

# Appendix 1A

## University Profiles

### West Yorkshire<sup>1</sup>

The West Yorkshire region has a high percentage of Muslims, with 11 per cent of the entire Muslim population in Britain located in this area, according to the 2001 census (Hussain 2008: 46; see also Peach 2006a: 650). However, this percentage is likely to have increased, with a growth in the population of Muslims in Britain to 2.7 million, as illustrated in the 2011 census (Office for National Statistics 2012: 1).

According to the same census, specific areas within West Yorkshire continue to have a high percentage of Muslims (Office for National Statistics 2012). Within this region, West Yorkshire<sup>1</sup> is located in a culturally and religiously diverse neighbourhood. The university itself has a relatively small proportion of Muslim and Pakistani students. The Students Union consists of a welfare officer, who deals with all students and their welfare concerns, together with a black and ethnic minority student officer and an international student officer, who support and encourage greater participation of students from different backgrounds.

The university also provides support in the form of counselling services. These services are aimed at the general student body and cover a wide range of issues from harassment or discrimination to emotional and psychological health. However, as outlined by the participants, while services may be available for student support, including Muslim students in the university in general, students remain unsure about whom to contact to report a specific form of discrimination, such as Islamophobia. To meet the needs of its Muslim students, there is provision of both halal food and prayer rooms. The university has an Islamic society but encountered problems establishing a Pakistani society, with opposition from British students with a Pakistani heritage. This problem is further explained in light of the association between this university and Islamist terrorists involved in acts of terrorism in the UK. These terrorists (of Pakistani heritage) were part of the university alumni.

## **West Yorkshire2**

The university is located in a town with a large South Asian community. This is also represented in the student population, consisting of a large Pakistani student body. The university's welfare provision includes faith advisors for different religious groups, with three in particular allocated for Muslim students, where one advisor is a member of staff. The contact information for these advisors is clearly available on the university's welfare website. A university Welfare member was also interviewed for this research, who further highlighted the nature of such provisions, which provide religious, intellectual, psychological and emotional support. However, the biggest problem for Muslim students—especially women at this university, as outlined in the interview—related to issues of forced and arranged marriages, as well as problems more directly related to academic underperformance, with no cases of Islamophobia being reported.

Information about such welfare provisions, particularly for issues relating to forced marriages, were publicized not only on notice boards across the university, but also in female toilets. Welfare provisions were further provided by the Students Union through the welfare officer, a part-time black and minorities officer and a part-time international students officer. The university also provides halal food options and prayer room facilities.

The university has a large Islamic society but, despite having a large presence of students with a Pakistani heritage, the university does not have a Pakistani society. The number of overseas Pakistani students is also quite small, which was evident from the fact that, for many, the researcher was the first Pakistani they had met. The university was in the news over the arrest of some of its students on charges of terrorism.

### **North West1**

The North West region is also reported to have a strong Muslim community, with a large Pakistani presence (Hussain 2008: 46; Office for National Statistics 2012: 8). The region has also been highlighted in the news due to Pakistani students from universities in this region being arrested on charges of terrorism. This led to the Justice for North West 10 Campaign, which is discussed in Chap. 5. North West1 in the sample has a large population of Pakistani students compared with other universities in this region, as indicated in the HESA dataset.

The university also has a strong Pakistani student society and an Islamic society. In providing support to students against hate crime, which includes racism and religious discrimination, the Students Union is working together with the local police authorities so that crimes can be easily reported through the Union.

The Union also provides welfare support through a wellbeing officer, as well as a diversity officer, in order to guarantee support to all students relating to problems of health, as well as issues concerning discrimination. The university itself provides counselling services, as well as personal tutors that look after the academic and other welfare needs of the students. There is also provision of prayer rooms and halal food.

### **South East England1**

This university town has a small population of Muslims and Pakistanis, both in the region and within the university. It has an active Islamic society and a Pakistani student society.

The university provides a race equality platform to discuss issues relating to race and inequality, as well as religious discrimination, with the aim of finding solutions and facilitating both staff and students. The university is also in the process of addressing student concerns regarding prayer facilities, as highlighted by a survey undertaken by the Equality division, though a temporary prayer facility was provided to students. Halal food can be found in shops around the university campus. The race and equality officer for the university was also interviewed, and highlighted the support given to students facing discrimination in terms of counselling services; but this officer also underlined the disconnect between students and university welfare provisions, which are seldom utilized. The Students Union also has a welfare officer and an international students' officer, as well as providing peer support across the university.

### **South East England<sup>2</sup>**

Located in the same town as South East England<sup>1</sup>, this university has a small population of Muslim students. The university provides a platform for multi-faith dialogue, as well as provisions such as prayer rooms and halal food for Muslim students. The Students Union comprises of an ethnic minorities student officer, an international officer and a full-time 'student experience officer', with all three positions aimed at assisting students' diverse welfare needs. The university's race and welfare officer was interviewed for this research; as in South East England<sup>1</sup>, the officer mentioned how miscommunication was often the biggest problem facing Muslim students in their relationship with the university.

### **South West England<sup>1</sup>**

This area has a small percentage of Muslims. A university town, South West England<sup>1</sup> has an Islamic society but, given the small population of Muslim and Pakistani students, it does not have a Pakistani society. However, to cater to the religious needs of its students, the university provides a multi-faith chaplaincy. It also has a prayer room, and halal food is available in the Students Union store.

The university further provides counselling services to students in general. The Students Union also has a welfare officer, who deals with issues relating to both welfare and equality. It further provides part-time officers, especially the international student officer and a part-time widening participation officer, to cater to the diverse needs of students, encouraging greater participation of students from various backgrounds across the student body.

### **West Midlands1**

The West Midlands—in particular, the area of Birmingham—has a strong presence of Muslims and Pakistanis (Peach 2006a; Hussain 2008; Office for National Statistics 2012). However, West Midlands1 is located in an area with a small proportion of Muslims, and the university itself has a small population of Muslim and Pakistani students. It is for this reason that the university does not have a Muslim or Pakistani student society.

The university is included in this list of profiles because of Tehmina, who is a student at West Midlands1 but was interviewed for her involvement not only with her Students Union, but also at the national level, and for her insights and experiences with Muslim students across the West Midlands area.

The university provides a multi-faith prayer room, with a multi-faith chaplain who can direct students to facilities outside the university. There is no provision of halal food within the university campus. The university provides counselling services for the wellbeing of its students. The Students Union welfare support comprises of diversity, representation and international officers, to encourage and support students from all backgrounds.

### **North East England1**

A university town, North East England1 has a small population of Pakistani and Muslim students. Students are given support through personal and academic tutors, as well as a counselling service. It has an Islamic society but, given the small population of Pakistani students,

there is no Pakistani student society. The university provides a Muslim chaplain, as well as a prayer room. However, the prayer room is located behind a public house, which proved problematic for students—particularly for young women who encountered drunk individuals on their way to prayer. The university does not provide halal food on campus.

## **London**

According to the 2011 Census, London is the most diverse city with a large presence of Muslims (Office for National Statistics 2012: 1). The student sample from universities across London varied, depending on student response and accessibility. The universities themselves had a diverse distribution of Muslim students, as the following profiles illustrate.

**London1:** This University of London Higher Educational institution is dedicated to research relating to health and wellbeing. It has a small population of Muslim and Pakistani students, with no Islamic or Pakistani society. The main source of support for students is their student adviser, as well as a counsellor to provide academic and non-academic welfare support. London1 is affiliated with the University of London Union which provides further student support in the form of the black students' officer. As students' narratives demonstrated, London1 does not have prayer room facilities on campus; neither is there any provision of halal food on campus.

**London2:** Also affiliated with the University of London, London2 has a large presence of Pakistani and Muslim students. The Students Union provides support in the form of a welfare officer and an international students' officer, and has been supportive of the Islamic society. The university also has a vibrant Pakistani society. The university provides a Muslim chaplain, as well as counselling services for Muslim students. There are prayer room provisions and halal options are available for students in the Students' Union store.

**London3:** This university also has a vibrant Muslim and Pakistani student body. While it has an active Pakistani and Islamic student society, the Students Union, under the anti-racism officer, is quite active in raising awareness about Islamophobia and counter terrorism. The Students

Union organized an Islamophobia Awareness Month, as well as a conference on security and student extremism on campuses. The Union also took a stance against Islamophobia and anti-Semitism, and implemented a no tolerance policy on all forms of religious discrimination, including Islamophobia, for all student societies. The university provides prayer room facilities, and halal food on campus. As with other universities in the sample, it also provides welfare support such as counselling services. While the provision of a prayer room exists, students have recourse to a multi-faith chaplain, who directs them to the relevant authority.

**London4:** While located in an area with a strong South Asian presence, this university has a small percentage of Pakistani students compared with the other three London-based universities. However, the Students Union has a large network of welfare officers, including individuals dealing with multi-culturalism and international students. London4 has both an Islamic society and a Pakistani society. The university makes welfare provisions, including counselling, with a multi-faith chaplain. Students are also provided prayer room facilities, and halal food on campus.

