

'Home': The Perspectives of Young Asian  
Women in Sheffield.

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## Summary/ Abstract.

This thesis describes and analyses the views of young Muslim women from Pakistani backgrounds who live in the same neighbourhood in Sheffield. The thesis documents their perspectives about 'home'. More specifically, it considers their perceptions of identity and 'belonging', in light of their residence in Sheffield and family connections to Pakistan.

This thesis is prompted by the inadequacy of existing explanations. 'Belonging' has been under theorised, viewed as cultural affiliation to British culture or Asian culture. This is inadequate. Debate focuses on 'difference'. Asian cultures are reified, depicted as patriarchal and constraining. More recent accounts have tried to move debate forward via a reformulation of identity; belonging is still viewed as one-dimensional. I aim to establish a broader based account of the young women's perspectives, focussing on their own views.

Central to the analytical framework is a focus on views about place. Description and analysis explores views about three key places in their views: the neighbourhood, Sheffield and Pakistan. This facilitates a move beyond the confines of existing research where 'belonging' is viewed as an affiliation to the nation.

Description and analysis of the young women's views reveals the centrality of 'racism' to their views about Sheffield. The young women were apprehensive about experiencing racial harassment or violence. This acted as a backdrop to their views

about place. Racism did not prevent 'belonging'. Meanings that addressed this apprehension were central to their perspectives about 'home' in Sheffield.

Identity and belonging are understood as multifaceted. The young women had a sense of affinity with Pakistan, coupled with a sense of belonging in Sheffield. Rather than being trapped 'between two cultures' they simultaneously looked towards Sheffield and Pakistan; they identified as 'Pakistanis in Sheffield'. Views about place played a mediatory role in perceptions of identity and belonging, reflecting and sustaining perspectives.

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**Chapter One: Young Muslim Asian Women's Views About Their Neighbourhood, The Wider City of Sheffield and Pakistan: A Conceptual Framework.**

**1.1 Introduction.**

This thesis describes and analyses the views of young Muslim women from Pakistani backgrounds who live in the same neighbourhood in Sheffield. Their views are of interest for number of reasons.

The analysis of the young women's views is prompted, in part, by wider social changes. Global change, globalisation and the emergence of the 'postmodern society' are thought to have transformed society. According to Mac an Ghail (1999:4) one of the claims of postmodernism is that:

*"...we are experiencing a fundamental cultural shift, marked by a sense of discontinuity, fragmentation and uncertainty."*

One product of this change has been growing global migration. This and the uncertainty of contemporary society have been viewed as challenging traditional understandings of 'belonging', where a single bounded place was 'home' (Massey, 1994). This is evident in the experiences of groups like Pakistanis in Britain. However, the experiences of such groups have been overlooked by wider debates about global change (Mac an Ghail, 1999; Gilroy, 1993).



Questions about how members of minority ethnic groups view identity and belonging have been explored in a more specialised literature, however. To a great degree this focussed on the experiences of young women. The wider implications of young women's views and experiences have been considered little, however.

The question of how young women understand belonging in Britain and Pakistani culture is a widely recognised one in this literature (Watson, 1977; Knott and Khoker, 1993; Ghuman, 1991, 1999). Corresponding with a wider sociological debate (Woodward, 1997; Castles and Miller, 1993), migration is understood to produce contested identities, in this literature. The question posed is how these young women understand identity and belonging. Where is their 'home'?

Whilst existing research has considered these questions, the explanations offered are inadequate. 'Belonging' has been under theorised, in research. Belonging has been understood as relating to the cultural affiliations of identity. Thus, research about young women has primarily asked whether or not they are assimilated into British culture or are retaining a distinctive ethnic identity. The focus has been on difference. The question of how ethnic minorities carve out a space for themselves in a society where they have been seen to not belong has been the focus of analytical attention (Britton, 2000:6). This question was raised against a backdrop of an ongoing debate, at the national level, about who belongs and who does not (Solomos, 2003; Alibhai- Brown, 2000).

British and Asian cultures are understood as polar opposites, presented in a fixed, determinate way (Watson, 1977; Anwar, 1998, Ghuman, 1991, 1999). There is a tendency to reify Asian culture in existing literature, seeing it (and its contrasts with an under-theorised British culture) as a key influence in young women's lives. This determinist approach has been widely criticised (Bhopal, 1991; Knott and Khoker, 1993; Basit, 1997b; Dwyer, 1998) and results from the limited scope of this field of research, to some extent marginalized from wider sociological debates.

Critique has also focussed upon how young women have been depicted (Bhopal, 1991). The way migrants and their children were trapped between British and Asian cultures was understood as being especially problematic for young women. A view that Asian cultures are deterministically patriarchal was an inherent feature of the reification of these cultures within debate (Knott and Khoker, 1993). This perspective on patriarchy was coupled with a view that women have a role as cultural transmitters/ reproducers (through their role in nurturing children, for example) (Dwyer, 1998, 1999). Thus, the views of young women were considered as indicative of future trends in the reproduction and sustenance (or not) of ethnic cultures in Britain. My research focuses on these young women, as there is a need to reconsider the findings and assumptions of this debate.

Existing research about young Asian women, and that adopting a broader focus on the femininity of young women of all ethnicities (for instance, Lees, 1992; McRobbie, 2000), indicates the significance of gender. There is a need for more

research that considers young people's own understandings of femininity and masculinity. This need does not equate to an exclusive focus on women. Webster (1996), Alexander (2000) and Goodey, (1998, 2001) demonstrate that more research to consider the experiences of young Asian men and their masculinity is also needed

Yet my research exclusively considers the views of young women. There is a need to consider how gender mediates the processes through which second-generation descendants of migrants understand their social world in Britain. The lives of these young people are not just shaped by their ethnicity; the role of gender has to be considered. There is also a need to examine how young women perceive place in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, building upon research such as that undertaken by Back (1996) that pointed to the role of the local context of place. More research about young women's views is needed, as their voices are often silent or under heard in the existing research about multi-ethnic neighbourhoods (such as Webster, 1996).

More recently, researchers have tried to move beyond the confines of earlier debates via a re-conceptualisation of identity, responding to postmodern theorising and Hall's (1992) influential arguments about the emergence of 'new ethnicities'. Dwyer (1998) argued that young women present multiple identities, a response to often the contradictory discourses that are drawn upon in the construction of identity. According to Dwyer, the role of these contradictory discourses was seen, for example, in the way young women adopted differing versions of femininity in different spaces/ situations (Dwyer, 1999).



Rassoul (1997, 1999) drew on Giddens' (1991) concept of 'reflexivity', to argue that young people used their knowledge of the social world to define their identities in a conscious way. This suggests that identity has coherence. If identity is shaped in relation to contradictory discourses, as Dwyer suggests, can multiple identities be coherent? The re-conceptualisation of identity in this literature has left many questions unanswered

A focus on discourse is also problematic. Dwyer interprets discourses as contradictory, but do young women view them in this way? Concentrating on discourses means that the analytical focus is on discrete expressions of identity, rather than how identities are constructed and interpreted. Dwyer's focus on discourse means that this process of interpretation is overlooked; the conclusion that discourses are contradictory is Dwyer's; attention to young women's interpretations may reveal them to be understood as coherent.

Therefore, there is a need for research that takes a broader focus, which looks beyond identity as constituted by discourse, to focus on wider social processes. In particular a broader analysis that focuses on young women's own interpretations of their identities is needed.

Through a reformulation of 'identity', the literature has moved beyond some of the confines of preceding explanations. This reconfiguration is insufficient in comprehending young women's views about identity and belonging in Britain, however. Though identity has been re-conceptualised, 'belonging' is still under-theorised, understood as coterminous with affiliation with a culture or nation.

‘Belonging’ is a key component of the questions posed about the affiliations and ‘identities’ of these young women and requires analytical attention too.

A broader based account that pays attention to both understandings of identity and belonging is needed. Such an account would ground analysis in the young women’s own views about their social world without making presumptions about the role of Asian culture or discourses. Such research could move beyond the confines of existing research and debate, making a contribution towards the comprehension of wider social changes, of which migration and global connections (such as those the young women may have with Pakistan) are an enduring feature. My research aims to do this.

The conceptual framework of this thesis is informed by the ways in which the existing literature about young Asian women has reified identity and belonging, whether in the static concepts of identity adopted in ‘between two cultures’ research (e.g. Watson, 1977; Ghuman, 1991, 1999; Anwar, 1998) or the determinate role given to ‘discourses’ in Dwyer’s (1998) research.

Rather than processual, the social world appears determinate for a number of reasons (Holdaway, 1996:5). What is needed is documentation of how these young women construct and sustain their social world through myriad processes (Holdaway, 1996:5), rather than how they are apparently constrained by their reified culture.

The research documented in this thesis attempts to do this. In particular, the ways in which perceptions of identity and belonging (a key part of understandings of the social world) are constructed and sustained will be considered. The young women's construction of their social world will be explored through description and analysis of their views about that world.

Their social world is located in place, which is the scene of everyday social interaction. Place has a physical reality that presents constraints and opportunities for social interaction. Views about place are also socially constructed, reflecting perceptions of the social such as the young women's views about identity and belonging (Lovell, 1998; Wallman, 1998). Hence, a key element of my conceptual framework concerns a focus on perceptions of place.

As perceptions of place are related to perceptions of identification and belonging, young women may understand identity and belonging. not only in relation to reified cultures, but also in relation to the places where their social world and culture are located and lived. Existing research has largely considered Britain as a source of culture, rather than as a place where everyday life is located. The places of everyday life in Britain may be spaces where a Pakistani culture can be located and lived; residence in Britain does not necessarily bring the extensive contact with 'British culture' that many existing accounts suppose. A focus on place means that analysis can look beyond the British/Pakistani cultural dichotomy, facilitating a more nuanced analysis of views about identity and belonging.

In accordance with this analytical framework, the young women's views about three key places in their lives will be considered: the neighbourhood, the city and Pakistan.

The neighbourhood is the place where the routine of everyday life takes place. The neighbourhood may have an identity and social world of its own. The young women's views about the wider city of Sheffield will also be considered.

How significant is the city within the young women's broader understanding of identity and belonging? Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996) suggested that Sheffield has an externally defined identity based on the steel and cutlery industries. According to Taylor et al. (1996), these industries have a culture associated with them, a white hegemonic masculinity. This is of continuing significance despite de-industrialisation and serves to exclude those from minority ethnic groups. This suggests that the city has a pre-existing identity: what role may it have in the young women's understanding of Sheffield and interpretation of identity and belonging?

Taylor et al. (1996) described minority ethnic groups, as a result of their sense of exclusion from the identity of the city, as being confined within their own ethnic neighbourhoods. Did this identity figure in the young women's views? Taylor et al.'s (1996) research has limitations, particularly in relation to their understanding of the minority ethnic experience in the city. My research will contribute to sociological knowledge by expanding the understanding of how young minority ethnic women view the city.



Where Pakistan is considered in existing literature, it is seen as a source of culture (e.g Watson, 1997, Ghuman, 1991,1999; Anwar, 1998; Knott and Khoker, 1993; Dwyer, 1998). My conceptual framework, however, opens up a broader frame of reference within which the significance of Pakistan can be considered. I ask how, in the context of identity and belonging, does Pakistan have significance beyond being a source of culture? What role do perceptions of place in Pakistan have? What role do views about Pakistan have in the young women's views about Sheffield?

The description and analysis of views about the neighbourhood, the wider city and Pakistan facilitates an understanding of the myriad processes through which the young women constructed and sustained their social world. Focussing on these three spaces in the young women's lives, the research aims to move beyond the narrow focus of existing research on belonging to a culture or nation.

## **1.2 Outline of the Thesis.**

The general rationale of the thesis has been outlined. This section briefly describes the content of each of the chapters, in order to make explicit the concerns that guide the thesis as a whole.

Chapter Two reviews existing the literature on belonging. This review of literature reveals the inadequate way that 'belonging' has been conceptualised in existing sociological accounts. Chapter Two also explores the literature in

relation to 'identity'. This focus on identity reveals how it has been conceptualised in existing research dealing with the experiences of young Asian women. Static, one-dimensional conceptualisations of identity underlie the view that they are trapped 'between two cultures', for example. The chapter also considers how research has been influenced by postmodern concepts of identity. These conceptualisations are problematic; an understanding of identity as interpreted through social processes, as multifaceted rather than multiple, is needed.

Chapter Three provides an overview of the methods of research used. Semi-structured interviews with young women (aged between fourteen and sixteen years) who lived in the same neighbourhood in Sheffield were undertaken. This chapter provides reflection on the process of doing the research and the obstacles encountered, such as issues of access. I also reflect on the success of the method selected.

With Chapter Four the focus of the thesis turns to a description and analysis of young women's views. Chapter Four describes and analyses the young women's views about their local neighbourhood. Chapter Five turns to the young women's views about the wider city of Sheffield. The young women understood 'Sheffield' as the city centre and the wider city; this chapter explores their views about both of these understandings of 'Sheffield'. The following chapter concludes the description and analysis of the young women's views about the significant places in their lives. Chapter Six turns to their views about Pakistan and considers views about place and connections to Pakistan. Chapter Seven,

reflects further on perceptions of identity and belonging. Shopping was a key way they engaged with place, shaping their perceptions of identity and belonging to place. Thus, shopping is the focus of Chapter Seven. Chapter Eight concludes the description and analysis of the young women's views. The chapter considers their views about femininity. The role of femininity in their perceptions of identity, and their feelings of belonging to the three key places in the young women's lives (the neighbourhood, Sheffield and Pakistan), is considered. Chapter Nine reflects upon the key points of analysis and argument further and concludes the thesis.

### **1.3 A Note on Terminology.**

Sociologists have used combinations of a variety of collective terms to refer to young women who are the children of migrants from Pakistan. 'Pakistani', 'Asian', 'South Asian', 'British Asian', 'Muslim Asian' and so on, have all been applied to describe such young women.

There is a potential problem in applying such descriptions, namely that I might be imposing externally defined terms on the young women. During the interviews, I explored their own views about how they would describe themselves. I gave the young women a long list of terms that they might want to consider, such as the ones listed above, and also gave them the option of selecting their own terms.



All of the young women said that, first and foremost, they would describe themselves as Muslims. The majority of the young women also said they would describe themselves as 'Asian'. Some said that they preferred this term, as it gave an indication of their roots without being too specific. One interviewee described 'Asian' as *'less racist when compared with 'Pakistani''*.

Reflecting their multifaceted identities, the young women also described themselves as 'Pakistani'. Elsewhere in the interviews, the young women identified as 'Pakistanis'. Describing the young women as 'Muslim Asian' I do not wish to deny the significance of their perceptions of themselves as 'Pakistani'; connections with Pakistan were significant to the young women. Nevertheless, 'Asian' was the preferred term in the context of selecting an overall description. Terms like 'British' (through preferred to 'English'), 'British Asian' and 'South Asian' were rejected. To reflect these preferences the young women are described as Muslim Asian, apart from in those contexts where they described their identification as 'Pakistanis'.

## **2. Literature Review.**

### **2.1 Introduction.**

This chapter presents a review of sociological literature relating to the themes of the research documented in this thesis. The thesis describes and analyses the views of young women from Pakistani backgrounds, who live in the same neighbourhood in Sheffield. A wide range of literature is relevant to the consideration of the young women's views.

In this chapter, this literature is reviewed in relation to the core questions posed by the research. Identity and belonging are themes that connect all of this literature, and in some way figure in the literature, whether explicitly or implicitly. The chapter begins with an introduction and overview of the key themes of debates about identity and belonging. This will be followed by an examination of literature more specifically related to the views of the young women.

### **2.2 Identity.**

Identity is a concept that has been of increasing interest within sociology (Jenkins, 1996; Hall, 1996). It is a wide-ranging concept, which is of broad sociological significance, as it concerns the relationship between the individual and collective, a core sociological question:

*“Identity can be seen as the interface between subjective positions and social and cultural situations... Identity gives us an idea of who we are and of how we relate to*

*others and to the world in which we live. Identity marks the ways in which we are the same as others who share that position, and the ways in which we are different from those who do not.*” (Woodward, 1997: 1-2)

The body of literature relating to identity is large and expanding. Identity has been discussed in relation to a number of differing, overlapping, areas of interest. Identity has been associated with modernity, postmodernism and ‘difference’, gender, the politics dimensions of identity, ethnicity and nationalism (Jenkins, 1996).

This thesis takes as its focus specific aspects of identity, those related to perceptions of belonging to place. ‘Identity’ is a concept that permeates the majority of the literature discussed in this chapter (whether overtly or covertly); this section serves as an introduction to those themes.

Identity has been depicted in several ways, from a roughly static phenomenon, to a fluid and ever changing one. The ‘cultural turn’ and a shift to postmodernist theorising had a significant influence on how identity is viewed. There has been a change in focus from the role of structural relations such as class, to more fluid understandings of identity. These various conceptions of identity have all been presented within the literature discussed in this chapter.

For example, ‘traditional’ sociological understandings of identity as stable, shaped by fixed ‘truths’ of social life such as class or ethnicity, have been adopted in considerations of the experiences of young Asian women. ‘Between two cultures’ explanations (discussed in greater detail later in the chapter) viewed ethnicity as fixed, rather than processual. Thus, stable identities were viewed as difficult to achieve due to the conflicts between these two forces.



These debates were also based on conceptualisations of specific developments taking place in identity during adolescence. Following Erikson (1968), Ghuman (1999:2) understood adolescence as the period where all young people embark upon a 'quest for personal and social identity', where stable identities, fixed for the remainder of the life course, are established. Thus Ghuman (1999:2) understood young Asians born in Britain as experiencing an adolescence that was more fraught than that of their white peers, because of the contrasts and conflicts between British and Asian cultures. This made their 'quest for identity' problematic.

With a shift to postmodern conceptualisations of identity, understandings such as that offered by Ghuman (1999) have been questioned. The relevance of stable influences upon identity, such as class, has been debated (Laclau, 1990; Giddens, 1991; Pakulski and Waters, 1996). Rather than identity being fixed and stable, it has been considered flexible and open to manipulation (Laclau, 1990:40). Identity is understood as being constituted by discourses, rather than fixed certainties such as class (Pilkington, 2003: 172). Hence we are now understood to exhibit multiple, shifting identities, with different identities being salient in differing contexts, as Said argued:

*"No one today is purely one thing. Labels like Indian, or woman, or Muslim or American are no more than starting points." (Said, 1993: 407)*

In the context of this approach to identity, as Said's (1993) comments indicate, concepts of 'race', ethnicity and 'difference' have been re-conceptualised, influencing much of the literature discussed in this chapter. Hall's (1992) arguments about the emergence of 'new ethnicities' have been particularly influential.

Hall's (1992) arguments are based on an understanding of identity as socially constructed, challenging essentialist, biological notions of ethnicity and difference. Hall understands ethnicity as a dynamic concept, defined by specific historical and cultural discourses. Hence, for Hall, ethnicity is always a process, always being made and remade within political and social contexts. 'New ethnicities' are fluid and dynamic; the concept has been used to understand how Asian and Black young people may move around seemingly different worlds and spaces, shifting their identities, often producing new identities as a result, fusing different cultural traditions into hybrid identities (Gillespie, 1995; Back, 1996; Dwyer, 1998). This perspective has influenced how much of the research discussed in this chapter has not only understood ethnicity, but identity too.

Either a static or a postmodern conceptualisation of identity has been adopted by much of the literature discussed in this chapter. Each of these approaches is problematic in many ways. Static concepts of identity essentialise ethnicity and lead to young women's agency being overlooked. The focus on discourses adopted by Dwyer (1998) and Back (1996) (prompted by Hall's conception of 'new ethnicities') is problematic too. An analytic focus on discourses equates to a focus on the end product, rather than the processes that shape understandings of identity. This thesis adopts an alternative understanding of identity, which has been little applied in considerations of the experiences of young Asian women in Britain. This conceptualisation fills a gap in the existing literature relating to the experiences of young Asian women.

I adopt a conceptualisation of identity that understands it as constructed and interpreted by the young women themselves. Social processes are not understood as shaping identity in a static or concrete like way, as with 'traditional' conceptualisations. The young women's interpretations of their identities are best understood, therefore, through the documentation of their views about their social world. The focus of analysis is on these views and the social processes they indicate, rather than discourses, which overlook how the young women interpret social processes in their understandings of identity.

This is not a new understanding of identity. It draws on the understanding offered by Mead (1934), that sense of self is developed through the interaction between our self concept and the view that others have of us, as an '*internal-external dialectic of identification as the process whereby all identities- individual and collective- are constituted*' (Jenkins, 1996:20). Therefore, in my description and analysis of the young women's views about place, identity and belonging, I focus on their own views.

### **2.3 Belonging.**

A core question posed by this thesis concerns how the young women view belonging. Before discussing how existing research about the experiences of young Asian women has debated 'belonging', broader debate will be considered. This broader debate about 'belonging' has been limited within sociology, however. Belonging is a central theme of much sociological debate and research, but has been under theorised.



### 2.31 A Sense of 'Home'.

Belonging has often been interpreted as a sense of 'home'. The breadth of the idea of 'home' has been recognised; it can be understood as reflecting a broad sweep of meanings and actions:

*" 'Home' can refer to the place you grew up (the place you perhaps threatened to run away from when you were five), the mythic homeland of your parents and ancestors that you yourself may never have actually seen, or the hostel where you are spending the night in transit. In other words, 'home' may refer to a familiar or a foreign place, or it may be no more than a passing point of reference." (Bammer, 1992: Editorial vii)*

However, within debates about 'home', the concept has typically been associated with a sense of belonging to place(s). Fundamentally, the notion of 'home' is a proxy for 'belonging somewhere' (Wallman, 1998), a connection between identity and place. Terkeneli (1996:325), argued that *'Every activity or experience in which people engage to some degree affects their geographical delineation of home.'*

The idea of 'home' has traditionally been associated in the literature with bounded spaces and homogenous communities (Rapport and Dawson, 1998). Thus, according to Rapport and Dawson, feelings of safety were associated with a sense of 'home', as it has been 'traditionally' conceptualised:

*"Salient among traditional conceptualisations of home was the stable physical centre of one's universe- a safe and still place to leave and return to (whether house, village, region or nation), and a principal focus of one's concern and control." (Rapport and Dawson, 1998:6)*

Thus, 'home' has been associated with a sense of affiliation to place. Lovell (1998:1) suggested that belonging *'evokes the notion of loyalty to place'*. This sense of loyalty



is integral to extracting feelings of safety and security. Lovell argued that belonging is defined through a sense of experience, where ideas about a place are created by a phenomenology of locality. If the young women have a sense of experience of locality in Sheffield, could they place their loyalties there, rather than to Pakistan?

As 'home' is associated with locality and a sense of security, it has also been connected to identity. For example, Wallman (1998:182) conceptualised 'home' as being *'compounded of identities of place and people'*. According to Wallman's (1998) conception, exploring views about 'home' requires the examination of relations between place and identity, therefore:

*"...between the identity of people (as groups or individuals) and the identity of the urban space in question."* (Wallman, 1998:182)

Wallman (1998) suggested that feedback exists between place and identity in the evolution of a sense of home. Identity creates a sense of what the place is like (the people here are like this, the place is like this, I am like this). This contributes to a sense of individual identity (this place is like this, I am like this); here place, identity and belonging are seen as intertwined. Could the young women be engaging in these processes, constructing their understanding of their neighbourhood in Sheffield as 'home'?

Wallman (1998) saw localities as 'urban systems', negotiated by residents. 'Getting by' in the city is dependent upon the skilful management of material and non-material resources, including identity. Wallman (1998) suggested that common foci for group identity in the contemporary period were ethnicity, work and locality. Each local

system had something that inclines it to one or the other. Therefore, an urban system may be better managed if the individual shares its work or ethnic identity.

Though Wallman (1998) saw place, identity and belonging as intertwined, there is a sense that the identity of place is, to some extent, defined externally to the views of its residents. Here a sense of 'home' indicates a place where an individual feels that their personal identity is compatible with the identity of that place (through ethnicity, for example), and, therefore, they can 'get by' in that urban system. This understanding of 'home' can be linked to accounts that depict Asian groups extracting a sense of belonging from 'Asian places' (Webster, 1996; Dwyer, 1998), or feeling excluded from 'white places' (Taylor, Evans and Fraser, 1996).

Therefore, in a majority of discussions about 'home', it has been associated with solidarity, with safety, security and being rooted. In this context, Rapport and Dawson (1998:7) proposed that 'home' can be seen as being '*synonymous with Durkheimian notions of solidary communities*'. However, others have suggested that 'home' is also something connected with processes of exclusion, as well as inclusion.

For example, Hobsbawm (1991:63) distinguished between the private and the public, in unravelling 'home'. Hobsbawm positioned 'home' as a private and individual routine, fantasy, longing or presence (*Heim*), being impacted upon by what was termed *Heimat*. *Heimat* represented a public or collective attempt to impose home as a social fact and a cultural norm to which some must belong and from which others are excluded. Racism could be an example, in this context, excluding racialised groups from a sense of belonging to place. Traditional definitions of 'home', linking it with

security and safety, overlooked power relationships in the places associated with belonging.

