

**'I feel my Dad every moment!': memory, emotion and embodiment in British South Asian fathering practices**

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## **Chapter 9**

### **‘I Feel My Dad Every Moment!’**

#### **Memory, Emotion and Embodiment in British South Asian Fathering Practices**

**Punita Chowbey and Sarah Salway**

This chapter examines the fathering narratives of British South Asian men with children aged three to eight years, in the context of their complex migration histories and experiences of socio-economic marginalization in contemporary Britain. It investigates men’s narratives about their memories of their fathers and their legacies for their own values and practices as fathers. This reveals the contradictions between men’s constructions of their own fathers and their own aspirations for fatherhood, and demonstrates how socio-economic location influences the fathering practices of British South Asian men.

While recent growing recognition of fathers’ roles and needs is to be welcomed, the research underpinning such developments in theory, policy and practice has been critiqued for largely focusing on European and North American middle-class fathers (Cabrera and Garcia-Coll 2004; Hawkins and Palkovitz 1999). Little research has involved minority ethnic or working-class fathers (Lewis and Lamb 2007; Shears 2007). There are concerns that policy and practice, grounded in the experiences and normative assumptions of white middle-class culture, is often inappropriate for fathers from other, less privileged, backgrounds (Gillies 2009; Lloyd, O’Brien and Lewis 2003). The finding that early years and parenting interventions often fail to engage with fathers from diverse cultural and class backgrounds is one indication of this mismatch between the dominant understandings and expectations of

fathering and the lived realities of many men in diverse societies (Lloyd, O'Brien and Lewis 2003).

According to the 2011 U.K. Census, British Asians/Asians represent 4.9 per cent of the total population in England and Wales. Of all ethnic minority groups, those identifying as British Indian/Indian are the largest, making up 2.5 per cent of the total population, while those identifying as British Pakistani/Pakistani (2 per cent) and British Bangladeshi/Bangladeshi (0.75 per cent) make up smaller but still sizeable groups (Office of National Statistics 2012). The majority of British Asian men become fathers, and fatherhood is a key component of identity for most U.K. Asian men (Beishon, Modood and Virdee 1998; Shaw 2000). Yet little is known about how British Asian men experience and practise fatherhood or how their fatherhood is shaped and constrained by structural factors alongside individual and family-level influences (Chowbey, Salway and Clarke 2013). Complex migration experiences, unemployment or poor employment, and systematic minoritization can make being a father challenging for South Asian men (Platt 2002; Salway, Chowbey and Clarke 2009). Furthermore, marriage breakdown is on the rise in some South Asian groups, underscoring the danger of assuming static parenting arrangements (Qureshi, Charsley and Shaw 2014). This chapter goes some way to filling this gap in knowledge. Our focus on fathers' childhood memories of their own fathers takes a novel, but we suggest fruitful, approach to increasing our understanding of British South Asian men's fathering experiences and practices.

Fathering attitudes and behaviours are influenced by parents' own childhood experiences (Daly 1993; Floyd and Morman 2000; Furstenberg and Weiss 2000; Pease 2000; Snarey 1993). For example, research suggests links between fathers' and sons' authoritarian parental practices, and that, similarly, young fathers are less likely to live with their children if their own fathers were non-resident (Furstenberg and Weiss 2000; Peretti and Statum

1984). The intergenerational transmission of fathering takes on a particular significance when the focus is on migrant and minority fathers. These men must often fashion their father identity and behaviour in a context that differs over space, as well as time, from that of their own fathers. Brannen, Moss and Mooney (2004) sought to examine how different generations and ethnicities engage in fathering. In their work with Polish and Irish fathers, they show the complexity of comparing migrants across different historical periods and across different national contexts. They conclude that structural and relational ambivalences are managed and reflected in men's identification with their own fathers' strong work ethics and provider roles. Our research takes a similar approach by focusing on fathers with young children and comparing their accounts of being brought up in South Asia and the U.K. In addition, fathers' different ethnic, religious, cultural and migration histories provide insight into diverse religious and cultural influences on fathering for British South Asian men.

### **Memory, Emotion and Unconscious Embodiment**

Current policy discourses on fathering make private acts of child-rearing public. Connecting personal stories of being fathered with collective narratives of racialization and marginalization is thus essential for understanding the images of the past and how they are projected onto the present context. Furthermore, memories construct a sense of the self in a particular time and context (Misztal 2003). As a father, memories of childhood give not only a sense of self as a son in a particular socio-economic and historical context, but also as a father constructed by the memories of the self as a son. Childhood memories may arouse particularly strong emotions. Smart argues that 'Whether the feelings evoked [through memory] are good or bad, they hold a peculiarly alluring and nostalgic significance. The emotional reaction to these memories when constructed in the present shifts "the family" into a special place in our internal calibrations of personal significance' (2007: 39). As she argues,

memories are not all about remembering, they are also about forgetting, as well as unconscious influences.