# Appendix 1B

## Narrator Profiles

### **Salma, North West1, 28, Graduate (Business), Overseas**

Salma was born in Lahore, Pakistan. Her mother is a homemaker and her father is a businessman and a landlord. She has two sisters. She went to a single-sex missionary school in Lahore, and a single-sex private high school. She attended a mixed-sex liberal arts university in Lahore, where she studied Social Sciences, with an emphasis on political science and history, and a took minor in Economics. She also worked in the university, a requirement of a scholarship she was awarded as an undergraduate. Her work entailed interacting with potential students and their parents, as well as managing other students who worked under her. She was never inclined towards extra-curricular activities, as she would rather spend her spare time reading books. She would have liked to pursue creative writing and literature as a career. However, describing herself as a practical person who wants to be financially independent, for a graduate degree she chose business school instead, something ‘she is good at’.

She read for a Masters in Business at a university in Coventry, and then worked as a research assistant at a business school in West Yorkshire. She joined another business school in West Yorkshire to pursue a PhD. She had visited England before on family vacations, and the transition from Pakistan to England was quite easy for her, despite having doubts about being away from her family. She made friends easily, although it was often people who befriended her, rather than her approaching other students, as she does not mind being on her own. However, she is more inclined towards being friends with women rather than men, as it takes her more time to trust men. On her PhD course, she now has more male friends than females, after having known them for four years. She moved to a big city for her PhD as she felt a PhD degree would have been an isolating experience, especially in a small campus town, whereas a big city would be more busy with more to do. While she goes to clubs and pubs, she does not drink alcohol for religious reasons, which she feels limits her friendship with British students, as there is a drinking culture of which she cannot be a part. Despite avoiding extra-curricular activities, she has been voted as the class representative for both her Masters and PhD degree courses. She believes people chose her because she is approachable and she consciously tries not to be judgemental, 'like people in Pakistan'.

While a practising Muslim, she does not wear the hijab.

### **Zebunnisa, North West1, 21, Undergraduate (Law), Overseas**

Zebunnisa comes from the city of Karachi, Pakistan. Her father works for the government and her mother is a teacher. Her parents sold a piece of property they had inherited from her grandfather to finance her studies. Her father was a little hesitant about sending her abroad. In school, she was both studious and active in her debating club. When she won a local debating competition and was selected to go abroad for another competition, she was accompanied by her mother and grandmother. When she won international competitions, her father 'was over the moon' and felt confident enough to send her abroad for her studies. Zebunnisa also has an older sister and a younger brother. Her sister got married at a young age, she 'had a love marriage', and she is happy and settled. However, her sister regretted not going abroad for further studies, a factor that

further influenced her parents' decision in letting her go to England. Her brother is still in school but will soon be also applying for undergraduate degrees abroad.

Zebunissa chose North West1 because it was located in a town with a strong Muslim population, so she felt she would not have any issues with halal food. She is active in her university's Pakistani society, and is passionate about portraying a positive image of her country. She wants to be a lawyer and serve Pakistan. In her narrative, she also highlighted the problem of Pakistani women being less politically active, even in their student Pakistani societies. She believes women need to be more involved in student politics, and tries to encourage others. She also co-founded' a charitable organization based in Pakistan that promotes education for the underprivileged. She runs the organization while studying for her undergraduate degree in North West1.

She is a practising Muslim but was not wearing the hijab or a religious signifier.

### **Hafiza, London, 25, Alumna, British**

Hafiza lives in London. Her father is from Lahore and her mother is from elsewhere in the Punjab. Her father came to England to study. She has five other siblings, two sisters and three brothers. While all her sisters, like her, wear the niqab, the youngest does not strictly observe this. Her mother is unwell. Her father always encouraged the sisters to wear a hijab and *shalwar kameez*, and they were allowed to wear long loose skirts but never anything tight. Her father also gives the Friday sermons at their local mosque. She describes her father as 'religious but his religion is tainted by culture', and gives the example of 'celebrating the Prophet's birthday' which for her 'is a cultural practice, not Islamic'.

She started thinking about religion after a course on philosophy, media and politics that she took in her A-levels; this confused her and made her question God's existence. She was in an accident, being hit by a car when she was in college, and describes how she 'had a strange vision' and she 'didn't feel any pain'. She was just grateful that she had said her morning prayers that day. Having survived, that accident made her even more

religious. She wanted to use philosophy to prove that Islam was right. That is when she started studying about Islam, since she did not want to believe what she was told.

She tried attending a regular university but felt 'that university life compromises a Muslim woman's modesty'. She felt she stood out because of her clothes. It was also the time she started wearing the niqab, which she describes as the hardest thing she has ever done. Her father discouraged her, since he was afraid that she might be targeted. Since she was still learning about the niqab and did not realize whether it was mandatory in Islam or not, for her father's sake she only wore it within the university, since her father was afraid of her travelling with the niqab on. Outside the university, she would take it off. Soon, she dropped out of university and, instead, joined an online university programme, since she felt more secure. She wanted to marry a man who would support her decision to wear the niqab and, in her last year at her university, she got married and feels more confident wearing the niqab since she now has the support.

Hafiza has travelled to Pakistan but she feels that she does not fit in. She also has never been to a protest because she believes 'going to protest is against Islamic ethics' and 'modesty'. She does, however, have a website through which she creates awareness about Islam, and has a separate section about the causes and campaigns she endorses.

In the interview she asked not to be audio recorded, as she was uncomfortable with being recorded.

### **Faiza, West Yorkshire2, 22, Undergraduate (Humanities), British**

Faiza was born in a predominantly South Asian town in West Yorkshire, where she has lived all her life. Her mother is a homemaker. Her father is a salesperson, or so she thinks, since she is not sure about exactly what he does. Both her parents are from a small village in Northern Punjab, Pakistan, and her ethnic background is Pathan. She has six sisters, four older than her and two younger. She went to a state-sponsored primary school and then attended a faith school, which received state patronage while she was a student there. She then attended a Muslim girls' college and, after sixth form, taught at a Muslim girls primary school for one

year. She is reading for an undergraduate degree in Humanities at West Yorkshire<sup>3</sup>. She is repeating her first year for the second time, as she failed her qualifying exams.

She does not take part in extra-curricular activities, and has described herself as someone who lacks self-confidence. Her biggest highlight of her school years was 'getting something that you didn't think you could do'. She enjoys watching cricket, though she does not know how to play the game. Her idea of fun is to go to theme parks with her family. She does not go to the cinema to watch films and, while she sometimes spends time with her friends, she does not enjoy it as much as spending time with her family.

She wears a niqab, which she started wearing at the age of 19 when she attended evening classes on Islamic theology. Her mother also wears the niqab. She started wearing the jilbab at age 18, since it was part of her sixth form uniform. She has continued with the hijab since school, where it was part of the school uniform.

She has never been on a plane and has never travelled to Pakistan. She imagines Pakistan as a place with 'open air, close to nature' having 'a lot more freedom to do things than you do here', since, for her, England feels 'quite closed'.

### **Hafsa, North East1, 22, Graduate (Law), Overseas**

Hafsa was born in England but mostly grew up in Karachi, Pakistan. She has a dual British-Pakistani nationality. While growing up in Karachi, she used to visit England during the summer. Her father is a businessman and her mother is a lawyer. She has an elder brother and a younger sister. She studied in a single-sex missionary school in Karachi and attended a mixed-sex private high school. She hated her high school experience, as she was not used to boys and 'that kind of attention'. She came for her undergraduate degree in law at a North East university in England, after which she continued to pursue law in England. She has always been involved in extra-curricular activities throughout her academic life. From sports and student politics in school, to becoming involved with the Islamic society and the student council at her university, she now volunteers for a pro bono legal advice organization in England.

She started wearing the hijab as an undergraduate. She had always wanted to wear one in Pakistan but her parents were not supportive of the idea. Her mother was especially against the idea of her wearing a hijab in England, as she was afraid her daughter might encounter discrimination. When she started wearing it in England, she did not tell her parents for a month. Despite wearing the hijab for three years, her father and brother still have a difficult time accepting the hijab. Her mother, inspired by her, started wearing the *dupatta* [a piece of cloth in the form of a sash, part of Pakistani traditional dress] in Pakistan.

### **Aliya, South West1, 20, Undergraduate (Sciences), British**

Aliya was born in a town in the West Midlands which has a large Pakistani diaspora. Her mother was born in the same town but her father immigrated from Mirpur in Pakistan. Her father has a hearing disability. She has one younger brother. She is studying in a university in South West England, She is in her second year of an undergraduate degree in audiology. She went to a mixed-sex primary and secondary school, and went to a grammar school for the sixth form. She visited Pakistan when she was aged five. She has been active in extracurricular activities from primary school to her university, becoming involved in the student council, entering writing competitions, as well as playing hockey. She is also a member of her university's sign language society and is learning sign language. She has also joined the photography club and a pottery club, though she feels she is not that 'good at making pottery'. She has volunteered at a Red Cross shop, as well. She is a member of the Islamic society, though not part of the committee, and helps out with society events. She feels that she is an organized person, which is why she can be involved in extracurricular activities and study at the same time, though her course is not that demanding.