It is this association of 'home' with bounded communities, in defined places, that is at the root of much sociological interest in the experiences of young Asian women. Rapport and Dawson, (1998:7) argued that understandings of 'home' as bounded, safe places are anachronistic in the contemporary era, as they command *'little conceptual purchase on a world of contemporary movement'*. Do 'traditional' concepts of 'home' have any relevance in the context of global change? To young women, the children of migrants, do understandings of place as bounded and safe have any resonance? Do they associate a sense of 'home' with place in Sheffield or Pakistan, if at all? Existing theorisations of 'belonging' underlie the posing of these questions, but do not adequately explain young women's views and experiences.

### ***2.32 Belonging and 'Community'***

Feelings of belonging to place have also been indirectly addressed through the concept of 'community'. Membership of a community has been equated with feelings of safety and security, associated by many with 'a sense of home'. The concept of community has been the subject of a wide-ranging sociological debate and critique, however.

During the 1950's and 1960's 'community studies' were a key trend within sociological research (Bell and Newby, 1972). The 'community studies' school of thought (for example, Frankenberg (1957), Young and Willmott (1957) Littlejohn,



(1963), Williams (1964)) made heavy use of ethnographic approaches. These studies were concerned with the issue of transitions within communities, particularly the shift from rural to urban environments and whether the notion of community had continuing resonance. Communities were portrayed as cohesive local social structures, or subsystems.

Gans (1962) and Pahl (1968) both highlighted how communities were imagined within this tradition, as bounded entities where a specified geographical space and a distinctive way of life are coterminous. Place, identity and belonging were closely linked in these studies, often with other factors like class. A sense of self-identity was understood to be derived from belonging to the community and the distinctive parochial identity it held.

The 'community studies' school has come under a wide ranging critique (Bell and Newby, 1972). In the context of this thesis, it is suffice to say that it cannot explain how these young women understood belonging in the context of connections to Pakistan. Neither can the 'community studies' school account for the heterogeneous nature of the population in their locality.

Cohen (1985) proposed another key sociological interpretation of 'community'. Rather than the association of community with place, Cohen emphasised the symbolic elements of understandings of community. For Cohen community was not necessarily associated with locality, though "*'objective' manifestations*" in locality give it credibility (1985 :108). Cohen argued that:

*"People construct community symbolically, making it a resource and repository of meaning, and a referent of their identity."* (1985:118)

Therefore, symbolic investment in community means that it forms a large element of self-identification processes: belonging, community and identity were closely linked by Cohen (1985). Cohen's view of a symbolically constructed community went beyond deterministic views that understand community and place as closely intertwined.

However, Jenkins (1996: 110) suggested that one thing Cohen did not account for was the *'fragmentation of communal identity within communities'*. Cohen identified community as being given credence by association with locality (as already noted) or ethnicity. Within localities, such as the one focussed upon in this thesis, occupants may associate themselves with a range of ethnicities and characteristics. People living in a given locality may simultaneously lay claim to belonging to a number of 'communities'. The emphasis on the symbolic in perceptions of place, identity and belonging, is more useful in understanding the young women's views, than an emphasis on community and belonging. For the young women, 'community' may be linked to place, but is not necessarily bounded by it. Their locality may contain multiple 'communities', which they may or may not feel they belong to.

Global change, which has led to the claim that identity is subject to deterritorialisation (Appaduri, 1990; Beck 1992), has relevance for the theorisation of belonging. Global change has been understood to be particularly relevant for minority ethnic groups. This has led commentators such as Appadurai (1990, 1993), Bhabba (1994), Hall (1991) and Gilroy (1987, 1993) to comment on *'the construction of imagined*

*diasporic communities, 'new ethnicities' and a third, hybrid space between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' in the context of global processes'* (Albrow et al, 1997:23).

Therefore, the conceptualisation of belonging as coterminous with 'community' membership is problematic, when people may be simultaneously a member of a number of 'communities' within and beyond their place of residence. A focus on 'community' does not facilitate a consideration of how these feelings of belonging may be interwoven.

A further problem with the concept 'community', in relation to understanding the young women's views about 'home', lies in the recognition of its discursive and political significance. 'Community' has specific meanings in the political sphere, particularly relevant to minority ethnic communities in Britain. Ideas about 'community' have been central the politics of multiculturalism (Vertovec, 1996). Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) argued that ideologies of multiculturalism and anti racism utilised discourses of community. Multiculturalism defined 'minority communities' as having a shared culture, customs etc and placed them in opposition to the dominant hegemonic culture. 'Community' was mobilised to join minority groups together through a shared experience of racism.

Amin (2002) argued that the political use of 'community', particularly constructions of the 'Asian community' has privileged self-appointed community leaders, and '*kept Asian patriarchs in place*' (Amin, 2002:965). 'Community' has been applied to comprehend young Asian women's identities and perceptions of belonging (for example, Dwyer, 1998), but this is problematic.



‘Community’ may have meaning to the young women in their common sense views. However, it presupposes a certain relationship between place, identity and belonging. The voices of certain members of a community may be privileged over others, particularly as the idea has been mobilised in political relations. Further, ‘community’ has been said to over emphasise unity, suppressing discordant views (Young, 1990:300).

Whilst attempts have been made to adapt concepts of community to incorporate diaspora and belonging across place, the use of the concept still leads to assumptions about the relationship between place, identity and belonging. A focus on processes through which the young women interpret place, identity and belonging is, therefore, adopted in this thesis as a means to overcome some of the shortcomings of the concept of ‘community’. Amin (2002) argues that:

*“Mixed neighbourhoods need to be accepted as the spatially open, culturally heterogeneous, and social variegated spaces that they are, not imagined as future cohesive or integrated communities.”* (Amin, 2002: 972)

A focus on processes of interpreting views about place, identity and belonging provides a conceptual framework within which the views of the young women can be understood, without skewing debate to the ‘state of community’ in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods.

### ***2.33 Belonging and the Consequences of Global Change.***

As indicated in the preceding discussion about ‘community’, many recent discussions of ‘home’/ belonging have arisen out of concern that these feelings are being changed,



or eroded, in the contemporary era. Globalisation has been understood as disrupting 'belonging', as it has traditionally been understood in terms of 'community' or a secure sense of 'home' in one bounded place. Globalisation is understood to necessitate re-conceptualisation of belonging to place (Terkenli, 1996)

Various processes associated with globalisation have been understood as relevant in this context; time-space compression, the relationship between the local and the global, international migration, the emergence of diasporic communities and so on. Bammer (1992) understood these processes as destabilising understandings of 'home':

*"In some cases, it (home) is under construction, in others under siege, but hardly anywhere is it stable and untouched by the seismic changes that local and global social economies are undergoing."* (Bammer, 1992: Editorial viii)

These changes are highly relevant to explaining the young women's views about identity and belonging. Often the question posed is whether they view Britain or Pakistan as home; could global change, time-space compression and diasporic connections indicate that, rather, 'home' is something that has little meaning for them? Is global change aiding the young women to construct distinctive perceptions of 'home'?

Massey (1994) argues that rather than being eroded, 'home' is being reconfigured, suggesting that this is highlighted by the experiences of migrant groups. According to Massey (1994) as understandings of 'home' as singular and bounded have declined, a re-conceptualisation of 'home' has begun to emerge. Here 'home' is understood in

relational terms, as place(s) are inhabited alongside connections with others within ‘*a shifting geography of social relations*’.

Massey described her local high street in Kilburn, North London, as a way of encapsulating how local and global connections can coexist and a notion of ‘home’ continue despite global change. Massey described the range of neighbouring shops that serve the range of people who live in Kilburn; Irish migrants, Hindus, Muslims and so on:

*“Under the railway bridge the newspaper stand sells papers from every county of what my neighbours, many of whom come from there, still often call the Irish Free State...thread your way through the often almost stationary traffic diagonally across the road from the newsstand and there’s a shop which as long as I can remember has displayed sari’s in the window. Four life sized Indian women, and reams of cloth.”* (Massey, 1994:153)

Massey argued that whilst Kilburn has a ‘character of its own’, it does not have the singular identity that ‘community studies’ discussions might point to:

*“...it is absolutely not a seamless, coherent identity, a singular sense of place which everyone shares. It could hardly be less so. People’s routes through the place, their favourite haunts within it, the connections they make (physically, or by phone, or post or in memory or imagination) between here and the rest of the world vary enormously. If it is now recognised that people have multiple identities then the same point can be made in relation to places. Moreover, such multiple identities can either be a source of richness or a source of conflict, or both.”* (Massey, 1994:153)

Massey’s view of ‘home’ is one that is more relevant to the experiences of the young women who participated in this research. Massey’s views points to the ways in which connections with Pakistan may be understood alongside a sense of belonging in the local neighbourhood. This understanding of belonging, in the context of global

connections, indicates that belonging (or a sense of 'home') needs to be understood as multifaceted.

Therefore, whilst many have understood global change as undermining the relationship between belonging and place, research focussing on the experiences of migrant groups has indicated the continued significance of place. Rather than attachment to one place, migrant groups may sustain attachments to multiple localities through transnational connections (Fortier, 1999:41; Calhoun, 1994).

This produces an additional insight into the inadequacy of 'traditional'<sup>1</sup> understandings of 'home' and belonging for explaining the views of the young women considered in this thesis. Global change has altered the relationships between people and place. This could suggest the erosion of feelings of belonging to distinctive places. However, Massey (1994) points to the continuing significance of feelings of belonging to near and distant places.

#### **2.4 Asian Women in Britain.**

As this thesis focuses on the views of young Muslim women from Pakistani backgrounds, literature that specifically considers the lives and experiences of Asian women in Britain is reviewed.

The literature has been concerned with issues of 'identity' and 'belonging'. The focus has been on assessing how women from Asian backgrounds, particularly second-

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<sup>1</sup> The view that a single, bounded place is 'home'.



generation descendants, adapt to British culture and society. A large section of this literature has, therefore, focussed on the experiences of *young* women, who are thought to indicate emergent and future trends.

Concern with how young women are adapting their identities in the context of British culture, has meant that debate has purely been concerned with cultural aspects of 'belonging'. For example, the key question throughout these debates has been the extent to which young women are assimilated into British culture or whether they retain a distinct ethnic identity. The perspective taken is influenced by more general understandings of belonging or 'home', where affiliation to one place is associated with stability and security. The young women's experiences of British and Asian cultures are thought to challenge this kind of understanding of 'home'. This is insufficient; too narrow a conception of belonging is adopted.

#### ***2.41 Between Two Cultures?***

Literature about young Asian women in Britain has been dominated by the question of how they understand their identities in the context of experiences of two different cultures. The differences between these cultures are understood to bring conflicting choices and ideas into young women's experiences.

Young women are understood to be located '*between two cultures*' (Anwar, 1976, 1998; Watson, 1977; Ghuman, 1991; 1999; Halstead, 1994). Their location between these two cultures means that they have to negotiate the conflicts between them. A 'home/school' dichotomy has figured in the literature, representative of the conflicts



between the two cultures (Knott and Khoker, 1993; Dwyer, 1999c). There is said to be conflict between the home (a source of ethnic culture and constraint) and school (representing British culture and 'freedom'). For example, negotiating school uniform and wearing salwar kameeze (loose trousers and tunic) is a '*charged metaphor*' in this context, representing conflict and structuring sociological account of the situation, according to Brah and Minhas (1985:16).

The 'between two cultures' explanations emerged in early accounts of the experiences of migrants to Britain. The contrasts between the two cultures were considered a particularly potent dilemma for those born in Britain, who were:

*"...caught between the cultural expectations of their parents (the first generation migrants) and the social demands of the wider society."* (Watson: 1977:3)

These dilemmas and conflicts shaped identity and belonging, which were understood as troubled. Knott and Khoker (1993: 595) argued that young women were often marked in the literature (in Rashid, 1981, for example, quoted in Knott and Khoker, 1993) as experiencing a kind of 'cultural schizophrenia', feeling as if they were two people (one British, one Asian) in the same body.

Young women have also been understood to experience problems not just because their parents experiences differ to their own, but because of the processes of adolescence. Defining identity is problematic for young women faced with a range of contrasting norms and values (Ghuman, 1999).

The 'between two cultures' paradigm is one that has shaped the interpretive framework of more descriptive accounts of the lives and experiences of young Asians too. For example, in "*Between Cultures: continuity and change in the lives of young Asians*", Anwar (1998) charted the experiences of young Asians in areas such as education, employment, housing, racial harassment, the family and marriage etc. The view that young people are 'between two cultures' permeated the interpretation of their experiences.

The 'between two cultures' explanation of identity and belonging has not gone unchallenged (see for example, Knott and Khoker, 1993). This perspective places Asian and British cultures in conflict with each other, with the effect of essentialising both cultures. Brah (1993:443) argued that these discourses have resulted in the dominance of 'culturalist explanations' of the experiences of young Muslim women. The agency of these young women has been denied (Brah, 1993: 443). 'Between two cultures' explanations are, therefore, based on narrow conceptualisations of identity and belonging.

The 'between two cultures' perspective is part of the broad trend that Martin Mac an Ghail described as a '*black-white dualistic model*' (Mac an Ghail, 1999:8). The key feature of Asian women's lives was seen as the challenges and conflicts created by the contrasts between Asian and British cultures. This fits into what Mac an Ghail (1999:8) described as '*a long academic tradition of 'over-racialising' selected groups of non-whites*'. Asian cultures were presumed to inherently different to British white culture. This euro-centric view overlooks cultural continuities.

The portrayal of British society and culture was also problematic. British culture was depicted as unitary and homogenous, as a source of liberation rather than constraint for young women. Feminist sociological accounts of the constraints faced by young white women, overwhelmingly contradict this position (McRobbie, 1984; Lees, 1994; Skeggs, 1997). In addition, the potential role of racism in experiences of British society and culture has been overlooked by 'between two cultures' accounts.

The dynamics of interactions between British and Asian cultures have been insufficiently explored. The intersections of these cultures, and of gendered and racialised social processes across them, have been excluded from analytic frameworks. As identification and belonging have been viewed too narrowly, the complexity of views that young Asian women may adopt with regard to British and Asian cultures has been overlooked.

Belonging was viewed in a one-dimensional way in this literature. Trapped between two cultures, young women's views about belonging were understood as confused. A broader based account of young women's views is needed, alongside a more open conceptualisation of belonging.

#### ***2.42 Moving Beyond 'Between Two Cultures': Ethnic or Religious Identification?***

Authors such as Jacobson (1997), Knott and Khoker (1993) and Gardner and Shukur (1994) present an alternative to 'between two cultures' perspectives. Exploring young Asian women's views about (traditional) ethnic and religious cultures, portrayed as separate and, to some extent, competing entities, as a means to understand their experiences, this research has progressed debate.



Knott and Khoker (1993) drew on interviews with young women conducted in a school in Bradford to explore the dimensions of religious and ethnic identity. They found young women adopting a number of stances towards religion and culture. A trend rejecting aspects of Pakistani ethnic culture, but not excluding elements of what it means to be a Muslim, was identified, however.

Jacobson (1997) echoes these themes, finding Muslim Asian young people rejecting identities based on 'traditional ethnic cultures', selecting identities based on their Islamic beliefs. Islam was viewed as a global movement unconnected to specific places, facilitating a sense of belonging in Britain. Jacobson found that many:

*"...criticised their parents for maintaining interpretations of Islam which are excessively confining or narrow, and based their arguments on the notion of there being a distinction between the ethnic culture to which their parents adhere (believing mistakenly that this is an expression of Islamic culture) and the 'true' teachings of Islam."* (Jacobson, 1997: 241)

This theme is also reflected in research that has argued that young women, in particular, are increasingly finding Islam attractive. Islam is appealing to young women as a means of resisting some of the restrictions on their behaviour imposed by their families and 'the community' (Ali, 1992). Young women are drawn to political 'intellectual Islam', which opens up a '*wider world in which to live*' (Ali, 1992: 113) where their piety allows them greater access to higher education and professional careers, for example.

Similarly, Dwyer (1999a: 64) found that the '*imagination of an alternative Muslim community*' gave young women the opportunity to challenge common perceptions



about the roles that women should take. Young women located the source of these constraining roles not within Islam, but in ethnic, 'traditional', cultures.

There has also been a concern to explore the levels and experiences of inter-generational conflict within Asian/ Muslim families (for example, Drury, 1991), often focussing on perceptions of ethnic cultures. This interest in intergenerational and family conflict has arisen from a perception that, for young people to forge a sense of home in Britain, they must incorporate a degree of assimilation into British culture, and reject their parents' traditional ethnic cultural values. However, empirical investigations have found little evidence of conflict within families (Rassoul, 1999). Further, Ali (1992) and Dwyer's (1999a) comments about the attractiveness of 'intellectual Islam' suggest that young Asian women may be finding alternative ways of pursuing careers in a way that does not create conflict with their parents and is not predicated on their assimilation into British culture.

Literature focussing on ethnic and religious identity was still influenced by the underlying themes of 'between two cultures' accounts, however. Underlying this research was a view that life in Britain must in some way change understandings of ethnic and religious identity, due to the contrasts between British and Asian cultures. Belonging, therefore, is still conceptualised as relating to cultural domains. Nevertheless, research concentrating on ethnic and religious identities has expanded the focus of debate, pointing to how rather than inherently creating conflict, aspects of identity may be negotiated.

### ***2.43 Moving Beyond 'Between Two Cultures': Postmodern Identities.***

Bhachu (1991) criticised 'between two cultures' explanations, pointing to how Asian women's power to mould and shape their identities has been overlooked. More recently, therefore, there has been a trend within research to go beyond the confines of 'between two cultures' accounts through a re-conceptualisation of identity. Research has understood identity as flexible or fluid (Rassoul, 1997, 1999; Dwyer, 1998, 1999a,b,c, 2000), reflecting broader sociological debates about the changing nature of identity.

Drawing on Giddens' (1991) arguments about reflexivity in her conceptualisation of identity, Rassoul (1997, 1999), for instance, argues that identity is flexible or fractured. Never a fixed state of 'being', identity is:

*"...continually being shaped in everyday interaction with the social world and thus they are flexible and engage in a constant, reflexive, process of 'becoming'."*  
(Rassoul, 1997:189)

The concept of reflexivity is important in comprehending Rassoul's view of the ways in which young Asian women's identities are formed. Giddens (1991) argued that individuals use knowledge of the social world in an intentional way, to re-order the 'self' in relation to that identity (Rassoul, 1997:189). Reflexivity represents a conscious process of identity formation, never completed as identities are always 'becoming'.

Such re-conceptualisations of identity have broadened the focus of sociological research, looking beyond the view that young women are inherently constrained by their entrapment 'between two cultures'. For example, Dwyer (1998, 1999c) sought to

counter dominant representations of Muslim Asian women through charting how they define their own identities and actively resist stereotypical notions.

The re-conceptualisation of identity has also drawn attention to the role that racism plays in the lives of Muslim women. In terms of making the transition to adulthood in British society, Rassoul (1999) argued that the key challenge for young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, lay in the social exclusionary forces of racism. Their 'flexible' identities proved a way of integrating into British society despite racism:

*"The difficulties faced by these pupils do not relate to their living between 'two cultures', or 'ethnic identity', as is often presumed. The interviews have shown that they are quite comfortable with their multiple and multifaceted identities; that often despite damaging experiences of racism, they are able to work reflexively in constituting themselves a fully integrated people in British society."* (Rassoul, 1999:35)

Dwyer (1998, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000) adopted a multiple, flexible conceptualisation of identity. Dwyer undertook focus group interviews with young Muslim women who largely came from Pakistani backgrounds. Dwyer's focus was upon how young women understood 'community'. Dwyer found that young women drew on different and contradictory constructions of 'community' in different contexts, reflecting the operation of multifaceted identities.

Dwyer (1999a) suggested that the idea of 'community' was both empowering and constraining for young women. Young Muslim women felt protected by the existence of an 'Asian community', which provided a defence against racism. Yet young women also felt restrained by the constraints placed upon their behaviour by the perceived surveillance of 'the community':



*“...a local ‘Asian community’ could be evoked as a source of security and identity, it was simultaneously a collectivity within which gendered identities were prescribed and monitored’.” (Dwyer, 1999a: 64)*

The notion of contradiction is significant within Dwyer’s research. Dwyer found that young women drew on different aspects of their ‘fluid and fluctuating’ identities within different contexts, depending on what they perceived to be to their own benefit. They drew on constructions of a ‘Muslim community’ in order to negate some of the restrictions placed on them by the surveillance of the ‘Asian community’.

Dwyer’s research indicates the problems associated with conceptualising identity as fluid, fluctuating or flexible. Dwyer’s understanding of identity was reflected in her identification of contradictory discourses of community. If identity is flexible, or if it fluctuates, it can incorporate contradictory meanings. Doesn’t the suggestion that the key feature of these young women’s identities is contradiction fall into the same pitfalls as ‘between two cultures’ explanations? This only moves beyond ‘between two cultures’ accounts through offering an explanation that sees flexible identities taking account of contrasts between the two cultures, rather than creating conflict. The focus remains on the contrasts and contradictions raised by belonging to both British and Asian cultures, however.

Dwyer’s account is problematic as it suggests that identities are composed of contradictory elements. If conceptualised in this way, can identities ever be coherent? Do young women have coherent identities, or does the incorporation of elements of British and Asian cultures mean that their identities are inevitably multiple and



incoherent? Is there a distinction between multiple and multifaceted, coherent identities?

Dwyer's focus on 'community' is also problematic. A focus on discourses of community means that attention was on the articulation of those discourses rather than the processes through which they were constructed. The 'discourses of community' were abstracted from everyday life. More investigation is needed of how young Asian women view contact with white people on an everyday basis in their neighbourhoods, in order to examine the processes through which place, identity and belonging are understood. This, therefore, requires a more specific focus on views about place in the neighbourhood. A focus on 'community' confines research to the consideration of relations between Asian people in the locality.

Whilst Rassoul (1999) and Dwyer (1998, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000) have developed sociological understandings of young Asian women in Britain (through indicating the possible role of racism, for instance), their research, like that which preceded it, is flawed. The notion of flexible identities presents an explanation for how young women can make sense of the differences between British and Asian culture and how their identities are not riddled by conflict. It is not clear whether flexible identities are understood coherently or not. This is problematic in the context of the centrality to Rassoul's conceptualisation of the notion of reflexivity, which emphasises the role of conscious intent in identity formation; this implies that different (potentially contradictory) facets of identity are understood coherently. In addition, research is still largely focussed on cultural aspects of belonging. A broader exploration of feelings of belonging is needed.

#### ***2.44 Femininity and Young Asian Women.***

Femininity has been a focus of sociological research generated by feminist sociologists. Research has sought to establish and consider how young women's lives are shaped by understandings of femininity i.e. meanings about being female and more specifically, what it means to be young and female. Young Asian women's views about femininity have been considered little in research, but this literature raises questions about the significance and role of their femininity.

Much of this literature has focussed on the connections between gender relations and class (McRobbie, 2000; Griffin, 1985; Skeggs, 1997). McRobbie (2000), for example, draws attention to the role of women in youth subcultures, which male researchers (focussing on males) had overlooked (Hall and Jefferson, 1976). McRobbie pointed to how popular culture (for example teen magazines like *Jackie*) reinforces the position of young working class women, in terms of class and gender relations.

Skeggs (1997) also focussed on the role of class in the context of white working class femininity. Like McRobbie (2000), Skeggs focussed on cultural dimensions, drawing on Bourdieu's (1986) model of class as based on capital movements. 'Respectability' was an important concept within working class femininity, in Skeggs account.

For Skeggs femininity was '*...the process through which women are gendered and become specific sorts of women*' (1997:98). This process is constituted within the spaces of 'textually mediated discourse':

*“...in the dialectic between the active creating subject and the organization of her activity in and by texts, produced in the interests of a wider global market.” (Skeggs, 1997:98)*

Skeggs’ (1997) conceptualisation of femininity therefore functions to allow femininity to be understood as classed or, indeed, racialised. However, Skeggs’ conceptualisation of femininity as constructed via ‘textually mediated discourses’ is problematic; the focus needs to be on young women’s own perceptions of femininity and how they construct their own social world.

As indicated by the discussion of Skeggs’ (1997), sociological research has also recognised the role of femininity in the context of identity. In her analysis of femininity and sexuality, Lees (1993) points to how femininity is socially constructed through sexuality, pointing to the role of labels such as ‘slag’ in understandings. For Lees (1993: 5) the process of identity development during adolescence is a gendered one. Previous conceptualisations of ‘adolescence’ were criticised, as they conceptualise it as a period of gaining independence through identity construction. Overlooking the role of gendered social processes means that how adolescence is different for females and males is overlooked; young women do not necessarily gain independence during adolescence:

*“I have shown the irrelevance of viewing female adolescence as the development of autonomy and indicated the importance of examining gender relations in order to understand how identities are constituted and reconstituted. I have shown that masculinity and femininity are only meaningful in relation to each other.” (Lees, 1993: 301)*

Thus, for Lees (1993) understandings of femininity (and masculinity) are at the heart of understandings of identity.