Here, to understand how fathers draw on their conscious and unconscious memories, it is useful to think about the embodied nature of memory. Following Doucet (2009), we draw on Bourdieu's (1977: 93; 1990) concept of the *habitus* as 'beyond the grasp of consciousness' to understand unconscious, habituated ways of thinking, acting and responding to current fathering contexts. Bourdieu's *habitus* makes it possible to investigate the extent to which the reproduction of fathering practices is deeply rooted in fathers' memories of their own childhoods and under what circumstances fathers question and seek to alter these practices. Further, it helps us to examine the role of structural inequalities in reinforcing the habituation of fathering practices across spatial and temporal contexts.

In examining the interaction of the social and the individual, a memory-led approach to *habitus* highlights the dynamic nature of fatherhood and enables exploration of gaps between fathers' expressed ideals and habituated ways of practising fatherhood.

## **Methods**

The study focuses on fathers of children aged three to eight years who self-identified as belonging to one of the four religio-ethnic groups: Bangladeshi Muslims, Pakistani Muslims, Gujarati Hindus (of Indian origin), and Punjabi Sikhs (of Indian origin). Our theoretical approach to ethnicity was to acknowledge the contested and malleable nature of both the content and boundaries of ethnic 'group' membership, and the multiplicity of experiences represented within the commonly used ethnic categories (Gunaratnam 2003; Modood 1988). At the same time, however, we recognize that identity formation remains 'deeply rooted in the organization of society' (Ville and Guérin-Pace 2005: 237), so that there are limits to the ways in which individuals can fashion their identities. The respondents represented a variety

of age, migration histories, educational and occupational backgrounds, as can be seen in Table 9.1.

**Table 9.1: Table of Respondents' Characteristics**

	Total	Sheffield		East London			
		PM	BM	PM	BM	GH	PS
<i>Age</i>							
20-29	6	2	1	2	0	0	1
30-39	36	7	9	3	6	6	5
40-49	17	2	0	4	3	4	4
<i>Migrant status</i>							
UK-born/migrated age <10yrs	26	4	2	1	1	2	5
Migrated age 10+yr	33	4	7	6	8	5	3
<i>Education</i>							
≤ GCSE/ O'level	20	2	4	4	3	4	3
A' level or equivalent	15	5	2	2	1	2	3
Degree or equivalent	24	4	4	3	5	4	4
<i>Current work</i>							
Part-time	19	2	5	3	4	2	3
Full-time	31	7	4	4	3	7	6
None	9	2	1	2	2	1	1
<i>Occupation (current or past)</i>							
Semi-skilled/manual	18	3	4	3	2	4	2
Skilled	17	3	3	4	2	3	2
Professional	17	4	2	2	3	2	4
Self-employed	7	1	1	0	2	1	2
Total respondents		11	10	9	9	10	10

NOTE: PM = Pakistani Muslim; BM = Bangladeshi Muslim; GH = Gujarati Hindu; PS = Punjabi Sikh

Fieldwork took place in a number of neighbourhoods across two English cities between 2006 and 2008. An initial phase of familiarization employed a range of informal interview and observational methods, involving over eighty informants, to gain a broad understanding of social and economic context, family, parenting and fatherhood, and relevant

local words and phrases. Next, fifty-nine in-depth interviews were conducted with fathers and thirty-three interviews with mothers recruited through a range of community networks. Respondents were interviewed in the language of their choice by bilingual researchers. Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed and, where necessary, translated into English in full with a focus on retaining conceptual equivalence. Our research team included four female professional researchers supported by a number of trained male and female community researchers who identified themselves as members of one of the four religio-ethnic groups.

Analysis and interpretation of findings were ongoing during data collection. Line-by-line coding was combined with an iteratively developed coding schema and holistic thematic analysis. Researchers kept field diaries and held regular meetings and analysis workshops to discuss and clarify emerging findings.

This chapter draws on data generated from the questioning aimed at understanding fathers' own experiences of being fathered. Respondents were asked to reflect on their own childhood including their relationship with their fathers, time spent together, involvement in daily caregiving and discipline. Fathers were then encouraged to think about how their childhood experiences might relate to fathering their own children. The interviews provided an opportunity to understand fathers' perceptions of fatherhood and experiences of fathering, providing access to discursive constructions of self as father (Mason 2002). A life history grid in conjunction with a semi-structured interview guide made it possible to probe childhood memories and fathers' experiences of fathering retrospectively. However, interviews are situational and relational and there can be differences in what people say and what they do. Further, it is important to appreciate, as Lawler (2000) identifies, that storytellers may choose to privilege one voice over another or use it to validate a certain class or ethnic position, and in so doing create proximity to, or distance from, their parents.

