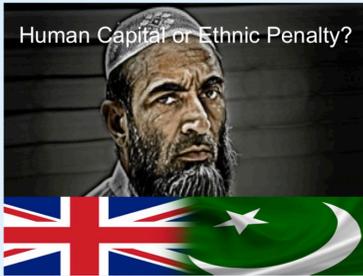


Around a quarter of Pakistani men in the UK drive taxis for a living (EHRC, 2010). When migrant communities are over represented in lower menial jobs, it could well be an equality issue (Blackwell, 2003). My research aims to explore how free are migrants (Pakistani men in this study), to choose any occupation or are there constraints which limit their employment options? Nestled in the structure-agency debate, this research draws on Bourdieu's theory of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1986) to explore how the intersection of class (social capital), religious capital, gender (symbolic capital) and ethnicity (cultural capital) affect the employment habitus of Pakistani men. Forming a cage like structure, often imposing doxic rules, the habitus could potentially limit their options in the labour market, pushing them to taxi driving (self-employment). As a reflexive researcher, while doing this ethnographic study, I often asked some uncomfortable, yet pertinent questions which led me to express some of my reflections in this poem.



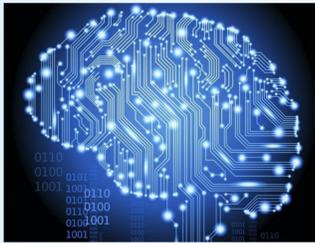
1 in 4 Pakistani men in the UK, drive taxis for a living
Is it a choice or constraint, their fortune's misgiving?
How free are they to choose a job? Do they really have a choice?
Or do their class, religion, and ethnicity take away their own voice?

How does being a Pakistani man in UK, affect their life chance?
What options do they get, in a society of white dominance?
Economists have sought to answer these questions in many ways
Through human capital theories, or the role an 'ethnic penalty' plays



Unable to find an answer, I turned to sociology too!
To Giddens, Archer, and Pierre Bourdieu
I found Bourdieu closest to explaining the reproduction of class
Of habitus, doxa and illusio, how they affect our life, alas!

A habitus is formed, as a 'mental structure' which guides our minds
A perception of only this or that could be done, which an illusio binds
The habitus is reproduced generations after generations
Yet, between structure and agency lie man's deliberations!



Faced with these questions, I took a social justice stance
An ethnographic study, an interpretivist dance
What counts can sometimes not be counted, and what's counted doesn't count,
So I am presenting their voices qualitatively, in their own account

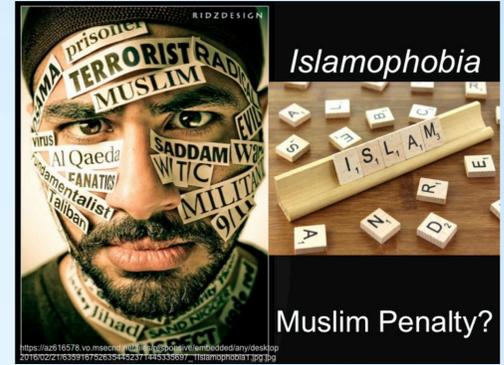
But wait, who am I in this entire scheme of things?
What's my positionality? A question of reflexivity rings!
Am I an insider or outsider here?
What common sense of my participants do I actually bear?



Is reflexivity a reflection, confession, or just a cathartic outburst?
If we all affect our research uniquely, then what epistemology do we trust?
Where does the researcher draw the line to remain objective?
Between the study and real people who are subjective?

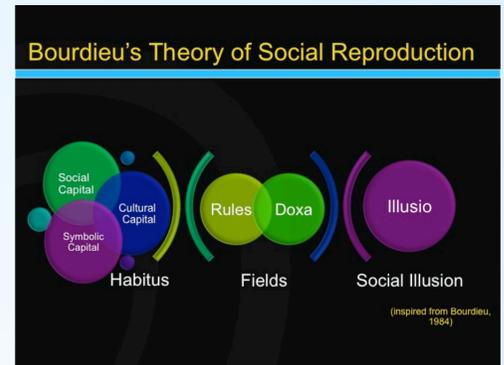
Whose story is it anyway, mine or theirs?
Am I their true representative as someone who cares?
How will this help policy and practice? What impact will it make?
Finding social justice for the community, I wish to awake

I have more questions than answers at this stage,
Perhaps I am bound unknowingly, by my own CAGE!
But these questions, however painful need to be asked for sure
Only then will I as an impactful & reflexive researcher mature.



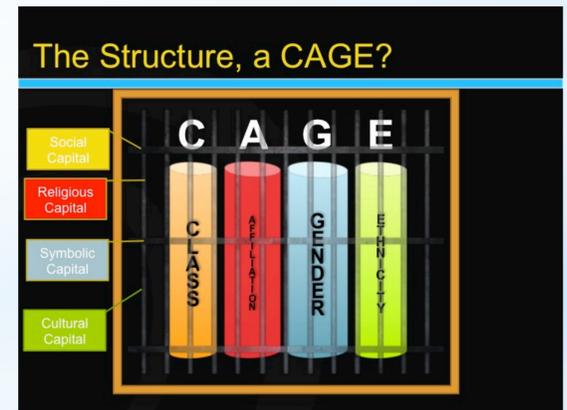
Many a studies have pointed to the disadvantage of Pakistanis in this land
Poor education, rural backgrounds, often push them to the lowest band
Discrimination is still rampant, in spite of all the laws,
How fair is Britain, boasting of its equality vows?

But then, these penalties are not the same across all groups that dwell
Indians & Chinese, in the same British labour market have done pretty well!
Is education then the emancipator, the key to success?
Yet, why do some second generation Pakistani boys to taxi driving recess?



Or is it the various capitals he says, that create this doxic structure
Social capital? Religious? Symbolic? Or Culture?
So our Class, Affiliations, Gender, and Ethnicity form a certain CAGE,
A structure one is born in, as we enter life's stage.

We do not choose these for ourselves, but they yield their power on us
Reproducing the habitus affecting our long term prospects thus
But man is born free, a rational thinking being!
How does one negotiate this CAGE? When does agency kick in?



I am a contrast to them in many a way
What role does my own background here play?
I am an educated, Hindu, Indian, woman from the middle class
They are taxi drivers, Muslim, Pakistani, men from a working class
So, how does one research these subjective questions of the mind?
How will I unearth the habitus of being a minority in the grind?
How do my own assumptions affect what I say and ask?
How in the glory of my own habitus does my research bask?