Like Lees (1992), others have argued that femininity is closely related to sexuality. Holland, Ramazanoglu, Sharpe and Thomson (1998) found femininity and masculinity to be constructed in relation to each other in accounts of heterosexuality. Constructions of femininity constituted and reproduced male dominance. Holland et al (1998:171) conceptualised this mutual dependence as 'the-male-in-the-head', arguing that:

*"If the 'male-in-the-head' regulates the expectations, meanings and practices of both men and women, then femininity can be understood as a product of masculinity and of the heterosexual contract."* Holland et al (1998:171)

Masculinity and femininity were understood as mutually dependant, putting patriarchy at the heart of what it means to be a young woman. The kind of consideration of femininity offered by Holland et al (1998) has not been reflected in sociological accounts focussing on young Asian women. Research has begun to consider the significance of femininity beyond the experiences of white girls, but has not reflected upon the role of femininity in a detailed way. Attention will now turn to research that has, in some way, looked beyond the white experience and has commented on young Asian women and femininity.

Griffin (1985), whose research followed a group of working class girls through their last year of school and into employment, noted how the experiences of Black and Asian young women differed from those of white girls. White girls experienced significant pressure to have a boyfriend in order to fulfil their femininity, though this was found not to be the case for Asian girls, whose femininity had different properties. Young women were found to fear the occurrence of sexual assault or harassment, which limited their leisure activities in place. Interestingly, Griffin



(1985:68) noted how young Black and Asian women's use of space was additionally restricted because of racial harassment.

Mirza (1992) followed a group of young Black women from the end of school and into employment, in an attempt to understand the processes of inequality that structure their lives. Though Mirza focussed on young Black women, her account has stimulated interest in looking beyond white experiences, and is significant for that reason. Mirza was critical of accounts that confuse external structural inequality with internal cultural traits, particularly the focus on subcultural identity. Mirza found young black women to have higher employment aspirations than black men, pointing to the significance of gender. A racially and sexually segregated labour market, however, limited occupational opportunities (Mirza, 1992:191). When in school, Mirza found young women devoting most of their time to *'strategies to avoid the effects of racist and negative teacher expectations'* (Mirza, 1992:192).

Though Mirza's research is a significant in the context looking beyond white experiences, it had a narrow focus on employment, and the role of structural inequalities. This reflects a broader feminist concern to consider the economic position of young women (Frost, 2001:89). However, Mirza's research has stimulated interest in the minority ethnic experiences in other accounts of femininity, leading Lees (1992) and McRobbie (2000) to consider the role of ethnicity. Their interest, however, has been on the question of to what extent minority ethnic experiences correlate to those of white girls.

McRobbie (2000: 198) for example, argued that, alongside class, ethnicity *'intersect(s) with, cut across and give distinctive and material shape to what it means to be young and female'*. The notion of class and ethnicity intersecting with understandings of femininity could mean that young women of all ethnicities share elements of femininity. McRobbie (2000) and Lees (1992) understood young Asian women's experiences to be distinctive from white experiences, however. McRobbie (2000:212) suggested that:

*"It is most likely that young Asian women 'recognise' themselves and each other on the basis of their Asian-ness, likewise young Afro- Caribbean women."*

This understanding reflects sociological research that has concentrated on the experiences of young Asian women, where their ethnic culture is considered paramount in determining their understanding of British society. Clearly, this is inadequate. Broader research about young Asian women's understandings of femininity is needed. However, research concentrating on young Asian women has focussed largely on issues of identity and belonging, interpreting the most significant aspect of these for young women to be the question of whether they are becoming assimilated into British culture or are retaining an ethnic identity. Femininity is at the heart of these arguments. Bar the analysis offered by Dwyer (1999c), the role of femininity has not been considered in a significant, however.

Dwyer (1999c) considered perceptions of femininity in the context of her research with young Muslim women (discussed previously). For Dwyer femininity is discursive; femininity was understood as multiple and fractured, intersecting with other aspects of femininity (Laurie, Dwyer, Holloway and Smith, 1999: 4). She

argued that analysis of these young women's perceptions of femininity is of significance in the context of the competing discourses about femininity that exist in contemporary British society, particularly 'new femininities'. Dwyer (1999c) identifies 'new modes of femininity' (McRobbie, 1993; Walter, 1998) such as those represented by 'girl power' to be potential influences, shaping new modes of femininity. Dwyer (1999c) explored the effect of new Muslim identities (Modood, 1992) upon femininity too. Dwyer posed the question of whether these femininities were example of 'new ethnicities'.

These questions were considered through an examination of the geographies of daily life (Dwyer, 1999c: 136). This was based on an understanding that different spaces may offer different 'appropriate femininities' for the young women to comply with and/or the capacity to explore new (alternative) femininities; Dwyer aimed to explore the contradictions and ambivalences produced by these different spaces.

Dwyer indicated that the young women in her research felt they were often resisting the expectations of others- constructing 'new femininities' as part of this resistance. Many negotiations were found to take place around ideas of 'appropriate femininities', ideas about how they should behave. Dwyer concluded that:

*"These young Muslim women's identities are over determined by dominant discourses about 'appropriate' Muslim femininities which come both from parents and from the stereotypical ideas expressed by teachers, the media and non-Muslim peers."* (1999c: 148)

With this backdrop of over determined identities, individuals sought to challenge expectations about their roles as young women. Dwyer (1999c: 149) argued



alternative femininities were being explored through imagined spaces and futures (such as imagining themselves at university).

Dwyer's account of femininity is problematic. Understanding femininity as discursive means that too much emphasis was placed upon influences such as 'girl power' and the role of new Muslim identities was presumed. A closer concentration on young women's own views, to document their interpretation of their social world, that does not presuppose the role of externally defined discourses, is needed. Do different femininities take the lead in different spaces? Are these femininities distinctive from one and other, or are they part of a multifaceted understanding of femininity? These questions were unanswered by Dwyer.

Although literature about young Asian women has been placed outside general analyses of femininity (Dwyer, 1999c: 137), and although literature has not fully considered the role of femininity, Dwyer's research indicates the need for further consideration of its role. Broader literature about femininity (i.e that not exclusively focussed on young Asian women) indicates that femininity can be understood in several ways. There is a need for further research to add to that completed by Dwyer.

## **2.5 'Race', Place and Belonging.**

A key constituent of the analytical framework of this thesis is the consideration of identity and belonging through description and analysis of the young women's views about place. These young women can be understood as a racialised group;

comprehension of the relationships between ‘race’ and place may shed light on their views about identity and belonging.

Existing sociological research has considered the relationship between ‘race’ and place to some degree. The focus has been limited to questions about segregation (Mason, 2000) and racial harassment. This literature raises significant questions for consideration in relation to the views of the young women, but is inadequate in explaining their views.

### *2.51 ‘Race’ and Segregation.*

Early accounts of minority ethnic groups charted settlement in urban areas. Following labour market demands, minority ethnic groups were clustered in inner city areas offering cheaper housing (Patterson, 1963; Peach 1968; Rex and Moore, 1967).

Accounts such as that offered by Rex and Moore (1967), in their study of Sparkbrook, depicted how minority ethnic groups were engaged in a ‘class struggle for housing’. ‘Race’ and class were closely related in Rex and Moore’s account, shaping housing choices. Minority ethnic groups were seen as being located within ‘zones of transition’ or ‘twilight zones’, where housing was often restricted to ‘lodging houses’ or poor quality council housing. The minority ethnic experience of place was understood to reflect their unequal position within society.

Thus debates about ‘race’, responding to American discussions, have scrutinised patterns of concentration and segregation, questioning whether ‘ghettos’ have

emerged in Britain. A narrow focus emerged on the extent of segregation; this is inadequate. Smith (1989:15) argued that one result of focussing on segregation, as something that just needs to be measured, was that there has been a reluctance to view segregation as something that has meaning. The broader experience of place was reduced to documentation of the racialisation of housing settlement.

'Race' was often viewed unproblematically within these debates, and was often seen as an *'...explanation for segregation rather than a facet of segregation to be explained.'*(Smith, 1989:14). The broader meanings attached to 'race' in urban life have gone unexplored, partly through the conceptualisation of 'race', partly through a preoccupation with segregation.

Within ghettoisation/ segregation debates, there has been a discussion of whether segregation is a good thing (or not), and the extent to which segregation was product of (institutional) racism or was a product of choice.

Smith (1989) suggested that racial segregation has emerged in urban areas, not as result of preference on the part of individuals and families. Rather, racial segregation in the city was said to result from racial inequality in the labour market and in housing allocation, and more general processes of social exclusion. For Smith (1989) segregation was:

*"...not simply a product of markets and institutions, nor even a legislative convenience: it is also a way of life- a medium in which power is contested and an arena in which social and political identities are shaped."* (Smith, 1989:147)



Yet segregation/ethnic clustering has been seen to have positive effects, as a product of choice. Being surrounded by people who identify as being 'like you' offers a sense of belonging. Shaw (1998) documented the wide-ranging reasons within Pakistani communities for living near to relatives. Webster (1996) and Dwyer (1999a) also suggested that living within an 'Asian community', for example, offered a sense of protection from racial harassment and violence. Racial segregation therefore reflects complex racialised social process, that shape how places are perceived.

Others have turned their attention to a more specific consideration of how 'race' can be associated with the identity of place. In particular, attention has turned to how specific localities (inner city areas with significant minority ethnic populations) have become 'demonised' through their association with racialised groups. Cohen (1993:7) suggested that a 'spatialisation of race' has occurred, where the inner city has become coterminous with 'black'.

Some urban areas, like Moss Side in Manchester, have become pathologised in the media and elsewhere (Jackson, 1989; Taylor, Evans and Fraser, 1996). Other areas, like Bradford and Oldham, particularly since the urban disturbances of 2001, have also become associated as places where high levels of racial segregation have produced to high levels of 'racial tension'. However, these accounts focus on white interpretations of racialised places. The views of those from minority ethnic groups, about the places where they live, need to be considered.

There is a need to look beyond the issue of segregation to establish a more broadly based understanding of the relationships between perceptions of 'race' and place, but

it can also be argued that segregation is of continued importance. Smith (1989:172) argued that segregation has becoming more potent, *'because, symbolically and in practice, the existence of segregation testifies to a systematic undermining of the rights of black people.'* Debates following the riots of July 2001 again raised the issue of racial segregation in these urban areas in instigating the riots.

The Cattle Report (2001) investigating the riots, noted the depth of segregation. Going beyond just residential segregation, the wider social lives of residents were found to be segregated. It was argued that this was a key factor that lay behind the disturbances. However, what these riots also showed was the complexity of relations within these areas; a singular focus of patterns of segregation does not adequately account for how people view their lives in these urban areas. A more detailed analysis of the role of 'race' in everyday life in neighbourhoods and cities is needed.

### ***2.52 'Race', Identity and Views About Sheffield: Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996).***

Many of the themes that have dominated existing research concerning 'race' and place (the significance of segregation, for instance) were reflected in Taylor et al's (1996) comparative account of Manchester and Sheffield. Taylor et al investigated how people identify the city and explored their sense of belonging to Manchester and Sheffield. The views of differing groups in the city were considered, including ethnic minorities.

Sheffield and Manchester were selected for sociological analysis, due to their status as cities founded on industry, facing a future without that industry. Despite a shared

history these cities 'feel' different, raising questions about how we relate to places. A potent question for Taylor et al was how these cities will be identified in the post-industrial era. They argued that they could not be understood in terms of the emergence of the post-modern global city (1996:xi), as they were distinctly unlike cities like Los Angeles or Tokyo, for instance.

The notion 'structure of feeling', derived from Williams (1961:48), was a central element of Taylor et al's theoretical framework. Williams (1961) argued that the character of any social formation could best be described by the examination of the routine and 'taken for granted' social practices, engaged in by members of that formation. Williams suggested that feelings of well being and views about the routines of everyday life are definite, a product of structural relations (1965:48).

In a later publication (Williams, 1977), added the need to understand a culture in terms of its past and future aspirations, to the concept. Thus, 'structure of feeling' represented an attempt incorporate everyday experiences and meanings within a structuralist framework.

Taylor et al used this concept to describe the contemporary experiences of these cities. The structure of feeling, in the 1990s was compared with that of a 'historical moment' in the late 1960s (prior to de-industrialisation in the 1970s).

De-industrialisation was a feature that loomed large over Taylor et al's analysis, as contemporary Sheffield was compared with its industrial zenith. The pre-eminent identity associated with Sheffield was a sense of mourning the decline of steel and



cutlery; '*...a Sheffield dreaming of the return of Stee.*' (Taylor, Evans and Fraser, 1996:224). Understandings of Sheffield were driven by a 'structure of feeling' that was economically determined and concrete.

Due to the centrality of industry to the structure of feeling in Sheffield, the loss of industry had serious ramifications according to Taylor. Sheffield's industry shaped the cultural landscape of Sheffield within this conceptualisation; a form of hegemonic masculinity emerged based on the culture of the workplace:

*"...an angry and aggressive accentuation of the vocabularies (local slang, folk sayings, local knowledge and myth) and behaviour and practice (grafting and misogyny) known, locally, to have been characteristic of the 'little Mester'."* (Taylor and Jamieson, 1997: 175)

In a further paper co-authored with Ruth Jamieson (Taylor and Jamieson, 1997) it was argued that young men in Sheffield were displaying a form of 'protest masculinity', as the local hegemonic masculinity was under threat due to de-industrialisation.

Taylor et al (1996:39) described Sheffield as being identified as '*having a resistant culture*', largely based on this hegemonic masculinity. This view was central to how Sheffield's identity was depicted by Taylor et al, particularly with reference to minority ethnic groups.

### ***2.53 Taylor et al (1996): Racial Difference in the City.***

Differences and similarities between people were presented by Taylor et al through a series of essays focussed on different 'publics', defined around social characteristics

such as gender, race and age (1996:33). This is problematic as it overlooks how these intersect.

The problems of defining differing experiences of the city along the lines of 'publics', was demonstrated by Taylor et al's discussion of ethnic minority groups. In Chapter Eight of "A Tale of Two Cities", Taylor et al (1996) focused on the ethnic minority experience of Manchester and Sheffield. Taylor et al stated that aim of the chapter was to explore:

*"...the ways in which migrant peoples, defined in part by the colour of their skins as 'different', were able, first, to establish some kind of home and sense of well-being and security in the industrial North of England per se (thus doing battle with 'Northern, non-metropolitan industrial culture' in all its general attributes)..."* (Taylor, Evans and Fraser, 1996:203).

The concept of 'structures of feeling' meant that the analysis of the minority ethnic experience of the city was limited. The economic structure of Sheffield had produced a white hegemonic culture; the identity of the city was based upon this. This hegemonic culture was being challenged by de-industrialisation. However, it underlay the history of ethnic minority migration to the city.

Thus, the absence of racialised 'ghettos in Sheffield (1996:204), and a lower level of migration to the city, can be explained by this hegemonic '*Northern, non-metropolitan industrial culture*'. Here Sheffield was compared with Manchester. With a structure of feeling organised around notions of free trade, minority groups in Manchester have been able to establish neighbourhoods as 'their own', providing a sense of home and well being.

However, the enclave culture of Sheffield, with its historically strong structure of feeling based on a hegemonic culture meant that it was harder to secure ethnic minority neighbourhoods. This led Taylor et al to the conclusion that a sense of belonging must require minority ethnic groups to challenge this '*Northern, non-metropolitan industrial culture*' (1996:203). However, the specific ways 'racism' was understood and was connected to views about belonging was not considered; Webster's (1996) research has highlighted the complexity of the ways in which Asian groups secure their own neighbourhoods; Taylor et al's analytical framework does not account for the point of view of ethnic minority residents.

Ethnic groups, including the white majority, were understood as homogenous groups. The nuanced differences between ethnic groups were subsumed to one experience of 'difference'. 'Difference' was the key ethnic minority experience of the city; is this necessarily the case?

Continuities between minority ethnic and white experiences of the city were not considered. There was an assumption that the 'structure of feeling' expressed by members of ethnic groups must necessarily be different to/ in conflict with white groups. Taylor et al did not capture the complexity of what makes people feel as if they belong in a place.

Though Williams (1961) developed the notion 'structures of feeling', to overcome some of the negative, deterministic, aspects of Marxist approaches, it too produced reductionist accounts of social experiences. The concept was based on the presumption that there is an underlying aspect of social life to be revealed, such as



'true' class relations. This determinism can be followed through Taylor et al's accounts of Manchester and Sheffield, where the factor that had had greatest effect upon people's feelings about the experience of the city was the economic changes of the past twenty years. The identity of the city was seen as being defined by its economic activities and fortunes, reflected in the cultures lived by residents of the city.

Thus 'structure of feeling' is deficient as a way of understanding how the city is identified. The economic determinism of the concept means that the identity of the city was seen as being defined in a way external to the views of residents. This led to a failure to analyse the subtle relationships between individuals and places (Rose, 1995). The processes through which place, identity and belonging are interpreted were seen as concrete; the process of interpretation by residents is overlooked. This is clearly seen in Taylor's inadequate account of how those from minority ethnic groups view Sheffield.

A broader analysis of perceptions of place, identity and belonging is required to fully explore how cities like Sheffield are understood in the contemporary era. This thesis aims to go beyond Taylor et al's homogenous view of minority ethnic groups, through a clearly defined focus on the views of young Muslim women from Pakistani backgrounds. This contrasts with Taylor et al's analysis, which made broad generalisations about the views of different 'publics'

Nevertheless, Taylor et al's understanding of racial difference in Sheffield draws attention to how the local context of place can influence understandings of racialised

relations in that place. This goes beyond the focus of other existing research on issues such as segregation. It also raises significant questions about how the city is perceived. Did the young women feel a sense of belonging in Sheffield? Was this impeded by 'Northern, non-metropolitan culture'? How did they view Sheffield, if not through its economic activities?

#### ***2.54 Racial Harassment: Place, Identity and Belonging.***

Racial harassment and violence, in addition to attempts to estimate its extent, have largely been discussed as criminal incidents. Research has often concentrated on mapping the extent of racial harassment. Generally, it has not been linked to a wider conceptualisation of racism (Hesse, et al. 1992: xv). Some discussions have, however, discussed racial harassment and violence in the context of the city and localities, indicating that perceptions of racial harassment and place may be connected in some way, challenging belonging in Britain (Holdaway, 1997: 47).

Two accounts that point to the significance of considering perceptions of place in explanations of racial harassment and violence are considered here. This section will consider the arguments of Bowling (1993) and Hesse (1997). Bowling (1993) proposed that racial violence and victimisation should be viewed as a process that extends beyond individual actors, involving 'communities' within localities. Hesse's (1997) argument that harassment and violence are connected to attempts to preserve the hegemony of whiteness in cities will also be discussed.

Bowling (1993) argued that, rather than as specific incidents, racial victimization and violence (and other forms of crime) are best understood as processes. An incident of attack or harassment is just one element of a process of victimisation. When an individual is attacked, the victimization can be recognised as affecting not only *'him or her alone, but may extend to immediate and extended families, friends and 'community'.*' (Bowling, 1993:239).

Bowling also perceived a relationship between the perpetrator and their families, friends and community. Therefore, Bowling argued that racial violence and victimisation are connected to relations between different 'communities' within localities.

Thus, processes of racial violence and victimisation, connected to communities within localities, can be related to the production of 'climates of unsafety', as described by Stanko (1990) (Bowling, 1993). In this context, fear and perceptions of threat become significant because, as Pearson et al (1989) suggested:

*" A black person need never have been the actual victim of a racist attack, but will remain acutely aware that she or he belongs to a group that is threatened in this manner."* Pearson et al (1989:135)

Bowling (1993) proposed that viewing racial violence as a series of incidents means that this effect upon the climate of places is lost. This argument this could be taken a step further to argue that focussing on racial violence and victimisation purely as a crime (whether viewed as incident or process) is limiting. Thus, perceptions of racial violence and victimisation can be considered as being significant in broader process of place, identity and belonging. Understanding views about localities, in a broader



sense, may add to an understanding of processes of victimisation and harassment and vice-versa.

Hesse (1997) also saw racial violence and harassment as more than just a criminal incident, understanding it as central to the imagination and, moreover, the control of the city. In particular, racial harassment and violence plays a role in what Hesse (1997:99) termed ‘white governmentality’<sup>2</sup>. ‘White governmentality’ represents an attempt to maintain the hegemony and territoriality of British ‘whiteness’ in the city. Hesse (1997:87) viewed the city as a sibling of the nation, suggesting that there is an urban genealogy of whiteness that has a ‘terroristic structure’.

For Hesse (1997) the experience of racial harassment has a direct influence on perceptions of place, in the argument that *‘the social experience of racial harassment is the victimisation of communal location’* (1997:88). There is some parallel here with Taylor et al’s view that belonging for minority ethnic groups in Sheffield is problematic because of the hegemonic masculinity reflected in a ‘Northern, non-metropolitan culture’. Hesse goes beyond this to argue that white hegemony is sustained through racial harassment and victimisation:

*“Intensely localised, racial harassment secretes a nationalist narrative in the spatialisation of a ‘whiteness’ that attempts to inherit the city.”* (Hesse, 1997:89)

Hesse’s view of the relationship between racial harassment, white hegemony and place is problematic. Is racial harassment connected to white control of the city? Taylor et al (1996) have indicated that their residents can view apparently similar

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<sup>2</sup> Drawing on Foucault’s (1979) notions of power and governance.

cities in very different ways. This is challenged by Hesse's view of the city as a sibling of the nation; continuity between city and nation is presumed. A locality viewed by residents as 'their own' may be understood as distinct from 'Britain' as a nation. Racialised relations may operate in differing ways in differing localities; Hesse's account is too deterministic.

Further, Hesse views white people homogenously. These arguments need to be considered in the context of everyday views about place and contact with white people.

Both Bowling and Hesse's views suggest the need for research where views about 'racism', harassment and violence are positioned in the context of broader, fuller, descriptions of place, identity and belonging. The wider significance of racial violence and harassment, or the fear of these in everyday life, could then be considered.

### *2.55 Young People and 'Multicultural Places'.*

The relationship between 'race' and place has also been considered in research focussing specifically on young people in 'multicultural areas' of Britain. Research has begun to explore the implications of young Asian, white and black young people living in close proximity to each other. 'Community' has been a focus of this research, reflecting broader sociological associations of belonging with 'community'.

Some of this research has documented young Asian and white (and black) young people living in relatively close proximity to one another, but living separate lives, often in conflict with one and other. Others have found young people having friendship groups containing other young people from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Often these young people emphasise tolerance of each other, or reject the significance of 'race'. The paradoxes of this literature will be explored.

Baumann (1996), in his anthropological study of Southall, set out to explore dominant perceptions of ethnic communities:

*"This dominant discourse equates ethnic categories with social groups under the name 'community', and it identifies each community with a reified culture."*  
(Baumann, 1996:188)

Baumann (1996) found differing ethnic communities understanding their culture according to these dominant discourses. In Southall, culture was largely viewed as 'ethnic heritage' (1996:98). Baumann (1996) noted a sense of 'culture consciousness' amongst young people, who saw their lives being shaped by a culture understood as reified heritage. Young people imagined Southall in relation to this understanding of their clearly demarked 'communities' and cultures.

The only groups who challenged the existing understanding of the reified, distinctive, cultures in Southall were feminist groups (the Southall Black Sisters), and 'Asian youth' culture (1996:109). Young people reported having friendships groups consisting of peers from differing religious backgrounds. Young Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims saw themselves as developing a shared 'young Asian' culture, seen for



example in the way in which Punjabi, Hindi and Urdu languages were being mixed by young people (1996:154).

However, the 'young Asian' culture did not challenge the pre-eminent understanding of distinctive 'cultures of community' along ethnic/religious lines in Southall. Young people here seemed to 'mix' in a limited way, within an understanding of their clearly delineated 'communities'.

Baumann's focus on culture and, moreover, community, found dominant discourses to define community in Southall. This finding could, in large part, be attributable to Baumann's focus on 'community', which leads to the privileging of some voices over others. Recent debates about belonging and global change (discussed earlier in the chapter) indicate the problems of assuming that belonging and community are coterminous. What is needed is attention to perceptions of place, identity and belonging, to understand how young people themselves view their localities.

Others have found community to be an important feature of how young Asians feel a sense of security and belonging in their localities. Dwyer (1999a), as discussed previously, found young Muslim Asian women having a strong understanding of being part of a 'local Asian community'. Webster (1996) found similar evidence of the significance of the 'Asian community', but concentrated on the way the definition and boundaries have to be territorially defined.

Webster's (1996) account of groups of white and Asian young men defending their racial defined neighbourhoods in West Yorkshire, also reflects the view that young

Asian and white people are living separate lives, often in conflict with one another. Understandings of place and belonging here seemed to be predicated on the maintenance of racialised territories, rather than the discursive construction of an 'Asian community' (as identified by Dwyer, 1999a).

More recent concerns about conflict between white and Asian groups in urban areas (following the urban disturbances of 2001, for example), reflects Webster's findings about territorial control. Concern about the 'Asian gang' has put young Muslim men under the spotlight as a new folk devil (Alexander, 2000). According to Alexander the recent 'discovery' of the Asian gang:

*"...has brought Asian communities to the forefront of public concerns over crime, urban decay, poverty and civil unrest, increasingly taking the place of Britain's African-Caribbean communities as scapegoats amidst renewed prophecies of millennial social doom."* (Alexander, 2000:229)

This understanding of young Asians has heightened following urban riots July 2001 and concern about Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism following September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001. The segregation of white and Asian groups has come to be viewed as a major social problem in the media. Therefore, whilst Dwyer (1999a) found the imagination of an 'Asian community' to be linked to security in the context of racism, these constructions have also been depicted as sustaining conflict with white people.