Below, we begin by describing how fathers remembered their own fathers and the content of these memories. Next, we consider the legacy of fathering, outlining different ways in which our respondents made sense of the memories of their own fathers and how they responded to these in their own enactment of fathering. The final section draws out the significance of emotion and unconscious embodiment, as we have introduced above.

## **Remembering Fathers**

### *Memories of Fathers*

Although both fathers who had migrated to Britain and those who were British-born were asked the same questions and probed along similar lines, the second-generation migrant fathers tended to reflect on their childhood memories more expansively than first-generation fathers. The majority of first-generation fathers grew up in extended families with a high degree of involvement by other relatives and therefore had limited memories of their own fathers. Further, given the public discourse of involved fathering in the U.K., second-generation fathers had more prompts to engage in reflection on their own childhood as well as their roles as fathers.

Over two-thirds of respondents told us that they lacked many vivid memories of their own fathers, being unable to recall things that they had done together or particular events. However, this lack of concrete memories contrasted with the strong emotional ties that they reported sharing with their fathers. Some had been raised by their grandfathers or uncles, with their fathers being less involved in their lives. The following statement from a second-generation Pakistani respondent is typical of many fathers in our study:

I wouldn't say there were any positive memories! It's like a blank ... 'cos if there's no involvement, you're not actually going to have any memories of it. He [my father]

never hit us or anything but ... we didn't notice the difference, most of the kids in our area were like that, so it seemed normal to us that most of the parents [were not involved].

The above quotation illustrates how the absence of fathers from their children's daily life was a 'normal' way of growing up for the majority of our fathers. Another Pakistani father's narrative threw light poignantly on what it meant for the early childhood relationship between fathers and sons: 'When I was about four or five, he was apparently a man that I didn't like. People say he was a complete stranger to me so I used to run away from him.' For respondents who had been separated from their fathers due to family migration, the years of separation remained the main frame through which they remembered their fathers, as illustrated by a Sikh respondent who migrated to Britain aged seven: 'I am not sure I did have much of a relationship with my father because when I was very little he came over to England so, up till seven when we came here ... I don't think I knew him, hardly at all.'

Some fathers reported missing their own fathers while growing up. The majority of these men were brought up in the U.K. and lacked the involvement of a large extended family that was more common for those raised abroad. This second-generation Pakistani father stated: 'When your father is not around, it's difficult. Your granddad can only play a certain role. I have no regrets ... it's part of life ... I'm thirty, but I've got experience of a sixty-year-old, what I've gone through.' Some fathers who were raised by their grandfathers or other relatives abroad did not feel that their father's absence was unusual or problematic, as reported by this first-generation Sikh father: 'There is not much difference in Asian families [between parents and grandparents], that you can't get love from grandparents. They are the same as parents. So I missed my dad, but only a little. It wasn't that bad because my grandparents loved me a lot.'

Although distant physical locations shaped day-to-day experiences, the psychological and emotional distance or proximity to their fathers did not always depend on daily interaction. Instead, for many respondents their fathers were very prominent in their childhood narratives, despite physical separation and fleeting encounters. The significance of letters and phone calls, however infrequent, is evident from this first-generation Bangladeshi respondent whose father worked in the Persian Gulf for a major part of his childhood: ‘My father left when I was four, came back after about five, six years for a couple of months. Then he went again for three, four years. But he was all the time in touch through letters ... they were very powerful at that age. We had lots of questions to ask and there were huge letters from him offering guidance.’

Many fathers recounted memories of their own fathers with a deep longing for greater physical and emotional intimacy. However, some fathers said they understood that their fathers loved them without receiving direct verbal or physical expressions. Being introduced by their fathers to their friends with pride, being called to sit on the same *charpay* (cot) next to their father, or being asked if they had eaten, were all viewed as expressions of love. Reflecting on his relationship with his father, one first-generation Bangladeshi father expressed these unstated articulations of love: ‘Actually he shows his affection with us actually internally ... not hugging, I mean, holding us just inside, we can imagine he likes us too much.’

Many respondents had vivid memories of limited but important time together with their fathers. Rather than descriptions of routine and daily time with their fathers, the narratives recounted stories of going to parks, the seaside, shopping and on visits to relatives and other ways of linking to the outside world. For the majority such occasions were limited, and some respondents were unable to recall any details of time spent with their fathers. Nevertheless, many respondents’ narratives suggested strong bonds with their fathers, and a

powerful impact of limited time spent together, as illustrated in the following excerpt from a second-generation Pakistani father:

So although your mother is there you really look forward more to the time with your father because it's like a guy thing, you can chill out together. I remember always wanting to impress my father more than my mother, want[ing] to get the answers right, behav[ing] myself slightly better in front of him. It was almost like trying to impress him more than my mother ... a longing for my father to come home in the evening. Because the time was limited it meant a lot more for us to be there with him.

