has reviewed the study?
Research Integrity
Brunel University London is committed to compliance with the Universities UK Research Integrity Concordat. You are entitled to expect the highest level of integrity from the researchers during the course of this research
Contact for further information and complaints
Researcher name:
Supervisor name (If relevant):
For complaints, Chair of the Research Ethics Committee:

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM TEMPLATE

STUDY TITLE

NAME OF PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

APPROVAL HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR THIS STUDY TO BE CARRIED OUT BETWEEN Click here to enter a date. AND Click here to enter a date.

The participant (or their legal representative) should complete the whole of this sheet		
	YES	NO
Have you read the Participant Information Sheet?	☐	☐
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? (via email/phone for electronic surveys)	☐	☐
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? (via email/phone for electronic surveys)	☐	☐
[Where relevant] Who have you spoken to about the study?		
Do you understand that you will not be referred to by name in any report concerning this study?	☐	☐
Do you understand that		
• You are free to withdraw from this study at any time • You don't have to give any reason for withdrawing • Choosing not to participate or withdrawing will not affect your Choose an item.		
• You can withdraw your data any time up to Click here to enter a date.	☐	☐
[Where relevant] I agree to my interview being Choose an item.	☐	☐
[Where relevant] I agree to the use of non-attributable quotes when the study is written up or published	☐	☐
The procedures regarding confidentiality have been explained to me	☐	☐
I agree that my anonymised data can be stored and shared with other researchers for use in future projects.	☐	☐
I agree to take part in this study.	☐	☐

Signature of research participant:
Print name:
Date:
Witness Statement
I am satisfied that the above-named has given informed consent.

Witness signature:	
Print name:	Date:

APPENDIX C:
TABLE USED IN CODING THE DATA FROM INTERVIEWS

The numbers in the cells refer to the page numbers in the interview transcriptions.

PARTICIPANT	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**13**	**14**	**15**	**16**	**17**
Life in Iran			1 3	7 8	1	1 7	1	1 4	1 8	2					1 4	6	
English education in Iran		1 2	5	9 10	6 7 8			1 4	10	1 8	1 2		1	1	1 5	1 8	
Social/ economic status in Iran			1 3	7 8	1	1 7	1	1 4	1 8	1 6	1 10	1	1	1 3		1	1
Career path in Iran	1	1		1	1	1 2 6	1	1		1		1 2	1	1	1	1	1
Reasons for leaving Iran (Reasons for choosing UK)	1 2 3	1 2 3	1	1 2 4	2 6	2	1 2	1 2	1 2 3	1 2	3 4	1 2	1 3		1 3	1 2 3	1 2 3
Survival in UK	1 2 3	3 6	2 3 4	2 3 5 9	3	3 4 5 6	2	2 3 4 5	3 4 5 6 7 8	5 6	3 6	3 4 7	2 3 5 6	3	1 2 3 4	3 4	1 2
British culture vs Iranian culture		5 6 7 8	2	4 6 7 9 13	2 5	4 7	2	2 3 4			3	5 6 8 12		6		2 3 4 5	3
Acceptance in UK	2 3	1	3			3		3		2 5 7		3	4	2		4 7	4
Family in UK	2		3 4	1 2 3	3 5 7			9 3	7	3 5 6	11	5	2 6	1 2	8	3	3
Attitude to Acculturation							2	2		2 3 4 5 10	6 7 8 9	4 8	3 4	1 2 3 4 5	3	3 5 9	4

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Gender and marriage	1 2 7 10	1 6 7	5 8	8 12	1 3 6 7 11 12	9 10	1	2 3 5	9	3 7	5 10	8 9	6	4	4 7	1 4 11	4 7
English language learning in UK	1 2 4 5 6 8	1 2 3 4 6 7 8 9 10	2 5 6 7 8 9	1 6 7	8 9 10 11 12	3 4 7 8 9	4 5 6 7 10	4 5 6 7 10	9 10 12	1 6 7 8 9	5 9 10 11	5 7 9 10 11	6 7 8 9	1 3 4 5	3 4 5 6	3 5 6 8 9 10	2 5 6 7 8
Career path in UK	5 7		3 4		4 5	3 8		4 5 9	8 11	2 4 6	1 2 3 5 6	6	1 2 3	4	1 4 5	1 10 11 12	3 4 6
Family in Iran								2	1 5							1	1
Studying in UK			9	3 4 5	5 10 11			5			3	7 11			6	10 11	3

APPENDIX D

AIDE-MEMOIRE

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A: These questions are about your life and education in Iran before and after the Revolution of 1979.

1. Please describe the kind of education you had.
2. What sort of occupation did your parents have?
3. When you were older, did you have a career plan or vocation?
4. How did the Revolution affect your life in terms of career?

B: These questions are about your experience of moving to Britain.

1. What were your hopes for a new life when you first came to Britain?
2. Have any of these hopes been answered? if so, which ones?
3. Why did you choose Britain, rather than other countries?
4. How difficult did you find it to make the journey here?
5. What were your feelings when you first arrived in Britain?
6. What was the most difficult part of living here when you first arrived?
7. What members of your family came with you and who was left behind?
8. Do you think that migrating to Britain has made you a stronger person?
9. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experience of moving to Britain?

