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'Conceptualising Simultaneity in the British Bangladeshi Transnational Social Field'

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Conceptualising Simultaneity in the British Bangladeshi Transnational Social Field

This paper responds to the work of Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) and other work on transnationalism, integration and cultural mixing. Drawing upon research on British Bangladeshi children in London[1], the paper critiques previous conceptualisations of cultural complexity, describes the ways in which a transnational social field is created, maintained, and reproduced though the socialisation of children and argues for a transnational social fields approach. The aim is to develop theory about transnationalism, cultural mixing and symbolic power. After a review of literature and concepts the paper describes the British Bangladeshi social field and some transnational practices. Finally the paper discusses how transnational social fields and their symbolic power challenge the monopoly of nation states on symbolic power.

Transnationalism

Complex patterns of migration have led scholars to describe some migrants as 'transmigrants' or 'transnational migrants'. Immigrants who *"build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement"* are 'transmigrants' (Glick Schiller et al., 1992:1). Transnational communities develop through migration, where migrants from one country of origin are present in one or more 'host' countries. Transmigrants are involved emotionally, physically and *"develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously"* (Glick Schiller et al., 1992:2).

Transnationalism involves the creation and maintenance of links, flows and networks that stretch over national borders and often across the globe. A 'community' or family need not live in close proximity to one another to have a common arena of activity, especially in the era of relatively cheap telecommunication, flights and internet access (Vertovec, 2004a). Families

can be 'close', decisions made, relationships maintained, goods and money exchanged and people can move between remote sites.

Real and close relationships with family or friends can be maintained at a very great distance. The experience of space and time becomes 'distantiated', as distant events are communicated instantaneously on television, over the telephone or through the internet. Distances in space and time are 'compressed', accelerating connection, communication, conflict interaction and change (Giddens, 1990:14, Harvey, 1989:241)

Transnationalism has allowed scholars to move beyond national comparisons. It has allowed studies of migration to take into account both migrants and non-migrants. Transnationalism enables a conceptualisation of the way migrants (and others) are embedded in more than one society simultaneously. Social spaces are multi-layered and multi-sited; they include influences and locations that are not limited to the 'home' and 'host' countries but take in other sites and societies around the world (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007:131).

Hybridity

Social scientists have debated different ways of understanding the 'cultures', and identities of groups such as British Bangladeshis. Many of these theories and approaches are flawed or problematic. Early work on South Asians in Britain in the 1970s, such as the papers in Watson's (1977) edited collection, conceptualised 'culture' and 'identity' as fixed and essentialised. South Asians in Britain were described as falling between two established and discrete cultures. This discourse of a 'clash' between two different cultures and the people 'caught in the middle' was considered too simplistic and essentialising by academics such as Gilroy (1987), Hall (1992) Cohen (1994), Bhabha (1994), and Baumann (1996). The work of these writers, among others, led to ideas of 'culture' and identity being seen as more blurred and fluid.

Bhabha (1994) used the notion of 'hybridity' to describe complex post-modern influences on identities. Writing about nationalism in the West he described it as:

> …*more hybrid in the articulation of cultural differences and identifications than can be represented in any hierarchical or binary structuring of social antagonism* (Bhabha, 1994:140).

His use of the notion of hybridity is an attempt to describe the almost indescribably complex array of influences, forces, inspirations and catalysts for change in a post-modern, post-colonial, globally connected world. Hybridity emerges from Bhabha's writing as a description of the way in which multiple representations of the same events, contestations, re-writings, re-mixings and unexpected evolutions lead to change. It is, Bhabha says, '*how newness enters the world*' (Bhabha, 1994:227).

Friedman (1997) attacks the idea of hybridity and its proponents such as Bhabha (1994). Citing Rosaldo's (1993) observation that:

> *… the notion of an authentic culture as an autonomous, internally coherent universe no longer seems tenable, except perhaps as a useful fiction or a revealing distortion* (Rosaldo, 1993:217).

Friedman accuses proponents of hybridity of gross simplifications of notions of culture. The idea that 'once pure' cultures mix or collide to create a hybrid, he points out is ridiculous, for were these cultures ever pure? Are all cultures not inherently hybrid? (Freidman, 1997:73). The reference to 'once pure' cultures carries undertones of racism and eugenics, smearing the idea of hybridity with out-dated biological concepts. Bhabha's (1994) use of the term hybridity does seem to allude to genetics, inspired by the way in which mixtures of ideas carry influences from multiple sources and an element of chance, much like the process of biological reproduction. It seems like an apt metaphor in his work but does not assume that what is being mixed was not already inherently mixed. Indeed Bhabha is passionate about the politics of

understanding that 'cultures', 'nations' and 'communities' are always heterogeneous (Bhabha, 1994:5).