The memories may not have been abundant, but they were powerful and meaningful for the fathers in our interviews. What many men lacked in giving their sons bountiful memories of togetherness as fathers, they more than made up for by role-modelling as honest, hard-working, self-made men in a more overtly racist Britain. Many second-generation fathers' narratives recognized the additional hardship that their fathers had faced because of discrimination that they had experienced in their daily lives. Fathers frequently described how society had changed in the decades since their own fathers had worked to make a life in the U.K., referring to reduced racism in schools and communities, as well as greater visibility and acceptance of minority ethnic people. A second-generation Sikh father whose parents had moved away from an all 'black area' to an all 'white area' to provide a 'better environment' for their children recollected:

I can remember like we had quite a big National Front organization in the white area and mum would go down the road and they'd be six-foot skinheads, [calling] to mum like, that would be her English name and it was quite ironic to see ... I can remember

one day the next-door neighbour saying ‘oh there’s a Paki family have just moved in up the street’. She never thought it was a bad thing to say.

### *Relationships with Fathers*

Our respondents’ relationships with their fathers shifted over their life courses. For the majority of respondents, their fathers contributed to their lives in many positive and nurturing ways, despite often limited day-to-day involvement. For over half of our fathers, especially the first-generation migrants, their fathers were a source of inspiration. Many expressed deep gratitude to their fathers and felt they owed everything to them. Some dwelt upon what their fathers had achieved and ignored the minimal day-to-day involvement they had had in their lives. Several fathers talked about their fathers as their ‘heroes’ and role models. A second-generation Sikh father said: ‘[He was a] ... person to look up to, like an idol, sort of thing, you know. The things he used to do, you’d want to do when you grow up’. Pride was a very common sentiment in many fathers’ narratives. Some fathers elaborated on how their fathers were very knowledgeable, helped others and served their community and family back home. Many expressed respect for their fathers’ very hard work to provide for the family, as seen in this second-generation Sikh father’s narrative: ‘Dad had six or seven jobs at one time ... just before I joined the police service I did loads of jobs like my dad because you do whatever there’s available to do ... he would do whatever he could to lay his hands on money to bring us up.’

The respondents’ narratives also revealed a deep sense of gratitude towards their fathers. The fathers who felt this way had grown up with a strong sense of trust and security and felt that the provision of such a strong attachment is an integral part of fatherhood. The following statement from a first-generation Gujarati illustrates this well: ‘Whatever my father says is the truth! I am here, because of him. If you need something [even if it is impossible], a

father would still try to do that to keep you happy ... not only my father, everybody's father is going to do.' For many who felt this way, this sense of gratitude emanated from the huge sacrifices their fathers had made to help them become the individuals and fathers they now were.

For some, however, memories were painful and ever-present, appearing to limit their own fathering role. These fathers wanted to salvage themselves and their fathers from traumatic (or absent) childhood events. Some longed for their fathers and tried to make sense of their predicament, blaming not individuals but circumstances that may have got in the way of fathers and sons. As one second-generation Sikh father said: 'As I was born at the wrong time they gave me to my dad's friend, the English lady. She was looking after me and then ... one day they took me back in and ... I was very young. I put it down to experience and in the olden times life was hard.' This father in his forties was still grappling with what his narrative suggests is the most significant event of his life – the sense of abandonment by his parents. This childhood desertion shadowed all aspects of his life including his role as a father. Yet his narrative also included rationalization of why his parents had acted as they had. Other fathers rationalized their fathers' role in their lives and wished to forgive them. A common rationale was that fathers had not experienced 'good' fathering themselves and so did not know how to father; it was not their fault. As one second-generation Pakistani father said:

My dad was nine when he came to this country. His uncle brought him. So he didn't actually have a proper father figure either ... and I can't blame him, because he didn't have a father as well. So for him to give that to his own child, he wouldn't have known what it would [be], because he didn't experience it himself.

Unlike those who sought to explain and accept their fathers' behaviour, a couple of fathers expressed anger and resentment at their fathers' failure to fulfill their expectations – to provide protection, love and resources. One second-generation Gujarati father complained that: 'I don't know why my dad wasn't the main breadwinner ... my mother worked solid. She did what my dad should have been doing! So looking back on it ... it's wrong. The whole roles had been reversed, except my dad didn't do anything to actually take over the other role and look after the kids.' However, almost all of the fathers who had painful memories sought to reconcile themselves with their childhood events and 'move on' in life. As one Sikh father expressed, 'I have had a hard life ... and really if I want peace in life I've got to let go of the past and try and move on'. Although just a few of our respondents expressed the desire to seek reconciliation with their fathers, despite troubling childhood memories, their stories illustrate well the importance of fathers' positive roles in children's lives.