C: These questions are about your life in Britain between first arriving and now.

1. Are you generally happy you came to Britain?
2. Tell me about any differences in the way of life you noticed between Iran and Britain when you first arrived here.
3. What have been your greatest challenges since you arrived?
4. What has caused you to feel the most happiness?
5. Overall, do you think you and your family have done well since you came?
6. Can you tell me about any times you have felt unwelcome in Britain?
7. Do you feel that, in spite of any difficulties, it has been worth coming to Britain?
8. Tell me about any help you had from friends to settle in here?
9. When you came here, what did you miss the most about Iran?
10. What advice would you give to a young Iranian woman on how to deal with her new life in Britain?
11. Do you now feel at home in Britain? Please tell me the reasons for your answer.
12. What was the difference in your social status between when you lived in Iran and when you lived in Britain?
13. What was the difference in your economic status between living in Iran and living in Britain?
14. Please tell me about your working life in Britain since you arrived?
15. Has your marriage status changed since you arrived? If so, please tell me in what way this has happened.
16. Has your family grown in number during the years since you arrived?
17. How do you feel that being a woman, rather than a man, has affected you in coping with life in Britain?
18. How important do you think it is that an immigrant to Britain should be able to speak and understand English?
19. How important do you think that learning English has helped you to live in Britain and be part of British life?
20. Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experience of living in Britain?

D: The next questions are about your language abilities when and before you first arrived in the UK.

1. What would you say was your level of being able to speak English at your time of arrival: completely unable, basic, moderate or fluent?
2. Did you learn English at any point in your life? If so, at what stage in your schooling did this happen?
3.
4. Please tell me generally how you felt about being able to communicate with English-speaking people?
5. What difficulties had you in understanding people when they spoke to you in English?
6. Were you able to read and understand written or printed English?
7. How well were you able to talk to and understand ordinary British people in everyday situations?
8. How able were you to read and understand printed documents, for example, claim forms?
9. Did any other members of your family able to speak and understand English?
10. How much opportunity did you have to speak and listen to English?
11. How did your financial status affect your ability to get lessons?

E: The following questions are about your English language abilities now.

1. How fluent do you consider yourself in communicating in English at the present time?
2. Roughly how much of your time is spent speaking English in proportion to Farsi?

F: The following questions are about your education in the UK

1. How did you learn or improve your abilities in English during your first few years here?
2. If you were able to get English lessons, how easy was it to get them?
3. How did your status as an immigrant cause problems in getting lessons?
4. How did being a woman affect you in getting lessons?
5. How have you been able to learn English since you have been in the UK?
6. Has being a women, rather than a man, been a challenge in getting lessons in English?
7. Do you find that it is now much easier than before to get English lessons?
8. Do you find that English lessons are too expensive?
9. Have you been to state-run English language classes, had private tuition or are you mainly self-taught?
10. Have you been to a state-run college for any other kinds of education or training? Is so, please tell me what the subjects were.
11. When studying subjects other than English, what problems, if any, did your level of English cause you to have when studying other subjects
12. Do you believe that being female has caused any problems with learning English?

G: General questions about language

1. If you have children, are they fluent in English?
2. Have they helped you with communicating in English with people outside your family?
3. Do you speak English at home with your children or with other members of your family?
4. Please tell me about any problems you have had in being able to learn English in the UK.
5. Please tell me about any problems you have had in being able to study other subjects.

APPENDIX E

EXAMPLE OF AN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH PARTICIPANT : 'Pari' 5th November 2019

INTERVIEWER: Tooran Issapour (TI).