Kalra et al. (2005) explain a variety of ways in which the idea of hybridity has been used (and abused) in different disciplines. They end their discussion with recognition of the ubiquitous nature of hybridity, which explains both the power and weakness of the notion of hybridity. Everything is inherently hybrid so the concept is not that useful conceptually, but it is an important reminder against essentialism and simplification. The British Bangladeshi social field is no more homogenous than other social fields or spaces and contains within it a variety of positions, tensions and dispositions towards everything. It is important to remember that the 'British Bangladeshi social field' and 'habitus' are inherently hybrid, drawing inspiration and influence from many locations and processes.

Social fields and habitus

Bourdieu sought to link the objective, the material realities facing a person, which he called the 'field' with the subjective, the dispositions, inclinations and reactions of that person, which he called the 'habitus'. These ideas provide an alternative to other theoretical approaches for the analysis of transnationalism. Bourdieu's notion of a field bears striking similarities to the work on transnational communities reviewed above.

A 'field' is the site of struggles over resources or stakes in and access to them. Fields are defined by the different types of resources over which these struggles take place (cultural goods, housing, intellectual distinction or education, money and employment, land, different types of power, social class, prestige etc). The defining features and struggles of a field give it its unique and specific logic, rules and structure which are both the product and producer of the 'habitus' which relates to that field. (Jenkins, 2002:84)

The material conditions and histories in each field and among different classes and groups of people produce different habitus among them. Habitus is a "*system of durable, transposable dispositions*" (Bourdieu, 1977:72).

These are so ingrained and instilled in people that they regulate behaviour unconsciously without people appearing or feeling like they are obeying rules. It is:

> *… an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted, the habitus engenders all the thoughts, all the perceptions and all the actions consistent with those conditions …* (Bourdieu, 1977:95).

In this sense, unlike the idea of 'culture' that Baumann (1996) analysed, habitus causes behaviour. It is a product of collective and individual histories and contexts and perpetuates itself by producing practices and events based on its principles and dispositions which in turn inform the habitus. Habitus is both structure and structuring, determined and determining, producer and product (Bourdieu, 1977:82). Habitus makes possible but also sets limits to thoughts and behaviour. It is a template setting out acceptable behaviour for specific positions within a social field (Friedmann, 2002:316).

Power dynamics and hierarchies structure the individuals or institutions within a field. This power is based on the access each agent has to the resources which are at stake in the field. One of Bourdieu's most influential ideas was the notion of different types of capital. Bourdieu (1986) stated that there are four principal types of capital at stake in each field: economic capital, social capital (valuable interpersonal relationships), cultural capital (knowledge) and symbolic capital (prestige and honour) (Bourdieu, 1986, Jenkins, 2002:85,).

The existence of a field assumes that the capital at stake in the field is valuable to the agents in the field and through its existence creates the value and legitimacy of the capital. The historical processes that produce the field also create this interest in it (Jenkins, 2002:85). The field is the mediator of objective change upon individual practices and institutions. The logic, politics and structure of the field influence the way in which 'external determinations' or factors affect what is going on in the field. Fields may be overlapping or have similarities in them and their boundaries are often imprecise. Similarities

in practices or habitus between two fields may be due to the similar environment they occupy and thus the similar habitus that their objective context produces, or due to the effect of power relations between fields, with dominant fields influencing weaker ones. The weaker and less autonomous fields suffer from 'overdetermination' by more powerful fields (Jenkins, 2002:86).

In London, many social fields exist side by side and overlap with each other encompassing the many ethnicities, classes, areas and strata of society. Different areas vary greatly in their wealth, conditions, ethnic and social mix. Within and across areas, social and ethnic groups occupy the same space but often have very little contact with each other. Parallel worlds or 'fields' exist in the same space. Other, more fragmented 'fields' stretch between spaces, places, nodes or individuals across wide areas of the city.

Carrington and Luke (1997) explain how people move between and adjust behaviour in the different fields that they encounter in their daily life. (Carrington and Luke, 1997:107). This characterisation of the way in which people move between social fields and acquire competency to participate in the practices of the habitus in each different field is reminiscent of Ballard's notion of 'skilled cultural navigators' (Ballard, 1994:31).