She describes herself as a British Muslim first and a Pakistani last, while her grandparents keep telling her that she is a British-Pakistani and then a Muslim. She disagrees, since she has only been to Pakistan once, does not speak the language and her 'Mirpuri is like that of a 7-year-old, it is that bad'. She also does not feel as though she is a 'typical Pakistani girl', since Pakistani girls are either into 'boys, Bollywood films and songs', or

try to 'be white'. She has never been in either category, and believes that 'having boyfriends' is not allowed in Islam. She has had friends from different backgrounds, since she makes friends based on the person not their background. Her sixth form best friend, though, was of a Pakistani background.

She wears the hijab, but her mother discouraged her from wearing it in the beginning. Her mother felt that she should wear the hijab for the right reasons, rather than changing her mind later on and taking it off. Her mother also wears the hijab. She started wearing the hijab whenever she would go out while still in school. However, she would never wear it to school. She and her friends also used to wear it during Ramadan. She realized the importance of the hijab when she read the Quran in English and has been wearing it ever since.

### **Amna, North West1, 28, Graduate (Social Sciences), Overseas**

Amna was born in Lahore, Pakistan. Her deceased father was a doctor; she has a stepfather who is a businessman. Her mother used to be a beautician but now is a full-time homemaker. She has two sisters and three brothers. She went to a single-sex missionary school in Lahore, and a single-sex private high school. She completed her undergraduate degree from a liberal arts university in Lahore.

She travelled to West Yorkshire to study part-time for a Masters in Social Sciences at West Yorkshire1. At the time of the interview, she had returned to Pakistan after completing her Masters and was working for an NGO related to education. She was involved in sports in school and became 'politically aware' during her undergraduate degree course. As a graduate student at West Yorkshire1, she was politically involved in the Justice for North West 10 campaign. She also initiated a political campaign in West Yorkshire against General Musharraf in September 2007, when he declared an emergency in Pakistan. She became politically active in West Yorkshire because she was frustrated by the lack of student activism for Pakistan, and felt the need to take initiative. She continued her political activism on returning to Pakistan, attending street protests and organizing discussion groups on current affairs in Pakistan.

While a practising Muslim, she does not wear the hijab.

**Aisha, London4, 22, Undergraduate (German), British**

Aisha was born in an Asian neighbourhood in Lancashire. Her mother is a community worker and was the first woman in her community to start teaching in the local mosque. Her father is a pharmacist. She has one sister and one brother. Relatives on her father's side are from both Lahore and England, as her grandparents moved to England from Lahore. Her relatives on her mother's side are from Lahore. She went to a predominantly white primary school. She then joined a state secondary school, which was really bad so her parents moved her to a private high school. Her school was located in a vastly Asian neighbourhood. In her high school, there were not many Pakistanis. She was in a class of 70, in which one in four were girls. She soon realized she was 'different' from the other girls, when she used to show up at school wearing long skirts while the other girls wore short skirts. She also spoke Urdu and Punjabi fluently, in which the others could not communicate. She described her mother 'as the driving force behind her education'.

She is studying German for her undergraduate degree course. She feels Pakistani and that German people find it strange that she is pursuing German. She wanted to be a pilot but her father's friend advised her parents against it, as he was a pilot and felt that such a profession was not good for a woman, especially when she is married. Her father tried to make her take up pharmacy but she was not interested. She thought about what she enjoyed and realized it was German, so she pursued it in her undergraduate studies. Her undergraduate course has a big Asian population, with a strong Bengali community. She used to be involved in extra-curricular activities growing up. However, since coming to university, she describes herself as an introvert. She mostly kept to herself. It was difficult for her because she came from a protective environment, even though her mother encouraged her a great deal. She has now moved to a big city and has to deal with financial issues as well as other problems on her own. She also felt that she has been involved in many extra-curricular activities while at school so, whilst at university, she just wanted to focus on her work. She tried to join student societies but never felt like attending their events. She feels the university is in a 'very Asian area'.

She does not 'like the way it looks'. She also feels there needs to be more interaction amongst students from various backgrounds in the university, as students have a tendency to stick with their 'own people'.

She has become more religious in recent years, though she is neither part of any student society, nor does she wear the hijab.

### **Mehreen, South East England1, 28, Graduate (Science), Overseas**

Mehreen describes herself as a true 'Lahori'. She was born in Lahore, Pakistan. Her father used to be an engineer in the army. As a consequence of his job, they moved around Pakistan a great deal when she was growing up. Her father now teaches in a university and her mother teaches at a government college. She describes herself as coming from a family whose 'fifth generation' is in education. Her grandparents were doctors. She has two sisters. She went to an army school growing up. She talks highly of her father. People also believe she has a mind like her father's. Her father was supportive of her education. She applied to both the USA and Britain but felt that, in Britain, there were 'more human rights', as her friends did not have good experiences at the airports in the USA. She is pursuing a PhD in the sciences in a university with a small Muslim and Pakistani population. She describes herself as a 'very friendly person', yet she has had trouble making non-Muslim friends as she feels they don't talk to her because of her scarf. However, her circle of close friends, while mostly Muslims, also includes a German who is in her course and was also her flatmate. She is involved in extra-curricular activities with the Pakistani and Islamic societies.

She wears the hijab and the Pakistani dress, *shalwar kameez*, in her university. She is very proud of her Muslim and Pakistani identity. She started wearing the hijab when she was aged nine or ten. At first, inspired by her sister who wore the *dupatta* [a piece of cloth in the form of a sash, part of the Pakistani traditional dress], she started wearing the *dupatta* but soon felt that she should cover her entire head. Despite negative experiences, she confidently asserts her Muslim and Pakistani identity.

In the interview she asked not to be audio-recorded, as she was uncomfortable with being recorded.

### **Nadia, West Yorkshire<sup>2</sup>, 20, Undergraduate (Law), British**

Nadia was born in Germany and came to Britain before her GCSEs. Her mother is a civil servant and her father runs a shop. Her mother's family is originally from Lahore, though her mother moved to England. Her father's family is originally from Kyrgyzstan and then her grandfather moved to Pakistan. Her father eventually moved to Germany. Her mother's side of the family is mixed because of the area in which she grew up. They include non-Muslims, mainly Afro-Caribbean. She has two sisters and lives in a predominantly Pakistani neighbourhood in West Yorkshire.

She is reading for an undergraduate degree in Law at West Yorkshire<sup>3</sup>. She has always been involved in extra-curricular activities, learning martial arts and drumming, and becoming involved in the student council. However, having grown up in Germany and then having moved to the UK, she has a keen interest in anti-fascist student politics, and has been active in the university as well as in the community, doing youth work and tackling racism. She was also involved with the National Union of Students. She is the head sister of her university's Islamic society, and was previously the head of the United for Palestine society. She describes her purpose in coming to university as being not simply to gain an education, but also to become involved in student activism. For her, this activism means standing up for what you believe in. During her own freshers' week, she organized a stall for Palestine and anti-fascism. However, she has moved away from socialist societies towards Islamic societies, though it was 'not an easy transition' for her to realize that socialism was not the answer.

She wears the hijab and jilbab. She started wearing the hijab one year after joining her university. She had thought about wearing it, but it was quite a shock for her parents as she used to have dreadlocks before. She considered wearing the hijab after she cut her hair but 'did not want to do it for the wrong reasons'. However, one day she wore it and never took it off. She put more thought into the jilbab. She read the Quran, researched it, felt there was a 'rational thought process' behind it and realized that she should wear it. She also had supportive

friends in her university. Her family, however, was not supportive initially. They were a little shocked, especially after she wore the jilbab, as none of them wear a hijab. Her father has ‘come around’ to the jilbab though, in the beginning, they were all ‘against it’ as they felt ‘it was a bit too much’. She feels that she looks like an ‘adopted child’ whenever she goes out with her family, as she is the only one wearing both the hijab and the jilbab.

### **Abida, West Yorkshire<sup>1</sup>, 21, Undergraduate (Law), Overseas**

Abida describes herself as being from all over Pakistan. While her father is from Muzafarahbad, a town in Azad Kashmir, and her mother from Quetta in Baluchistan. She has grown up in different cities in Pakistan because of her father’s job in the army. She attended mostly army public schools. She moved to England on her own to study for her A-levels when she was 16, and has been in England for five years. She came to England because she did not want to ‘regret missing an opportunity’ to study abroad. She chose England over the USA because she prefers the British education system, believing that the British are ‘more cultured’ and more ‘informed about the world’ than the US population. Before pursuing an undergraduate law degree at West Yorkshire<sup>2</sup>, she took one year to study an international business foundation course.

She has been involved in extra-curricular activities since she was in kindergarten—debating, swimming and heading her school basketball, cricket and netball teams. She was also involved in the English literature society and the school literary society, and was the head prefect in school. She felt that there was ‘no group’ that existed without her. In England, she did not pay much attention to extra-curricular activities, though ‘she did stand in elections for the international student representative in her college’. She is now trying to create a Pakistan society at her university, though she has faced opposition from British Pakistani students.

She does not wear the hijab. In fact, people have a hard time believing she is Muslim. This is because ‘she does not really hang it by the neck’. People are also often surprised to see her in the Islamic society.