In contrast, some fathers appeared to have an emotionally distant relationship with their fathers and explicitly recognized little contribution of their own fathers in their lives. Although several did not have many negative things to say about their fathers, they did not dwell upon the memories or their relationship. Some tried to identify work-related reasons for their emotional distance. For others, their fathers were fear-inspiring, distant figures. This distance was often understood as a reflection of 'old-fashioned' parenting, as reported by a second-generation Pakistani father: 'I don't want it to sound like I'm painting a bad picture of him, but he was this individual who [we] would classify as old-school thinking'. Some fathers accepted this emotional distance and refused to dwell upon this, being more concerned about how they could be better fathers to their own children, as reflected in this Sikh father's statement: 'I have got more things to do than look back on things ... it's not that important really ... You've got another generation to look after, [rather] than look over in the

past and decide it could have been better here or there'. The majority of these fathers were pragmatic about their relationship with own fathers and, if they had felt any resentment in the past, this was no longer at the forefront of their experience. Some appeared to have gone through a cycle of appreciation, and finally acceptance, of the difficult circumstances of their fathers. Some of these respondents answered questions about their own childhood memories with comments about their children's future, illustrating the simultaneity of their roles as both son and father.

### **Legacies of Fathering**

In this section, we examine the legacies of our respondents' own childhoods in terms of the extent to which they drew on the fathering practices and values of their fathers. We identify three broad patterns: emulation, rejection and reinvention. Importantly, these patterns do not neatly map onto respondents' experiences of being fathered or relationships with their fathers. For example, those fathers who had positive memories did not necessarily emulate all aspects of their childhood. Similarly, those who had painful memories did not necessarily reject their fathers' approach to fathering in its entirety. Some degree of reinvention, or at least aspirations for reinvention, was present in all narratives. This recasting of fathering reflected a desire not to replicate unpleasant aspects of their own childhood, the need to adapt to changes in society such as expectations of a more hands-on approach to fathering, and their own socio-economic positioning and family circumstances.

#### *Father Emulation*

Many fathers' narratives described various ways in which they sought to reproduce the fathering that they had experienced. Although not all fathers in this category described themselves as 'close' to their fathers when they were their own children's age, as fathers now

themselves they looked back on their father's ways of parenting as desirable. They identified various areas such as emotional closeness, self-sacrifice, role-modelling and encouragement towards education, which they sought to replicate. Although some fathers were doing things that their fathers had never done when they were children – such as direct caregiving – they did not dwell upon those aspects when talking of their own fathers. The following explanation by a Bangladeshi father who migrated to Britain as a teenager reveals how he sees his father as a role model: 'I learnt many things from him, particularly how he sacrificed his personal life for his children. For example, the importance of education. Lots of people didn't educate their children because they wanted money a little bit earlier. If my father had not sacrificed so much then I would not be here in this position.'

For many fathers reproduction was effortless and some had not considered other ways of bringing children up. One first-generation Bangladeshi father was eager to demonstrate the affection he had learnt from his father: '[What] I have learnt from him is ... to love and be affectionate towards my children ... and also that we should be happy and have a good time with the children together, and have a greater attachment [*maya*] for the children'. For this father, showering children with love was the most natural way of bringing up children. For him, this was the main contribution of his father to his life; he did not talk about any practical ways in which his father may have been involved. Although he was more involved with his children on a day-to-day basis than his father, to him these were not the most important aspects of fathering. Even though he was reorienting fathering practice, therefore, in his mind he was following in his father's footsteps. Several other fathers talked similarly about the rush of emotions at the sight of their fathers, be it at the end of the day or after an extended period of separation; they sought to reproduce the same with their children.

A further significant area for reproduction was to inculcate survival skills and confidence. Fathers were keen that children have the necessary skills to negotiate the hostile

world and carve out a respectable life for themselves both within their religio-ethnic community and within wider British society. A second-generation Sikh father whose early childhood was marked by racist experiences, articulated this powerfully:

[My] dad instilled us with common sense and street awareness that pays me off more now ... Sometimes I'll take him [my son] to the gym just so he gets used to the environment. I like him to be around people so he gets confident talking and not scared of people ... my dad always taught me that ... that's what I want to instil in my son. It's just to have confidence and that's a vital role my dad had on me, just to give me a man's confidence to deal with things and issues.

Some fathers also talked about helping their children financially, saving money for their education and marriage, just as their fathers had done for them. The majority of the fathers who sought to emulate their fathers' practices chose to overlook the less desirable aspects of their own upbringing and carry on with the other aspects.