The dispositions of habitus are durable and transposable not only across generations but across continents to such a degree that the habitus acquired by a mother in a village in Sylhet will survive the journey to London. It may also survive many years of life in the UK and the material conditions of an estate in Islington, to be passed on to her children as part of a British Bangladeshi habitus. The effects and perceptions of their Bangladeshi habitus may be changed or have unintended side effects in London. They may be re-interpreted and take on new significances, depending on whether they enhance or diminish aspects of capital, but their durability is still in evidence many years later. This is how parents who are migrants gradually acquire a British Bangladeshi habitus, through adaptation of old practices and adoption of new practices. British Bangladeshi children, require exposure to people,

practices and places in Bangladesh as well as London to learn the British Bangladeshi habitus (Zeitlyn, 2011).

The extent to which habitus is tied to a place, where the objective conditions and experiences produce it, is not clear from Bourdieu's work. Bourdieu used his concepts to discuss classes of people, but most subsequent work using his concepts has centred on particular places. Kelly and Lusius (2006) argue that habitus need not be confined to one place and that immigrants may continue to react to new conditions using the rules of their place of origin. They venture a step further and maintain that habitus itself may become transnational, encompassing the two (or more) locations (Kelly and Lusius, 2006:836). Kelly and Lusius argue that the "*lived spaces that contain the habitus are thus more social than physical*" (Kelly and Lusius, 2006:845).

The British Bangladeshi Social Field

British Bangladeshi children are acquiring several habitus simultaneously and at least one set of these dispositions and generative schemes is influenced by a set of material conditions which exist or existed thousands of miles away from where they now live. While there are many social fields in London, and others that the children in my research engaged with, in this paper I focus on a social field that stretches from London to Sylhet, in Bangladesh. The experiences of British Bangladeshis in London and Sylhet are unique, they are different from the fields and habitus of other inhabitants of both locations that are not British Bangladeshis or family members of British Bangladeshis. This is the 'British Bangladeshi transnational social field'.

Significant numbers of Bangladeshi immigrants came to Britain in the 1950s and 60s. They were single men, and were helped by friends or kin amongst the earliest arrivals. The 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act reinforced this pattern. Under the new regime, those already in the UK helped their family members and neighbours from villages in Sylhet to get employment vouchers to come to the UK (Choudhury, 1993:135). This social network effect led to the high number of migrants to Britain from very concentrated areas of Sylhet

(Dench et al., 2005:40). The new migrants at first saw themselves as temporary work migrants rather than settlers; the 'myth of return' was ever present in their minds. They came in search of high wages rather than as a response to poverty (Gardner and Shukur, 1994:147).

During the 1960s and 70s, British immigration policy became more restrictive and citizens of Commonwealth countries could no longer enter, live and work in Britain. The 1962 Act restricted the rights of non-citizens to live in Britain. It meant that Bangladeshis living in Britain could not return to Bangladesh for long visits without losing their right to live in the UK. Some, feeling nervous about their increasingly unclear legal status took British citizenship, while others lost their rights to live in the UK by staying too long in Bangladesh (Choudhury, 1993:135).

First sons, then wives and other children slowly started to arrive to join the early arrivals (Eade, 1997:149). A cyclone in 1970, the Bangladesh War of Independence in 1971 and the ensuing political instability hastened many families' decisions to relocate to Britain. (Choudhury, 1993:173). In the early seventies, two more factors shaped the nature of the Bangladeshi community in Britain. The decline of the textile industry in the north of England meant that Bangladeshis who had initially found jobs in the mills, moved to London, mainly to Tower Hamlets. The 1971 Immigration Act further restricted immigration, reducing the flow to family reunifications (Dench et al. 2005:44).

There were 283,063 British citizens of Bangladeshi origin recorded in the 2001 census (ONS, 2005). 153,893 (55%) of all British Bangladeshis live in London (Piggott, 2004:5). A quarter of British Bangladeshis, about 65,000 people, live in Tower Hamlets (Piggot, 2004:5). Bangladeshis in East London were mainly employed in the local garment industry, but as this has declined due to foreign competition, more have moved into the restaurant trade or shop keeping (Eade, 1989:29).