TI: First of all, thank you very much for you time spent to do this interview. I appreciate it.
These questions are about your life and education before and after the Revolution of 1979.
Pari: *I was born in a city* [redacted] *and I studied in different cities in Iran, and most of my secondary school I spent in a small city in west of Iran, which now they call* [redacted] *before the Revolution. I studied there. Well, it was a very small city. There was only one higher school and one for girls and I wanted to go there to study mathematics and I wanted to carry on at that* [unclear] *but there wasn't … there wasn't … I mean for girls, there wasn't maths classes, I mean special classes for girls. And so I had to study social … biology, because it was mixed, biology and … I had to study biology at a higher school. And so I participated in an annual exam for higher education, for university, and I was one of the first persons in that city, I mean between girls and boys, which accepted for a medical school, for medicine at University. And actually I was accepted for, I think, biomedical chemistry in Shiraz University. So I went to the* [redacted] *university and studied medicine, for seven years.*
TI: What sort of occupation did your parents have?
Pari: *My father, he was a teacher and my mother a housewife.*
TI: When you were older, did you have a career plan or vocation? When you finished your studies.
Pari: *Yes, I immediately started working as a doctor in one of …*
TI: How did the Revolution affect your life in terms of career?
Pari: *Well, dramatically, because I couldn't stay in that place where I was working. And I decided, when I finished my university I started working in one of the shanty towns called* [redacted] *and it was very … as I said, it was a shanty town where people were very poor. And it was the first year of the Revolution … or second year … I'm not sure … and there was another lady from India, a doctor, she was working there – it was me and that doctor. And there was one manager at that surgery – there was a surgery, and at that surgery, that manager – he was one of the Hezbollah, form the government and I don't think he even had a higher education and, you know, even he was telling me what to do and not to do, you know? He didn't know. For example, he was telling me, 'Don't write down too much antibiotic for those people. We don't have enough stock.' And I said, 'That person, he needs it or she needs it. I am the one who should decide what to do.' So it was really, really very difficult. And at that time there was the … Khomeini said that women should wear hijab, wear a veil, and that lady, she had to wear a hijab and, well, me as well. And so, to be honest, every day I should see more than a hundred patients, very, very poor, and lack if hygiene and not good nutrition and a poor situation and it was affecting their health, you know.*
TI: This was after the Revolution, but during the Shah it was poor …
Pari: *Yes, it carried on, yes. It was one or two years after the Revolution.*
TI: Yes, it was, you know, some areas, they were poor.
Pari: *yes, it was established during Shah. So, at that time, I decided … I was working with one of the organisations and that organisation asked me to go to Kurdistan to join them – I mean, I'd already joined them, I asked them to go there, and they needed a doctor there as well. And working politically as well* [laughs]
TI: These questions are about your experience of moving to Britain.
What were your hopes for a new life when you first came to Britain? Can you tell me any special reason you should leave the country?
Pari: *At that time I didn't have any choice except leave the country, you know, because at that time I was living in that area of Kurdistan which was not under Iranian establishment, and at that time my*

Iranian regime attacked us and I had to go further down into Kurdistan and I went into Iraqi Kurdistan. And at that time the two other Kurdish organisations were the Bari Sani and the Kurtalibani – PUK and PPK. I went there and at that time I had to leave. There was no choice. It was bad.
TI: Have any of these hopes been answered? If so, which ones?
Pari: *Somehow, no. To be honest, it wasn't my choice. I didn't want to leave.*
TI: This is by force …
Pari: *Yes, you know …*
TI: Why did you choose Britain, rather than other countries?
Pari: *It wasn't in my hands – other people, they chose for me.*
TI: How difficult did you find it to make the journey here? For example, from Kurdistan you had to make a special journey.
Pari: *Mine is a little bit different, because I flew from there to Britain. But still, it was difficult.*
TI: What were your feelings when you first arrived in the UK?
Pari: *Lost.* [laughs] *I live on another planet.*
TI: What was the most difficult part of living here when you first arrived? I mean, as a refugee, when you first arrived and you came here, you had some difficulty, which was the hardest part?
Pari: *I wanted to tell you on my studying, carry on my profession, and that one was very difficult.*
TI: Why was it very difficult?
Pari: *Well, because at that time, when I arrived here, I didn't work, I didn't have money and actually I left one of my sons behind me. And that was a difficulty, you know, because of course I had to bring him here as well, and it was very difficult, you know, to bring my son.*
TI: Especially a child …
Pari: *… my child, and he was away from me for several years. And emotionally even* [unclear]. *To answer your previous question, it was very difficult, yes.*
TI: What members of your family came with you and who was left behind – you just said your son …
Pari: *My son…*
TI: Anybody came with you?
Pari: *My husband and one of my sons, my younger son.*
TI: Do you think that migrating to Britain has made you a stronger person?
Pari: [pauses]
TI: … if you compare it with your country, since you came here? What do you think?
Pari: *Er … it's a very difficult question* [laughs].
TI: Sometimes a life of hardship makes you more strong, more motivated. You know, for example, some people came here, they become stronger.
Pari: *Er … I think yes. Yes, because of hardship, because I had to work, I had to look after my children, studying language, studying at the university, doing a lot of things. I started at an age which was almost 30.*
TI: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experience of moving to Britain? What is your experience. You know, this is very important, as an immigrant, to hear, as an Iranian woman. You had a very good social status, economy; you had a better situation than when you came here. What was your experience in that period.
Pari: *It is a little difficult to say. It's mixed, you know.*
TI: The following questions are about your life in Britain between first arriving and now.
Pari: *So when I arrived here the life was really very difficult.* [unclear – noise on recording] *and when I finished my studying, I worked in a small city* [in Iran] *and a small surgery in order to promote health of poor people, but they wouldn't let me. I mean, my boss, as I explained, was a person not professional and he was one who told me what to do, what to write. I didn't have choice, I couldn't say no to him …*
TI: … because you were a woman …
Pari: *… because I was a woman as well. And even he was the one who was telling me I had to wear a veil as well, you know. I mean it was really upsetting and that's why I decided to go to the area which was not under the establishment of the Islamic regime, and at that time it was free. And I tried to*