### *Father Rejection*

Over one third of the fathers sought to distance themselves from some aspects of their fathers' approaches to parenting. In particular many fathers, though appreciating the need for their fathers to work long hours in the socio-economic and migration context of their time, sought to reject this model of work-life balance. Significantly, these respondents were prepared to pay the price for their decisions in terms of reduced earnings and social disapproval, as it was common for friends and relatives to discourage them from compromising their breadwinning role. A second-generation Pakistani father explained his reasons for taking part-time employment through his relationship with his daughter:

Well I used to come back from work and sit next to her cot not wanting to wake her up. I wasn't seeing her grow up and that's where I went wrong with my parents. Because my father used to work all the time and I thought 'I am not going to do the same with my children'. So, I went part time.

Many fathers distanced themselves from their fathers by presenting themselves as more loving and involved in day-to-day caregiving. Some respondents also rejected their father's approach of imposing their choices on their children, which they found unacceptable. This second-generation Sikh father saw himself as somebody who believed in the individuality of children, unlike the previous generation who he felt viewed children as their 'property': 'Because my parents made me do things I didn't want to do. I'd rather they experience the things they want to do. And if it's wrong they can say then, "I don't want to do that anymore". I want them to experience life as they want to rather than what we want.' With regard to their involvement in daily lives, these fathers identified many avenues where their own fathers had failed and vowed not to repeat these mistakes. One second-generation Bangladeshi father said: 'To my father we were just kids, he did not think about our education, future. So I think that, the mistake that my parents committed has led me to be unsuccessful in many areas, and I don't want that to be repeated by me.' Like this father, several others blamed their fathers' lack of input in their education as a reason for their current economic plight. Linking academic failure to poor employment outcomes, fathers reiterated their commitments to their children's education.

Importantly, despite our respondents' best efforts to give their children a different childhood, the legacy of being fathered was evident in the way they thought about their children. One second-generation Sikh father's narrative showed how he projected his own

lack of love as a child onto his children. As we mentioned earlier, this particular father was given up for a temporary adoption as a child and felt unloved by his parents. He describes how he loves his children and worries that something bad might happen to them:

Now while you're going to work you ain't got your eyes on your children and you're worried that, I hope my children are safe because I don't want them to go through any abuse or anything through life ... I hope they're all right, they haven't got injuries or they ain't done something silly or ... I'm quite worried every time I'm out ... if something went wrong, how would you get home quick?

Importantly too, although many strived to get away from an undesirable work-life balance, they found themselves working long hours and in multiple jobs just like their fathers. They felt trapped and bitter but at the same time did not have the time or resources to break this cycle of long working hours and little time for fathering. This frustration is revealed by one second-generation Sikh father's failure to be different from his father:

Because of my job situation I can only do a certain amount. I don't blame myself, and I do blame myself. I blame myself because I didn't get education, but my parents should've taken care of that. Now it's having a big impact on my children. I try my best to do things for them even though I'm tired, shattered or exhausted. I still try and do it.

Despite their explicit rejection of their own father's parenting, many respondents' patterns of involvement in their children's lives were therefore affected nevertheless by their own childhood memories and by the reproduction of socio-economic disadvantage.

### *Father Reinvention*

Many fathers responded to their memories of their fathers by emphasizing the vast difference in context between their childhood and the present day. Some in this category were raised abroad for parts of their childhood and others carved out a different life to their fathers in terms of class and neighbourhood. They felt that the composition of households, their own educational and occupational backgrounds, as well as changes in understandings of childhood and fathering rendered their own childhood experiences meaningless as a platform for comparison. One first-generation Sikh father felt there was no point in looking back because his childhood was so different to that of his children:

I grew up in India and it's a different story, parenting isn't done by mother and father as such. It's a big family situation and anybody can be responsible for you. It's like an open house ... it's not just your parents, who can tell you off or whatever.

Another second-generation Sikh father emphasized the way in which ideas of childhood and what it means to be a father have changed:

I've given a lot of time for my child but it's naturally because the way things have moved on in life. My father had ten children ... it was work and feeding ten children and ... now a lot of fathers are trying to spend time with their children ... So I think it's a lot different from my dad giving us time than we do today.

For some respondents, the conscious decision to reorient their fathering practices only came after a major life event such as sickness. Some discovered other models of fathering slowly by observing others. A Pakistani father made this point:

I didn't give my family that much time because my father didn't give us much time. I thought it was normal to be like that. But it's only when you get more mature you see other people and you think, I should have personally given my kids more time.

Many fathers emphasized the difference in education and occupation between themselves and their fathers. One second-generation Pakistani father in professional employment described how different his circumstances are to his father who had worked in a factory and led a very family-centric existence. He said:

My dad was slightly different because he was working all the time ... he didn't go out. The only socializing for my father's generation was with the extended family. So his knowledge about what was going on in the world was limited, whereas I am different.