A unique British Bangladeshi transnational social field has developed over the years, with its own logic, rules, values and habitus. This social field includes

extended networks of family, neighbours and friends in Sylhet, those who have moved from Sylhet to London and British-born Bangladeshis. The most important physical locations in this social field in terms of size and symbolism are in Sylhet and London. It is closely related to and overlapping with other fields at its two locations. People within this field move in and out of the field and have practices that come from the habitus of other fields.

Analysing the British Bangladeshi transnational community in these terms, as a transnational social field, has several advantages. Transnational fields include both migrants and non-migrants, including in the analysis those 'left behind' by migrants and subsequent generations, children of migrants (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004:1010). This approach is clearer than others about how multiple orientations and loyalties emerge and affect practices (Vertovec, 2004b:22).

Relative poverty and 'security capital'

As British Bangladeshi families have become embedded in social and economic networks in London, the security of life in the UK has become increasingly important to them. In many ways this 'security capital' is a combination of social and economic capital. Free healthcare, schooling, effective policing and the justice system save money and also make acquiring social capital as a form of insurance in an emergency less important. Networks of friends, professional contacts and family are increasingly based in the UK. Competencies and ways of behaving are geared towards succeeding in British-based and transnational British Bangladeshi social fields rather than in Bangladeshi-based social fields.

Economically, politically and environmentally, life in the UK is more secure than in Sylhet and there is a high value placed on the security and stability of life in London (Gardner, 2008:479). Older British Bangladeshis become increasingly reliant on the free care and medicine that they are entitled to from the National Health Service (Gardner, 2002:154, Adams, 1987:178). Despite the relative poverty of many British Bangladeshis, life in the UK is seen as more secure than life in Bangladesh. Despite the feeling that many British

Bangladeshis have of suffering from unfair persecution and prejudice as Muslims; rules, laws and institutions are more reliable in the UK, the infrastructure works and justice is seen to prevail most of the time (Gardner, 2008:487).

This security is valued and the reliability and predictability is something that people in Bangladesh yearn after. The corruption and impunity of political classes in Bangladesh, coupled with political and environmental insecurity, leads many to despair of their chances there. The 'security capital' of being a British Bangladeshi has emerged as one of the most powerful and sought after forms of capital in the British Bangladeshi social field.

When seen from a British perspective, British Bangladeshis are a relatively deprived group. While they are seen as wealthy and successful in Bangladesh and their security capital much sought after, statistics in Britain tell another story. 70% of Bangladeshi pupils in UK schools live in the 20% most deprived postcode areas. A large proportion (45%) is actually living in the 10% most deprived postcode areas. Compare this to White British school children, of whom 20% live in the 20% most deprived postcode areas (DfES, 2006:19). 68% of Bangladeshis live in low-income, often overcrowded households that rely more on benefits than any other community. British Bangladeshi pupils have the highest percentage eligibility for free school meals of any ethnic group (Ofsted, 2004:5).

From a Bangladeshi perspective, the council housing, benefits and free school meals that are markers of poverty in the UK are almost unimaginable luxuries. The British Bangladeshi social field is defined by the unequal power relations between its two poles and the exchanges of different types of capital that take place as a result. Transnational practices around communication, marriage and visits to Bangladesh reflect and facilitate these flows and exchanges.

Transnational Practices

Practices related to communication technology, marriage and visits to Bangladesh play a crucial role in maintaining the social field and reproducing its habitus. The practice of marriages between partners based in Bangladesh and the UK has disrupted the sense of neatly integrating generations of immigrants. While marriage linking a family in one place with one in another is a very old practice, transnationalism has been aided and intensified by the use of technology. Communications technology has played a role in 'distanciation' or 'space-time compression' and the 'disembedding' of social relations from physical places which makes current modes of transnationalism distinct from previous ones (Giddens, 1990:14, Harvey, 1989:241). Visits play a crucial role in the socialisation of children into the British Bangladeshi habitus through exposure to Bangladeshi dispositions, attitudes and ways of behaving (Zeitlyn, 2011).

Marriage

In the early years of the British Bangladeshi social field (1950-80), the wives of British Bangladeshi men often stayed in Sylhet. Beginning in the 1960s due to the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act and continuing until the current day, families have been reunited, where possible, in the UK. In the earlier phase, women played a crucial role in Bangladesh in managing families and households. In general their lives were characterised by hard work in their in-law's household and the loneliness of long periods of absence from their husbands. Once in the UK after family reunification, loneliness and isolation accompanied their confinement to the household and distance from friends and relatives (Gardner, 2006).