Young people in multiethnic areas have also been found to be imagining place and belonging through reference to inter-ethnic friendships. Back (1996) in a study undertaken in London, was concerned with 'racism' and the cultural mixing termed 'new ethnicities' by Stuart Hall (1992) (in contrast with Baumann (1996) who

focussed on distinctive ethnic cultures in Southall). Back considered *'how urban contexts also offer sites where constantly shifting forms of racism can be enunciated.'* (1996:2).

Back (1996) found young people in a multicultural area rejecting 'race' from their peer group common sense. There was a view that it is 'out of order to talk about 'race''. The young people expressed a notion that they were 'all the same'. This opened up *'diverse range of linguistic and cultural'* resources to young people (Back, 1996:51). Back argued that this resulted in:

*"...the reworking of symbols within a context where they have a particular and creative expression and provides the terms and means of cross-racial communication. This is the landscape of interaction and negotiation"* (Back, 1996:51)

Back (1996:111) found that people talked about 'race' and 'racism' through the language of 'community'. Two discourses of locality were identified by Back. The first, a 'harmony' discourse, reflected young peoples' exclusion of 'race' from their common sense. 'Racial things' were banished from everyday experiences, facilitating interracial friendships (Back, 1996: 111/112). Back argued that the 'truth' of this racial harmony doesn't matter; what was significant was how difference was understood.

The second discourse emphasised the importance of a 'black community'. This was not an alternative to the 'harmony discourse'. It was used to particularise black experiences in the locality, attached to a sense of centring in the locality (1996: 111/112). Both these discourses could, therefore, be seen as being linked to processes of belonging in the locality, but Back did not explore this.



However, Back argued that this imagination of the locality, through a rejection of 'race', did not make 'race' and 'racism' irrelevant to these young peoples lives. *'Multiply inflected forms of social identity'*, according to Back, were being expressed within multicultural areas, but were equally being met by *'multiply accented forms of popular racism'* (Back, 1996:7).

Back's focus on 'community discourse' is problematic, however. The 'community discourses' Back identified could be understood as views about place. Understanding these views as discourses, meant that attention was turned away from the role these meanings have in processes of identification (in relation to views about place and belonging). Concentrating on discourse means that the focus was on the articulation of views, rather than processes of interpretation.

Back's (1996) study revealed much more about relationships between young people from different background in multicultural areas, and the everyday role of race and racism. Back, however, focused on urban cultures, particularly 'new ethnicities'. His research raises many questions about how young people view their neighbourhoods, and contact with other young people from different ethnic backgrounds; a wider focus is needed.

More broadly based research that explores views about multicultural neighbourhoods is needed. Attention is needed to how place, identity and belonging are perceived. The focus needs to move from 'community discourse' (the case in both Back, 1996 and

Dwyer, 1999a) to the exploration of views about place, identity and belonging in a broader sense.

The picture from this literature about how young people relate to each other in 'multicultural' neighbourhoods is unclear. On one hand there is an image of delineated 'communities'; young people from different ethnic backgrounds are depicted as being situated anywhere from living parallel lives to being in direct, gangland, conflict with one and other. On the other hand, there is evidence of young people having mixed friendship groups, drawing on each other's cultures, putting forward discourses about rejecting the significance of racial difference. How young people imagine the multiethnic neighbourhoods where they live, however, might not only be predicated on relationships/conflicts with young people of other ethnicities; a more broadly based approach is needed.

### ***2.56 'Neighbourhood Nationalism'***

Relationships between racialised groups in urban areas, and feelings of belonging to place, have also been explained through the concept of 'neighbourhood nationalism'. This concept has featured in some of the research (discussed above) that focuses on young people in multicultural areas; the concept will now be examined in greater detail.

Many existing debates about belonging or a sense of 'home', discussed earlier in this chapter, understood this to be a positive feature of social life, reflecting harmonious social relationships. Debates about belonging have generally overlooked the role of

power, however. The concept of 'neighbourhood nationalism' offers an explanation of how feelings of belonging in place are understood, that has the notion of power at its core.

'Neighbourhood nationalism' is a concept first adopted by Phil Cohen (1993). 'Neighbourhood nationalism' has been used to refer to a territorial imperative within locality. As such it can be an expression of belonging and of control over space and place. It is, therefore, a form of belonging that takes locality as centre stage, rather than nation. 'Neighbourhood nationalism' has been associated with the defence of space and territory.

Cohen (1993) associated 'neighbourhood nationalism' with white working class masculinity. This reflected the concerns of subcultural sociologies of youth of the 1970's and early 1980's (e.g. Hall and Jefferson, 1976), which focussed on social class and masculine notions of territory (Watt, 1998). This view stipulated that working class youth have strong neighbourhood ties in a 'localist' and parochial fashion (Jenkins, 1983). Therefore, 'neighbourhood nationalism' can be identified as producing virulent forms of racism (Westwood and Phizacklea, 2000:34) and 'geographies of exclusion' (Sibley, 1995), as young men 'police' their neighbourhoods.

Others have recognised similar forms of 'neighbourhood nationalism' connected with masculinity and making claims to and controlling space, existing beyond white groups. Webster (1996), charting patterns of violent racism within a locality (Keighley, West Yorkshire), noted how young Asian men adopted a form of



‘neighbourhood nationalism’ in response to racism (as discussed in the preceding section).

Young Asian males challenged ‘racism’, imagining ‘neighbourhood nationalism’ in a way similar to white males. This led to *‘territorial settlement between Asians and Whites based on a relatively stable and agreed racialisation of space’* (1996:20).

Watt (1998) indicated that a key factor in ‘neighbourhood nationalism’ may be class rather than ethnicity, a response of working class males to control their locality. In a study of young people from a range of ethnic backgrounds, living in the South East of England, Watt (1998) found the strongest level of local attachment (or belonging) amongst working class youth, whether black, white or Asian. Territorialism was something relevant to young working class men of all ethnicities:

*“For Asian youth the ‘Streetville’ area of the town, an area of older terraced housing near the town centre, acted as a clearly identifiable safe ‘Asian place’. Many of the young Asian men, in particular, felt a strong sense of loyalty to this area based upon a masculine-dominated street defensiveness: ‘it’s always filled with Asians here, it’s like no-one messes around with you, we just hang around with each other’, ‘I know everyone there and I know nothing will happen’. This localism amongst Asian male youth was partly a defensive response to racist territorial aggression in other parts of town.”* (Watt, 1998:692)

‘Neighbourhood nationalism’ seems to account for how place is understood where there is conflict between racialised groups. Back (1996), however, has also applied ‘neighbourhood nationalism’ to explain the understanding of place shared by young people from different ethnic groups.

For Back (1996) 'neighbourhood nationalism' explained how some minority ethnic groups could, on some levels, become included within the sense of identity of a locality. Back used 'neighbourhood nationalism' to represent the view within the community that was the focus of his ethnography that "*it is out of order to talk about people's colour*" (Back, 1996:66). This did not represent a denial of 'race', or blackness, but rather a shared discourse or belief, that 'race' talk or racism were unacceptable. It represented an acknowledgement that Black and Asian people could be included within the identity (or 'neighbourhood nationalism') of the locality, as they were (familiar) residents of it.

However, Back emphasised that this did not mean that 'race' was insignificant. Cultural contest and the emergence of de-centred subjectivities (Hall, 1992. Bhabba, 1994) did not mean that harmonious, progressive 'multicultures' amongst young people amongst young people. 'Neighbourhood nationalism' represented how black and Asian people could be incorporated within the parochial identity of localities. It was inclusive of young people on the basis of shared territory, but:

*"It is not a benign ideology facilitating cross racial 'harmony' but a product of lived struggles between black and white young people over belonging."* (Back, 1996:66)

'Neighbourhood nationalism', as adopted by Back (1996), points to the significance of power relationships within understandings of belonging, even if this is less manifest than in the types of conflict Webster (1996) documented.

As debates about 'neighbourhood nationalism' and Hesse's arguments about 'white governmentality' indicate, racialised relations in urban neighbourhoods may be power

relationships. These debates also reinforce the need for analysis that takes into account femininity and masculinity. 'Neighbourhood nationalism' appears to be closely intertwined with male experiences, but the role of masculinity or the views of young women have not been adequately explored. The need for analysis of young Asian women's views about place is explored in the following section.

### ***2.57 Young Asian Women: Incorporating Place and Pakistan.***

Research about the views of young people in multi-ethnic neighbourhoods, suggests the need for analysis of young Asian women's views about place. However, existing sociological literature that has considered the experiences of young Asian women has largely overlooked the significance of place. Three trends within the literature indicate the cogency of research that considers views about place, including views about Pakistan.

Firstly, conceptualisations of belonging within existing research have been inadequate. Largely due to the lingering influence of the '*between two cultures*' perspective, research has focussed on specific questions relating to belonging, such as the question of whether young women are being assimilated into British culture. Research is needed to consider more broadly views about belonging, looking beyond questions about cultural identity. This requires a broader conceptualisation of belonging. One way to achieve this is through exploring views about place.

Second, empirical investigations of the experiences of young Asians have been concentrated in the major centres of Asian population (Watt, 1998) such as Bradford



(for example, Knott and Khoker, 1993) and London (for example, Jabobson, 1997; Bhopal, 2000). Others have conducted research in other areas without fully considering the implications of being a young Muslim Asian woman living in an area with a relatively small Asian population. Dwyer (1998) undertook research in a place described as a small town in Hertfordshire, without fully considering the context of relative size of the Asian population. Is the experience of being a young Asian woman in Bradford necessarily the same as that of young women in places with relatively small Asian/ Pakistani populations (like Sheffield)? Considering views about place would go beyond this existing literature through considering features of the local context which may shape perceptions of identity and belonging (such as the size of the local Asian/ Pakistani population).

Third, considering views about place opens up a framework that can incorporate the analysis of understandings of belonging to Pakistan. Through focussing on questions of cultural assimilation research to date has focussed on cultural aspects of being a Pakistani but has not fully explored the significance of Pakistan as a place.

Basit (1997b:29) explored some views about Pakistan, but in a limited way. Basit (1997b) found that almost all of the research participants had visited Pakistan. Visits to Pakistan were found to last for prolonged periods of two to three months, to make the most of the visit due to the prohibitive nature of travel costs. These costs and school commitments meant that visits were not made as often as the young women would wish. Basit (1997) found that visits to Pakistan were something that families saved long and hard for, where one or two children could only accompany one parent usually.

Basit found that visits to Pakistan contributed to a 'love of their country of origin' amongst young women. At the same time they rejected the idea of moving there permanently. This indicates that perceptions of Pakistan as a place may be related to understandings of identity and belonging.

Anwar (1979) referred to the 'myth of return' amongst Pakistani migrants to Britain; here migrants dreamed of one day returning to live in Pakistan. Connections with Pakistan were an important part of constructing Pakistani communities in Britain, and sustained the 'myth of return'.

Is the 'myth of return' relevant to second-generation descendants of migrants? Basit (1997) found the idea of return to Pakistan to be a diminishing trend. However, close contact with members of their extended families was maintained, in terms of correspondence, phone calls and visits. However, Basit's research did not explore the significance of this contact in the contemporary era.

Rassoul (1999) explored young peoples' views about 'homelands' in relation to identity and belonging, but again the scope of research was limited. Rassoul found that the desire to visit 'homelands' was related to perceptions of racism and social exclusion from British society. Visits to 'homelands' were often coupled with a rejection of 'the dominant [British] culture' and a reversion to 'traditional cultural practices'. Thus, whilst the second generation may not have a 'myth of return', sustaining contact with Pakistan means sustaining an identification distinctive from being 'British', where 'being British' is associated with the perpetrators of 'racism'.

This helps young people cope with social exclusion they encounter in Britain as they have a sense of inclusion associated with identification as a Pakistani.

Though limited in many ways, existing sociological research suggests that Pakistan has significance beyond being a source of a culture that migrants have brought to Britain. Research has indicated that place in Pakistan and connections to Pakistan have significance in the context of identity and belonging for the second, as well as the first generation. Clearly, more research that considers in greater detail views about place in Pakistan, and the role of these views in understandings of identity and belonging, not only to Pakistan but in Britain too, is needed.

This would add to research (for example Back, 1996; Jackson and Penrose, 1993) that has sought to put place and spatial issues into the study of race and ethnicity (Mac an Ghail, 1999), in addition to the studies of young people in multicultural areas of Britain (discussed in the preceding sections of this thesis).

### **3.1 Shopping.**

Consumerism is an emergent interest in sociology (Miles, 1998) but little attention has been given to the routines of shopping until recently (Miller et al, 1998). It has been closely associated with identity. Literature about 'shopping' has largely concerned with whether shopping practices are defined by the exploration of identity or whether they reflect identity.



A wide-ranging review of this literature is beyond the scope of this chapter. This literature has largely taken a broad focus, and little scrutiny has been made of (young) Asian women's views about shopping. The literature is discussed in relation to the experiences of young Asian women; shopping emerged as a key way through which they young women engaged with place, and is the focus of Chapter Seven.

### ***3.11 Shopping, Identity and Place***

Shopping has been associated with place. It has been understood to have an important role and impact on urban life (Miles, 1998:52) For Knox (1991), the whole of the contemporary landscape has been geared towards consumption. There are clearly demarked places that exist purely for shopping and associated consumption based leisure activities (such as large malls, like Meadowhall in Sheffield). Few studies have investigated the views and meanings that people associate with the places where they shop; debates about how shopping practices are connected to the construction of personal identity have predominated.

In a study in London, Miller, Jackson, Thrift, Holbrook and Rowlands (1998), explored the links between shopping, place and identity. Miller et al (1988) focused on two shopping centres in London: Brent Cross and Wood Green. For Miller et al (1998) exploring place whilst shopping was about exploring identity.

Whilst Miller et al found gender and ethnicity relevant in understanding perceptions of shopping, they were not viewed as '*pre-given social parameters of identity*' (1998:185); identity was conceptualised in fluid terms. Therefore, for Miller et al

(1998:187) place was not merely the site for the performance of pre-given identities, but discovering and refining identity. The young women's shopping for Asian ethnic clothes, in the city and beyond, would be viewed, from this perspective, as being concerned with the exploration and refinement of a fluid identity as Muslim Asian women.

Others have viewed the relationship between shopping, place and identity in more deterministic terms. Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996) approached the question of the relationship between shopping, place and identity in their investigation of local feeling in Manchester and Sheffield.

Taylor et al viewed shopping as a key everyday activity conducted within places and central to the general 'structure of feeling' associated with the city. Taylor et al emphasised the significance of the routines of shopping reported by participants (1996:131). These were developed in relation to perceptions of self and place.

Taylor et al identified four factors as significant in shaping these routines. Firstly, research participants identified issues of practicality (for example, what they need to purchase, the quickest/safest route from a to b). Second, strategic calculations were made as to how to minimise feelings of insecurity or anxiety. Third, economic considerations, and fourth, shoppers avoided or visited certain location for aesthetic reasons (going to a certain area because you like the atmosphere, for example) (Taylor, Evans and Fraser, 1996:131).

Therefore, Taylor et al's analysis of the relationship between shopping, place and identity contrasts with Miller et al's. Whilst Miller et al saw shopping as offering the opportunity to explore and refine identification with place, Taylor et al viewed the relationship between place and identity in more deterministic terms. They argued that there is a relationship between the economic activities of place, its identity and that of its residents. So did the young women (in this thesis), view shopping places as being about the exploration of identity or reflecting their identities?

### *3.12 Shopping, Place and Ethnicity.*

Both Taylor et al (1996) and Miller et al (1998) incorporated discussions of shopping practices amongst minority ethnic groups within broader analyses that included those from a wide range of social groups. Their analyses will be discussed further, with particular reference to ethnicity.

For Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996), shopping routines amongst minority ethnic groups were understood to reflect their general standpoint in relation to the 'structure of feeling' of the city and their ethnic cultural practices and choices. This resulted in shopping being confined to local ethnic neighbourhoods for members of minority ethnic groups:

*"Local shops can also serve an ethnic minority community with specialist foodstuffs and other items that are not found in the city centre...The Asian women from Nether Edge did much of their shopping in the Asian goods shops near where they live."*  
Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996: 148)



Taylor et al found that a sense of exclusion on the basis of 'race' explained (to some extent) an absence of interest in city centre shopping, particularly for young Black men (1996:216).

City centre shops were found to be particularly uninteresting and problematic for Asian women too, but for different reasons. Taylor et al (1996), depicted Asian women as being passive and confined by 'the community'. Their ethnicity determined their shopping choices:

*"Neither Manchester nor Sheffield city centres held much interest for Asian women. Much of their time was spent in Asian food stores or in clothes shops...they would only go into town when accompanied by their husbands, as it would be unacceptable 'in their community' for them to go alone."* Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996:213)

This is too deterministic an account of the shopping practices of young Asian women. As the discussion of research specifically concerned with the experiences of young Asian women earlier in this chapter indicated, there is a need to look beyond the view that Asian women are inherently constrained in concrete like ways by their community or culture.

In Chapter Eight of "Shopping, Place and Identity", Miller et al focused on ethnicity, using material from focus groups with shoppers from a range of 'ethnic groups' (West African traders, Cypriot youths, Jewish women, and those who identified themselves as 'Black') who shopped in either the Brent Cross or Wood Green areas of London.

Miller et al found ethnicity to be a key feature of these shopping sites, framing the choice to shop there and patterns of shopping there. They argued that ethnicity *'emerged as a part of the identity of the sites themselves...'* (1998:159).

Place was associated with shoppers of particular ethnicities and with exploring/experiencing these ethnicities. Taylor et al (1996), on the other hand, saw ethnicity determining shopping choices rather than being sustained through shopping.

Miller et al's analysis can be questioned. Ethnic identification with place is seen in terms of a sense of belonging, largely defined in terms of how recently the ethnic group in question has settled in the area. A more dynamic view of 'belonging' for minority ethnic groups may be helpful here.

The value of Miller et al's analysis beyond London can be questioned, however. London, due to the history of settlement and migration there, has areas which are clearly identified around ethnic groups, and offer an ethnic shopping experience- for example, Brixton as Black, Golders Green as Jewish, Green Lane as Turkish, Brick Lane as Asian.

Smaller cities like Sheffield are not clearly divided along ethnic lines in such a clear-cut way. This may be highly significant in terms of the shopping practices of minority ethnic groups and their perceptions of place and identity; this is indicated by the way Miller et al's analysis in London contrasts with Taylor et al's.

Taylor et al (1996) overstated the absence of minority ethnic groups in Sheffield, and their exclusion from 'mainstream' shopping. However, neither can Miller et al's view of ethnicity, place and shopping account for shopping practices amongst Asian groups in Sheffield. The young women's neighbourhood is known as a place where Asian/Pakistani people live, and for having a range of Asian shops alongside a range of other local shops. Simultaneously, the main road, lined with shops, is often identified as a place with a large number of antique shops, rather than as an Asian shopping area. Places to shop in Sheffield, therefore, may not solely be given meaning through ethnicity.

However, Miller's analysis may shed light on the way the young women viewed shopping in places like Bradford. Whilst Sheffield does not offer a large, clearly defined ethnic shopping space, Bradford does. The young women often went shopping in Bradford (or Birmingham, Manchester etc). Was this connected to a process of identification, where shopping in Bradford offered an experience of ethnicity unavailable in Sheffield? Clearly, the relationship between shopping, place, identity and ethnicity for the young women is complex, and cannot easily be explained by either Miller et al's or Taylor et al's analyses.

### ***3.13 'Youth' and Shopping.***

It has been suggested that if young people are valued as anything by society, it is as consumers (Miles, 2000). Discussion about the relationship between young people and shopping has largely focussed on identity. The question this literature largely centres on is to what extent are young peoples' identities controlled by consumer



choices, or do young people use shopping to creatively develop and explore their identities?

Presdee (1990) suggested that young people are attracted to shopping malls, which are seen as 'cathedrals of consumption'. Often young people go to malls to 'hang out', claiming a right to be non-consumers in a consumer oriented world. Langman (1992) saw shopping spaces, like malls, giving young people the opportunity to contest, reinterpret and mobilise meanings, and areas such, a source of empowerment.

Paul Willis (1990) saw consumption not only a means to explore identity; crucially, young people take existing identities to the arena of consumption:

*"People bring living identities to commerce and the consumption of cultural commodities as well as being formed there. They bring experiences, feelings, social position, and social memberships to their encounter with commerce."* (Willis, 1990:21)

Like Miller et al (1998), Willis depicts shopping as being about the exploration of existing identities.

These discussions have been questioned. Griffin (1993), for instance, was critical of depictions of young people's consumer freedoms as inherently liberating, arguing that this is an exaggeration. Miles (2000) also suggested that too much emphasis has been paid to the way in which consumption is used as a tool in constructing sub-cultural/ counter-culture identities, as part of a wider tendency to exaggerate the rebellious nature of youth.

Discussions of young people's shopping practices have had a narrow view of identity. Influenced by subcultural debates, young people's identities have been seen largely being constituted by their youth, and expressed in terms of dress. The role of perceptions of place has only been considered as far as the role of the mall, for example. The relationships between views about shopping, place, identity and belonging have not been considered for young people.

Young people have also been treated as a homogenous group, and differences in opportunities and inclinations to shop have not been taken into account. Young people do not have a unitary experience; intersections of class, 'race', and gender have been overlooked. As a homogenous group young people have been viewed to have to power to model their own identities and resist the interpretations of others. Young Asian women have been excluded from this understanding, as they are typically viewed as being deterministically constrained by their community and culture. There is a need to explore their perspectives on aspects of everyday life like shopping.

#### **4. Conclusion.**

This chapter has reviewed existing sociological literature that relates to the research documented in this thesis. Reflecting the aims of the research, identity and belonging have been themes that have run through the chapter.

One point that connects all of the conceptualisations and explanations about 'belonging' in the majority of literature discussed in the chapter concerns the need to move to a re-conceptualisation of the notion. Belonging has been under theorised,

understood in deterministic, one-dimensional terms. The idea of 'home' has been associated with bounded places and a sense of security. Global change and global connections (like the ones that link the young women to Pakistan) mean that this understanding of 'home' is inadequate. There is a need to move towards a multifaceted understanding of the concept.

This one-dimensional conceptualisation of belonging figured in accounts of the experiences of young Asian women in Britain, leading to the supposition that they are trapped 'between two cultures'; belonging to more than one place is not feasible within this conceptualisation. Especially in the context of the experiences of these young women (in light of their connections to Pakistan) there is a need to move beyond one-dimensional concepts, such as the idea of 'home', to examine the full range of meanings associated with feelings of belonging to place.

Ideas about identity figured in the majority of the literature discussed in the chapter too, whether these ideas were an overt or covert concern of debate. Many accounts about the experiences of young Asian women have been influenced by more traditional understandings of identity as static, determined by factors such as ethnicity or class. Ideas about the (deterministic) role of adolescence in identity formation, for example, shaped the understanding that young Asian women face particular problems during their teenage years due to the contrasts between British and Asian cultures. Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996) also adopted a deterministic understanding of the relationship between the economic activities of the city and the identity of that place and its people.



Such understandings of identity have been extensively critiqued; there is a need to look beyond one-dimensional, deterministic conceptualisations. This critique was instigated by a move towards postmodern conceptualisations of identity as fluid, flexible and multiple. This interpretation has heavily influenced the literature debated in the chapter, having a distinctive effect upon how young Asian women's identities have been understood.

Accounts such as those offered by Rassoul (1999) and Dwyer (1998, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000) have opened up new ways of understanding the views of such young women, looking beyond 'between two cultures' explanations. However, the idea that identity is defined by discourses is problematic; my research adopts an alternative understanding of identity, as interpreted by the young women themselves. This conceptualisation also overcomes another problem with the interpretation offered by Dwyer (1998). Dwyer argues that young women have multiple identities; also integral to her interpretation is the idea that different discourses shaping these multiple identities are contradictory. It is unclear whether multiple identities are understood in a coherent way.

A facet of identity also discussed in this chapter concerns gender, indicating the need for further attention to young Asian women's views about femininity. Literature about femininity has largely concentrated on white girls, bar the analysis offered by Dwyer (1999c). There is need for further scrutiny of the role of perceptions of femininity in the context of views about 'home'.

The literature focussing on relationships between young people in multiethnic localities also indicates the need for attention to the role of gender. Debates such as that about the concept of 'neighbourhood nationalism' have indicated the role of masculinity in shaping racialised relations in urban neighbourhoods. However, closer analysis of masculinity or the views of young women have not been offered. This thesis can contribute to wider debate, through consideration of the role of femininity in perceptions of place and belonging in place.

Indeed, all of the literature discussed in the chapter points to the value of the description and analysis of views about place. A wide range of sources point to the potential significance of views about place to how these young women perceive identity and belonging.