At the time this student profile was being created, Abida had successfully founded the Pakistan society at her university despite opposition from some British Pakistani students.

### **Farzana, South West1, 20, Undergraduate (Medicine), British**

Farzana was born and lived most of her life in Leicestershire. Her father was born in a place called Sangla Hill in Pakistan but lived most of his life in Lahore. He had a business in Lahore and moved to England much later in his life. Her mother is from Africa, though originally from Pakistan. Her parents are cousins but they 'had a love marriage', as she describes it. Farzana has never travelled to Pakistan. She attended 'normal state schools' and a single-sex madrassa before starting her undergraduate degree in medicine. She is now in her second year.

She has always been involved in extra-curricular activities. She used to take karate lessons in junior school and 'French lessons now and then'. She was part of the netball team in her secondary school, participated in Christmas productions at school and helped with school activities such as parents evenings. She has not been as active during her undergraduate degree course. She helps with a charity for the homeless and is a member of the Islamic society and the marketing society. At her university, she has come across students who have never met a Muslim before. For her flatmate, she was the first Muslim friend. She often engages in conversations with her to clarify any misconceptions about Muslims. She often gets asked 'What are you?' in the Islamic society. People are confused about her identity since, for many, she doesn't look Pakistani.

She used to wear the hijab but stopped wearing it. She felt she was wearing it for the wrong reasons. She started because her friends wore it. However, she soon reached an age where she realized she was not praying five times a day and, despite 'being good' by not having boyfriends, not smoking or drinking, and not going to clubs, she still felt that she needed to 'work on the praying thing'. Her parents have been supportive of her decision. Her mother does not wear the hijab and 'has short hair'.

**Kiran, London1, 22, Graduate (Science), British**

Kiran had been married for almost three years at the time of the interview, living in an area South West of central London. Her grandfather worked for the Pakistani government but was based in England. According to Kiran, the British government invited his entire family to live in England. Her mother at that time was six-years-old. Her father, who is also her mother's cousin, moved from Pakistan; her parents fell in love, got married and moved to a district in South West London. Her father has severe arthritis and 'was made redundant' because of his illness. He has had five hip replacement operations. She looks up to her father, who she describes as the 'bravest man' she knows, who 'never complains about his pain ever'. Her mother works at a 'company taking care of training for people'. Her husband has just completed his degree in politics and will start work.

Kiran wears the hijab, but started wearing it properly a year before she got married. She had tried wearing it before but, at that time, she 'wore it' for the 'wrong' reason, as more of 'a fashion accessory'. She felt disgusted with herself for treating it like that and also feels that she should not have taken it off, but explains it as being part of the process. She feels that the hijab keeps away unwanted attention from men. Her mother does not wear the hijab, her elder sister wore it 'for a year or two' but then she stopped. Now she only wears it when she goes out with her husband, as he wants her to. Her younger sister, however, wears the hijab. Her mother, on first seeing her in a hijab, told her that it was her choice but she did not have to wear it as 'Allah looks at your heart more than anything'. Her father was pleased, though he also told her that he would not mind her not wearing it. However, as a father, he does not like it when his daughters wear tight jeans so he was happy to see her in a hijab, as was her husband. While she wears the hijab, it has not stopped her from dressing up, which she enjoys doing.

She is quite critical of the new generation in Pakistan. When she went to visit her relatives in Pakistan, wearing the hijab for the first time, she felt people treated her differently, assuming that she had changed. She also feels the new generation does not have good role models. 'There is a lot of materialism and a lot of people [...] think wrongly of religion [...]

They think that if somebody prays five times a day they are a big *aalam* [religious authority] or something', an 'impression' she got from her 'cousins'. As for the Pakistani female students who come to the UK, 'a lot of them have gone off the rail. A lot of them are making an effort with their education which is really admirable', people like the researcher as she points out, who 'will go back to' her 'community and become a role model and give back ...'

### **Zubaida, London1, 30, Graduate (Science), British**

Zubaida comes from a town north of Manchester, which she describes as 'a racist little town'. Her grandfather was a sea merchant who lived in Egypt but then moved to England, where he met her mother's grandfather. She sarcastically calls the marriage between her parents as 'doing business', when her maternal grandfather invited her father and paternal grandfather to his place to choose which daughter he wanted in marriage. Her mother, who was unaware of this arrangement, was initially quite upset but 'it worked out in the end'. Her father was recently made redundant and her mother is a housewife. Her mother comes from a small village in Afghanistan, while she describes her father as being of 'Mongol-like' origin from the north of Pakistan and a little Libyan. She has six sisters and a brother, with her being the second eldest. She describes herself as still under her mother's influence, unlike the 'younger generation' in her house; one sister lives away from home with her boyfriend, without her parents' knowledge, and another lives at home and constantly gets drunk in front of the mother. She, on the other hand, cannot conceive of ever upsetting her mother, a sort of influence which she thinks will last till the age of 60. She also believes that, while her mother wants her to be happy, secretly she is hoping that Zubaida would marry one of her cousins. The idea that she would choose someone in her present university would completely 'destroy' her mother, something she could never do.

Zubaida went to a 'racist school' which was predominantly white and where she was continuously bullied. Her high school was also full of bullies. The fact that her mother made her wear a headscarf from a young age and also stitched clothes for her to wear, as she was not allowed

to wear Western clothing such as skirts or trousers, made the bullying worse. She would be beaten up, called 'Paki' and often returned home with bruises. Her father was always busy with work but her mother tried to talk to the teachers. However, the mother could not speak English, having basically taught herself while watching *Sesame Street*, which is why, when she would try to talk to the teachers, they would dismiss her by telling her they could not understand what she was saying. The teachers were also often complicit in the bullying, looking the other way or telling Zubaida off for making up stories, ignoring her bruises. A teacher in high school also once physically assaulted her. Zubaida, in her narrative, constantly mentions how she carries this trauma with her, even at the age of 30; now, she reacts if anyone is rude to her and often answers back with anger. She has also struggled with religion, removing the hijab as a teenager without her mother's knowledge, since she pretended to wear it but removed it after leaving home so as not to get bullied. She does not wear the hijab now. She also mentioned how she tried her first drink while at university but, because of getting 'alcohol poisoning', did not drink for almost 'two-and-a-half years' after that incident and felt guilty for lying to her mother.

### **Mehnaz, West Yorkshire<sup>2</sup>, 22, Undergraduate (Law), British**

'Born and bred in Britain'. She is a third-year law student who lives in a town with a high percentage of Pakistanis, attending a university that also has a high proportion of Pakistani students. Her father is a taxi driver, born in Pakistan but 'bred in the UK'. Her mother is a 'housewife' born in Pakistan who only came to the UK after her marriage. Her family comes from a small village near Lahore, and she describes herself as Punjabi. The last time she visited her village was in 2007 (i.e. four years ago at the time of the interview). She has three brothers, and she is the second child. She mentions how all her brothers are over-protective. If someone said anything to her or swore at her 'they would actually go' and 'beat the hell out of them'. She finds Pakistanis outside of Pakistan, particularly overseas female students, really 'modern'. She believes that by going abroad they have already 'taken a step' forward,

which is described as something 'fantastic'. In further elaborating her observation, she points to the researcher, indicating 'how the only way she could tell the researcher was not British was from the accent.

She studied in an Asian populated school, but her nursery was in an English populated locality. Her high school was very Asian, with only four English people in her class. Sixth form comprised a majority of white students. She recounts how, while in the sixth form, she removed her hijab once in class because her hair had become loose. Since she was sitting at the back of the classroom, she thought no one would notice. But on seeing her hair, all her classmates including her teacher were in shock. They were shocked because they thought she was bald and did not realize she had hair underneath her scarf. However, she doesn't think she has 'experienced any form of racism' because she describes herself as a 'volatile person'; her motto is 'if you push me I will make sure you fall'. She believes that it is the attitude of the person that also influences experiences; if anyone messes with her she will 'mess' with them. However, the fact that she has grown up in an Asian community is one of the main reasons why she feels she hasn't encountered Islamophobia. She started wearing the hijab at the age of eight because her mother was wearing it and she has continued to wear it ever since. She did not struggle in taking on the hijab since it felt natural to her. Her mother wears the jilbab and has advised her to wear that but, for the moment, she feels the hijab is more than sufficient'

### **Rukshanda, London2, 28, Graduate (Science), Overseas**

Rukshanda originally comes from the city of Peshawar but her family moved to Lahore. Her father is retired and used to work in Saudi Arabia as a health professional, while her mother is a retired social worker. She has one brother who is a businessman. She chose to study in England as opposed to Australia, which is the other option she was considering, since the universities in England had a higher ranking. When she came to England for her doctoral research, she suffered a 'cultural shock' since she had never lived away from her family, or been in a non-Muslim country. It took her a while to adjust which, in the beginning, was emotionally

difficult. She also had trouble in her laboratory since the research in her British university was quite advanced, compared with Pakistani universities where she had previously been based. It therefore took her time to adjust to the new university environment.

While a practising Muslim, she does not wear a hijab or any religious markers. She had problems with her supervisor because of her Pakistani identity, as her supervisor—a British citizen of an Indian heritage—often brought up issues of insecurity and terrorism in Pakistan in their discussions, which she found upsetting. She also claimed to be a proud Pakistani and planned on going back after her PhD to help her country.