Several fathers also noted that children are now more aware and demanding than they had been as children. As one second-generation Gujarati father said: 'If you don't get no time off during the holidays ... children start saying that "oh, my dad is not spending time with me"'. Some fathers spoke of how their children insisted that they want their 'daddies' to do certain tasks such as taking them to the park, reading or putting them to bed. Wives' roles in encouraging fathers to be more involved with their children also emerged as important. Sometimes, it arose out of necessity when wives were away at work in contrast to their

mothers who had been housewives. For others their wives encouraged, taught or forced them to take on more hands-on childcare responsibilities. Fascinatingly, with regard to intimacy with children, many fathers looked to their own mothers for role models rather than to their fathers. They sought to forge intimate bonds with their children that were similar to those that they had had with their mothers; for some this had made up for their distant relationship with their fathers. As one second-generation Bangladeshi father said: 'The things which my father did not do ... like playing with us ... these things I do with my children ... the things I found lacking ... and this was something we had with our mother'. Many fathers viewed themselves as modern fathers who were like a 'friend' to their children, creating a space for openness. As a second-generation Sikh father said: 'I know he's my son but if I look at him as a friend we'll share more secrets and we'll have a great laugh in life. If I look at him as my son then he's going to be shy and doing things behind my back'.

Interestingly, fathers in this category, more than any other, appeared to be especially aware of public discourses of appropriate fathering. Though only a handful of fathers had ever engaged with fathers' support services, many had had encouragement from their colleagues, children's teachers and health professionals to adopt a particular form of 'involved fathering'. Some fathers felt pressure on them with regard to meeting the expectations of these professionals, though believed there was little support available to them. In addition, many fathers in this category found their new way of fathering tough because they were doing things which were considered to be unusual. Their own fathers and extended family members disapproved of their high level of involvement in their children's lives, especially when it compromised their breadwinner roles. As one second-generation Gujarati father who took time off for a year to look after his sick son said: 'My dad sees him [sick son] as being someone who has probably cost me financially because I took a year off to care for him'.

Grandfathers were a source of practical support, especially when both parents worked, but they controlled the amount and types of input by fathers. For example, many grandparents influenced what was construed as helping with children as opposed to doing domestic chores. While it was acceptable to feed the children, cooking was considered a wife's job and was frowned upon. Thus fathers often found themselves reinventing their fathering role in the face of familial and community disapproval. The following quotation from a second-generation Pakistani father sums up the outlook of many fathers towards their new way of fathering:

And you also [in addition to your own fathering aspirations] use your own life experiences as I said earlier about my father ... between the two of them you try to establish what parenting is for you. So, I didn't want what had happened with me in terms of not having a relationship with my father but at the same time I wanted to bring them up to the best of their abilities with what my education and understanding had taught me.

The fathers' narratives highlighted the need to juggle the multiple inputs that new modes of fathering demand and negotiate a more subtle and multidimensional fathering role. This new way of fathering was usually fashioned in the absence of a role model and often in the face of criticism from extended family and community and significant structural constraints. As they embarked on this journey of father reinvention, however, they were also aware of the influence of their fathers on their fathering practices. As a first-generation Bangladeshi father narrated, 'That influence is there. I feel my dad at every moment. How he spoke. How he would look at me. I find myself doing the same with my children.'

## **Conclusion**

The psychological literature has clearly demonstrated the significance of a father in a man's life (e.g., Gruenert 2003; Pease 2000), but much of the sociological literature has ignored fathers' complex relationships with their own fathers and the role they play in reproducing fathering. Indeed, in frameworks of influences on fatherhood, authors have spent no more than a few sentences considering how fathers' memories of their own fathers influence their approach to bringing up children (for example Cabrera et al. 2007; Doherty 1998; Lamb 2004; Palkovitz 1997). Against this, we have demonstrated that fathers' own experiences of being fathered shape their constructions, enactment and experience of the fathering role, both consciously and unconsciously.

Our findings show that despite the diversity in socio-economic, cultural and household trajectories, the majority of the fathers had shared a deep bond with their fathers, which was sometimes troublesome and complex. Irrespective of the actual day-to-day contributions, our respondents were deeply influenced by their fathers, as reflected in the individuals they had become and the fathering roles they had defined. Several key features of previous generation's fathering were highlighted, including undesirable work-life balance, minimal involvement in daily caregiving and a physical and emotional distance between many fathers and their sons – the typical 'old-fashioned' or 'Asian' model of fathering, as they put it. Respondents remembered their fathers not just as individuals with certain temperaments and behaviours, but also as individuals who occupied a particular position in the socio-economic and racial hierarchy. Consistent with previous research (Daly 1993), our respondents often justified their fathers' absence from their childhood on the grounds of their work and associated constraints.