The common practice of marriages between British-based Sylhetis and Bangladeshi-based Sylhetis maintains links between families in the UK and Bangladesh. The reasons for the preference for these marriages are complex. In a marriage between a British-based Bangladeshi and a Bangladeshi partner, the British Bangladeshi family has power over their new Bangladeshi son or daughter in-law, due to their dependence on the success of the marriage to get British citizenship. In return, British-based families are able to

maintain links with Bangladesh and secure what they see as a suitable marriage partner for their child. As Charsley (2007) shows in relation to British Pakistanis, marriage to kin or neighbours from Pakistan or Bangladesh is partly to reduce the risks of marriage to an unsuitable spouse, marital problems or shame being brought upon the family (Charsley, 2007:1119).

The practice of patrilocal households is reversed in the case of a Bangladeshi man marrying a British Bangladeshi woman. Bangladeshi men who relocate to the UK live with their in-laws or as couples and work in the UK. Bangladeshi partners are perceived to be 'loyal' and less 'canny', more 'moral', more 'traditional' and less likely to abscond, divorce or cheat (cf. Charsley, 2007:1124). Through cousin marriages, British-based families can find someone upon whom they believe they can rely, consolidate wealth and land and also fulfil obligations to help members of their family migrate (Gardner, 2006:385).

Bangladeshi-based families can secure a connection with London and the transnational community through marriage. Here the flow of economic capital is in the opposite direction to that normally assumed, with the marriage to a British citizen likely to be very expensive for the Bangladeshi citizen's family. Often cash, land and/or goods worth tens of thousands of pounds are transferred. Years of savings and acquisition of social and symbolic capital may be transferred in such an arrangement (cf. Gardner, 2008:487). In return, the family hope to start a process of remittances, meaning increased security in Bangladesh. If everything goes well they can look forward to increased social capital, meaning perhaps future marriages for members of their family and relative security and wealth for children of the marriage in the UK.

The practice of transnational marriages remains common of the children who I studied, all had a parent who had migrated to the UK in adulthood specifically for marriage. Marriages form one of the strongest ways of maintaining transnational links between Sylhet and the UK. They interrupt the neat and artificial notions of a 'second' and 'third' generation, continuously bringing new arrivals and Sylheti subjectivities to the UK. This

conceptualisation however, misses the point. These marriages are part of a unified social space between Sylhet and parts of the UK, a transnational social field. The scale and accessibility of transnational connections, the extent to which transnational social fields can be coherent has been transformed by improvements in communications technology.

Transnational technology

Technology has been used to define new ways and transform old patterns of being transnational. The increased availability and affordability of telecommunications has meant that economic, political and social networks between Bangladesh and London are stronger and denser today than ever before. In the 1980s, communication by telephone between Bangladesh and the outside world was difficult and unpredictable. Most households did not have a telephone, especially in rural areas. Transnational Sylheti families mainly communicated through letters, which took weeks or months to reach their destination (Gardner, 2008:477). New mobile phone companies, many of which are joint ventures between Bangladeshi companies and foreign investors, have leapfrogged the old land lines. Cheaper and more reliable than the old land lines, mobile phones are now the preferred mode of communication.

Mobiles are now affordable to many who previously would not have had telephones; they work in remote rural areas that previously had no telephone lines. This revolution has been driven by the tumbling cost of making international phone calls and demand not only from within Bangladesh for cheap and reliable calls, but from outside Bangladesh for ways to keep in touch with friends and family. Improved international phone lines, technical improvements, the massive market, intense competition and the rise of international phone cards have brought prices of international calls down sharply. Research on telephone traffic shows remarkable recent increases in calls from many countries that send and receive migrants and Bangladesh is no exception (Vertovec, 2004a:220).

Increased contact changes the lives of families separated by huge distances and allows the kind of discussions over family issues that would take place in a non-migrant family. These enable people in London to be involved in the day-to-day affairs and decisions of their families in Bangladesh. As providers and remittance-senders, families in Britain want to know where their money is being spent. They want to keep tabs on activities, work and expenditure in Bangladesh. They convert the economic capital they have earned in London into social and symbolic capital in Bangladesh. Their pounds may go towards building a new mosque, homes for relatives or charity work and they must ensure that the social and symbolic capital is attributed to them. Telephone communication enables them to be intimately involved in the buying of a new fridge, in preparations for a marriage or a business venture which they may have funded. British Bangladeshi women in London can also feel the sense of companionship with other female relations in large joint families in Bangladesh that they miss, living relatively isolated lives in London through frequent communication with relatives in Bangladesh (Gardner, 2006:374).