help people … I mean I ran a surgery, like a mobile surgery in the different villages and we would go with other people to those villages, running surgeries and helping people, distributing medicine without charging them. The Iranian regime imposed some sort of sanction against Kurdish people at that time – those areas were free from the Iranian regime. They wouldn't let, I mean, all or other food coming from the cities to those areas, and people were under … I mean, medicine or anything …
TI: … and this is before the war, the Iran-Iraq war?
Pari: *During.*
TI: because I remember Kurdistan, they had problems with the government …
Pari: *It started before the war and carried on.*
TI: ... because you had two problems. One was the Iraq bombing you and the other one was the government.
Pari: *The government . Two governments, yes. Two despotic regimes. I mean, especially women over there, they were under pressure and they didn't have any rights and they, you know, there want any plan for family planning, or those sort of things. And every year they had to bring another one child and there was a lot of, I mean, diseases. The reason was the malnourishment and lack of hygiene, the cause those diseases – which was preventable.*
TI: … because of the lack of education.
Pari: *… lack of education and lack of …*
TI: Another thing was religion? For the family planning?
Pari: *Yes, somehow religion, which is to say that God give us …*
TI: Gift?
Pari: *Gift from God, When God give us a baby he would give us the way how to feed him or her.*
TI: I know, God will help.
Pari: *Yes.*
TI: Are you generally happy you came to Britain?
Pari: *A little bit, er …*
TI: As compared with that situation you had, and then you came here. Compare it.
Pari: *if you compare it down , it's different. Well, if you compare it with when I first arrived. First I came, it was very difficult for me. There were a lot of problems, in terms of housing, in terms of education, in terms of money, and … I should start it from zero … as a doctor, a female doctor. And I didn't have any resources, any money.*
TI: Tell me about any differences in the way of life you noticed between Iran and Britain when you first arrived here.
Pari: *[hesitates]*
TI: Hijab?
Pari: *Yes, hijab. My first impression was that everything was commodified. You know? It was, look at you if you had money, it was OK. It was very … In my country it was like this, but here you felt very much your …*
TI: Tell me what have been your greatest challenges since you arrived?
Pari: *There were a lot of challenges.* [laughs] *The greatest was to bring my son, which I left in Iran, and I didn't have chance, you know, to bring him, and it was really very challengable, you know, to bring him, and …*
TI: How long a time did it take to extend your family?
Pari: *Almost … more than one year. Two years almost.*
TI: What has caused you to feel the most happiness?
Pari: *When I brought my son here. yes, it was the most happy day of my life, yes.*
TI: Overall, do you think you and your family have done well since you came here?
Pari: *Er … I tried my best. And in very harsh and difficult situation. yes, I think so. However, for myself, I think I would have done better if I had money, if I didn't have those sort of problems behind myself. And I could have carried on my studying, and …*
TI: Can you tell me about any times you have felt unwelcome in Britain?

Pari: [hesitates]
TI: For example, when you go somewhere official?
Pari: *Yes, for example, when I was going for housing. Because when I arrived here first we were sent to a … somewhere called a hostel, and after that, after a few months, we were sent to temporary accommodation, which was primitive* [?], *you know. I didn't feel even safe when I was sleeping at that accommodation, because the wall was not from break, or …*
TI: … broken and mouldy?
Pari: *Yes, well, I would go to the council and asking for them, yes. I didn't* [unclear].
TI: Do you feel that, in spite of any difficulties, it has been worth coming to Britain?
Pari: *Well … because … I didn't have any choice. You know ….*
TI: … rescued from the dangers?
Pari: … dangers, yes.
TI: Tell me about any help you had from friends to settle in here.
Pari: [hesitates]
TI: Did you have any friends here to help you when you came?
Pari: *Yes, a friend of mine, yes, helped me* [unclear] … *to take me to the different organisations to help me for the … settle down. Not much.*
TI: When you came here what did you miss the most about Iran?
Pari: [hesitates]
TI: Did you miss your family? Did you miss your friends?
Pari: *Well, of course I missed my … as I said, my son, my family, people.*
TI: Which one was the most important?
Pari: *Yes, my son, of course, my son, yes.*
TI: What advice would you give to a young Iranian woman on how to deal with her new life in Britain?
Pari: [hesitates] *Well, she should adapt herself in the new culture. She has to work hard and she has to learn … the first thing is to learn English, because in order to learn the culture and go to the society and be able to get a job, to carry on studying, the first thing and important thing is language, isn't it? It's very important here.*
TI: What was the difference in your social status between living in Iran and when you lived in Britain? Because you said you were a doctor there.
Pari: *It was very different, yes. Hard time and difference, yes. I started from zero. Because I had everything there. I was a doctor and* [unclear] *qualification was accepted and I was working. However, I had a lot of problems and difficulties with the regime, but here I had a lot of challenges.*
TI: What was the difference in you economic status between living in Iran and living in Britain? You know, financially. For example, there you were a doctor and you came here as a refugee.
Pari: *Yes, I had … a moderate income, as I said, because I was working in different villages in Kurdistan. I didn't charge them. I mean, I was happy with the job that I was doing …*
TI: … to help people with their issues …
Pari: *Here, I didn't have anything. I didn't have any money when I came here … I had five pounds, I don't know, I can't remember how many pounds in my pocket.*
TI: You were on benefit?
Pari: *Yes, that is very, very difficult for me …*
TI: Please tell me about your working life in Britain since you arrived.
Pari: *I didn't have any job. Well, firstly you come, you have to study English. You have to improve your language. However, when I was in Iran I studied a little bit … I mean from the secondary school we started English language, but it was* [unclear]. *You can't compare. The one you learn it from year to year. Even when I went to university we didn't study English but I read my medical book in English. However, I couldn't … I mean …*
TI: You couldn't use it as a communication …