### **Zahra, West Yorkshire<sup>2</sup>, 19, Undergraduate (Social Sciences), British**

Zahra is in her second year of undergraduate studies in sociology. Her parents are from Mirpur in Pakistan. She lives in West Yorkshire with her family. She grew up in an area in West Yorkshire with a large percentage of Pakistanis and Asians, even her school had a large South Asian presence. She did not experience any discrimination in school, as she felt everyone was more or less the same. She started wearing the hijab in primary school; her sister does not wear it, but her mother does. She started wearing the jilbab in the sixth form. At first, she was not sure whether the jilbab was an Islamic requirement, but soon learnt at 'a madrassa where' she 'was studying' that 'in Islam it says you should wear it'. For her, a Muslim is someone who recites the *Kalima*, making a pledge to God and His Prophet, and someone who practises—i.e. follows the fundamentals of Islam which include, which include praying; fasting; giving *Zakat* or alms; and, if possible, going for pilgrimage to the *Ka'aba* in Mecca. She also includes wearing the scarf as an act that may be part of being a Muslim, as well as following the *Quran* and *Sunnah*. However, she is uncertain about the niqab and can understand people who do not like the niqab since 'you can't see their face' and there are problems in communication as a result of that restriction. Zahra visited Pakistan when she was in grade 8. That was also the last time she left her home town.

**Areesha, West Yorkshire<sup>2</sup>, 20, Undergraduate (Social Sciences), Overseas**

Areesha is an overseas Pakistani student studying at a university in West Yorkshire which has a large presence of British-Pakistani students. She lives with her relatives and chose this university because she had been rejected from universities in Pakistan and the others to which she had applied. She is studying psychology and feels that her university provides strong academic support. She used to live in Saudi Arabia but moved back to Pakistan and lived mostly in Islamabad. Since she studied in an American high school in Saudi Arabia, she has had no difficulty in making friends from different religious groups and nationalities. However, she did have trouble adjusting to a different lifestyle in Britain.

She wears the hijab and the jilbab. However, in her interview she was quite critical of the British Muslim students with a Pakistani heritage. She felt they were confused, living in Britain but trying to keep a Pakistani culture. She also felt that Pakistan was more modernized than the people she met understood, as they 'have a perception ... that in Pakistan no one wears English clothes and no one goes out'. She feels that since people come 'from villages ... they have mixed their culture and religion with the British lifestyle' which is why 'it is quite messed up'. She also believes that British-Pakistani women are more restricted, and is further critical of young girls who pretend to be religious in front of their parents but remove their hijabs the moment they enter the university.

**Fatima, West Yorkshire<sup>2</sup>, 21, Undergraduate (Law), British**

Fatima was born in West Yorkshire, where she grew up. Her parents are from Mirpur in Pakistan. She studied in a local primary school, attended an Islamic high school followed by a Catholic college, and is now studying Law at West Yorkshire<sup>2</sup>. At high school, she was a head girl and prefect, while mostly she did not participate in extra-curricular activities. At university, she is active in the Islamic society.

Fatima wears both the *shalwar kameez* and a hijab. She stood out in her university campus, which had a small percentage of Pakistani and Muslim students. This was also obvious when she was taking the researcher to a seminar room for the interview, since other students would stare at her and her clothes, though she would just ignore them and stare elsewhere.

Fatima is the first girl in her 'whole generation to actually go as far as university'. No other girl in her 'generation has even gone to college. They just did a high school education and are sitting at home', are either getting married or waiting. Since her family is living away from her extended family because of family problems, with her mother's encouragement, she pursued an education. Her mother thought that she 'was doing pretty well in' her high school and her teachers thought that she should go to college as it was pointless staying at home in this age, so she went to college and was successful enough to get admission into West Yorkshire1.

She looks up to her mother who is the first woman in their whole generation to start driving. She described the rest of her extended family as living 'in the stone age', with many of them having problems with her coming to university. Her father, while somewhat reluctant at the beginning, has also gradually accepted the fact that she is studying.

### **Nargis, South West1, 25, Graduate (Sciences), Overseas**

Nargis was born in Dubai and lived there for 18 years, after which time her family moved back to Pakistan. She did her undergraduate and graduate degrees in Pakistan in a top research university in Islamabad. She came as a doctoral candidate to South West1, because of their research facilities and financial aid. She had trouble finding friends in the beginning, since she had never previously lived in a non-Muslim country and could not find someone who understood or shared her culture. However, she felt the Islamic society was useful in helping her settle in.

She is an active volunteer in science related projects at the university, which she enjoys. She does not wear the hijab, though she wore it when she was in Pakistan. Before coming to the UK, she decided to remove the hijab out of fear of experiencing discrimination. Her family was also hesitant about her wearing the hijab. She believes her family is really paranoid

about Muslim groups in the UK, which is why she did not tell her parents about the Islamic society at first, when she started attending their events. Her parents think that the Islamic society is extremist, so she was afraid that her parents might think that their daughter is at risk of being radicalised. Even though her mother wears the *dupatta*, she would not encourage her daughter to wear the hijab. Her graduate course supervisor in Pakistan also warned her about Muslim groups in the UK who may try to recruit her. Her supervisor advised her to stay away from Muslim groups and avoid Islamic events, as those are the places where young students are targeted. She believes that such reactions from her loved ones back home further add to the paranoia, since she felt the Islamic society in her university was an ordinary student society and people were friendly. She finds her laboratory colleagues also supportive; she prays in an office next to the laboratory, and all her colleagues and her supervisor respect her and often give her the space to pray.

She is still considering wearing the hijab and has asked several of her friends at her university about their experiences, getting a mixed reaction from some who faced discrimination and decided to remove it, while others have had a good experience. However, what prevents her from taking on the hijab is the number of questions that she will have to answer from colleagues and other people if she makes that decision, not to mention her family who would be concerned about her safety.

### **Rehma, South West1, 29, Graduate (Sciences), Overseas**

Rehma is originally from the Swat Valley but her family moved to Peshawar. She comes from a traditional Pathan family, with seven other siblings, three brothers and four sisters. She is the first girl in her family to go to a university and to go abroad. Her father, described as a strict individual, has always been supportive of his children's education, encouraging his sons and his daughters to pursue higher studies. He was the one who also encouraged her to apply for a PhD programme within Pakistan and, when she secured a scholarship, was happy to send her abroad. Two of her brothers also supported her ambitions. Her mother, however, was hesitant at the idea of her daughter living alone in a foreign country, but she kept quiet and never discouraged her. She also has a fiancé in

Pakistan. She got engaged before she came for her PhD. Her fiancé was the son of a family friend who was recommended by her mother, and she agreed. Before the proposal, however, her relatives had voiced their concern about her eligibility for marriage on getting a PhD degree.

She describes herself as *gharailu*—i.e. more domestic, being interested in housework. In Pakistan, she would attend university and be busy at home helping her mother, which is why she faced problems in getting a bank account and sorting out the official details when she came to England, as she was unfamiliar with the procedure, never having dealt with such official business. She never participated in any extra-curricular activities while at school or during her undergraduate course, describing herself as always the ‘quiet and unnoticed’ one. While she was interested in sports, she never had the confidence to pursue them. In England, since she is getting used to a new system, she does not have the time for extra-curricular activities. It is for this reason that she has not joined the Islamic society.

She used to wear the niqab in Pakistan, as she felt more comfortable wearing it in Peshawar. However, she decided to only wear the hijab in England, because she felt she would stand out otherwise. In Peshawar, there is a culture of women wearing the niqab and people are still familiar with each other, whereas in England she felt people would not be able to recognize her and it would cause unnecessary problems. Her decision to remove the niqab was based on the realization that, in Islam, veiling is for the purpose of modesty and ‘looking Muslim’, which she believed could still be achieved with the hijab. Her Muslim appearance due to wearing the hijab also ensures that people know their limits in interacting with her.

Since she was more comfortable with the Urdu language, the interview took place predominantly in Urdu, with some phrases from English included in the conversation.

### **Shaista, South West1, 27, Graduate (Sciences), Overseas**

Shaista is in her second year of a PhD course. She is from Multan in Pakistan. She undertook her undergraduate course from Pakistan. This is her first time in the UK and she is the first girl in her family to go to a university, or even to go abroad. She is married. Her husband is in

Pakistan, where he is doing his PhD. In university, she is mostly busy with her academic work and is not involved in any extra-curricular activities—though she does interact with the Islamic society, as her friends are members. She did not join the Islamic society as she does not have time and, being a ‘disorganized person’, she felt she would not be able to participate fully in the society, which would make her feel guilty for doing something half-heartedly.

She describes herself as a quick learner, which is evident from her pronounced British accent, which she picked up when she moved to England. She feels she has the ability to pick up accents without realizing it. She wears the hijab and the jilbab. While her supervisor has always been supportive, she had problems with some of her laboratory colleagues and fellow students, including a female from Pakistan, who were not supportive of her Muslim appearance. However, she believes it was the result of miscommunication, as people often misunderstood her. She also never complained about it to her supervisor. She further believes that she is a positive person, who does not realize when someone is behaving in a negative manner towards her, which surprises people.