Debates about 'home' and belonging have understood these feelings as linked to place. Taylor et al (1996) indicated the significance of the context of the locality and the city, indicating how apparently similar places can be viewed in very different ways. However, literature about the experiences of young Asian women has not considered the significance of perceptions of place in the context of belonging.

The significance of the local context of place is also indicated by debates about racialised relations. Literature concerned with racial harassment and violence, and 'neighbourhood nationalism', has indicated how harassment or conflict between racialised groups may be linked to perceptions and the control of place. There is a need to explore the young women's views about place in order to develop a more broadly based sociological account of their perceptions of 'home'.

## **Chapter Three: Research Methodology.**

### **3.1 Introduction: Research Design.**

This chapter provides an overview of the methods of research employed in this thesis. As outlined in the introduction, this research aims to establish a more broadly based documentation of young women's views.

The conceptual framework of this thesis is constructed in relation to the inadequacies of existing sociological research. This provides too deterministic an account of how young women's understandings of identity and belonging are shaped by British and Asian cultures, which were presented in concrete like ways in the literature.

The research aims to go beyond this, through considering how the young women constructed and sustained views about their social world, particularly their understandings of identity and belonging. The research will do this through considering views about place in the context of identity and belonging. Their views about three key places will be considered- the neighbourhood, the city and Pakistan. This conceptual framework shapes the design of the research.

As the aim of the research is to describe and analyse the young women's views about their social world, the research was designed to access their own understandings of these. An inductive, qualitative approach was required by the



conceptual framework of the thesis; the aim of research was to ‘...*document the world from the point of view*’ of the young women (Hammersley, 1992: 165).

That is not to say that the aim of the research was to tell the truth of the young women’s social world. Qualitative social research (particularly ethnographic approaches) have been widely criticised about their claims to ‘truth’ (Clifford, 1986). Qualitative research cannot tell ‘the whole story’ (Back, 1996:6). The aim of this research was not to document the whole truth of the young women’s social world, but to document their views about it from their own standpoint.

Various qualitative methods could have been employed in this research. Several approaches were considered when designing the research and I concluded that semi-structured interviewing was the most appropriate method of data collection.

An ethnographic approach would have been a way to gain an insight into the young women’s views. Participant observation, a key method of ethnographic approaches, focuses on the interactive and interpretive aspects of a setting (Grills, 1998). Ethnography can be used to gain a picture of ‘a way of life’, and helps make sense of the world as perceived in everyday life (Hammersely and Atkinson, 1983). An ethnographic approach would have produced data that documents the young women’s understanding of their social world, from their own point of view. However, an ethnographic approach would have been difficult to achieve in the context of this research.

As will become apparent throughout the remainder of this chapter, access was a key issue in this research. The problem of gaining participation is one applicable to all social research; I faced some significant barriers that would have stood in the way of an ethnographic approach. Ethnography would have required the prolonged participation of young women, which could have been difficult to achieve.

Many of the difficulties I encountered in gaining access were related to my status as white researcher. Inevitably, the young women, and those who controlled access to them, were always going to be aware of this. The success of an ethnographic approach often relies upon the extent to which the researcher is accepted and trusted by informants; could I have achieved this?

Ethnographic approaches have been used in contexts where the 'race' of the researcher differs to that of participants, as in Back's (1996) examination of the formation of identity, racism and multiculturalism in London. Back (1996) gained access to young people through youth groups. There was a youth group operated specifically for Asian girls in the young women's neighbourhood. This was a potential place where I could have gained access to the young women. Unlike the young women's school this was a space specifically designed for the young women. Like Watson and Scraton (2001) I would have been prominent in this space. Watson and Scraton (2001:268) contacted Asian women through a community group. Although made to feel welcome they still *'felt conspicuous in a space that had been specifically provided for South Asian women'*.

Hence, interviewing represented the most appropriate way of accessing the young women's views in the design of this research. Interviewing required a lower degree of participation, whilst giving an opportunity for the young women to express their own views about their social world.

Several styles of interviewing could have been adopted within the design of the research: open-ended, semi-structured, structured, focus group interviews etc.

An open framework was required to gain an insight into the young women's views. As this is the core aim of the thesis, structured interviews were rejected as too constraining, barring the young women from sharing their views from their own standpoint

Other researchers have shown that focus group interviews can be of value in the context of understanding the experiences of young Asian women (Dwyer, 1998). Focus or group interviews have been found to be less confrontational than one-to-one interviews (Kruegar, 1994). Focus groups would have allowed the young women to compare their views, giving an insight into the processes through which they understand their social world.

Dwyer (1998) found that group interviews facilitated the discussion of common understandings. However, young women can sway each other's views within a group interview situation. The data produced in my interviews revealed the value of individual, one-to-one, interviews. Many of the young women presented criticism of their peers. These tended to focus on perceptions of femininity and



sexuality, particularly criticism of other young women's behaviour, unlikely to be aired in a group situation.

Therefore, the value of focus groups in the context of documenting the young women's understandings of their social world can be questioned. What is likely to be shared in a group situation is a shared, accepted version of the young women's social world. This would lead to depicting the young women as a homogenous group- a feature of much existing literature, to be especially avoided in research that aims to establish a broader based account of their views.

A key methodological decision was whether to adopt a wholly unstructured or semi-structured style of interviewing. Unstructured interviews as a 'strategy for discovery' (Gilbert, 1993:136) offered the free framework for the young women to share their understanding of the social world. However, a semi-structure was selected within the research design.

### **3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews.**

Whilst the conceptual framework of the thesis seeks to document a more broadly based understanding of young women's views, this framework poses more specific questions too. These refer to the young women's perceptions of place, identity and belonging. A semi-structure was selected to guide the interviews towards these themes. The semi-structure represented a framework for the interviews that allowed for focused, conversational, two-way communication,

giving the young women a (relatively) open space to share views from their own standpoint.

An interview guide<sup>1</sup> was developed, to encourage conversation relating to specific themes in the interview situation. This flexible guide ensured that the interviews focused on the research questions. The interviews were open ended, to allow participants to introduce and discuss issues, yet retained a clear focus on the research questions.

Simultaneously, a semi-structured format allowed the preparation of probing questions, which facilitated further exploration of the young women's views. A semi-structure provided a framework where the comparability of views across the interviews could be established.

In a more practical sense, semi-structured interviewing was also selected as the method most suitable for successfully establishing the research. Access was a crucial issue in this research. In terms of gaining access, other approaches, as already noted, would have been problematic.

Many access issues (as will be discussed subsequently) arose from my position as a white researcher. Interviews with the young women were arranged through, and conducted in, their school. Teachers and senior school management controlled access. An assessment of my trustworthiness was integral to the school's perception of the research. This went beyond perceptions of myself as a

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<sup>1</sup> The interview guide used in this research is discussed further on page 89.

white researcher. Teachers had a responsibility towards pupils in their care, and they had to scrutinise the ethical dimensions of the research.

A semi-structure enabled me to outline the scope of the research with teachers, detailing the amount of contact that would be needed with the young women and the broad content of the interviews. There was concern about the content of the interviews and how the young women would react to me.

Teachers had more practical concerns too. A key issue, for example, was time. Social research in schools requires knowledge of and co-operation with the routine of school life. Interviews were scheduled within the school timetable, to avoid the young women missing too much lesson time. A semi-structure was valuable in planning and focussing the interviews within the rigid time limits<sup>2</sup> of the school timetable. This ensured the collection of data in relation to all of the research aims.

### **3.3 The Semi-Structured Interview Guide.**

As previously discussed, the interviews had a semi-structure. An interview guide (see Appendix 1, page 274) was developed and organised on a thematic basis.

Taking into consideration the research questions, four main themes for discussion were developed, school, family (incorporating views about Pakistan), the neighbourhood and Sheffield. The four themes that composed the semi-structure of the interviews aimed to generate discussion of a wide range of views

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<sup>2</sup> I was allocated an hour with each interviewee- the length of one lesson.



about in order to explore perceptions of place, identity and belonging. The themes took into account all of the places likely to be significant to the young women (neighbourhood, city, Pakistan). Hence, their views about place, identity and belonging in relation to all of these places could be considered, without over determining the young womens potential views through a one-dimensional understanding of belonging.

Reflecting these themes, an aide memoir of prompt questions was developed, and amended after the first (pilot) interview.

The first section explored views about school. Whilst the focus of the research was not on the school, or on experiences of education, talking about school (the time/space we were in) was a useful way of developing a rapport in the interview situation. This section also sought views about other young people at school, generating insightful comparisons with white young women, for example.

The second section explored the young women's views about their family. Prompts were designed to generate discussion about the young womens everyday lives with their families, family connections in the neighbourhood and their broader significance in terms of perceptions of place, identity and belonging, in the locality and beyond. This section began to explore views about the neighbourhood and routine life in the area.

This thematic section also explored views about Pakistan. This was achieved, for example, through exploration of the young women's views about their family's

histories and their connections to Pakistan. Discussion was designed to explore the mundane and the symbolic significance of Pakistan.

The next section of the semi-structure was designed to explore views about the local neighbourhood in greater depth. Prompts were designed to generate discussion about routine daily life in the neighbourhood.

The final section of the semi-structure was constructed to prompt discussion about Sheffield. This incorporated discussion about potential trips to the city centre (for shopping, for example). The semi-structure was also designed to explore how Sheffield was viewed as a city, how its identity was perceived, for example. One way in which the prompts sought to do this was through asking the young women to compare Sheffield with other cities they may have visited.

This final section of the interview semi-structure was also devised to explore in greater detail the young women's views about belonging and 'home'. Prompts were designed to stimulate discussion about all of the places discussed in the interview (the local neighbourhood, Sheffield and Pakistan) and generate reflection on views about feelings of belonging (or not) to these places.

The interview schedule was concluded through an attempt to explore views about belonging and processes of identification, in a broader sense, through prompting the young women to consider a number of terms (associated with place and identity). These terms (such as Pakistani, Asian, British, English, Sheffielder, Muslim) were presented on a prompt card, and with the intention of asking the

young women to consider which they would select to apply to themselves and their general views about them.

To conclude the interviews, I asked participants to select their own pseudonyms, which are adopted throughout the thesis. I saw this as a practical way of emphasising and explaining to the young women that their anonymity would be protected and how the data would be used.

### **3.4 The School Setting.**

Throughout my fieldwork access was a central issue. A place was needed to conduct the research, where access to the young women was viable. A setting where they could feel comfortable speaking to me, relaxed and secure enough to tell me their views was needed. A sample of young women who lived in a specific geographical zone (the young women's neighbourhood) was required, in order to meet the research aims; the 'setting' had to facilitate this in some way.

Several alternative research locations were considered. For example, interviews could have been held in the young women's homes. The presence of other family members would have been problematic, however. The key aim of this research has been to consider the young women's views, carrying out interviews in their home would have impeded this.

A space for the research was needed where I could negotiate access and where the young women felt comfortable about sharing their personal views and



opinions. Like many who have investigated the experiences of young Asian women (for example, Dwyer, 1998, 1999a,b,c, 2000; Basit, 1997; Razzoul, 1999) I decided that the school attended by most young people from the neighbourhood in question could be a suitable setting.

Liasing with the young women's school meant I could negotiate access to a sample of young women who met the criteria of coming from Pakistani Muslim backgrounds. Liasing with the school (that drew young people from the neighbourhood) meant that a sample of young women who live in this specific geographical location could be established.

However, conducting research in a school was not unproblematic. Further, specific concerns and constraints were encountered. These primarily concerned issues of access, the ethics of research undertaken by white people and time constraints.

### **3.5 Access.**

Negotiating access to interview the young women was a lengthy and delicate process. This process will now be described and explored in greater detail.

I began liasing with the school in spring 1999. A letter outlined my proposed research and the co-operation I sought. The school agreed (in principle) that the interviews could go ahead. I planned to undertake the fieldwork in the autumn. Access was agreed with the condition that the participants' identities were protected and that I work with the co-operation of a teacher. This teacher had a

specific responsibility for community liaison. They were intended to act as a gatekeeper, controlling and overseeing my contact with the young women.

Following the school summer holiday, I attempted to contact this teacher, anticipating initiating the process of scheduling the interviews. At this point the first delay in the research process occurred.

The school's community liaison teacher was now on long term sick leave. The deputy head felt that it would be better to wait until a temporary replacement was found or until this teacher returned (possibly after Christmas), prior to undertaking the research.

The deputy head teacher felt that the research could be problematic, for example, gaining consent from parents. The value of the participation of a teacher with a special knowledge and good relationships with 'the community' was emphasised. The school (justifiably) felt a need to protect the relationships it has with parents and 'the community'.

These stipulations can be seen as a reflection of broader concerns about the validity of my research. These concerns gradually steadily crept in to the process of negotiating access.

The teachers' concerns can be comprehended if there are understood as being based on perceptions of 'race'. In this context, my research was viewed as problematic either due to the validity of research undertaken by white people or

the teachers' mundane perceptions of 'race' (and therefore, factors such as relationships between white teachers and Asian parents). These concerns are discussed further in the subsequent section of this chapter.

The school felt that I would be more likely to gain both the permission of parents and students if I worked with someone who had specific community 'knowledge'. There was little choice other than to delay the research until a community liaison teacher was in post.

I continued contacting the school on a regular basis; the school hoped that a replacement community liaison teacher would be found, though the deputy head expressed concerns about whether the school would be able to fund the position. After the Christmas holiday it became apparent that the community liaison teacher would not be returning, nor would the school be able to sustain a dedicated 'community liaison' post. If the research was to go ahead, the school needed to be able to appoint someone with the 'community knowledge' to safeguard the school's responsibilities.

The deputy head teacher offered a solution, in the form of the help of a female Asian teacher. Concerns about how issues of 'race' would be handled in the research, became clearer at this point in the research process. The assistance of a female Asian teacher was viewed as a way of safeguarding the reputation of the school amongst parents and 'the community'. Whilst this teacher had little special experience of school-community relations, her status as an 'Asian woman' was of paramount importance to the deputy head teacher.



### 3.6 'Race', Research and Access.

One methodological debate to be considered in relation to this thesis, is that about the significance of the 'race' of the researcher and research participants. I am white and my research has focussed on the views and experiences of young women, from Pakistani backgrounds. A central issue in debates about research practice, particularly within the sociology of 'race', has been the ability of white researchers to understand and empathise with black (and Asian) participants' experiences (Back, 1996:24, Lawrence, 1981).

Questions about the reliability and ethical value of research exploring the experiences of Black and Asian people conducted by white researchers, was largely derived from Black Feminism. Black Feminism, responding to the lack of sensitivity to 'race' in 'second wave' feminism, raised the issue of 'race' being linked to experience; therefore a white researcher can never truly comprehend the experience of being a black woman (hooks, 1981). Researchers from Asian backgrounds who have researched the experiences of young Asian women have argued that this has helped them to comprehend participants' experiences:

*"The fact that I was myself a Muslim, originating from Pakistan gave me the advantage of an insight into the Islamic religion and the Muslim culture as only a researcher with intrinsic knowledge of the subject can have."* (Basit, 1997a:18)

Researchers like Basit (1997a) undoubtedly have a greater insight into being a Muslim and experience of an associated culture. This does not mean, however, that those from different backgrounds cannot consider or appreciate the views of young women from Pakistani backgrounds. Accepting the argument that white researchers cannot conduct research with Asian or Black participants, falsely

assumes that there is a single truth about 'race' and 'racism' that only non-white people can know (Miles, 1989:6-7).

Acceptance of this point would have far wider consequences for sociological research, beyond the confines of sociology of 'race', concerning how sociologists understand experiences of the social world. These arguments also make assumptions about the sweeping significance of 'race'. 'Race', in this context, is always equated with 'racism'.

This does not mean that my status as a white researcher, or perceptions about 'race' more generally, were not an issue for my research. For instance, perceptions about 'race' played a role as I negotiated access, at an everyday level. The teachers with whom I negotiated access had mundane perceptions about 'race', which shaped their views about my research.

One aspect of these mundane views was stereotypical understandings of young Asian women. The suggestion that teachers held stereotypical views about young Asian female students is not a new one. Researchers who have explored the educational experiences and achievements of young Asian women have documented how teachers viewed these students in stereotypical ways (Brah and Minhas, 1985; Mirza, 1992 and Basit, 1997).

Khan's (1999) description of stereotypical notions about Asian women reflects these observations:

*“Asian women wear the veil and this is an integral part of their religion... they walk behind the men...Asian women come from a primitive backward culture...Asian women accept their lot and do not struggle against the circumstances in which they find themselves...Asian women are the passive victims of circumstances...Asian women are submissive” (Khan, 1999: 2-3)*

Therefore, young Asian women have been understood as passive victims of oppressive cultures (Dwyer, 1998; 1999b, Brah and Minhas, 1985; Parmar, 1984). Dwyer (1998: 53) suggested the significance of how Islam is perceived in stereotypical views. Here ‘Orientalist’ discourses construct Islam as antithetical to Western culture. ‘Muslim women’ are seen as the embodiment of ‘oppressive’ Islam- as victims of a repressive and fundamentalist religion.

Understanding the teachers as viewing the young women in ways that reflected stereotypes, can explain the problems I encountered negotiating access. For example, teachers proposed that the interviews could be condensed, from roughly an hour each. They suggested completing three interviews in an hour. There was a presumption here, centred around an understand that, as a white person, I may find it difficult to get these young women (viewed as quiet and reserved) to talk to me, for any significant period of time or in any significant depth.

Another concern that was expressed centred on whether I should be alone with the students. It was suggested that the female Asian teacher who assisted me with setting up the interviews, should also be present in the interviews. The teachers concerns about appropriateness of research conducted by white people and the vulnerability and shyness of Asian girls could explain this.



However, some of the other problems I encountered in negotiating access could be accounted for in ways unrelated to perceptions of 'race'. For example, the doubts were raised about the length of the interviews could be explained as a general issue in negotiating access to carry out qualitative research, where gatekeepers do not immediately appreciate the nature of qualitative sociological research. It is the duty of the researcher to explain their intentions. The conditions the school sought to impose could be interpreted as not necessarily being about perceptions of 'race', or doubts about white researchers.

However, this was also a reflection of how the teachers perceived the young women, myself and relations with 'the community', on the basis of their mundane perceptions of 'race'. Academic objections about the validity of research conducted by white researchers may be overcome. However, mundane perceptions of 'race' were significant in the research process. Awareness of the way in which the teachers drew on their mundane perceptions of 'race', in the process of negotiating access, was essential to understanding and addressing their doubts about my research.

In the broader context of the research, the difference of my 'race' to that of the participants did not endanger the validity of the data. Black feminist epistemology has also argued that interviewer-interviewee matching is not the only way forward in social research (Watson and Scraton, 2001:268). Phoenix (1994:66) expressed the potential value in terms of sociological knowledge, of recognising that researchers of differing 'races' produce different accounts of 'race' and racism.

Hence, my whiteness was of value in the research situation. The young women presumed that I did not understand some of the features of their lives that they may have taken for granted with a Muslim Pakistani interviewer. This gave me a differing insight into their understanding of the social world. This is not to say that I received a greater insight into their experiences than Asian sociologists would have; I gained a differing, equally illuminating one. The difference between my 'race' and that of the interviewees was an issue for consideration, but did not bar the production of a sociological insight into their views.

### **3.7 Getting into the School: Further Access Issues.**

One of the key challenges I faced during this phase of establishing the research, was communicating its objectives and purpose and negotiating practical requirements. It was crucial to address the broader concerns (for example, those based on mundane perceptions of 'race') that underlay specific predicaments concerning, for example, the length of interviews. Further obstacles and concerns were also raised.

Although I welcomed the assistance of the school in helping me to form a sample of participants, contact parents and seek their permission for the interviews to take place, I had anticipated that I would be left alone with the students during the interviews themselves. The school felt that the female Asian teacher, who was helping me with the sampling process, should also sit in on the interviews. From the school's perspective this represented protecting the interests of the young women.

I felt that the proposed chaperoning would be problematic. The presence of someone else in the room listening to our conversation, but not actively taking part, would be even more unnatural than the interview situation itself. The presence of a teacher (an authority figure, whatever their 'race') could affect the young women's confidence about speaking openly. This would challenge both the ethical value of the research and the validity of the data produced.

A process of negotiation began. I carefully outlined why I opposed the chaperoning. I had to find a way around this problem, which addressed the needs and concerns of the school. I felt that my first obligation, however, was to the research participants. From the school's perspective, the needs of the young women (and themselves) would be served by the interviews being observed by a person they deemed to be appropriate. I felt that the needs of the young women and of the research would be best served, if the interviews could take place in an environment where they would feel relaxed about talking to me and able to air their views freely.

The way forward I devised, was to offer the school the opportunity to practically observe what the interviews would be like, hoping this would offer reassurance and demonstrate that I could be trusted. I suggested that a 'pilot interview' should take place, which could be observed by the female Asian teacher, with the consent of the participant. This would allow the school to see how the interview progressed, and how they may expect the participants to react to me.



I proposed that following this 'pilot' interview that the school could make an informed judgement about whether they felt the 'chaperoning' of the young women was necessary. The school agreed to this and were prepared to observe the 'pilot interview'.

### **3.8 Pilot Interview: Confirmation of Access.**

Following this lengthy process of negotiation, I went into the school to carry out the 'pilot' interview. As agreed, I was expecting to have a teacher present in the interview.

The interview began with the anticipation of the 'chaperone' teacher sitting in on the whole interview. The teacher was aware of this intention, but also made it clear to me that she did not share the concerns of the school management about the reasons for the interviews potentially being overseen by her.

I sat down with the participant and we began chatting. Our 'chaperone' had left the room momentarily (or so I thought) and I stalled the interview waiting for her return. We chatted about the interview and related topics as we awaited her return. After about ten minutes I concluded that she was not coming back, and so we continued with the interview, following the semi-structure as designed.

Just as the interview was coming to a conclusion, our 'chaperone' returned. We chatted, and she asked me to call into the deputy head teacher on my way out to update him on my progress, and to tell him that *'as far as she was concerned it*

*would be okay to do all the rest on my own*'. This message was enough to satisfy the school management of their worries about the nature of the interviews.

Therefore, it became clear that the worries that the school had raised as the process of getting into the school to do the research was underway, were largely concerned with gate keeping and with developing a sense of trust. There was a perceptible gap between the worries that the school felt they should assert, and the actual amount of scrutiny they wanted to impose once the interviews were underway.

Throughout the rest of the research the school imposed little surveillance of the research process; teachers made friendly enquiries about the progress of the interviews but did not seek to scrutinise the research further

### **3.9 Recruiting Participants and the Sample.**

During the latter stages of the negotiation process (discussed above), I met with the teacher nominated to help me with the research, in order to discuss recruiting participants. The recruitment process is described below.

The female Asian teacher assisted me in the process of forming a sample of young women and seeking the consent of parents and the students concerned.

The first stage of this process involved generating an initial sample of possible participants, who met certain criteria. This sample was drawn from pupils in school years nine, ten and eleven, who were aged fourteen, fifteen or sixteen

years. The scope of the research meant that it was important that participants lived in the young womens neighbourhood of Sheffield. Further, all of the participants in this sample were Muslim and from Pakistani backgrounds. This information was gathered from school records.

Following the formation of this initial sample of sixty, the school issued letters to parents on my behalf. This letter, drafted by myself with a foreword from the deputy head, explained the purpose of the research, what their daughters' participation would involve and requested their informed consent. I stated that I would be happy to provide further information about the research if parents wished, though none contacted me. Each participant was also asked for their informed consent prior to starting their interview.

I hoped to recruit around 25 participants. Initially fifteen parents responded positively. Although this response was disappointing, I began the interviews.

I also pursued gathering a larger sample. Eventually four more letters of consent were returned to the school on a piecemeal basis. Two further participants were recruited during the middle of the research process. I had interviewed their friends and they too requested to be interviewed (possibly attracted by the prospect of missing a lesson). Letters of consent were despatched to their parents.

However, after this the prospects of recruiting more participants seemed remote. The initial stage of sampling (where letters were sent to parents of students in years 9, 10 and 11) had in fact included roughly all of the young women who met



sample criteria. Snowballing or other sampling measures would have been ineffective.

Recruiting more participants would have involved changing the sample criteria, therefore. This would have had implications in terms the validity of the data and the research questions. For these reasons, I decided to conclude the research with a total of twenty-one interviews.

The representativeness of this sample needs to be considered. I would not suggest that the experiences and views of those who participated in this research are typical of the experiences, more generally, of young Muslim Asian women in Britain. One of the positive attributes of my research is that it does not seek to over generalise the experiences of the young women.

By focussing on one neighbourhood, in Sheffield, the research has sought to assert the importance of the context of place. The experiences of the young women interviewed may have something in common with the experiences of similar young women who live in their neighbourhood and other places in the UK. However, a representative sample, in this context, has not been sought. Therefore, the sample can only be judged on its representativeness of the population of this neighbourhood, in Sheffield. The measures I undertook to define the criteria through which the sample was generated, means that the sample is representative in this context.

### **3.10 Analysis.**

Once the interviews were completed, the formal analysis began with verbatim transcription of audio recordings of the interviews. Following transcription the data was analysed on a thematic basis, following the semi-structure of the interviews.