Pari: *… as a communication … Like a sign language, you know.* [laughs] *How people with their sign language, they see that sign, they know it. I know that disease, I know everything. Even normal people, they couldn't read … understand. It wouldn't help me, you know. it didn't help me because it was just professional words. But I had to study English, enforced, and this was the forcing I had.*
TI: Has you marriage status changed since you arrived? If so, please tell me in what way this has happened. Because, some families, when they come here to western culture, it sometimes conflicts [unclear] but … feel free if you want to …
Pari: *Yes, yes, it changed after a few years I separated from my husband. You know, when you come, a different culture and … specially … I mean … I can't explain it.*
TI: Anyway, because it affects your life …
Pari: *Yes, affects your life …*
TI: Some things they don't accept, but we should carry on … as a mother.
Has your family grown in number during the years since you arrived? Just your son came, nothing else?
Pari: *Yes … I …*
TI: How do you feel that, being a woman, rather than a man, has affected you in coping with life in Britain?
Pari: *it is very difficult here because of the culture. Even when you are married, when you are intellectual people, but still the culture is a male dominated culture. When you come here, as a woman, you have to study, you have to look after children, and …*
TI: More responsibility.
Pari: *Responsibility … You have to hold the jobs at home, as well as cleaning, cooking, looking after children, and even men … I don't … As I said, because of the culture, even an intellectual one, they don't take more responsibility for … and you've got a double responsibility.*
TI: Double job.
Pari: *Double job. No one sees.*
TI: How important do you think it is that an immigrant to Britain should be able to speak and understand English?
Pari: *Well, in order to live in that society it is very important because you have to adapt to society. You have to work, you have to study, you have to bring up children, you have to communicate with society. When you go to the doctor, when you go to other organisations, you have to deal with this sort of thing. I mean, the first important thing is language, otherwise you can't do anything.*
TI: How important do you think that learning English has helped you to live in Britain and be part of British society?
Pari: *Well, it helped me a lot, because I managed to go to university. I mean, when I was in Iran, I worked in Kurdistan, I encountered a lot of infectious diseases, and one of my goals was to study that part – infectious diseases. However, I went to study laboratory – microbiology – after a few years and I managed to get qualified, getting a degree from London University.*
TI: Is there anything else you want to tell me about your experience of living in Britain?
Pari: [hesitates]
TI: For example, you studied in that field. What has that given you?
Pari: *As I said, I had that motivation – I took that motivation before I left Iran, and I wanted to carry on helping people. I was hoping that one day I can use that experience in my country, because ….*
TI: But, for example, if you compare this experience of studying here than studying in Iran – if you compare the educational study, what is your experience of the system of the education you did here?
Pari: *Well, it's totally … well, I studied at university – it was during the Shah regime – and end of it, my internship was during the Revolution. I think it's fairly different, because here you have essays; everything was writing essays, you know, even in biology you have to write essays, even when you do medicine. I think in Iran it wasn't like this. You didn't have to write essays. You learned, you go to the*

classes, and after that you sit an exam. If you pass an exam, that's ok; you can go to the higher level. Here, everything is varied. I remember that wrote essays in Iran only in [unclear].
TI: But here you should write essays. There do exams.
Pari: *But even here you have exams and …*
TI: You have exams including essays, but there, exams.
Pari: *Only exams count. I don't know whether it's changed or not.*
TI: The next questions are about you language ability when and before you first arrived in the UK. What would youi say was your level of being able to speak English at you time of arrival: completely unable, basic, moderate or fluent?
Pari: *Basic.*
TI: Did you learn English at any point in your life? If so, at what stage in your schooling did this happen?
Pari: *Yes, at secondary school and the first year of university.*
TI: Please tell me generally how you felt about being able to communicate with English speaking people?
Pari: *Well, when I came it was, as I said, basic, and I was really struggling, struggling to find a word.*
TI: What difficulties had you in understanding people when they spoke to you in English? What was the hardest part?
Pari: *Yes, the hardest part was, as you mentioned in your question, it was speaking – I mean understanding when people spoke to me …*
TI: Slang …
Pari: *Yes, slang language. When it was writing or reading I totally understand it, and I could read it and even writing, but understanding … Even when, I mean it was the postman speaking – write it down, I could understand it properly.* [laughs]
TI: Were you able to read and understand written or printed English? This is when and before you first arrived here.
Pari: *I've already told you.*
TI: When you came. For example, they gave you some paper …
Pari: *Basic, yes.*
TI: How well were you able to talk to and understand ordinary British people in everyday situations.
Pari: *When I arrived?*
TI: This is the ability about when and before you first arrived in the UK.
Pari: *Well, when I first arrived in the UK it was very difficult. Yes, I was struggling. Sometimes I used a dictionary* [laughs] *to find a word. And before I even wrote a letter … I mean, sometimes when I wanted to talk to people, in order to prepare myself.*
TI: How able were you to read and understand printed documents, for example, claim forms?
Pari: *Again, basic. I understood, but not much.*
TI: Were any other members of you family able to speak and understand English?
Pari: *No.*
TI: How much opportunity did you have to speak and listen to English? When you came or before you came. As a refugee?
Pari: *Before I came, well, I said I studied at the school, which was totally different. But when I came here I had to go to the English class, I went …*
TI: Did you have any chance, for example, at home to study? Did you have a book, radio, TV?
Pari: [laughs] *I didn't have TV when I arrived.*
TI: The following questions are about you English language ability now. How well do you consider your ability in English to be at the present time? How is your English now?
Pari: *It's OK, It's improved. I can do everything. Of course, improved.*
TI: Roughly how much of your time is spent speaking English in proportion to Farsi? For example, somebody at work speaks English but at home they speak Farsi.