Young men in Sylhet, eager to get to London and join the transnational community, engage in the production of symbolic and social capital, through practices that link them with transnational, 'British' lifestyles. Fast food, fashions, trips to the British High Commission and the internet café are all part of this, but so is the possession of the latest model of mobile phone. These young men hope to convert this symbolic capital and the social capital they gain by maintaining close contact with British kin into economic capital for themselves and their family through marriage and migration to the UK (Gardner, 2008:487).

Mobile phones acquire a special totemic meaning: they are the 'social glue' of transnationalism (Vertovec, 2004a) and they are the tools for the construction of social and symbolic capital (Gardner, 2008:487). In transnational networks the holders of these tools are the 'gatekeepers' to access. Through them flow messages, money, relationships, power, social and symbolic capital. Sylheti families reported that their relatives in Bangladesh request mobile phones more than any other gift.

While mobiles and cheap telephone calls are important, other forms of modern communication are also influential. Satellite television brings news from Bangladesh to London and from the East End of London, 'Banglatown', to the rest of Britain and back to Bangladesh. British Bangladeshis can see the suffering of cyclone victims on television and contribute to relief funds with a telephone call. Money and clothes were collected among my research subjects in different parts of London in response to Cyclone Sidr[2]. Bangladeshis in Sylhet can watch the festivities at the annual *Boishaki Mela*[3] near Brick Lane on television.

Through many, short term communications and the longer term commitment of marriage as well as visits to Bangladesh, among many other practices, a transnational social field is maintained. These transnational social fields have important implications for the way in which power is conceptualised in the work of Bourdieu (1977) and Foucault (1977).

Power

Jenks' (1996) discussion of the social construction of childhoods identified 'Apollonian' and 'Dionysian' archetypes of childhood. He associates these two archetypes with different modes of discipline discussed in Foucault (1977). Whereas the Dionysian child of the *ancien regime* had to be strictly controlled and punished, the Apollonian child self-regulated through the internalisation of discipline and guilt (Jenks 1996:79). Foucault's conceptualisation of power sees it as moving from a system of control over subjects by those with power to a relational idea of power, as expressed above. 'Disciplinary' power does not simply involve a hierarchy, authority or control that happens simultaneously to other social relations but works through all social relations. Disciplinary power takes effect through constant small scale struggles that make patterns that transcend the individual and combine to form large scale mechanisms of domination (Foucault, 1977:27).

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[2] A very powerful and destructive cyclone that hit Bangladesh on the 15th of November 2007
[3] Bengalis new year, celebrated with a large open air fair in East London.

Rather than focus on the conscious subject of power, Foucault focuses on the way in which disciplinary power acts on the body to instil habitual responses. 'Sovereign power' prohibits, while disciplinary power, through this surveillance and regulation, produces the modern subject. Foucault emphasises the role of science and the institutions of the prison, hospital and school in this process of observation and regulation. In this way, Foucault draws a direct link between power and knowledge (Foucault, 1977:27). Bourdieu's conceptualisation of power also focuses on the body and the inculcation of habitual dispositions. Through habitus, every aspect of behaviour is taught to children by parents, school and peers. The socialising training of habitus reflects the power relations of the social field by communicating to the child his or her position in relation to practices, objects and dispositions (Bourdieu 1977:72).

Power relations, in Bourdieu's conceptualisation, are influenced not only by material resources such as wealth and physical coercion, but also by symbolic power. Symbolic power is how material power relations are considered by a certain worldview or habitus to be legitimate (Cronin, 1996:65). Habitus is built from a shared belief system, which Bourdieu refers to as 'doxa'. From the 'doxa' the shared logic and system of meaning of a social field or society, symbolic power and capital is drawn (Bourdieu 1977:168-171). Through his theory of practice and the notion of habitus, Bourdieu and Foucault manage to transcend conceptualisations of power limited to the individual subject and consciousness. Both conceptualisations manage to theorise the effects of what might be called a collective unconscious. Both focus on the habitual learning of a way of being and on the way in which symbolic power limits the subjective perception of the objective possibilities.

The dominant forces in society have an interest in maintaining their system of logic, for that legitimates their dominant position. This is why ruling powers in societies take an interest in the socialisation of children to reproduce their worldview and hierarchy. This, of course, like Foucault's (1977) conceptualisation of power, relies upon the complicity of the dominated in

these power relations (Cronin, 1996:66). It is also why Bourdieu's (1977) notion of symbolic power is so important.