The data was analysed according to the broad areas of interest established by the research questions and the topics that emerged in interviews. Hence, the data was organised around the broad chapter headings that began to emerge. As views about place were a key element of the research questions, chapter and data organisation reflected this interest. The data initially lent itself to organisation around views about the local neighbourhood, about Sheffield and Pakistan.

The analysis then progressed into its second phase, where data was categorised into more specific themes within the broad subject headings. These themes emerged from analysis of the data. For example, within these data about the local neighbourhood, themes emerged concerning views about how people in the locality mix, and so on.

Further analysis of the data led to the emergence of further themes, which were also reflected in the final organisation of the thesis. For example, analysis of the young women's views indicated that shopping was a key activity that involved them in places. This led to the analysis of the data with respect to views about shopping, which forms the basis of chapter seven.

The data was stored in Microsoft Word 2000, using the web page construction features that this version of word has. Each broad theme, which came to represent a chapter of the thesis (for example, views about the neighbourhood), was given a separate file. The web features allowed me to insert hyperlinks (cross references) between different sub themes within the data, including across a range of meta-themes and files.

In the context of my research, I felt this to be superior to other packages for storing qualitative data, for example Nudist. Word 2000 was judged to be a more flexible software package for the analysis of qualitative interview data. Using word has allowed me to cut and paste data directly from the transcripts, to the data storage files, and then straight into chapters of this thesis. This was a feature absent from the Nudist package I considered using. Word 2000 was a flexible package for the analysis of the data, as the organisation of data files closely reflected the organisation of the data.

### **3.11 Conclusion.**

This chapter will be concluded through reflection on some of the key issues raised by the methods employed, and their effectiveness in generating data that informs the research questions posed by this thesis.

Access was a primary issue for this research. In addition to a lengthy and problem-strewn process of negotiating access with the school, there was also the issue of recruiting a sample. Analysis of the process of gaining access revealed



that whilst academic objections about research undertaken by white researchers' may be overcome, mundane perceptions of 'race' play a crucial role in the research process.

The overall effectiveness of the research design in generating data that addresses the research questions also needs to be considered. Contrary to some of the teachers' perceptions of the young women, and of my capacity as a white researcher to establish a rapport in the interview situation, the young women generally responded positively to the interviews. Frank and detailed views were aired in the interviews. This produced rich, detailed data. As designed, the methodology produced data that documents the young women's understandings of their social world, particularly perspectives about 'home'.

Crucial to this was the effectiveness of the interview guide that formed the semi-structure of the interviews. The interview guide was generally effective. The research questions meant that the guide reflected a need to gather views about the places significant to the young women (neighbourhood, city, Pakistan). Upon reflection, however, the interviews could have explored some aspects of the young women's views in greater depth.

For example, I did not anticipate the overall significance of shopping, as an activity, nor its importance in the young women's views about place. The data about shopping emerged through conversation in the interviews. Greater anticipation of the significance of shopping would have meant that more detailed, probing questions could have been developed in advance. For example, although

my main focus would remain on the relationship between shopping and place, it would have been interesting to explore further the young women's views about the goods that they bought, and, for instance, views about the blending of Asian and 'western' fashion styles.

There is scope for further research here, and the young women's views could have been explored in greater depth. However, the interviews did capture their views about shopping in the broader context of their understandings of place, identity and belonging- the main aim of the research.

Overall, whilst the research may have benefited from further attention of to the interview guide, and from the participation of a few more young women in interviews, the research design was successful. Rich, detailed data was gathered, from the standpoint of the young women themselves.

## Chapter Four: Views About the Neighbourhood.

### **4.1 Introduction.**

This chapter describes and analyses the young women's views about their neighbourhood. It explores their views about place, their identification with place and their sense of belonging in it.

Underlying all of the young women's views about the neighbourhood were meanings of 'race'. These formed a backdrop to a complex of other meanings related to the space called 'the neighbourhood' and particular places within it. The young women's racialised understanding, underpinning these complex meanings, meant concern about the possibility of encountering 'racism' was a constant, pervading all places. 'Racism' influenced understandings and meanings about all particular spaces within the neighbourhood and beyond it.

'Racism' was understood as the possibility of being subjected to verbal or physical abuse on the street. All white people were viewed as having the potential to be racist. Encountering white people in space brought the chance of being a victim of 'racism'. 'Racism' is not just about criminal incidents of harassment or violence. Bowling (1993) argued that an incident of attack or harassment is just one element of a process of victimisation. Within this understanding, incidents of racial harassment have a ripple effect throughout a family or community. The young women's understanding of 'racism' was



representative of this process; only some had personal experiences of racist incidents, yet all had an underlying sense of apprehension about 'racism'.

This arose from an understanding that racially motivated abuse is sometimes inflicted upon Asian people. Racially motivated attacks represented the possibility of serious injury or even death. There is a risk associated with public places (Holdaway, 1996:49); no matter how small this risk was significant to the young women. On a wider basis, racial attacks have significance as they challenge the right to live in Britain at all (Holdaway, 1996: 46). Apprehension of 'racism' was an invasive, mundane feature of place in the neighbourhood for the young women. It was central to their understanding of their social world located in their locality.

Apprehension about 'racism' played a background role in all of the meanings the young women ascribed to the neighbourhood. During interviews, young women talked about specific places in their neighbourhood and gave them distinct meanings. Background apprehension about being racially abused was ever present. It influenced views about place in the neighbourhood and provides a frame of interpretation for understanding their views.

#### **4.2 'Racism'.**

Meanings about 'racism' were based on mundane views about 'race', on the basis of 'race' there was a clear understanding of what white and Asian people

are like, their likely views and behaviour. Zareena identified white and Asian people as 'different':

"You know white people and Asian people are different. And, like I said, I've heard of some areas that are racist, you know, but in ours there's not problem like that, Asian people can do what they want there." (Zareena)

'Racism' was understood as incidents of harassment or violence, ranging from name calling to physical attacks. Racialised divisions between white and Asian people were seen as the foundation of, or justification for, this harassment. Other factors, primarily religion, were understood as component of racialised understandings too:

"[In this neighbourhood] they respect our religion. But if we went [to another neighbourhood], I don't know, people there might start swearing at us or something." (Shabnam)

Incidents of racist name calling or violence, which Azra referred to in the following quote as being '*picked on*', were viewed as probable when Asian people are in a minority in place:

"Me, cos I am a Pakistani, I want to be in a place where there are quite a few other Pakistani's. Cos, I think that if you are one Pakistani and you go into a place, where you are the only one, or there is not many, and there is loads of whites, obviously you are going to get picked on." (Azra)

'Racism' could also be a general sense of unfriendliness towards Asian people. All white people were viewed as having the potential to be racist, but were not understood homogenously i.e. some white people were viewed as more inclined

to have racist views. Older white people, for instance, were understood as being more likely to be generally inhospitable:

“Some places, like where there’s old people, you get the feeling they don’t want Asians there.” (Saika)

Within this comprehension of ‘racism’, if white people were encountered on a daily basis it was important to know them. Knowing white people meant that the racist potential they held can be assessed. A sense of apprehension about encountering ‘racism’ could be ameliorated as a consequence. This can be observed in the following quote, where Aliesha emphasised the importance of knowing people, in order to assess whether they were likely to ‘get along’, i.e. the likelihood that they will not get along (resulting in heightened) apprehension about ‘racism’):

“Yeah, all our neighbourhood knows each other and they seem to get on. If they didn’t it wouldn’t be a nice place to live. All our neighbours seem to be getting on...” (Aliesha)

The importance of knowing white people was often highlighted in discussions about other neighbourhoods. Apprehension about ‘racism’ permeated views about all places. Other neighbourhoods were understood in relation to the young women’s own neighbourhood and, therefore, illustrates how they understood the neighbourhood.

Other neighbourhoods were described as places where it was more difficult to get to know white people. The physical features of place were placed at the fore descriptions, to highlight the importance of knowing white people. Features of



place, such as houses being some distance from each other, were understood as making it difficult to communicate with (white) neighbours:

“There it’s being all spread out and only a few people probably know each other. In our area everyone seems to know each other.” (Robina)

This was also seen in Sam’s description of a place where a friend lives. Sam associated features of this place with a greater sense of apprehension about ‘racism’:

“...[My friend] She lives there and it’s a posh area and there’s all English there and she says it’s quite a nice area really, everyone’s friendly and that. It’s just that it’s a bigger house. Its, like, they’re spread out, but we’re all close together on the street, so you know each other. But she, like, knows her neighbours, but not everybody on her street, but it’s still okay. Its quieter, cos there’s all trees there, its scary cos its all spread out.” (Sam)

In all places with similar characteristics, accordingly ameliorating apprehension about encountering ‘racism’ was viewed as problematic. How underlying meanings about ‘racism’ shaped views at the fore of the young women’s descriptions (like Sam’s comments about the quietness of her friends street) will be discussed in greater detail, later in the chapter.

### **4.3 The Local Pakistani Population.**

The significance of ‘race’ in the young women’s understanding of place, can also be observed in the value they placed on the presence of other Asian people in the neighbourhood. This was seen as positive. It was an almost taken for granted

feature of place, central to everyday experiences, making the neighbourhood a 'good place to live':

"[I like the neighbourhood] cos of everybody that is there, my family and my friends and everyone round there, it is a really good place to live." (Sadja)

Existing sociological research has also highlighted the significance of Asian people living in close proximity to each other. This has been understood in terms of the significance of extended family networks and the *biraderi* to Pakistani people. Living in close proximity to your family, means that family support networks can be sustained; it also corresponds with common living arrangements in Pakistan (Anwar, 1979; Shaw, 1988).

The young women described how they interacted with their extended family. They often went round to nearby family members homes. Shazia's suggestion of visiting cousins '*if we wants anything*' echoes, to some extent, Shaw's (1988) conclusions about extended families supporting one and other:

"In our area we've got cousins and if we wants anything we just go round to their house." (Shazia)

The meanings associated with this looked beyond this practical support, however. Going round to family members homes was associated with a sense of 'closeness':

"I like that they're close. Can go round their house, they can come to ours." (Shazia)

Familiarity with places in the neighbourhood was fostered. Therefore, living close to extended family was associated with a sense of belonging in place,

Living in close proximity to other Asian people, has also been understood as significant in the context of the 'Asian community'. Webster (1996) and Dwyer (1999a) argued that membership of such a community is a defence against racism; the community offers surveillance when young women are in public places, meaning that rescue is at hand should 'racism' arise.

Background views about 'racism' also featured in the young women's views about the Pakistani population in the neighbourhood, echoing some of the findings of Webster (1996) and Dwyer (1999a). This was reflected in the view that 'racism' was more likely to happen when Pakistani people are in the minority:

"That's when people might start calling names and stuff, when there's not many Asians around, in places like that, I think you stand out more." (Ashley)

The young women also proposed the view that that the surveillance of their families and other Asian people in public places provided a sense of protection and security, ameliorating apprehension about 'racism':

"My brothers they watch out for me, they like to do that, but at the same time I can go where I want." (Salika)

For these young women the presence of other Asian people was not enough to support a sense of belonging in the neighbourhood, however. Their



neighbourhood in Sheffield, does have a significant Pakistani population, but is populated by a significant number of white people too. Therefore, their perspectives on their locality were shadowed by an unease about 'racism'.

The 1991 Census showed that in the two electoral wards that compose the neighbourhood, those from Pakistani backgrounds composed 9.2% of the overall population (Census, 1991). A large part of this population was centred in one of the two electoral wards that geographically cover the neighbourhood; the local Pakistani population has a significant presence in the area, but alongside a white population.

The demographics of their neighbourhood meant that drawing on meanings about the protection of the local Pakistani population was not enough to forge a sense of belonging. Much existing sociological research has typically focussed on Asian people in the major centres of Pakistani population, like Bradford, London, Leicester and so on (Watt, 1998; Pilkington, 2003). Sociological focus on larger Asian conurbations means that the complexity of the young women's views cannot be interpreted according to existing frameworks, such as those offered by Webster (1996) or Dwyer (1999a).

As a result of the proximity of white people in the neighbourhood and its relatively small Pakistani population, the views of the young women were complex, and belonging more multifaceted an understanding. Belonging in the locality was predicated on addressing background meanings about 'racism'.

#### **4.4 'Racism' and Belonging in the Neighbourhood.**

The young women were unable to articulate a sense of belonging in their neighbourhood, solely on the basis of the presence of an Pakistani population. As a phenomenon, 'racism' is often understood as a social relation that is essentially divisive, based on the powerful position of the white majority and the unequal position of racialised groups (Pilkington, 2003). The mere existence of 'racism' could be interpreted as excluding a sense of belonging in the neighbourhood, due to the unequal power relationships between white and Asian people.

This understanding of 'racism' is reflected in various accounts of Asian and other minority ethnic populations and belonging in urban areas. Taylor et al (1996) argued that belonging was problematic for minority ethnic groups in Sheffield. The white working class 'enclave culture' was seen as a strong feature of Sheffield's identity (Taylor et al, 1996:203). Belonging for minority ethnic groups, according to Taylor et al, was predicated on challenging this culture- a considerable task. 'Racism' was understood as inherently exclusionary in this context.

Hesse (1997) saw 'racism' as an exclusionary force, linked to the powerful position of white groups. Hesse (1997) argued that racial violence represents an attempt to sustain white dominance in the city, termed 'white governmentality'. According to this framework, a sense of belonging in the face of 'racism' can be understood as difficult to achieve.

However, for these young women the pervasiveness of background views about 'racism' did not disqualify or bar a sense of belonging. Their views about place, their identification of it and their sense of belonging in it, reflected and addressed background core meanings about 'racism'. A sense of belonging was articulated through views about the reduced apprehension of 'racism' they encountered in their neighbourhood. I will now unravel this interpretation.

As noted previously, the young women did not view white people homogeneously, and white people were understood to have the capacity to reject 'racism'. This understanding was predicated on knowing white people, assessing the chances of 'racism'. This was reflected in the way the young women identified place in their neighbourhood and their sense of belonging in it.

The identification of the neighbourhood and belonging to it was based on an understanding of it as a place where they know white people. This was seen in the value the young women placed on 'mixing' with white people. 'Mixing' represented the process of getting to know people in the neighbourhood, in order to assess the shadow of 'racism':

"Yeah, I think it is mixed, cos I think... We're the only Asian people on that road, and we really get on with each other, with the neighbours and everything."  
(Nasreen)

In the context of the significance of knowing white people, Sam's awareness that one of her white neighbours was someone who was likely to get drunk and inflict abusive name calling on Asian neighbours, meant that she was able to adapt her daily routines to avoid him:



“You know everyone on your street, your all close together, your not enemies like some other- well there is that Irish man, but he’s okay now... we used to play on the street, but I didn’t like it, and some of our neighbours used to shout. There was this Irish man who always used to get drunk and shout at us, and that, so he said ‘go to the park!’ So my uncle he said ‘go to the park from now on, lets avoid trouble’. So we said, like, we’ll go to adventures- that’s the main park.” (Sam)

‘Mixing’, therefore, was partly a strategy for managing contact with white people and ameliorating underlying apprehension about ‘racism’. It also equipped the young women with the knowledge to anticipate likely incidents of ‘racism’, through mapping the white people who were not willing to abandon ‘racist views’.

‘Mixing’, as a strategy was understood as having boundaries to its effectiveness, however. As Shaila outlined in the following quote, ‘mixing’ was dependant upon the participation of white people. Knowledge of white people only eased apprehension about ‘racism’, if white people were willing to give you access to that knowledge. In Shaila’s view ‘mixing’ could be problematic where white neighbours had a racialised understanding of Asian people, leading to mistrust of friendly advances from their Asian neighbours:

“...a few English people, in our area, in our road and stuff, there are a few white people, it was a while ago, they got disturbed by a few Asians , they didn’t like it, saying ‘look at all these Asian people living round here, kids disturbing us’. Those kids, they do like causing trouble, but some English people, no offence to you, but they can be racist and stuff. That’s cos they are like that, you know, you can be nice to them, offer to help them, ask ‘can I go to the shop for you, get you newspaper’, and then they don’t want help, they don’t want to talk to people, that’s just cos some people are like that, you know. That person might not want to change. But then that person might think ‘I’m not giving them money to go to shop for a newspaper for me, cos they be’s running off with the money’. Those thoughts enter your head, you know, some people they take advantage. Trust is a big thing, you know.” (Shaila)

If a sense of belonging is to be forged on the basis of easing fears about 'racism', via mixing, this problem of participation of white people needs to be addressed.

The young women did this through understanding 'mixing' as having meaning beyond representing a process of getting to know white people. 'Mixing' was invested with meanings about the moral correctness of racial mixing and tolerance of other 'races', cultures and religions. Place in the neighbourhood was embodied with these meanings. Place itself was viewed as taking on the ethic of racial tolerance:

"It's a mixed place" (Robina)

"Everyone mixes, and respects your religion." (Salika)

Their neighbourhood took on the character of a 'mixed' place. This process can also be observed in how spaces where 'racism' was feared more, were viewed as 'racist places'; places themselves were understood as 'being racist', or not:

"Most know that some places are racist, can be dangerous. But our area, no problems, everyone gets along and that... It's mixed you, know." (Saika)

White people, who don't want to mix, were viewed as being in the minority and in the wrong. This understanding meant that unease about 'racism' was calmed, even though some white people were difficult to get to know, or were known to have racist views. 'Racism' was viewed as going against what their neighbourhood stood for. A sense of belonging was articulated on this basis;

even if 'racism' does occur it was understood as likely to be frowned upon by white, as well as Asian people.

The imagination of this understanding of place was sustained by a personal commitment to the philosophy of racial tolerance and equality. The young women signalled their own belief in 'racial equality'. Their understanding of the neighbourhood was built upon an understanding of self in relation to place. This was reflected in the way the young women typically added an apology to me when they identified white people as racist:

"Some English people, no offence to you, but they can be racist and stuff."  
(Shaila)

They presumed I shared their view, that we were both right about 'racism' being wrong, and that you had to talk about other 'races' with care, in order to avoid 'being racist'.

Accordingly, the presence of a few potentially racist people did not shake understandings of identification with place. Azra, for example, embodied these ideas about tolerance in place in the neighbourhood. This was seen in her observation of *'down here that is the way you get treated'*; place itself is viewed as *'not racist'*:

"Our area I think is not racist, cos like, no one has ever come up to me and said to me 'you're a Paki'. While in other places, like, no offence, white people come up to you and start calling you things, just cos you are Asian, Black, whatever... Me, I don't think there is a colour difference, every ones equal and down here, that is the way you get treated, everyone mixes" (Azra)



This personal commitment to racial tolerance meant that everyday contact with white people had to reflect this. Some of the young women referred to differing ways of treating contact with white people. They understood these different attitudes as ones adopted by Asian people in other places (in 'Pakistani places'). For example, it was suggested an alternative way to avoid 'racism' was to create 'trouble' for white people, to encourage 'white flight' from the locality:

“...it is not bad for an English person to go into our area, I mean, in my thoughts we can be equal, you know, we are not that kind of people you know, that go around causing trouble with English people, I just think that is really wrong. I mean, in our area, as far as I know, no Asians do that, they are really friendly.”  
(Zobia)

These 'white flight tactics' are reminiscent of Webster's (1996) descriptions of attempts to address 'racism' in Keighley. Young men attempted to avenge 'racism' and secure safe Asian only zones. The way the young women understood their neighbourhood through 'mixing', mediated through a personal identification with 'racial tolerance', meant strategies of encouraging 'white flight' were rejected:

“Well I would say to [white people], most Asians you know aren't very welcoming, are stuck up, you know, but I would tell them that we are welcoming. Our area is not like that, you know, you can come to this area, and hopefully you will forget those things that put you off our area, that we're Asian, that we're black, cos that doesn't stop you to come in, we can be friendly, we can be helpful. We don't mind that there is English in our area as well as Asian. If there would be just one English and the rest Asian, all around, then we would be friendly, not try to get rid of them. I would say to them that we are not the kind of people you think we are, you know, we're friendly and you know, you wont have any doubts, in a day, you can tell the difference, we are not like most Asians, in our area we are friendly. If you go round different towns, cities, Birmingham, Bradford, you know, you don't find that all the Asians are friendly.”(Shaila)

#### 4.5 Levels of Noise.

The focus of this chapter now turns to the specific meanings at the fore of description of space and place in their neighbourhood. Discussion of these will reveal how underlying meanings about 'racism' were invasive, shaping other meanings about place at the fore of the young women's views about the neighbourhood.

One collection of meanings about place in the neighbourhood concerned the busyness of space and levels of noise associated with space. These meanings were associated with an underlying concern with apprehension about 'racism'. The young women's views were not linear- different levels of busy-ness/noise were associated with the presence or absence of unease about 'racism'.

The young women described their neighbourhood as a busy place:

"I think it's busy and local, you know what I mean?" (Aliesha)

Busyness meant that people were always around the neighbourhood, talking to one another. This reflected underlying views about 'racism', where an important resource in calming unease was having knowledge of white people (and, therefore, knowing the chances of them being racist). This understanding was associated with meanings about noise as a positive feature of place. Noise and busyness can reflect people 'mixing', i.e. talking to one and other. Accordingly, noise was understood as signalling reduced apprehension about 'racism':

“In our area there is always people about on the streets, and people sometimes want to get out and talk to someone then they can get out of the house, a quiet atmosphere is not what everyone wants all of the time. They want to be in a lively area, people talking, mixing, know each other and making friends, making friends in your neighbourhood, you know, get to know each other, so that you get to understand.” (Shaila)

These meanings about noise partly reflected views about living in close proximity to extended family. Going around the neighbourhood to visit relatives, bumping into them when out and about, talking on the street, etc, forged an underlying view that noise reflects (in some contexts) people talking- a positive feature of place:

CW: If you moved away to a different area and you did not have that anymore [lots of friends and relatives living close by], how do you think you would feel?

Nabeela: Lonely...I like the area. I wouldn't like to live in too much of a quiet area.

Quietness in place was given meaning according to this understanding. Quietness represented a failure to 'mix' and address apprehension about 'racism'. Thus, quiet places were associated with an increased chance of encountering 'racism'. Zareena explained how the chances that someone might 'get you' are heightened in quiet places. Whilst she talked about this in the context of being a victim of street crime, quietness was associated with a sense of being a victim and, therefore, with unease about 'racism' (understood as victimisation):

“Like, in quiet places, my friend she lives on [ ] Road, and there, you know, there is big houses, spread out, and quiet. But places like that anyone, a robber, could come up to you and get you and no one would notice! (laughs).” (Zareena)



Therefore, views about noise were associated with underlying concern about 'racism', reflecting a racialised understanding of place. The young women recognised these views as specific to them, and their relationship to apprehension about 'racism'. This was seen in views about how white people might perceive their neighbourhood. It was felt that white people might view the busy-ness and noise in their neighbourhood in a negative light, reflecting and sustaining racist perceptions of Asian people:

"...If they have come from a quiet area then they would think its noisy and perhaps too busy." (Zareena)

The young women's views did not only reflect underlying concerns about 'racism'. They presented a complex of views. Some of the meanings associated with space were specific to the young women, reflecting their underlying concern with 'racism'; these views about 'racism' shaped how they viewed the physical reality of place, to some degree. Others were more general, reflecting the physical reality of place, in a way less dependant on specific processes of identification.

In accordance with these more general views, noise in place was viewed in a more unenthusiastic light. Rather than reflecting people talking to one another, noise reflected more negative experiences. For example, a quiet place may be a more respectable place; this was seen in the following quotes where noise was associated with badly behaved kids, viewed as a detrimental influence on younger brothers and sisters:

“[The neighbourhood] is really noisy, there’s a lot of kids, like, playing and screaming and shouting. And compared with that, our road is really quiet and no kids behaving like that.” (Nasreen)

“...Like round where my aunty lives [also in the neighbourhood], there’s loads of kids hanging about on the street, and my brother and sister and my cousins go down there and learn a lot of swears, and, like, in my part kids don’t do that and they are well behaved and stuff, so it is better for my brother and sister that they can be there and not always down there, and not brought up the way some are.” (Azra)

The variety of meaning about noise represents the complexity of their understanding of place and their identification with it. This complexity is also seen in how general meanings and those more specifically related to underlying apprehension about ‘racism’ were often interwoven:

“I like my street and I like the area as a whole, I like both together, cos like my road is quiet and the rest is a bit more lively. So if you want it a bit more lively you can go down there and if you don’t want it you can go up to my street where it’s nice and peaceful! (laughs)” (Azra)

The differential meanings associated with noise could be interpreted as contradictory, if the conceptual framework offered by Dwyer (1999a) was adopted. Dwyer (1999a), with a focus on ‘discourses of community’, interpreted contrasting views about place as indicative of the contradictory impact of ‘the community’ on young women. How different meanings about noise were presented in a coherent understanding of place reveals the drawbacks of Dwyer’s (1999a) analysis. This will be discussed further, later in the chapter.