Pari: *To be honest, I spend a lot of time reading English – reading and listening – I like listening to Radio Four.*
TI: I do that.
Pari: *You do? Especially at ten, you know, Woman's Hour. And reading books.*
TI: At home do you speak English of Kurdish or Farsi?
Pari: *At home, no. With my son I speak Farsi, but sometimes I had to speak English … yes, a mix.*
TI: The following questions are about your education in the UK. How did you learn or improve your ability in English during your first few years here?
Pari: *After a few months, the first few years, I went to the … one year or two years … to the English class.*
TI: If you were able to get English lessons, how easy was it to get them?
Pari: *At that time it was different from now. It was easier at that time. When you were a refugee, you can do it. At that time it was easier.*
TI: If you were able to get English lessons, how easy was it to get them?
Pari: *As I said [before] it was easier to get them than now.*
TI: How did your status as an immigrant cause problems in getting lessons?
Pari: *Well, it was very difficult because the first thing was the language barrier.*
TI: Because when you come her you should have, for example, travel documents.
Pari: *Oh, yes, you have to have first some sort of ID.*
TI: ID … refugee?
Pari: *Yes, refugee, in order to …*
TI: … to go to free classes.
How did being a woman affect you in getting lessons?
Pari: *Well, in somehow … because I had a young child and I had to … you know … in our culture … and the responsibility is yours. And my husband can go free.* [unclear]
TI: You can't take your child to the class.
Pari: *I had to find a college that has a crèche or …*
TI: How have you been able to learn English since you have been in the UK?
Pari: *As I said I was reading books, listening to radio and watching TV.*
TI: Has being a woman, rather than a man, been a challenge in getting lessons in English?
Pari: *Yes, of course it was a challenge, as I said, because it's your responsibility.*
TI: Do you find that it is now much easier than before to get English lessons?
Pari: *No, I think it's much harder.*
TI: Do you find that English lessons are too expensive?
Pari: *Nowadays, yes. It's very difficult, you know, to get English lessons.*
TI: But before, when you came, it was free for refugees?
Pari: *Yes, for refugees it was free, but nowadays it's changed even. I don't know whether you have to pay or not, but it's very limited.*
TI: Do you think that the facilities when you came were better for refugees? Or now? If you compare it.
Pari: *Yes, the facilities were much better than now.*
TI: Have you been to state-run English language classes, had private tuition or are you mainly self-taught?
Pari: *No …* [unclear] … *and self-taught was well.*
TI: You've been to that state and self-studies.
Have you been to a state-run college for any other kind of education or training? If so, please tell me what the subjects were. You just mentioned you did something in the laboratory.
Pari: *Yes, in the university I studied microbiology.*
TI: When you studied subjects other than English what problems, if any, did your level of English cause you to have when studying other subjects?