While the conversation took place in English, towards the end of the exchange she switched to the Urdu language.

### **Sanam, South East England1, 25, Graduate (Social Science), Overseas**

Sanam grew up in Saudi Arabia but her family moved back to Lahore, in 2003. Her father is an academic; her mother has been unwell. She has a brother and a sister, being the youngest in her family. She studied in an American school in Saudi Arabia, moved to a British school as her parents wanted her to take the GCSE exams, but then returned to her American high school when she realized that she did not want to take A-levels. On moving back to Pakistan, she went to a public university, rather than a private one, for the experience of being in the Pakistani system. She has always been involved in extra-curricular activities from debating, amateur dramatics and sports, especially basketball, to becoming the editor of her

school magazine. She chose England because of her scholarship, and her university was well-known in Pakistan.

She is active in her English university, attending talks and participating in debating and sports. She also attends ISoc events. While she believes the ISoc is welcoming, she does not spend too much time with them as she feels there is a strand in the ISoc that expects students to dress a certain way, especially if one gets involved with ISoc events. She used to wear a scarf when she was 15 or 16, but only wore it for a few months. All her friends wore the scarf; her elder sister also started wearing it, as did her cousins, and she was part of the Islamic society in her school where she felt inadequate for not wearing it. However, she soon realized that she did not like it and felt like she was 'two different people'. Overnight, she had to behave in a certain way with her male friends, who had always been close friends, and was different at home. She could not take it and decided to remove the hijab. While some of her friends were not happy with her decision, as the hijab for them was not a light matter, she nonetheless felt she was being honest in removing it. She visited the UK with her father when she went through that phase and, while she stayed within a university, she recounts how she wandered off on her own to explore the countryside and asked an Englishman for directions to a town. While he gave her directions, he warned her not to go there alone as she would face discrimination because of her scarf. However, since coming to the UK for her graduate degree she has not worn the scarf; neither does she feel the need to wear it.

### **Dalia, South East England<sup>1</sup>, 21, Undergraduate (Social Sciences), Overseas**

Dalia is from Karachi, where she attended a private English medium school. She has one younger brother, who will be applying for his undergraduate degree. She has always been involved in extra-curricular activities. At her undergraduate university in England, she is also quite active in student societies, from acting to politics. She describes her family background as liberal in terms of religious practice, and she does not wear any religious symbols or signifiers. However, she faced

problems settling in because of the drinking culture at her university. During her first week, she attended a student event; she was put off by students getting 'drunk and hitting on each other', which discouraged her from attending any of the other events. She felt a bit scared at the beginning, not having any close friends, and did not know how to handle such situations. She also did not fit into the Islamic society, described as being too 'conservative', while the Pakistani society for her was also too insular, as they did not encourage students to mingle outside their group. However, gradually she made other friends, especially on her course, which she describes as 'multi-cultural', and found a place for herself.

In her discussion about the Islamic society, she shared the experience of a friend who became an active member of the ISoc. However, her friend started wearing the hijab because everyone in the society wore a hijab and she felt left out. Only later did she realize that she was wearing the hijab for the wrong reasons and stopped. While the ISoc for Dalia is friendly, she tends to go to their events during Ramadan, when she can eat free food for Iftar (the time when Muslims break their fast). She has met British-Pakistanis and, in her description, divides them into two groups: those who are completely assimilated, and those who are still stuck in 1950s Pakistan. Only a small minority for her have found a place in between.

Dalia, in discussing Islamophobia, highlighted the discrimination faced by Pakistani students when applying for student visas. She personally knows friends who could not join British universities because of visa issues. She feels students are discriminated against because of their Pakistani identity.

### **Tehmina, West Midlands<sup>1</sup>, 19, Undergraduate (Social Sciences), British**

Tehmina was born in a multi-cultural town in the West Midlands, where she grew up. Her father is from Pakistan but her mother was born in Britain. While studying for an undergraduate degree related to youth work, Tehmina has been involved in youth projects within and outside her university. She has been active in community projects relating

to young people focusing on integration. She has also received several national and local awards for her activism. One of the reasons why she was invited to participate in this research was her involvement in student activism inside and beyond her university. Having been active in the national and regional student organizations, she was familiar with the problem of Islamophobia across universities in her region. She highlighted the issue of non-reporting of Islamophobia by students and, on several occasions, intervened on behalf of students. She is also active as an equality officer within her university.

Tehmina wears a hijab and has been verbally attacked because of her political views, which she believes is a result of the nature of the work she does as a youth activist, having debated with workers from the British National Party. She also started an online radio station and a magazine for young people. She disagrees with terms such as ‘minority’ since she feels she is British and not part of some minority community—a term that ‘was made popular by middle-class politicians’. She also believes that Muslim women and men need to become more involved in mainstream politics, where they can change negative perceptions about their community. For her, the problems faced by the British community with a Pakistani heritage is a consequence of a culture which is confused with religion, and hence misunderstood.

### **Sehrish, North West1, 21, Graduate (Social Sciences), Overseas**

Sehrish is from Sialkot, in the Punjab province of Pakistan. She went to a private English medium school. She came to England to pursue an undergraduate degree, but stayed for her Masters. Her university has a strong presence of Pakistani students. While she has never been involved in extra-curricular activities, she is part of her university’s Islamic society. She feels more comfortable with Asian students and has friends from East Asia, but cannot feel the same level of connection with English people. She has been to England before on a family vacation. While she has not experienced Islamophobia herself, she is familiar with friends who have experienced it in public. She also knows of a family friend who wears the niqab and encountered Islamophobia on the street, being

called a ‘terrorist’. She believes that if she suffered Islamophobia, she would go and report it to the Islamic society.

She wears a loose *duppata* with Western clothes.

### **Bano, North West1, 22, Graduate (Sciences), British**

Bano was born in England in a town that has a strong presence of South Asian Muslims. Her father is from Faisalabad and her mother is from Sahiwal in Pakistan. Her father had a cloth manufacturing business, but he is now retired. Her mother is a housewife. She has three siblings, two brothers and a sister. She is the youngest. Her parents always encouraged their children to excel in school and have continued to be supportive, letting them study whatever they want to study. Her parents themselves are not educated, since their families could not afford their education. However, her father’s brothers are doctors; their education was supported financially by her father when he started working. She speaks Urdu fluently and is also well-versed in Punjabi. All her siblings speak Punjabi, but she was the ‘guinea pig’ who was taught Urdu by her parents at home, instead of Punjabi. As a rule, she and her siblings can only speak in Urdu or Punjabi with their parents, but they speak in English amongst themselves.

Bano went to a primary school with a strong Pakistani student community. However, her parents moved and, at the age of ten, she joined another school where she was the only ‘brown person’. She struggled at her new school and often came home crying. In explaining her experience, she describes how it was difficult for the ‘all white’ students to have a ‘brown’ person in their midst, since they were not used to seeing someone like that. They used to ask her all sorts of questions about her eating habits, and her culture and religion which, at times, were asked just to annoy her. However, soon, through group projects, she managed to make friends. Her high school and college was quite multi-cultural, which also prepared her for university.

Bano has always been involved in extra-curricular activities. She learnt how to play the piano and the guitar, and she writes poetry and plays badminton. She also teaches ‘Bollywood dancing’. She does charity work and has raised funds for Pakistani flood victims. She is a member of the Islamic society and is active in her university’s Pakistan society. She feels a

greater affinity with Pakistan, which she illustrated through an anecdote. When she was aged ten, she filled in a form and ticked the Pakistani box in response to a question on identity. This created a problem, as her father was contacted to check whether his daughter was of a Pakistani nationality. She was lectured by her father and was told that she was Pakistani within the house but was a British citizen outside. She could not understand since she always felt Pakistani. She also wants to go to Pakistan and contribute, since she feels she can be of more use there than in England.

While a practising Muslim, she does not wear the hijab.

**Malika, North West1, 22, Undergraduate (Social Sciences), Overseas**

Malika grew up in Canada and Pakistan. She chose England to pursue a law degree as it would have taken longer in Canada. She has been involved in extra-curricular activities such as debating and activities related to her degree. She was also involved with her college Paksoc in her first year. However, she is not that active with the Islamic society, which she felt was 'extreme' initially, until she interacted with them and saw 'their events', and 'realized they' were 'normal'.

While brought up in Canada, her father was very strict about her speaking in Urdu at home, because he was afraid that she might lose touch with her culture. She spoke in English outside, but at home she always conversed in Urdu, which is the reason why she is in touch with her Pakistani culture. She believes the problems concerning Muslims and Pakistanis in Britain are more related to the media, which create a 'paranoia around Muslim students'.

While a practising Muslim, she does not wear the hijab.

**Tasneem, North West1, 21, Undergraduate (Social Sciences), Overseas**

Tasneem is from Karachi. She chose England in which to pursue her studies as it was closer to home compared with the USA and Canada, and she already had her brother studying in North West1. Her parents there-

fore felt more comfortable sending her to North West1. She went to a private school in Karachi and has always been involved in extra-curricular activities. At her university, she was involved with her Students Union and was also active in the Pakistani society. She did not have trouble adjusting because of her brother and her friends from Pakistan, who also chose North West1.