Bourdieu's (1977) work on the Kabyle draws upon data from a relatively homogenous 'traditional' society. In 'modern' societies, however, Bourdieu says, social action becomes rationally differentiated into different fields of discourse and practice. Economic and cultural spheres have different fields of action and exchange. In non-literate societies, the system of meaning and symbolism is shared by all, but the doxa is imposed by those with power. In literate societies, this domination is opened up to specialist producers of symbolic goods who compete over symbolic power. This codification normalises and formalises practices, rationalising them and leads to new forms of symbolic power. Those, who possess the competence to codify practices, control the legitimate vision of the social world and the power to reinforce or challenge social relations (Cronin, 1996:68).

Through his analysis of cultural capital and *Distinction* (1984) Bourdieu shows how cultural capital is related to economic capital, as people seek to improve their status by exchanging wealth for cultural capital. This can be achieved through education and the 'right types' of cultural consumption. The social field therefore becomes polarised between a dominant class who are rich in economic and cultural capital and a class who are poor in both. Bourdieu maintains that the modern state gains power not only through control of legitimate physical violence but also through a monopoly over the power to produce and impose categories of thought to the social world. Through the education system, as Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) describe in *Reproduction in Education and Society,* the state seeks to transform the dominant culture into a legitimate national culture (Cronin, 1996:72). Power struggles happen both within social fields, for control over different types of capital, but also between social fields as different interpretations of the world, class positions and interest groups compete over resources, the power to rule or the power to control production of symbolic categories.

One problem with both Foucault and Bourdieu's conceptualisations of power and their application to contemporary empirical work is the fixation with the organisational unit of the nation state. Foucault's all pervasive regime of normalising discipline emanates from the state. Bourdieu's conceptualisations of class and cultural capital relate to a state authority with a monopoly on the production of symbolic capital. In the world today, these conceptualisations, while theoretically extremely useful, are not supported by empirical research. Globalisation and transnationalism mean that communities all over the world are linked and influenced by forces far beyond the borders or control of the government of the nation they are in. As Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004) point out, a transnational social fields approach entails a rethink of power. British Bangladeshi children experience many different types of power from different local, global as well as national social fields.

Power relations and British Bangladeshi Children in Islington

Many migrants move from a state that is relatively weak to a state that is more powerful, both in terms of its capacity to rule within its borders and relatively compared to other states (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004:1013). Bangladeshi migrants to Britain for example moved from a poor and relatively weak Bangladesh to a relatively wealthy and powerful Britain. The British Bangladeshi social field lies across these unequal power relationships.

Many migrants and participants in transnational social fields gain social power in terms of their increased access to social and economic capital in their 'homeland' compared to the power they had before migrating or that they do in the country they have migrated to (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004:1014). British Bangladeshis' earnings in the UK make them extremely powerful economically in Bangladesh. They can, as Bourdieu (1986) says, exchange this wealth for social and cultural capital. Marrying into high status families, giving gifts to neighbours or kin in Bangladesh, paying for mosques to be built and holding lavish wedding or Eid parties are all ways in which British Bangladeshis may convert their economic capital into social and cultural capital.

The important 'security capital' that British Bangladeshis possess relative to their kin and neighbours in Bangladesh is not free however: it comes at a cost. The valuable security provided by the British social welfare system makes British Bangladeshis dependent on the British state and subject to its rules. While parents may exercise power over their children in a number of ways, certain forms of physical force are not considered acceptable by the British Government's rules. Through the institutions of the school and the system of social services, the state exercises power over its citizens, British Bangladeshi and otherwise, about the acceptable boundaries of behaviour. Parents must conform to rules governing the care of their children in order to benefit from the free education, healthcare and to avoid the sanctions the state can bring against parents who do not act 'correctly'. Parents who take their children out of school during term time for extended visits to Bangladesh, for example, may be fined for every day that their child is out of school or may find when they return that their child has lost their place at school. A host of bureaucratic and legal systems represent the power of the state to rule its citizens and to exercise particular power over recipients of government benefits.