Pari: *Yes, I know what you mean. Yes, when I studied microbiology, yes, of course, because I started a few years after I arrived here. Yes, it was difficult.*
TI: Again, language …
Pari: *Yes, somehow. As I said, you had to write essays. I love essays.*
TI: Do you believe that being female has caused any problems with learning English?
Pari: *It's not caused problems, but because, as I said, you responsibility is too much – more than a male. yes, I mean, your opportunity would be less. As I said, for example, when I arrived here I had to study English, I had to look after my children, I had the responsibility of the house, financial, and I was working part-time as well – I mean, like a superwoman* [laughs], *you have to do all things at once. You know, a lot of responsibility. Even single of them are working at home and looking after children is one of the most … I mean, the job … it's a full-time job.* [laughs] *I had to do that one, I had to work part-time and study part-time, and help myself in self-study in English as well.*
TI: These are general questions about language.
if you have children, are they fluent in English?
Pari: *Yes.*
TI: Have they helped you in communicating in English with people outside your family?
Pari: *Hmm … not much.*
TI: Do you speak English at home with your children or with other members of your family?
Pari: *With the children somehow, yes … sometimes.*
TI: Please tell me about any problems you have had in being able to learn English in the UK?
Pari: *I mean, the difficult part of learning was understanding for me.*
TI: Is it about their accent in English, for example, Scottish, Irish or …
Pari: *Yes, English accents, yes, exactly, accents, because we learned English from the book,* [laughs] *from the study.*
TI: Please tell me about any problems you have had in being able to study other subjects.
Pari: [hesitates]
TI: You just mentioned about the other subject, to write essays, it is the hardest part, because it's professional and …
Pari: *Yes, and it was … because at that time I had to do several things at once, you know, when I was doing my university course. You know, other people, younger than me, they didn't have responsibilities, they were just coming to the university and studying their subject. But my thought, it was when I was sitting in my classes, what should I do when I go home, what should I make for my children? And then I had to arrange what time to go back to work. A lot of things were in your mind. And it makes your attention … distraught sometimes, because so many things it was inside your mind.*
TI: And with that hardship you had, are your children successful in this country?
Pari: *Yes, they were very successful.*
TI: What do they do now?
Pari: *One of my sons, he had a PhD in astrophysics and he's working now. He's got a good job. And my other son's got a Master's in mathematics, and he's working as a data analyst.*
TI: Thank you so much, It was lovely. I appreciate it. You are such a brave woman.

APPENDIX F

SHORT DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

ADA

Ada's family were from Armenia, a Christian country, although they were not practising Christians. Her mother came from a rich family and, in Ada's words, 'a lady of leisure'. Her father, previously a university lecturer in philosophy, was a restaurant and night club owner with an unconventional approach to life. The family was able to afford Ada's education at a prestigious school in London. In Iran she qualified as a medical doctor but post-revolution she was imprisoned and after she was released, had to escape with her children, via Turkey, to Britain. Like her parents, she never married. She had hoped that her father was able to join them, but she later learned that he had died in Iran under torture. Ada considers herself to have been, in some respects, extremely lucky because she had money and was able to live in London without material difficulty. She re-qualified as a doctor and worked for the National Health Service.

AHOO

Before the Revolution, Ahoo's father was a high-ranking army officer, making life especially difficult for the family in the aftermath, as he would be associated with the Shah's regime. Her mother was a clothing designer, running her own factory. Ahoo was working as a journalist and had a scholarship to study for a doctorate in Criminal Sociology at the Sorbonne in Paris, an educational path that was curtailed by the Revolution, as was any chance of an academic career in Iran. Even her journalism was forced to stop when the newspaper offices where she worked were burnt down. This dangerous situation forced her to migrate to Pakistan, and eventually to Britain, where the family had previously been on holiday. In Pakistan, she had to leave her husband, who had become a radical Muslim and won a custody battle for their children. However, she managed to escape with her children to Britain, where she and they suffered violent racism at first. Since then, Ahoo has worked for various charities, helping young people.

ASHTI

Ashti had been a secondary school teacher before the Revolution, but because she had been involved in politics and journalism, she lost her job in the aftereffects. Furthermore, she refused to wear the *hajib*, and was forced to flee Iran with her husband and child, but had to leave her husband behind in Afghanistan. She chose Britain because she had a close friend living there and preferred a country where the dominant language was English, which she had learned at school. Because her level of English was initially low, she chose to study information technology, which did not require an advanced standard of English, and became a teacher of IT at tertiary level.

AZEE

In pre-Revolutionary Iran, Azee spent seven years working as an electronics engineer, but had no work there after the Revolution. She had also spent some time in Britain learning fashion design, so when it came to her escaping from Iran, Britain was the obvious choice. Azee initially struggled financially in Britain, but managed to find work in fashion design. Her marriage, begun in Britain, lasted only three years because her husband did not want her to study and had a patriarchal attitude to marriage and the role of women. She had three children.

DORA

Dora was born and brought up in the Kurdish area of Iran. She was able to have a good education because her father was a baker, a respected and profitable occupation in that part of the world. Her career as a primary school teacher turned into adult literacy tuition when she and her colleagues realised that many adults, especially women, in that area were illiterate because, in both pre- and post-Revolutionary times, educating women was not encouraged and Kurdestan was neglected and repressed. During the Iran-Iraq war, the situation became worse and Dora became a freedom fighter, eventually leading to the need for her to escape. Britain was not her choice; it was that of the people-smugglers. After five years' coping with bad housing in an area of London dominated by drug gangs, Dora established a charity to help immigrant women. She has since written a book about her experiences as a freedom fighter in Kurdestan.

FARIBA

At the time of the Revolution, Fariba had been living in Britain for several years and, on her return to Iran, she saw that it had become an extremely dangerous place, not only because of the war with Iraq, but also because many members of her extended family had been executed or imprisoned by the new regime, so she decided to follow her husband to Britain and escape with her three children. Her own eight-year-old daughter was arrested at the border and had to stay in Iran for a year. It is therefore understandable that on arrival in Britain she was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder. Eventually, she decided to work for organisations that helped Iranian immigrant women and ran a community centre for that purpose.