#### **4.6 Local Shops.**

Meanings about space in the neighbourhood were also presented in the young women’s views about shops in the locality. Shops were understood in a racialised

way. Some shops were viewed as specifically serving Asian people, others white people; other shops were seen to be run by either white or Asian people, but were open to everyone:

“I think it’s got everything, everything that you want, close together. There is Asian clothes shops, English clothes shops, a couple. And just like basic things, like grocery shops, food shops, chemists, everything that you would need. It’s my type of place. I think it’s nice.” (Azra)

The meanings the young women attached to shops reflected underlying meanings about ‘racism’. One way this was evident, was in the emphasis placed on shops being within close proximity, as indicated in the quote above. The young women valued shops being close to each other, and close to their homes; this gave a sense of protection and security when going to shops:

“Nearby, okay, you’ve got grocery shops, you’ve got fish and chips shops and takeaways around the area, you’ve also got, like banks round that area, and you’ve got a lot of things around there, *all nice and near.*” (Ashley)

The meanings attached to the proximity of shops, can be understood in relation to other views where concern about ‘racism’ played a role. As already noted, ‘racism’ was feared more in quiet places, where people do not ‘mix’; this meant that white people were not known and the shadow of ‘racism’ remained. Quietness was associated with ‘spread out’ places, where the distance between the physical features of place, houses for instance, makes it difficult to know white people. The proximity of shops was understood against this backdrop:

“Well, up Toley, I think it is quiet and there is not any houses or not many. And round here it’s got, like, loads of houses with people you know, and up there it is like quiet. I only went up there the other day, with my dad, and it was all quiet,



and I couldn't see any houses and no shops and it is a very expensive place! (Laughs)" (Samina)

The immediacy of shops in space was associated with people interacting with one and other, therefore. In the following extract, Ayesha associated this with people 'getting along' i.e. less apprehension about 'racism':

- Ayesha: ...In [another area], its like bigger houses and things are more spread out, and if you go there you only find a few shops and you have to walk, and that, our area, its smaller, but is more local.
- CW: Do you think that your area has more of a sense of community, cos people are closer together, know each other, and there's more shops more nearby, it's more local?
- Ayesha: Yeah, there its all spread out and only a few people probably know each other. In our area everyone seems to know each other and be getting along.

If they were close together, the young women felt safe about going out to shops.

This was seen in the following quote where Aliasha described the shops in her aunt's neighbourhood as spread out. This made going to the shops daunting; in her neighbourhood shops are nearby so '*you might as well go*':

"When I go [to another neighbourhood to visit my aunty], everything is not close there, in our area everything is close, there you have to walk about fifteen minutes to get anything. But here you it's just cross the road, or cross the traffic lights and there's the shops, for us everything is close. There if you want anything from the shop, you think about it and you don't go cos you've got to walk ten-fifteen minutes, but in our area its across the road, so you might as well [go to the shop]." (Aliasha)

Meanings about shops were also invested with meanings about 'mixing'. The young women's views in this context were not linear, and they had different views about how white and Asian people did or did not use each other's shops.

Nevertheless, all of their views were attached to those about 'mixing' in some way.

Within the racialised understanding of shops, other young women were keen to emphasise that contrasts between white and Asian shops were not problematic. The racialisation of shops, which could be taken as evidence of segregation between local white and Pakistani populations, did not challenge their understanding of the neighbourhood as a 'mixed place':

"...Its like, you wouldn't find white people going in some Asian shops, and some Asian people might not go in other places, like pubs and things like that, but it does not matter, I don't think it does." (Ashley)

Others were keen to depict shops as an important point of contact between white and Asian people. Shops were understood as significant locations, where 'mixing' with white people takes place. The young women said that they went in 'white' shops, and that this was not problematic:

"And the shops there around where I live, there's Pakistani shops, and there's English shops. But we go to both cos if we need something to make Pakistani food we go to the Pakistani shops, if we need something else we got to the English shops as well." (Saika)

Others took this understanding further, suggesting that white people used Asian shops too. In the following quote, Shabnam suggested that English people go into Pakistani shops 'to try the food'. She felt this kind of cultural exchange made the neighbourhood a 'nice place', reflecting how the neighbourhood was a mixed place, i.e. a place where unease about 'racism' was not a concern:

“We go in the English shops, and English people go into the Pakistani shops, to try the food, and Pakistani people go into the white shops an all. It’s quite nice round there.” (Shabnam)

Others simultaneously recognised the importance of Asian shops in their neighbourhood and argued that Asian shops should not replace white ones<sup>1</sup>. Whilst Asian shops were viewed as an important resource, understanding of place in relation to underlying meanings about ‘racism’, and a commitment to the ethic of ‘mixing’, meant that Zobiā argued that there should be a ‘mix of shops’. As with the comments above about white and Asian people being involved in a cultural exchange, these views also reflected an understanding of the neighbourhood as ‘mixed’:

“Its round there, there quite a lot of Asian shops round there and there’s some broken down old shops there as well and then further down there’s a few more Asian shops and a bit of white and then it’s kind of mixed down there, but further up it’s a bit separated and everything. But they should have, like, a mix of everything, there’s not only Asians who live in our area.” (Zobia)

Shops, therefore, were invested with an important role in the context of ‘mixing’ and eliminating the shadow of racism now, or in the future. As noted on page 120, the young women saw trust as important in the effectiveness of ‘mixing’, which requires the participation of white as well as Asian people. Shops were given meaning as places where contact between white and Asian people occurs. Through the routines of shopping encounters, white and Asian people can learn about each other and develop a sense of trust,

“You know, we’ve never got to that thought you know that this should be for us, and that for white, you know. We’re so mixed, and so equal and so happy, that we wouldn’t think about that, you know. And the newsagents, they’re Asians, but

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<sup>1</sup> Reflecting the way ‘white flight tactics’ were rejected (see pp. 123).



whites still go to there, buying newspapers, The Sun, The Star, magazines, and the little white kids as well, you know, buying sweets. The generation starts from there you know, going to the newsagent buying sweets, newspapers, doing paper round for money, and the other shops as well, you know, like Victoria Wine, they sell drink and beer and stuff, but we still go there to buy coke and crisps and sweets and stuff. We are not thinking that they sell drink in there, we're not going to go in there, or they're whites we're not going to go in there, we don't think of it like that, you know, we just think of it as a local shop. The white people in there are really friendly to us too, they say 'how are you', 'how's your brother', 'thank you, have a nice evening'. In the newsagent too, they are being nice to white people, saying hello, chatting, giving right money for paper round, not too low a pay, not giving them two pounds, when the right amount is five pounds. The Asians running shops they are being nice, saying 'how are you', 'please', 'thank you', 'have a nice day'. It be's so mixed you know. " (Shaila)

The young women's views about 'mixing' could be interpreted as evidence of racial harmony, of cultural blending and the emergence of hybrid identities (Back, 1996; Caglar, 1997). What these views reveal is the enduring role of underlying views about 'racism', within a racialised understanding of place. In the previous two quotes, shops were given meaning as important sites in 'mixing' between white and Asian people. However, these understanding were based on the young women's racialised understandings of themselves and others. Whilst white and Asian people used each other's shops, these shops were understood in a racialised way; they always remain white or Asian shops. Their social world was not concrete but constructed. It had to be sustained. 'Mixing' has to be maintained now and in the future in order to continually sustain the reduced apprehension about 'racism' in their neighbourhood; shops had meaning here. 'Mixing' did not mean that the shadow of 'racism' was eroded through cultural blending, or hybridity. It was dealt with, rather than removed.

#### 4.7 The Mosque.

The young women valued the presence of a mosque in their neighbourhood. The mosque was imbued with a range of instrumental and symbolic meanings. It was felt to be important that the mosque should be near to the place where they live:

“We would always choose to live in a place that mosque be’s near as well, you know.” (Salika)

These views about the mosque can be understood in relation to underlying views about ‘racism’. To a limited degree, the proximity of the mosque can be understood as valued in the same way that the proximity of shops was valued. If a specific location within the neighbourhood was near to their home, the young women felt confident about going there.

The immediacy of the mosque was significant in terms of underlying views about ‘racism’ in a more symbolic way too. The mosque is symbolic of Islam and of an Pakistani population. The location of a mosque in their neighbourhood, in close proximity to their home, meant that the young women and their faith had a stake in the area. This contributed towards a sense of belonging:

“...You see at the mosque, there’s a man, the Imam, you see him, and he knows it all off by heart, and he helps us and tells us what we should and shouldn’t do in our religion...so that is that, that is why it is good to live near a mosque.” (Shabnam)

This sense of belonging was also generated by the everyday role of the mosque. Instrumentally, the location of the mosque meant that there is a space for Muslims in the neighbourhood to meet; Mosques are places for education and

other gatherings. The Mosque (and other community amenities for Muslims) was a forum for gathering with people they identified as like them. This was valued by the young women, even though they rarely pray at mosque:

“Women, we tend to pray at home. But I think it's good that there's a mosque and there's loads of centres and that round us for Muslims. It means that my dad and brothers can go and pray, no problems, they don't have to travel far.” (Zareena)

Therefore, both the symbolic and instrumental meanings attached to the proximity of a mosque, were associated with identification with the neighbourhood. The young women viewed the mosque as part of the fabric of the neighbourhood; the mosque was indicative of sharing something with others in the neighbourhood:

“Yeah, actually that is one thing about our house, the mosque it is just about two-three minutes away. And today, it is Friday, it is a special day for us cos all the Muslim's pray and go to mosque, it is a special prayer today, and a special day Friday. And my parents will have gone there now, or they'll just be leaving, at two 'o clock, and it's near to us. And there is people, Asians around, Muslim's, so it's near for them too, [in our neighbourhood] there is quite a few Asians, so it is near for them too.” (Shaila)

This was significant in the context belonging, through a belief that their faith and people they identify with were not marginalized within the neighbourhood. Views about mixing, for example, were partly founded on a personal commitment to the idea of racial tolerance; the presence of a mosque had a role in this view. The idea that their religion has a place and was accepted was valued by the young women; it is evidence of the way their neighbourhood is a place that embodies the idea of racial tolerance (where religion is an element of racialised understandings of self):



“[In this neighbourhood] they respect each other, different religions, things like that.” (Sophia)

“...Everyone mixes, and respects your religion.” (Salika)

Encounters with white people around religious festivals, for example, confirmed a view that their religion was accepted in the neighbourhood. Farzana, who had only moved to Sheffield from Pakistan a couple of years prior to the time of the interviews, was surprised to see white people participating in Eid celebrations:

“I thought it [Eid] was really good cos of things that were going on, I was happy. You know the English people, it was good, cos they were joining in, and they were happy. I did not realise it would be likes that. At school, we did have a party, everyone was happy!” (Farzana)

Meanings about the mosque were not just about identifying with other Muslim people, therefore. This sense of having a stake in the area entered views about white people, influenced by underlying views about ‘racism’.

Participation in Eid celebrations, or exchanging gifts at Eid and Christmas with white neighbours, was given meaning as evidence of racial tolerance, and an absence of unease about ‘racism’. This formed further confirmation, according to the young women, of how their neighbourhood embodied racial tolerance and an amelioration of ‘racism’:

“All the people around here, they respect each other. One of our neighbours they are Pakistani, but our other neighbour she is English, and she is very nice. When it be’s Christmas she gave us presents, and said ‘I know you don’t have it, but I’d like to give you present’, and we did give her Christmas card. And when it was Eid we gave her some food, she is very nice.” (Shabnam)

Understandings of 'mixing' were dependant upon Asian people and Islam having a stake in the area. The symbolic and instrumental meanings associated with the mosque were, therefore, important not only in the context of the sense of belonging derived from being in a place with a Muslim presence, but this was understood in the context of underlying apprehension about 'racism'.

#### **4.8 Conclusion.**

This chapter has revealed the dynamic ways the young women described their neighbourhood. A complex of meanings about themselves, place and their sense of belonging in it, were associated with their understanding of the neighbourhood. Some meanings were at the core of this understanding, playing a background role in all of their views about the neighbourhood.

At the core of the young women's views about the neighbourhood, were meanings about 'racism'. These meanings about 'racism' were central to the young women's views about place. They shaped other specific meanings about place in the neighbourhood, like views about shops, for instance. 'Racism' cast a shadow over the young women's perspectives about their neighbourhood.

This understanding of the young women's imagination of place, identity and belonging, goes beyond existing research findings. The local Pakistani population was important to the young women, but in a neighbourhood where there was a white as well as Pakistani population, this was not the only basis upon which a sense of belonging was expressed.

Living in close proximity to white people brought apprehension about 'racism'. Knowledge about white people was integral to easing fears about 'racism'. 'Getting to know' white people meant that the young women could learn whether they were likely to be racist or not. White people were not viewed homogenously, and were felt to have the potential not to be racist. Knowing which white people were likely to be racist meant that they could be avoided. Views, which identified the neighbourhood as 'mixed', were partly about getting by, and ascertaining a sense of belonging in a place where white people were encountered.

The problem with this as a way of reducing apprehension about 'racism' is that the participation of white people is required. Meanings about 'racism' and mixing meant that apprehension is only reduced if white people want to get to know you too. This problem was reflected and addressed through imagination of the neighbourhood as a place that embodied the idea of 'mixing'. The neighbourhood was embodied with this meaning; it became a 'mixed place'. This meant that a few unfriendly white people did not challenge the reduced apprehension about 'racism' expressed by the young women, because it was a 'mixed place'. 'Racism' was generally felt to be as wrong. This imagination of place in the context of meanings about 'racism', involved the young women making a personal commitment in their own beliefs to the view that it is right to be tolerant of people from other 'races' and religions.

The young women presented some views about their neighbourhood that could be interpreted as contradictory, therefore. The young women valued the presence



of other Asian people in the neighbourhood; they were apprehensive about encountering 'racism' from white people. They also talked about the importance of 'mixing' with white people, their personal commitment to racial tolerance and viewed their place in the neighbourhood as embodying the ethic of 'mixing'.

According to Dwyer's (1999a) conceptual framework, these meanings would be evidence of the contradictory nature of community for these young women. The analysis within this chapter reveals the inadequacy of such an analysis. These apparently contradictory views both reflected a sense of apprehension about 'racism'. The young women's views were not contradictory; they are part of an understanding of place in the neighbourhood, which while complex, was coherent.

This understanding of the role of 'racism' has implications for the way 'racism' is understood sociologically. 'Racism' was an invasive, background feature of the young women's everyday lives in their neighbourhood.

'Racism' had a mundane role. 'Racism' can be understood as a social relation that serves to exclude those from minority ethnic backgrounds; 'racism' can be understood as serving to sustain white dominance in urban areas (Hesse, 1997) barring feelings of 'belonging'. This was not the case in the views of the young women, who had a sense of attachment and belonging to their local neighbourhood, despite the shadow of 'racism'. Contrary to the conclusions of Taylor et al (1996), the young women's sense of belonging to neighbourhood

was not dependant upon challenging '*Northern, non- metropolitan culture*' (1996:203). Belonging was multifaceted and complex.

This understanding of 'racism' contrasts with the findings of Back (1996), to some extent. Back (1996) found Black young people to share an understanding of locality with their white peers, based on an 'exclusion' of 'race-talk', for instance. However, 'racism' derived from sources beyond the locality still featured in the young peoples lives. This chapter has revealed how 'racism' was engrained, having an enduring role within the understanding of locality and 'the neighbourhood'. Views about the neighbourhood being 'mixed' were not about the banishment of 'race' from an understanding of the locality, but were evidence of 'racism' playing a more fundamental, underlying, enduring role.

Therefore, the research findings outlined in this chapter also reveal the need for a greater focus on place and locality in sociological attempts to understanding the experiences of young Asian women and the broader role of 'racism' in everyday life. How the young women's views about the neighbourhood differed from the interpretations of Dwyer (1999a), Webster (1996) and Back (1996), indicate that whilst there are some continuities across Asian 'communities' in Britain, the distinctive make up of localities is a significant factor in perceptions of 'race' identification and belonging. The relative size of Asian and white populations, for example, impacts on how place is understood in relation to underlying apprehension about white people being racist.

The analysis in this chapter has revealed the significance of locality to these young women. Moreover, the mundane, invasive, underlying role of 'racism' in their understanding of the neighbourhood reveals the importance of sociological investigation of views about place, within broader attempts to explain the role of 'racism' and the construction of racialised identities.



## **Chapter Five: Views About Sheffield.**

### **5.1 Introduction.**

This chapter describes and analyses the young women's views about Sheffield. It concentrates on their views about the wider city of Sheffield, beyond the neighbourhood.

Beyond the neighbourhood, the part of the city visited most frequently was the city centre. The city centre and the city more widely, were interlinked in the young women's understanding of 'Sheffield'; this chapter focuses on their views about both of these. The chapter considers how the young women understood 'Sheffield'; how the city was identified and how the young women viewed belonging in relation to it.

Feeling a sense of belonging in Sheffield could be considered problematic for these young women. According to Taylor et al's (1996) analysis, Sheffield's identity was determined by processes external to the views of residents of the city (such as the young women). For Taylor et al, the identity of the city was determined by its economic activities past and present shaping the culture of the city. The local autonomy produced by the success of the steel and cutlery industries in Sheffield produced a 'white enclave culture'. According to Taylor et al (1996:204) this accounted for the relatively low level of ethnic minority migration to Sheffield, when compared with cities like Manchester.

The identity of Sheffield and the city's 'enclave culture' makes belonging problematic for minority ethnic groups according to Taylor et al (1996). Sheffield's identity, which exists external to the perceptions of residents from ethnic minority backgrounds, is one based on a '*Northern, non-metropolitan industrial culture*' (1996:203). To achieve a sense of belonging in the city, according to Taylor et al, residents from ethnic minorities need to challenge this culture, and therefore, the (external) identity of the city. This seems an unwieldy task.

Taylor et al (1996) commented on how Asian women viewed the city. Their understanding of how the 'Asian community' impacted upon women in an unquestionably constraining way, coupled with their view of Sheffield's identity, meant that Taylor et al interpreted the city as something of little interest to Asian women (1996: 150). They stated that their lives were confined within their 'ethnic neighbourhoods'. Culturally specific consumer interests made city centre shopping of little interest.

Taylor et al's (1996) interpretation is inadequate. Taylor's understanding of how the city was understood (determined by economic activities) is one-dimensional. This is too simplistic. In the context of minority ethnic views of the city, the complex dynamics of residents' own interpretations of Sheffield were overlooked.

How Taylor et al considered minority ethnic experiences of the city is also problematic. As was seen in Taylor et al's comments about Asian women, due to

their ethnic difference, their views and experiences were viewed as inherently and wholly distinctive from white views of the city. This is too simplistic an interpretation of the role of ethnicity and 'race' in mediating understandings of the city.

Further, Asian women were viewed as being constrained by the 'Asian community'. Asian women were treated as a homogenous group; young women may have, however, differential views and experiences. The 'Asian community' was viewed as a monolith that constrains women in a straightforward way. The description and analysis of the young women's views in this chapter aims to go beyond this, in order to document the processes through which they understood 'Sheffield'.

The description and analysis of the young women's views in this chapter, indicates a more complex, multi-dimensional understanding of Sheffield, which was not determined by the economic activities of Sheffield, either past or present, as Taylor et al (1996) proposed. The young women were interested in the city centre. Further, the analysis presented in this chapter reveals that although ethnicity and meanings about 'race' were at the core of the young women's understanding of 'Sheffield', they played a more underlying, background role. Hence, the young women views about place were not wholly distinctive because of racial difference; they drew on more general meanings about place too.

As a result of the determinism of Taylor et al's interpretation, this more dynamic role of 'racism' in the background of the views of those from minority ethnic



groups (like the young women) was overlooked. This chapter indicates that meanings about 'racism' playing a central, but underlying, role in the young women's understanding of the city.

Indeed, apprehension about experiencing 'racism' was a feature of all places for the young women, play a central role in their views about the neighbourhood too. For the young women, a sense of belonging in the city was founded not on challenging the white enclave culture but in understanding the city in relation to underlying apprehensions about 'racism'. A sense that the city was a place 'safe' from racism was integral to feelings of belonging there; racial difference did not make their views inherently distinctive, however.

## **5.2 An Pakistani Presence in the City.**

Analysis of the young women's views reveals an understanding that the best way to comprehend place, in relation to underlying apprehension about 'racism', was in relation to the presence of a significant local Asian- Pakistani population. This offers a sense of protection from 'racism'. This view was partly based on a perception that 'racism' is more likely to happen when Asian people were in the minority in place:

“That's when people might start calling names and stuff, when there's not many Asians around, in places like that, I think you stand out more.” (Ashley)

The presence of a number of Asian people in the vicinity was viewed as a deterrent against 'racism'; rescue is always at hand should an incident should occur.

This reflected a view that being in a place with people 'like' yourself, is the best way to feel a sense of belonging there, against the backdrop of 'racism'. This understanding is seen in the following extract, where meanings about 'racism' played a background role.

- Ayesha: Like the shops here that they have there too, like here white people work in them, but there [Birmingham] Asian people work in them, which is, I think, very good, and makes you feel at home.
- CW: Yeah, so would you like to go and live in Birmingham, or would you like Sheffield to be more like that, or?
- Ayesha: Really, I like Sheffield, but I would like Sheffield to be like that, cos it makes you feel at home.
- CW: Why does it make you feel at home?
- Ayesha: Just cos it is nice you know, to see you own kind of people around where you go...

'Belonging' in a city with a significant Pakistani population was also viewed as sustaining a sense of belonging with Pakistan. Cities with large Pakistani populations were viewed as being like Pakistan, as is seen in descriptions of such cities:

"[Discussing the idea of living somewhere other than Sheffield] It would be like, if it was Manchester or Birmingham, more culture and everything. It would be like a miniature Pakistan and everything!" (Zobia)

Being in a place like Pakistan, sustained an affinity with the country and with Pakistani people.

Sheffield, however, was understood as a city that could not be identified in this way. Sheffield was viewed as having a smaller Pakistani population (especially when compared with other cities in Britain).

Recent data from the 2001 Census confirms the young women's understanding of Sheffield. According to the 2001 Census, Sheffield had an Asian-Pakistani population of just over 3%. In comparison, Bradford had an Asian-Pakistani population of 14.53% of the total population. The young women's perspectives on 'Sheffield' took this understanding into account.

This meant that Sheffield could not be understood as a 'Pakistani place'. The sense of protection from 'racism' that derived from being with other Pakistani people could not be articulated. This view provides a background against which the identification of Sheffield can be comprehended.

### **5.3 'Mixing': Imagining Belonging in the City.**

In response to the perception that Sheffield could not be understood on the basis of a significant Pakistani population, the young women presented an understanding of it in relation to 'racism'. There was continuity with understandings of the neighbourhood, as the city was described as 'mixed'.

In the context of the neighbourhood, 'mixing' had meaning in the context of everyday encounters with white people. White people were not viewed homogeneously- they had the potential not to be racist, but knowledge about their



non-racist views had to be learned. 'Mixing' was a way of getting to know white people, in order develop an understanding of whether they were likely to be racist or not.

'Mixing' was also associated with the identity of place in the neighbourhood. Dependent upon the participation of white people, as a strategy 'mixing' had its limitations. Understanding the neighbourhood as embodying meanings about 'mixing' meant that the young women felt confident that the locality was generally a 'racism' free place, despite the fact that some white people didn't want to 'mix'. Underlying apprehension about 'racism' was addressed; this meant that a sense of belonging was felt in the neighbourhood according to this understanding.

In the context of both the neighbourhood and the city, 'mixing' was concerned with understanding encounters with white people. Many young women talked about Asian people being equal with both white and black people in Sheffield. However, analysis of some of the boundaries of the young women's views about 'mixing' reveals it to be a meaning concerned with apprehension about 'racism' and relationships with white people. For example, Farzana talked about 'Sheffield people' (by which she meant white people) being 'really good', i.e. not racist. Whilst she described Sheffield as a 'good community', Somalian people were excluded from this understanding- ideas about 'mixing' did not extend to them:

“You know the Sheffield people are really good, it’s a good community, I like them, so you know... but like I told you the Somalians they are bad, they are fighting and being bad.” (Farzana)

There was continuity between the meanings associated with ‘mixing’ in the neighbourhood and the city. Yet this ended with the association of ‘mixing’ with relationships with white people, however. These meanings did not extend to relations with Somalian people, for instance.

Meanings about ‘mixing’ were integral to the young women’s understanding of ‘Sheffield’, but were applied in ways different to how they were in the neighbourhood. In the neighbourhood, ‘mixing’ was about gaining knowledge of white people (and whether they were likely to be racist). People encountered outside the neighbourhood in busy shopping areas are likely to be strangers.

It has been argued that one of the key features of urban life in cities is the contact it brings with strangers (Lofland, 1973). ‘The rise of the stranger society’ (Norris and Armstrong, 1999:20) has been associated with a sense of apprehension and fear in urban spaces. Nock’s (1993: 2) account of the way strangers are viewed, sums up how the young women felt about strange white people in relation to the potential they held for ‘racism’:

*“When someone has no reputation, that person is a stranger. We don’t trust strangers as much as people whose reputations are known. Strangers are suspect and must demonstrate that they can be trusted...they must earn each others trust”* (Nock, 1993: 2, quoted in Norris and Armstrong, 1999:22)

Meanings about ‘mixing’ meant that a sense of ‘trust’ was established in the neighbourhood, addressing unease about ‘racism’. However, beyond the

neighbourhood, knowledge of whether individual white people were likely to be racist was acknowledged as impossible to achieve. This sense of 'trust' that 'racism' was unlikely to happen in the city, was understood in another way.