Through the school, as well as public information and in the mainstream media the government also attempts to exercise another form of power over its citizens, which is closer to the type of power in Foucault (1977), Bourdieu's (1977) and Bourdieu and Passeron's (1990) analyses of power. This relational form of power requires the 'dominated' to accept and participate in power relations willingly rather than through some form of coercion. It is the power to structure the possible field of action for others or inculcate a system of dispositions such as the habitus. This requires socialisation and the recognition of the legitimacy of authority. Parents are obliged by law to send their children to school until they are 16, but most do so willingly, exchanging the power the school has over their children for the power that the cultural capital of education will give their children in the future. The school then acts to teach a series of useful skills, measure success among pupils and reproduce the symbolic power of the state represented as legitimate national culture.

It is through resistance to this symbolic aspect of power that some within transnational communities resist the power of nation states. Whist they are subject to laws and systems of taxes and subsidies, they may draw upon symbolic power and ideology from a variety of sources. British Bangladeshi children in Islington learn a system of logic that draws its influence both from Bangladesh and from the experience of being Bangladeshi in Britain. The British Bangladeshi transnational social field is influenced by state power, but its symbolic power is independent and occasionally hostile to the Bangladeshi state, which is perceived to be corrupt and ineffective. The symbolic power is also independent of the British state which is perceived to be corrupt in a different way, and hostile towards Muslims across the world and within Britain.

Instead the symbolic power of the British Bangladeshi social field draws upon economic success and 'security capital' in Britain, social and cultural capital drawn from relations in both the UK and Bangladesh and 'sacred capital' drawn from the correct observance of Islamic practices. The combination of these types of capital and the relations of people to power within other social fields, as well as different manifestations and scales of power in London and Sylhet makes the British Bangladeshi social field a unique system of logic that is not governed by the monopoly on symbolic power of any nation state.

Transnational social fields such as the British Bangladeshi one create symbolic power which is independent of nation states, they draw influences and meaning from a range of sources. This realignment of social spaces across borders, professions and even classes is not one that Bourdieu (1977) or Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) discuss. Using their terminology and useful conceptualisation of power and the reproduction of symbolic power, but recognising that there are multiple poles of symbolic power that are not limited to the borders of nation states is essential for a clearer understanding of power relations and the experiences of growing up as part of an ethnic minority in Britain. Non-state forms of power, such as transnational social fields, diasporas, corporations, social movements, ideologies and religions have become important sources of symbolic power.

Studying transnational children provides good empirical material for this analysis. Children are developing and learning, and as adults try to reproduce their own systems of logic as legitimate through the education or socialisation of children, they make good case studies of the workings of symbolic power. Studying this process in children reveals the workings of symbolic power more clearly than in adults as it is acceptable in a way that attempting to inculcate a system of meaning into an adult's mind is not. It can therefore be observed and studied openly. For all the restrictions upon and apparent difficulties of researching children, they are subject to symbolic power relations in a way that is much more accessible and observable than the ways that adults are.

A transnational social fields (re)conceptualisation of symbolic power sees it as emanating from many poles, or centres of power. Nation states remain important centres of symbolic power but no longer, as Fraser (2003) indicates, have a monopoly over it, globalisation means that symbolic power is multi-layered and multi-polar. Many of the poles of symbolic power are non-state institutions, ideologies or social fields. The privatisation and 'marketisation' of many functions of the state has accelerated this process, handing over control of sources of symbolic power to corporations who are often transnational and may have different agendas to governments. Communications technology has also enabled this process, allowing easy and regular contact between people and sources of symbolic power across national boundaries and large distances.

Recent repressive policies regarding civil liberties in the UK, which Muslims in the UK such as British Bangladeshis have felt more keenly than most, point to another of Fraser's (2003) contentions regarding Foucault's theory. The break up of the monopoly on symbolic power has led to increasing difficulty maintaining the self-regulating guilt of disciplinary power. People who regard transnational systems of symbolic power as more legitimate than the state are unlikely to self-regulate according to its logic. The school and education system in Britain socialises children into 'British society' but if children and their families regard British Bangladeshi or Islamic socialisation as more

important, some of these lessons will not be readily accepted. The legitimacy of the social order, the system of logic and rules taught by the school will not be recognised or respected. When self-regulating discipline breaks down, a return to repressive sovereign power is the last recourse of the state. The British Government's use of torture, imprisonment without trial and the spectacle of extra-judicial executions on London's underground system and armed raids at dawn on the houses of suspect British Muslims in can be seen as proof of a crisis in the disciplinary power of the state.

Transnational social fields can help us to understand how British Bangladeshi children grow up embedded simultaneously in several social fields. The analysis of the socialisation of children by practices in these different social fields, local, national, transnational and global can also inform our understanding of the way symbolic power works today.

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