HANNA

After spending more than five years in prison, including torture, and two more years under scrutiny by the Iranian authorities, Hanna understandably left Iran. After passing through France to obtain a visa, she arrived in Britain, where her brother lived. Because of the after effects of her extremely stressful experience in Iran, she found it very difficult to find suitable work, even though her level of English was sufficiently high. However, after she had received medical treatment and had support from the Iranian community, Hanna was able to advance her education enough to gain a master's degree in Social policy and began a career in social care for immigrants.

HOMA

Homa's education was cut short by the closure of the universities following the Revolution, so from the age of 18 she worked as an architectural draughtsperson. She left Iran in 1984, mainly because of the lack of employment opportunities there and went at first to Germany, where she gained a medical degree. 13 years later she went to Britain to continue her career in medicine.

MEHRA

Mehra had a career in education in Iran, being head of a college, and concurrently was running an import-export business. Her father was an officer in the pre-revolutionary army. Her career in education was stopped after the Revolution and, after receiving death threats at the same time as she was expecting a second child, she fled with her husband and child to Britain via Denmark to join her brother. Mehra studied at the London College of Fashion and Middlesex University, which

enabled her to become a fashion designer and she eventually opened a bridal shop in the West End. She was also a notable singer of Iranian classical music.

NADA

As a young girl, Nada was familiar with political unrest, as she was born into a Kurdish family in the west of Iran and her elder brother and sister were both arrested for political activism. Being Kurdish, the family had the same problems with official discrimination both before and after the Revolution, especially with her father being a military officer. She chose Britain as an escape destination for herself and her children because of its language, its political freedom and its relatively low level of discrimination. Her husband later joined the family in Britain and Nada had no marital problems. She learnt English and was able eventually to go to university to study political science. She made a career working for human rights charities and in translation and interpretation.

NAGME

When it came to learning English, Nagme had a good start: she attended the International School in Tehran at an early age, where she learnt English and French. Her father worked in the civil service and other members of her extended family were military officers, which meant they were targeted by the post-revolutionary regime. Her husband had already begun a business in Britain, so she joined him there. Eventually they were divorced. Nagme later had a career in journalism.

NAZEE

Nazee's university education was curtailed by the Revolution and, in common with many young women, was treated with suspicion by the authorities. In 1993 she and her husband decided to escape the extremely uncomfortable situation in Iran and move to London, where they appreciated the freedom and diversity. She became a school teacher, had two children and a continuing marriage.

PARI

Born in a small town in Kurdestan, Pari specialised in biology at school and was the first student in her town to qualify for a place at university to study medicine. She became a doctor and, at the time of the Revolution, worked with patients whose poverty caused illness in a shanty town in Kurdestan. She had problems working under the medically unqualified manager of the surgery. Due to the stress of Kurdestan being attacked by the Iranian forces, Pari moved to Iraq, where life was no better. With the aid of smugglers, who chose the destination, she migrated to Britain. Her medical qualifications were accepted there and, after improving her English, she had a career as a microbiologist. She had two sons, but separated from her husband .

PORAN

From the age of 16 until the 1979 Revolution, Poran had been living and studying in both Tehran and Los Angeles. She came from a family that was highly in favour of education for both sexes. After finishing high school, she obtained a BA in political science from Tehran University, then an MBA from UCLA, followed by qualification as a lawyer. After the Revolution she got involved in political protests in Iran, leading to the disappearance of her husband and his eventual death. Being unable to pursue her legal career in Iran, she escaped to Germany and helped Iranian refugees. She then went to Britain because her brother lived there, it was better for her son's education and she was

already fluent in English. Eventually, after having financial and housing problems, Poran gained an MSc in psychological counselling and began a career as a psychoanalyst.

SHALEH

Shaleh was brought up to be independent by parental example; her mother insisted on earning her own modest living, even though her father had a well-paid job. After being educated in a prestigious girls' school in Tehran, Shaleh gained a BA in political science at Tehran University and then an MA in Britain. While in London she worked for the BBC Persian service where she experienced employment gender discrimination. After establishing her life in London and buying a house, Shaleh went back to Iran where she married and studied for a doctorate. She was involved in political protest and the danger caused by that forced her to return to London. Unfortunately, due to more gender discrimination, she could not work for the BBC again, but worked in independent broadcasting.

TEIA

After studying film and television, Teia eventually became the first Iranian woman to be employed as a script supervisor in the film industry. She was with her English husband in England at the time of the Revolution, so she was unable to return to continue her career. Living in the north of England, and owing to union rules, could not find employment either in the film industry or in television. Instead she trained for and worked as a beautician, running her own salon. Her marriage did not last.

ZEBA

In her early years, Zeba and her siblings had an abundance of English language education, both in and out of school and she trained as a teacher of English. She was studying law in London and had got married there at the time of the Revolution. When she returned to Iran, hopeful that conditions there had improved after the Revolution, she was disappointed and was involved in political protest. Zeba was imprisoned there for over three years. She left Iran in 1993, choosing Britain over Canada because her daughter was left behind in Iran. In London she began a career as a solicitor. Eventually, Zeba's daughter was able to join her in London.