She is a practising Muslim who does not wear the hijab. She has worked closely with the Islamic society as a member of the Students Union and believes that the ISoc is misunderstood. She never felt she was treated differently, despite not wearing the hijab, and believes that the members are 'normal' people. She feels that the problem of Muslims in Britain was exaggerated after the events of 9/11, as Muslims had 'been around' before those events, dressed in the same way; while they may have experienced discrimination, they became more visible after the events of 9/11 and 7/7.

### **Noor, North West1, 19, Undergraduate (Social Sciences), Overseas**

Noor is from Islamabad, though she has travelled a great deal within and outside Pakistan because of her father's job; he works for a tobacco company. She chose North West1 because she was rejected from the top universities of her choice in Pakistan and, within the time she had left to apply, North West1 was one of the few good ones in the UK that was still accepting applications. She felt other countries, such as the USA, were too far away from home.

She has always been involved in extra-curricular activities in her school from amateur dramatics and debating to the student council and sports. However, during her undergraduate course she 'slacked' and was only involved 'in a few charities'. She is not involved in the Pakistan society, as she just never got around to it. However, she is also not involved in the Islamic society, which she describes as 'too religious for her'.

She recounts an anecdote about her first experience with the ISoc. In her first week, she went to their stall and was talking 'to a boy, who was fine with her' but then a 'girl' came up to her and told her that if she 'had a question she should ask a sister'. She was a little taken aback and simply apologised. She does not understand why, on their fliers, they

have separate contact information for men and women, which is why she never joined the ISoc. She has suffered discrimination outside the university in a well-known store in the area when a woman, who was being friendly, admired a necklace she was wearing. On asking her what it was and being told that it meant 'Allah', the name of God in Arabic, the woman just walked away without saying anything.

While a practising Muslim, she does not wear the hijab.

### **Natasha, North West1, 34, Graduate (Social Sciences), Overseas**

Natasha is from Pakistan. She mostly grew up in different cities across Pakistan, but also lived in the USA for over three years, where she enrolled in an American high school. The rest of her education was in Pakistan. The reason why she moved a great deal was because of her father's job; he was a government servant but is now retired. She has also travelled to the UK sporadically and, as a child, 'attended one year of kindergarten' in the UK. She has always been drawn to the social sciences. She has been involved in sports and amateur dramatics in school, but was not particularly involved in extra-curricular activities at her undergraduate university, which was small and did not offer many facilities in that regard. She is also not involved in extra-curricular activities at her present university because of the demands of her degree.

When she came to the UK for her graduate studies, she had problems adjusting—more so because she came from a working-class background and was not used to just studying. She worked in the education sector for a couple of years before she came to North West1. She has a closer circle of Muslim friends, since she feels that the requirements of her religion do not permit her to participate fully in the culture of non-Muslim class fellows. For her, 'friendship is something that you develop when you have commonalities'. She does not blame the non-Muslim students but feels that she did not 'feel comfortable' with them, since she could not join in the drinking culture, and so preferred to mingle with people with whom she had more in common.

While a practising Muslim, she does not wear the hijab.

## **Lyyla, North West1, Activist, Alumna, British**

Lyyla has been politically active on university campuses locally and nationally, being involved in leftist organizations but, in particular, in campaigns such as the Stop the War Coalition and United Against Fascism. Her parents are from Pakistan; her father is from a town near Islamabad and her mother is from the Azad Kashmir region. While she graduated from her university some time ago and was not politically active as a student, after graduation and working in different parts of England, she came back to the area where her university was located, and joined the anti-war movements.

She calls herself a 'radical' and believes that the problem with Islamophobia is related to the 'war on terror, media' and Muslims themselves who 'refuse to fight back'. In working with Muslim students and ISocs on university campuses, she felt that the Islamic societies reinforce the stereotype of a non-political Muslim, particularly for Muslim women. She shares her own experience, after she started wearing the hijab recently. A male Muslim student, also a leftist, was surprised when she told him she was going to go pray. He explained how he felt there were two kinds of Muslim women who wear the hijab, the ones who do it for religious reasons, as found in the ISoc, and people like her who are trying to make a political statement but are not religious. She feels frustrated at the idea that such external judgements and categories exist about Muslim women, though she also feels that Muslim women themselves reinforce it. For her, the Islamic societies in universities provide a safe environment for students who are away from home where 'no one pushes their' boundaries.

Lyyla has also encountered discrimination within national leftist parties, with a fellow activist questioning her loyalty to a leftist cause because of her Islamic belief. She is a strong believer in being politically active in the community and blames the leaders of the Muslim community for not setting an example of activism. She gives the example of an English Defence League (EDL) protest when the Muslim community was asked by the police to stay inside that day, being told that their 'safety' could 'not be guaranteed'. What upset her the most was the announcement by the local police that, if they saw 'Asian men' out on the streets that day,

they would arrest them on counter terrorism charges, accusing them of creating mischief. The fact that the EDL was allowed to protest whereas Muslim citizens were told to stay inside, which they quietly did, reflects the lack of political will on the part of the community and the institutional problems that exist within the government, as well as the British leadership. A similar lack of activism is also present in the Muslim student community in universities.

While an active member of leftist groups within and outside the university, she also works for an IT company.

### **Nazia, London3, 28, Graduate (Social Sciences), Overseas**

Nazia has grown up all over Pakistan. Since her father was a government servant posted across Pakistan, the family moved around with him, though her main schooling was in the city of Islamabad. While her father comes from a conservative region in north Punjab, he was always supportive of her education, and encouraged her and her sister to pursue a higher degree. She believes that she is successful because of the support of her parents. She was married but divorced her husband despite 'social pressures'. She worked in the banking sector but joined the graduate programme at London3, since she wanted to change her career path. She wants to be in academia and is a strong advocate of education for girls. She was the first girl in her family to receive an education because of her father's support and 'knows how education can change a girl's life', as it gave her the strength to be where she is today. She wants to contribute in the field of education for this reason.

She is also patriotic about her country, having been involved in Pakistan society events. She believes there is a need to promote a positive image of the country, which she has been doing at an individual and group capacity. She feels things are changing for women in her country, which is evident by the number of Pakistani women she has met at her university compared with men. However, she highlighted how this presence of women might also be the result of racism from the immigration and visa services. She has heard accounts of young Pakistani women getting visas and scholarships, while Pakistani men have faced more issues by being denied a

student visa. She believes the reason for this is discrimination and the idea that Pakistani men would be a greater ‘security’ risk and inclined to join terrorist activities; Pakistani women do not pose such a threat.

She is a practising Muslim, particular about praying, fasting and halal food, and does not drink alcohol either. She does not wear the hijab or any Islamic symbols or signifiers.

### **Rubab, London1, 29, Graduate (Science), Overseas**

Rubab is from the city of Karachi. Her father is a retired banker. She has two brothers and a sister. She is married and lives with her husband in England, who works as an export sales engineer. She wears the hijab and has experienced Islamophobia from her laboratory colleagues. She described one such incident, where her laboratory colleague told her how she felt ‘scared’ when Rubab would go to pray in a separate room. She believes that she is not a ‘weak person’, neither is she ‘afraid’—but she does not want to create issues in her laboratory by reporting such remarks. She wants to ‘leave a good impression’, which is why she ignored her colleagues at first, but soon decided to talk to them. While she believes that the talking has helped, it was difficult for her in the beginning.

She started wearing the hijab at the age of 20. No one in her immediate family wore the hijab and her mother was a little apprehensive when she started wearing it. She was influenced by her cousins and realized that she ‘felt comfortable’ with it. She has worn it since then. She was married while enrolled in her graduate degree. It was an arranged marriage, which she was happy about, though she constantly had to defend her decision to her laboratory colleagues, who kept asking her if she was being ‘forced’ to marry.

### **Zunera, London3, 24, Social Science Alumna, Overseas**

Zunera is from a town near Islamabad. She went to a private school in her town and an undergraduate college in Lahore. She did not have any problems adjusting to her programme in England. Her ‘university is very

international' and has a strong and active Islamic society, so she never felt any form of discrimination during her time there. She did witness Islamophobia while she was waiting in a tube station, where a man was being shouted at for looking 'Pakistani' and 'Muslim'. She feels Muslims themselves can also be Islamophobic and gives the example of her sister, who is studying in the USA. Her sister was quite ashamed of herself when she looked at a man with a 'Muslim' and 'Pakistani' appearance, with a turban, beard and *shalwar kameez*, boarding a train and found herself afraid that he might be 'a terrorist'. In narrating this incident to Zunera, her sister explained how she was shocked by her own reaction.

Zunera has participated in one protest against General Musharraf's self-imposed coup in 2007, outside the Pakistani High Commission in London but believes that Pakistani students in general are less inclined to be politically active. The reason for this is the protective environment in which they have grown up, since they do not know anything about political activism and the most they would do is sign petitions.

She does not wear the hijab but is a practising Muslim. She does not think that wearing the hijab or a religious symbol is the only thing that makes a Muslim stand out. She believes that she dresses conservatively, especially in summer, and people can tell that she is Muslim, since Muslims 'look a certain way' despite the lack of any prominent religious signifier.