Respondents related to their fathers in many ways, including some who had a troubled relationship with their fathers and wanted to salvage themselves from the painful past, some who idolized their fathers and overlooked any unpleasant aspects, and some who appeared

distant or indifferent to their fathers' memories. In this context, Pease's (2000) suggestion that fathers may carry deep 'wounds' because of how they were fathered and the relationship they had with their own fathers resonates with some of our interviewed fathers, but clearly not all.

Some studies of fathering suggest that fathers replicate the positive aspects of their own fathers' practices and reject the negative aspects of their own upbringing (; Bar-on and Scharf 2014, Snarey 1993). Although this is consistent with some of our findings on fathering legacies, we found three contrasting ways in which fathers responded to the memories of their own upbringing: those who emulated their fathers' practices, those who rejected them and those who reinvented their fathering roles to respond to significant changes in the fathering context since they had been children. Though changes in wider society and individual circumstances necessitated some reorientation of the fathering role for all our respondents, some differences in the degree of refashioning were evident, linked to the interplay of class and ethnic identities. The majority of those respondents who had degrees and were in professional jobs aspired to a highly involved model of fathering across all four religio-ethnic groups and regardless of migration generation. However, differences were also found between the groups. The majority of our Gujarati and Sikh fathers had wives who were employed, which necessitated their involvement in their children's lives on a daily basis, thereby changing their self-image as fathers. This contrasted with a large number, though not all, of our Pakistani and Bangladeshi fathers, who had sole responsibility for income earning within the family and tended to have a specialist division of labour with their wives, particularly if first-generation migrants. Further, the tendency to focus on enhancing children's education and development – for instance via educational toys and visits to museums – appeared to be more common among our Gujarati and Sikh fathers than the Pakistani and Bangladeshi fathers. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the dynamic

nature of parenting arrangements and the ways in which structural constraints and opportunities – such as restrictions on employment possibilities for some men – produced flexible responses in fathering practices.

Notwithstanding the active reflection and deliberate nature of fathering exhibited by some of our respondents, the role of *habitus* as embodied dispositions, ‘inculcated as much, if not more, by experience as by explicit teaching’ (Jenkins 1992: 76) was evident in the fathers’ narratives. These habitual ways of being, thinking and doing were acquired by watching their fathers and through the experiences of being fathered. This was evident in the ways that, despite active narratives of rejection, unconscious replication of their fathers’ values and practices or over-compensation were revealed. Interestingly, father reinvention responses had been triggered for some men by major life events, while prior to these ‘turning points’ respondents described how they had replicated, unconsciously, their fathers’ pattern of parenting. Fathers’ degree of emotional intimacy was a particular area where respondents’ experiences and expectations appeared unconsciously influential. Embodied physical and emotional connection or distance were frequently discussed in fathers’ narratives, with many expressing a sense of an intuitive ‘knowing the right way to parent’ in this regard. Such embodied memories are encapsulated in this quotation from a second-generation Sikh father:

I see people get books and stuff like that and I don’t think we need them. You have a feeling when things aren’t right, it’s gut instincts. You know how you’ve been brought up, you know what positive features there are in you and what positive features you need to hand on.

Like this father, the majority of fathers had relied on a ‘natural’ way of parenting learnt instinctively through their own experiences and from watching others (see Dermott 2008;

Gillies 2006). Many struggled for role models as they tried to carve out fathering practices that were fit for their current context and aspirations, and some drew instead on their mothers' embodied parenting in bonding with children. Many fathers cited the close relationship that they had had with their mothers as characterized by intimate conversations, physical and verbal expressions of love and day-to-day care as their ideals of parenting. Mothers' parenting practices were more in tune with the involved fathering discourses and provided in many cases the template to follow. While we emphasize fathers' core influences on their sons' later fathering practices, our findings therefore concur with Pease (2000) in acknowledging mothers' and wives' roles as a resource in building a fathering identity for some men.

To conclude, fathering practices are shaped not just by the intergenerational replication of values and practices but also by the deep emotional legacy that children inherit from their fathers. Further, fathering is embedded in wider socio-economic and racial hierarchies, which constrain men's ability to father in new ways. Despite their efforts, many men end up replicating their fathers' parenting practices, such as working long hours and being absent from the day-to-day lives of their children. Alongside men's conscious and intended fashioning of their fathering roles, the unconscious and unintended manifestations of father identities and practices persist largely due to men's inability to escape their own fathers' fate of insecure employment combined with gendered, classed and ethno-religious conceptions of fatherhood. Thus many of our respondents felt frustrated at their failure to enact the involved and emotionally close fathering promoted by current public discourses and to which they aspired, perceiving this to be the path to gain personal fulfilment and the joys of fatherhood.

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