### **Sabahat, West Yorkshire2, 25, Alumna, Teacher, British**

Sabahat was born in West Yorkshire, where she grew up. Her parents are from Pakistan. She has a big family, three brothers and three sisters, and nieces and nephews, all of whom live in West Yorkshire. After graduating from West Yorkshire2, she joined a teaching degree course and taught in primary schools for two-and-a-half years. During her undergraduate studies, she only started making friends outside her Pakistani circle in her second year. Throughout her life, she had always had close Pakistani friends but was happy to interact and get to know non-Pakistani British students. In her school, they never encouraged students to go beyond their small, close-knit groups, which she felt was the reason why she was

never confident enough to become friends with a non-South Asian or Pakistani. She also suffered racism at secondary school, when ‘white kids used to throw sticks and stones at’ the South Asian kids when they were walking back from school. She never told anyone, not even her parents, because she felt it would be too difficult for her parents to handle when they were already struggling with ‘bringing up their children in a Western society’. She did not mention it to any of her teachers either, which she regrets.

She has also suffered racism on her teaching degree course from fellow students. She narrates one incident in which classmates who were part of her group came into the classroom and, instead of sitting at her table—where there was plenty of space, and no other table available—they fetched a separate table, found chairs at the back of the classroom and created a separate corner. ‘That moment’ made her feel ‘horrendous’. She mentions how frustrating the situation was for her, especially knowing that the same people who kept ignoring her existence will become teachers and teach in multi-cultural schools.

She started wearing the hijab four weeks before the interview and has already noticed a change in people’s behaviour. Her colleagues at school look at her differently, and those who do not know her are often surprised when they hear her speak English. However, she feels that she has the confidence now to answer back to anyone who is Islamophobic or racist towards her.

### **Sana, London1, 23, Graduate (Medicine), Overseas**

Sana is from Lahore in Pakistan. She comes from an industrial and feudal background. She attended a private English medium school in Lahore and was involved in extra-curricular activities in school. She further attended a University of London institute for her undergraduate degree and came to London1 for her graduate programme. She chose England because she was familiar with the British system as well as London, since her family used to spend their summer vacations in London.

In discussing Pakistanis and Islamophobia, she believes that the family background and geographical location of students who come from

Pakistan is an important factor in how they interact with people in Britain. In trying to understand the difficulties some of her more religious classmates have faced in adjusting to a Western context, she believes that if she did not have the kind of exposure she had growing up in a city such as Lahore and, instead, had come from a less diverse city or village, she would also have a different attitude to Western countries. For her, the problem of Islamophobia is two-sided; Muslims need to explain themselves to people who do not know their religion to prevent discrimination from happening. This need for Muslims to explain themselves is particularly important in today's environment.

Sana is a practising Muslim and does not wear the hijab.

**Maqsooda, West Yorkshire2, 24, Alumna (Social Sciences),  
British**

Maqsooda attended West Yorkshire2 for her undergraduate degree course. Her father is from Lahore while her mother is half-British and half-Polish. Her father's family lives in Pakistan, which she visited quite frequently until the security situation worsened. She went to a private school and a girls' public secondary school. She wanted to appear for her A-level examinations but was not allowed to take A-levels because her school's headmistress told her she would not get good grades. Instead, she ended up attending a sixth form college. She does not know of anyone else who was discouraged from taking their A-level exams, but she felt greatly discouraged by that incident. However she liked her undergraduate university, as she was given the space to develop her thinking and express her opinions.

She understands the British-Pakistani dilemma that young people face, though she believes it should not be a problem, as identity is something subjective. Some people feel they are British, others do not. She does not mind being called either, but she does feel like she 'identifies' with her Pakistani background more. Her mother, being half-Polish, faced discrimination in England, so she never formed a strong English connection.

Maqsooda feels that, in today's climate of suspicion and apprehension, people 'have a responsibility to find out' about things that they are afraid of, rather than accept that fear without question.

She is a practising Muslim but does not wear the hijab.

### **Tamana, West Yorkshire<sup>2</sup>, 19, Undergraduate (Social Sciences) British**

Tamana was born and brought up in West Yorkshire. Her parents are from Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (now known as Khyber Pukhtunkhwa) 'but her grandmother was Indonesian who reverted to Islam'. She has three sisters and one brother. She is the youngest. She is also an *alima*, described as someone who 'is an Islamic scholar'. She graduated from a madrassa a year before the interview.

She started wearing the hijab when she was in high school. She 'used to wear it loosely then' but now wears it 'properly', after her 'mom explained 'the importance of the hijab. Her mother also wears the hijab 'and a coat' with it. Her sisters also wear 'the coat' and one of them wears the niqab. She felt her family was ignorant about Islam, confusing it 'with culture' but, gradually, her mother learnt more about the hijab and started wearing it. She 'hates the word "Paki"', which she finds offensive. For her, it was used against her 'forefathers' when they were employed doing work that 'the English people didn't want to' do. It was a word that was used for people such as her grandfather and she hates it, especially when Pakistanis use it with each other. She also mentioned an incident with her sister who wears the niqab; she was called 'a ninja' on the street, which shocked both of them. She believes the nature of discrimination depends on where Muslims live, as in some areas no one would ever experience Islamophobia whereas in other places one would.

She also does not understand the British-Pakistani identity question. When she goes to Pakistan, her relatives call her *walaity*, meaning 'foreigner'; when she is in Britain, people question her Britishness. She does not understand this obsession, as British history is filled with 'Roman' invasions, 'the Vikings' and other foreigners that have defined British identity. For her, there is no contradiction or dilemma in being British, Pakistani and Muslim.

### **Romeena, South East2, Alumna, University Welfare and Islamic Society Executive**

Romeena is an alumna of South East2. She also works full-time at the university with their welfare services and manages the Islamic society. She is also on the board of an organization that is in charge of madrassas in South East England. While she has encountered problems amongst student and staff—the result of misunderstanding and miscommunication—she believes her university is proactive in protecting the rights and welfare of their Muslim students. Being active in different Islamic organizations, she mentions how she is used to receiving interview requests from researchers working on Muslims in England.

Romeena is a practising Muslim with a Pakistani heritage. She also wears the hijab.

### **Tabussum, South East1, Racism and Equality Advisor**

Tabussum works with both staff and students in ensuring the welfare of university members. Her work concerns a ‘mixture of policy [...] keeping up with the legislation but also doing project work and responding to students’ needs’. She also ‘facilitates’ a working group on race and religion, focusing on multi-faith dialogue. She is further exploring the impact of university policies on religious groups. She believes that the problem of Islamophobia is primarily because of misunderstanding and miscommunication in universities. This can be overcome by creating greater dialogue within the university, and also encouraging students to step forward when they experience any kind of discrimination.

She is a practising Muslim of a Pakistani heritage. She does not wear the hijab.

### **Diane, West Yorkshire2, University Welfare, 2011**

Diane is part of the University’s welfare programme, which is specifically concerned with diversity and widening participation. Her university provides mandatory training to all its staff members regarding equality

and diversity. Since her university has a diverse student body, with a 'large proportion of non-white British applicants' and 'international students', she believes they have an 'ethical requirement to be aware of the "cultural" and "religious" preferences of their students'. Her university has a clearly defined no tolerance policy on discrimination, which she thinks is not a problem at West Yorkshire<sup>2</sup>. For her, the greater problems are to do with 'family issues', 'forced' and 'arranged' marriages and general academic related stress, which she believes the university is dealing with successfully.

### **Ahmed, London<sup>3</sup>, Students Union Anti-racism Officer**

Ahmed is the anti-racism officer of his Students Union. He is active in spreading awareness about Islam through student led conferences on Islamophobia and terrorism. He has worked closely with the Islamic society and the National Union of Students society in his capacity as an officer of his Students Union, and believes that Muslim students are making a difference by becoming more politically proactive in student politics within and beyond the university campus.

He is a practising Muslim.

### **FOSIS Representative, 2011**

The Federation of Students Islamic Society (FOSIS) was established in 1962, and is claimed by the FOSIS representative to be the 'oldest Muslim organization in Britain.' It serves Muslim students in higher and further educational institutions in the UK and Ireland. 'It is the representative, umbrella organization' of Islamic student societies. Their 'work revolves around reporting and representing the interest of Muslim students across the country, whether' related to 'welfare,' politics, 'or training Muslim students in leadership' (FOSIS).

The representative of FOSIS interviewed for this research is part of the National Executive Committee. She is also a practising Muslim who wears the hijab and jilbab.

## National Pakistani Student Representative, 2010

The National Pakistani Student Association (a pseudonym) is an organization that aims to build a network between Pakistani students and alumni, as well as encourage greater cooperation between British students with a Pakistani heritage and overseas Pakistani students in the UK. It further aims to encourage a positive image of Pakistan, for which purpose it organizes an annual Pakistani student conference to discuss the social, economic and political problems in Pakistan with the aim of providing workable solutions. These solutions are sent to the Pakistani parliament.

The representative interviewed for this research is the media spokesperson, who is also an overseas Pakistani student.

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