The young women's understanding of 'Sheffield' drew on a process of embodying the city with meanings connected with the idea of racial 'mixing'. This reflected, in part, both experiences in the neighbourhood and the processes by which the identity of the neighbourhood was imagined. 'Sheffield' was understood as a 'mixed city', that embodied the ethic of racial tolerance. It was a 'mixed place':

"Well, I always think about Sheffield as a very mixed place, there's black people, Chinese people, white people, Asian people, its mixed. It's mixed race, you know." (Ashley)

With this understanding of Sheffield, potential apprehensiveness about encountering white people in the city (in the context of Sheffield having a relatively small Pakistani population) was calmed. Embodying Sheffield with meanings about 'mixing' meant that white people were pre-emptively imagined as behaving in non-racist ways. This is suggested in the following quote, where an understanding of Sheffield as 'mixed' was equated with an understanding that most people treat each other equally (i.e. in a non-racist way) despite racial differences:

"...It's a really mixed city...white and Asian and black, it's the type of place where everyone's equals with each other, they think that and that is how most of 'em behave." (Sadga)



Three other meanings were drawn on in the young women's descriptions of 'Sheffield'; these reflected the breadth of their understanding of Sheffield as a place where the chances of experiencing 'racism' are diminished, and processes through which this understanding was articulated. These meanings were related to, and reinforced, the view of Sheffield as 'mixed'.

Firstly, the young women referred to how people in Sheffield 'respect' one another. This supported the view that Sheffield was a 'mixed city'; not only did people from different 'races' live alongside one another they had a sense of regard for the differences between them (such as different religious beliefs):

- Ashley: For me its just mixed and thingy, it's, it's, I think that is something really nice about it. All different people around you, mixing together, but respecting things...
- CW: What kind of things?
- Ashley: Different religion, things like that.

Secondly, the young women described Sheffield as a place that enveloped a number of cultures within it. This description communicated an understanding that while Sheffield had a small Pakistani population, this was not a problem because there are a number of 'cultures' in Sheffield. These were understood to exist alongside one another unproblematically:

- CW: How would you describe Sheffield to someone?
- Sam: I would say it's a place that's got all different cultures and different things in it and different things to do there.

A final meaning concerned the view that Sheffield was a 'community'. 'Community' is a term often associated with Asian groups, with frequent

references to the 'Muslim community', or to community relations. 'Community' is a loaded term, which has many connotations. The young women viewed Sheffield as a community, a community they were part of. This did not mean that they had social relationships or connections with the entire population of Sheffield, in the way in which 'community' has often been understood sociologically. Neither did it mean that the idea of an Asian or Muslim community was irrelevant to them.

In the context of understanding Sheffield as a 'mixed city', the notion of 'community' was used to imagine all white and Asian people in the city sharing an understanding of Sheffield as a city. 'Racism' is not a feature of everyday life. According to this understanding, everyone in the city (i.e. white and Asian people) shared an understanding of it as a 'mixed' city, where racial tolerance is the norm. This was considered as something distinctive to Sheffield, and was integral to the city's identity:

"People mix, there's not much racism like in other cities...It's just a brilliant community, you know! A brilliant, fantastic place!" (Shaila)

Unlike the neighbourhood, knowledge of the racist potential of white people was unattainable in the context of the wider city. Meanings like 'community' were used to imagine how all white people in Sheffield are likely to behave in a non-racist way. This connects with the earlier quotation from my interview with Sadga, who commented that:

“...It’s a really mixed city...white and Asian and black, it’s the type of place where everyone’s equals with each other, they think that *and that is how most of ‘em behave.*” (Sadga)

Applying the idea of ‘community’ to Sheffield was a way of imagining ‘how most of ‘em behave’; ‘community’ meant that people in Sheffield were imagined as sharing similar values and beliefs, primarily those concerning racial equality and tolerance.

These meanings associated with the understanding that Sheffield is a ‘mixed city’ were integral to addressing underlying apprehension about ‘racism’. Despite Sheffield’s small Pakistani population, a sense of belonging in the city was imagined.

#### **5.4 Places With Larger Pakistani populations Are Racist: A Contradictory View?**

The young women presented a view, already discussed in this chapter, that the ‘best’ way to curb apprehension about ‘racism’ and feel a sense of belonging in place, is when it is understood on the basis of its Pakistani population. Their understanding of Sheffield as a racially ‘mixed’ city was constructed in relation to a view that it has a relatively small Pakistani population.

Yet the young women also described another view about places with Pakistani populations, which could be seen to contradict this understanding. They described places with larger Pakistani population as places that have a greater



problem with 'racism', especially when compared with Sheffield. Some were described as 'racist places'.

This view arose from a perception that in places with denser Pakistani populations, there is greater segregation between people of different 'races'. The young women described such as places as having too many Pakistani people. This was said to contribute to these being 'racist places':

"In Bradford or Keighley it's all Pakistanis, everywhere you go. I didn't like it."  
(Shabnam)

"[Sheffield] I love it. That's what I would say. That is my type of place. To put it straight, I would not want to live anywhere outside of Sheffield...I don't like other places, I don't know why. Birmingham is a bit, I'm not being racist, but it is a bit, loaded, over loaded with Pakis. That is what I call myself, I'm a Paki and I'm proud! (laughs)" (Azra)

These views could be considered contradictory. This would be of significance if Dwyer's (1999a) conceptual framework was applied to the young women's views. According to Dwyer's framework these views could be considered as evidence of the contradictory impact of the Asian or Muslim 'community' for these young women.

However, if the underlying role of apprehension about 'racism' is acknowledged, then these views can be considered as part of a coherent understanding of place. Dwyer's (1999a) interpretation was based on an analytical focus on discourses. This produced only snapshot views about place; Dwyer viewed these as distinctive discourses. However, these need to be considered as elements of a more processual understanding of place. I will now unravel these processes.

Identifying place on the basis of its Pakistani population addresses other aspects of identity and belonging, but at the core of this view is the understanding that ‘racism’ is less likely to happen in such places. Sheffield was understood on the basis of its relatively small Pakistani population. The view that the city was ‘mixed’ reflected this.

The view that Sheffield was ‘mixed’ was based on a personal commitment to the idea of racial tolerance. Ameliorating unease about racism was predicated on the view that white people generally adhere to the view that racism is wrong. This meant that the young women had to believe this too:

CW: Do you think that Sheffield is like that, a place for white people?  
Azra: Well I think that Sheffield has changed a lot. It’s not like that and it’s a mixed place. It’s not just all white. Imagine places like Birmingham where it’s all blacks and Asian, and then come up here and its all white. It shouldn’t be like that, people should try to mix, and people down there should try to mix, like we do up here.

Meanings associated with identifying Sheffield were also applied in their views about other places. It is according to this understanding of place (mediated by underlying meanings about ‘racism’) that places with large Pakistani population were understood as ‘racist’. Places like Bradford were understood as being racially segregated, and lacking in racial ‘mixing’ and tolerance:

“In Birmingham, there is a lot of Asians, a lot of Asians there, separate... I think it is more racist. I like our area where it is mixed, black, white, Asian. It is better.” (Zareena)

The young women's views, therefore, were not characterised by contradictions, rather they described an understanding of place that was coherent to them. This coherent understanding was shaped in relation to underlying, but pervasive, meanings about 'racism'.

### **5.5 Views about the City Centre.**

Discussion so far, in this chapter, has largely considered the young women's overall perceptions of 'Sheffield'. My focus now turns to the young women's views about place in the city centre- an important space that they understood as integral to 'Sheffield' in a wider sense. Description and analysis will explore the young women's understanding of 'Sheffield' in further detail, through exploring perceptions of routine experiences in the city centre.

The young women's views about the city centre were not linear i.e. they viewed different spaces in the city centre in different ways. Their views about distinctive spaces in the city centre were shaped in relation to an underlying sense of apprehension about 'racism'.

The young women valued their knowledge about space/place in the city centre. Whilst they understood Sheffield as a place where most people can be trusted not to be racist, 'racism' was still a worry. Some places in the city centre were associated with a higher risk of 'racism'. Knowledge about places to go and places to avoid was valued in this context.



The importance of this knowledge and understanding of place, was highlighted by one of the young women's experiences of the city centre. Farzana had first hand experience of 'racism' when shopping in town. Farzana (who had only moved to Sheffield from Pakistan two years prior to the time of the interviews) implied that her lack of knowledge about in the city centre, left her more vulnerable to experiencing racist incidents:

Farzana: But some English people I think they are not liking Muslim people.

CW: Yeah? You can tell me what you really think...

Farzana: (laughs) It's not everyone, I really think that it is not all English people, but some. Like last Saturday, in town, one English girl, she comes to me in the shop and says, 'Oh you're a Pakistani, what you doing in here!' That is not good, I don't like that! Then at school my friend said to me, 'you know, don't go in there, stick to the okay places.'

The rest of the chapter will, therefore, focus on the young women's views about place in the city centre, exploring this 'knowledge', so valued in the context of underlying apprehension about 'racism'. Description and analysis will concentrate on two spaces in the city centre that were understood in differing ways in relation to meanings about 'racism'. One of these spaces was associated with a higher level of apprehension about 'racism'. Description and analysis of views about these spaces will shed light on their perspectives about the wider city of Sheffield and the role of racism.

### **5.6 Spaces Where Apprehension About 'Racism' Was Intensified: High Street And The Markets.**

The High Street area of Sheffield city centre and the nearby indoor markets were understood by the young women as undesirable places to be. Some said they

completely avoided the area; others went there yet preferred other parts of the town. Underlying their views about this part of the city centre, was a sense of encountering greater apprehension about 'racism' when there:

"I like to go round all of it [town], but I don't like going right up, to where those two markets are, I think that bit is not good." (Saika)

This understanding was founded on three distinct, but interconnected views. Firstly, at the fore of the young women's views were stories about racist incidents believed to have occurred in this location:

"And near there in town, some girls did get beaten up, by racists, round that High Street there, near the NatWest Bank...I don't know, I think so. I don't go out at night times, I just stay at home!" (Robina)

Secondly, accounts of racist incidents occurring anywhere were associated with this specific place. Shabnam, for example, talked about a notorious incident in Leeds, where an Asian student was attacked. This incident received much media coverage due to the alleged involvement of Leeds United players (Guardian, 2001). Shabnam viewed this incident as evidence of the occurrence of 'racism', and as justification for avoiding a part of the city centre felt to be generally unpleasant:

"We go to the Moor, cos it is better than other parts of town, cos like, you know, near High Street, and near down there, you know, indoor markets, there quite a few people are getting beaten up, you see it on the news, people getting beaten up in racist attacks. Like, this man in Leeds, Pakistani, he got beaten up by some racists at night." (Shabnam)

The young women's understanding of the High Street and Markets areas can be interpreted as correlating with Taylor et al's conclusion that for Asian residents use of the city centre "*...is much more cautious and sparing than for many other identifiable groups...*" (Taylor et al., 1996:150). As such, their views could be considered as distinctive, shaped by their ethnicity/difference.

However, the young women also described this part of town in ways that drew on more general perceptions, which are less obviously dependant upon a particular standpoint in relation to ethnicity.

High Street and the Markets area have been recognised as being in decline in recent years (Taylor et al, 1996). Many shops in this area have closed, to be replaced by discount stores (if by anything). It is generally considered a down market part of the city, that is an undesirable place to be.

Taylor et al (1996) charted some of these general perceptions of this part of town being 'dangerous'. Between High Street and the Markets used to be the 'Hole in the Road' subway. The 'Hole in the Road' (which closed in the early 1990s) and Markets, were described by Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996:128-9,235) as significant 'landscapes of fear' in the city, particularly for women.

The young women also articulated more general views about the High Street and Markets area to explain their dislike of it. Samina, for example, referred to the unpleasant smell in the indoor fish and meat market in a jovial way. Most people would think the smell is unpleasant:



“I like to go round all of it, but I don’t like going right up, to where those two markets are, and especially where they go inside and they sell fish and that, it really smells in there, it really smells, so I just send my mum in there! (laughs)” (Samina)

This general view added to a sense that this part of town is an unpleasant place to be. General views about this part of the city centre were, therefore, also shaped in relation to specific concerns around an underlying apprehension about ‘racism’. This was seen in how perceptions of crime in the High Street area were associated with a sense of apprehension about ‘racism’. The view that this part of town was one to be entered with caution because of crime was not one determined by ethnicity or ‘race’; Shabnam associated a general sense of apprehension about this place with her specific, underlying apprehension about ‘racism’:

“Well what I don’t like and makes me scared is there that there’s always people thieving and that, being racist...Like, the other week, when we were there, me and my mum, and my sister, and my cousin and my little sister, we’re were in the market, and this bloke was there and he says to this other bloke ‘here take this and go before the coppers get here’! And then they started legging it up the side, and me and my sister looked at each other and we got quite worried.” (Shabnam)

Meanings about ‘racism’ underlay all of these views, acting in the background of both specific and more general views about place; the shadow of ‘racism’ was pervasive in this sense.

### **5.7 Spaces Characterised By Lower Levels of Apprehension: The Moor, Peace Gardens and Fargate.**

The stretch of the city centre leading from The Moor to Fargate is home to the main shopping area in Sheffield. In the middle of this stretch is a public open space known as the Peace Gardens. The Peace Gardens have undergone a major programme of redevelopment, under the 'Heart of the City' regeneration programme, re-opening the year prior to the time of the interviews. The Moor, Peace Gardens and Fargate were the spaces in the city centre most frequented by the young women. They considered these parts of the city centre as ones they could enter without being apprehensive about 'racism'.

As 'racism' had an underlying role mediating the young women's views, the sense of safety associated with these spaces was not articulated in a manifest way. Descriptions of these spaces did, however, present general comments about them being 'nicer' or 'better parts of town'. Meanings about 'racism' underlay these views:

"I like going to Fargate now, cos of the Peace Gardens, and there a few different shops round there and it's a more better area round there." (Zobia)

As 'racism' was less manifest, descriptions were more general in their style. This meant that the descriptions could be interpreted as sharing much in common with the 'general Sheffielder's' view of these spaces; they are not distinctive just because of ethnic or racial differences. This can be seen in how the young women zoomed in on how they used The Moor in their descriptions:

“I always make sure I start off at the bottom, at the Moor, and then go right up, going in different shops and stuff.” (Nabeela)

In addition to very general descriptions of their routine use of these city centre spaces, the young women presented opinions about the state of the city centre:

“If you want to go to a shop that is in town, you have to go all the way to Fargate, if you want to go to one shop and then back to Moor if you want to go to another.” (Sam)

Comments about the decline of the city centre and the resulting impractical arrangement of shops, could be presented by anyone of any ethnicity- the young women’s views were not shaped by their ‘difference’ alone:

“...Before we had Poundstretchers and loads of other good shops and now we are just having a couple of pound shops.” (Sadjja)

This contrasts with Taylor et al’s (1996) account of how minority ethnic groups viewed Sheffield. Those from minority ethnic groups, particularly Asian women, were considered to have interests and concerns that contrasted with the cultural landscapes of the white majority. These young women did not have views that contrasted entirely with those that could be associated with white ‘Sheffielders’; these views partly reflect the physical reality of Sheffield city centre. This shows the value of not adopting an overly deterministic understanding of the role of ethnic difference and ‘race’ in mediating views about place.

This understanding of the young women’s views does not mean that ‘race’ was irrelevant to their views. As can be seen in the following quote, ‘race’ was sometimes at the fore of the young women’s views, used as a basis for their



perceptions of place in the city centre. Meanings about 'race' had a more complex role than the one proposed by Taylor et al (1996):

"I go there quite regularly, and you know I am quite proud of the English shops there, cos they know how to keep them clean you know. I mean, you know, they respect it. It's not that Asian shops are dirty, but it is nice to go in the shops in town that are so clean." (Shaila)

The young women's views were complex. Often views were quite general, often 'race' was at the fore of descriptions of place; in both contexts meanings about 'racism' always played a less manifest, underlying role. General views and those more specifically and manifestly shaped by meanings about 'race' and underlying apprehension about 'racism' were interwoven.

As discussed previously in this chapter, in many instances the young women's complex views about the city could be interpreted as contradictory. However, the interweaving of specific views about 'racism' and those less defined by the young women's standpoint in relation to 'race' and ethnicity was seamless, the young women had a coherent, if complex, understanding of the city.

This can be comprehended if the young women's views about the Peace Gardens are analysed in further detail. In some instances the young women made comments about the Peace Gardens that were very general in nature. They felt that the Peace Gardens was a pleasant place. Most reflected on this in a way not obviously nor wholly determined by their ethnicity or 'race':

"Those Peace Gardens are really good, cos, me and my friends are always playing in there. We go to town and we just there looking at the waters and it is

really nice. It is really nice... And, my friend ran through that fountain! (laughs)  
(Samina)

The young women emphasised how the Peace Gardens were a place where people meet one and other, where they interact. They associated this with a sense of enthusiasm about the idea of the redevelopment of the city centre (of which the Peace Gardens are an example). This could be interpreted as a very general view too:

“I think they have improved it there, but I thinking bringing more, like, the made the Peace Gardens and that is such a big improvement, but making ever more, that will be even more fantastic! I mean you know, there is such a rush to there every Saturday, cos people love going there, going to town, to the Peace Gardens, around High Street and stuff, a lot of people be there, cos they just love it, in the week it is not that busy, but on Saturday there is just such a rush there, that you just can't believe it.” (Shaila)

However, this view can also be interpreted as being related to a more specific, but underlying concern with a sense of apprehension about ‘racism’. The young women’s appreciation of a space that encourages people to interact with one and other also reflected their understanding of place, according to meanings about ‘mixing’.

The young women understood Sheffield (in broad terms) as a ‘mixed city’. This understanding addressed underlying apprehensions about ‘racism’, in the context of Sheffield having a relatively small Pakistani population. ‘Mixing’ had meaning in the context imagining the city to be a place where most white people are unlikely to be racist, where the city embodies the notion of racial tolerance.

As can be seen in the following extract from my interview with Sophia, this broader understanding of Sheffield also informed how spaces in the city centre were understood. Sophia suggested that ‘some people don’t go to town’ (she seems to refer to Asian people here) but that the existence of the Peace Gardens as a space where ‘mixing’ can be witnessed, was encouraging them to do so. As a space popular with people of all ‘races’, the Peace Gardens was understood as a place that reflected the broader identity of Sheffield as a ‘mixed city’:

- Sophia: That Peace Gardens, where the town hall is, and that is such a nice place. Cos like, in the holidays, like six weeks holidays, loads of people they are not going into town, but that it is nice to go there, with the water and everything, everyone going there now, so I think that is good.
- CW: Yeah, have you been there, do you go there in the holidays?
- Sophia: Me and my friends we go, Pakistani and English friends, we go spend lot of time there during the holidays, in sunny weather.

This understanding of the Peace Gardens explains why interviewees like Sophia and Shaila were enthusiastic about the idea of the regeneration and development of the city centre. These views were a mix of specific views related to underlying apprehension about ‘racism’ and those that were more general. For example, some of the young women were concerned about Sheffield’s general prospects or conversely, wanted the local authority to focus on more pressing local concerns about the city:

“...Some parts of Sheffield are like really good, and posh and like other parts are not that good. And when they do, like, spend money on big things like the Peace Gardens, they should try like, spending money on other things, like cleaning up the streets” (Zobia)



The young women's understanding of the city centre, therefore, was complex and dynamic. Taylor et al's (1996) conclusion that Asian women are not interested in the city centre clearly does not apply to these young women.

While many views about the city centre were general in nature (ie not deterministically shaped by racial difference), they were interwoven in complex ways by more specific understandings connected to meanings about 'racism'. Meanings about 'racism' underlay views about all the different spaces in the city, including both those considered 'safe' and those encountered with a greater degree of apprehension.

## **5.8 Conclusion.**

This chapter has described and analysed the young women's views about Sheffield. It has explored both their understanding of 'Sheffield' and how they understood the city centre. The chapter has considered how the city was identified and how the young women viewed belonging in it.

How the young women understood 'Sheffield' differed, but was not completely divorced from their understanding of their neighbourhood. Meanings about 'racism' played an underling role in how both the neighbourhood and Sheffield more generally were viewed. There were parallels and continuities with regard to how these spaces were viewed in relation to 'racism'.

Both the neighbourhood and Sheffield were understood as racially 'mixed' places. This addressed underlying apprehension about 'racism' through an understanding of these places as ones where 'racism' is unlikely or disapproved. The identification of these places was understood in different ways.

In the neighbourhood, 'mixing' partly referred to gaining knowledge of the white people in the vicinity, to learn whether they were likely to be racist or not. 'Sheffield' could not be understood in this fashion, as it is impossible to know every white person encountered beyond the neighbourhood. Rather, the young women applied the principles of 'mixing' to their understanding of 'Sheffield', which was imagined as a city that embodied the inclusion of different 'races' and 'cultures', where the majority of white people are anticipated to behave in non-racist ways.

With this understanding of Sheffield, the young women's apprehension of 'racism' was (to some extent) addressed. This facilitated a sense of belonging and affinity with Sheffield. As the young women's understanding of place in the city as 'mixed' required them to make a personal commitment to the view that racial tolerance is the correct attitude to have, there was a perceived alignment between how they viewed themselves and how they viewed 'Sheffield'.

This account contrasts with Taylor et al's analysis of Sheffield. For these young women, feeling a sense of belonging to Sheffield was not predicated on challenging 'northern, non-metropolitan industrial culture', as Taylor et al suggested is the case for minority ethnic groups (1996:203). This presumes that

those from minority ethnic groups are excluded by an externally imposed understanding of Sheffield.

Though their view of Sheffield, particularly the city centre, had much in common with general views (i.e. they were not determined by racial difference) they were mediated by underlying meanings of 'racism'. The young women constructed their own understanding of Sheffield; this drew on generally held views about the city, but responded to their own needs and concerns faced during everyday life in the city. This reveals the limits of Taylor et al's (1996) interpretation.

Belonging was multifaceted for these young women. They not only had feelings of belonging to Sheffield, but Pakistan too. Feelings of belonging to Pakistan had different qualities to those associated with Sheffield; the young women had a sense of affinity with Pakistan and Pakistani people, rather than a desire to be in Pakistan. The young women's understanding of Sheffield as a 'mixed' city, rather than as a city having a significant Pakistani population, had implications for how feelings of belonging in relation to Pakistan were sustained.

Feelings of belonging to Pakistan were not inherent because of family connections, these feelings had to be developed and sustained. Living in a place with a significant Pakistani population, and understanding that place as a 'Pakistani place in Britain', was one way of sustaining that sense of belonging. This was not open to the young women in Sheffield, who consequently understood their city in a differing way. This did not mean that belonging with



Pakistan was abandoned; feelings of belonging were sustained in other ways.

These are discussed in the following three chapters.

## Chapter Six: Views About Pakistan.

### **6.1 Introduction.**

This chapter considers the young women's views about Pakistan. Most of the young women were second or third generation descendants of migrants from Pakistan to Britain. Patterns of migration were complex, however. Some of the young women had only come to live in Sheffield in recent years<sup>1</sup>. Most of the young women had visited Pakistan for holidays or extended visits<sup>2</sup>.

The young women's connections to Pakistan raise questions about how they understood identity and belonging in Britain. The focus of sociological debate has been on 'belonging' in terms of the sustenance of an ethnic identity (see for example, Ballard, 1977; Drury, 1991; Knott and Khoker, 1993) or assimilation into British culture (Watson, 1977; Ghuman, 1999).

Within this literature, young women are generally understood as being confined by their religion and culture (Basit, 1997a: 4). They are often depicted as trapped in a void between British and Pakistani cultures. Belonging has been understood as problematic. Such accounts are inadequate.

With the focus of sociological inquiry on cultural assimilation, the role of place has been overlooked. Social experiences are not just experiences of culture

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the young women's parents had been born or spent considerable periods of time in Sheffield and then moved to Pakistan, and then again to Sheffield.

<sup>2</sup> Only one of the young women had not done so, but she was planning a first visit the following year.

(defined at the national level); everyday life is located in place. Moreover, feelings of belonging are associated with place (Lovell, 1998; Wallman, 1998). The young women understood Pakistan as a place, not just a culture. A broader definition of belonging is therefore needed. As views about place have been overlooked, the focus of sociological inquiry has been on experiences in Britain. Research has pointed to the significance of Pakistan in cultural terms and Anwar (1979) has explored the 'myth of return'. Yet views about the significance of Pakistan and their significance in terms of belonging, have not been explored in any great depth.

This distinctive focus on views about place is at the heart of the interpretative framework of this chapter. In interviews, the young women's views about their connections to Pakistan and mundane views about place in Pakistan were explored. This chapter describes and analyses these views, revealing how they reflected understandings of identity and belonging, both to Pakistan and Sheffield.

## **6.2 Belonging and Pakistan.**

Commonalities and themes can be identified within the young women's views, but they were not a homogenous group. Some had stronger feelings of belonging to Pakistan than their peers in the sample. During their childhood, a small number of young women, Robina for example, had spent lengthy periods in Pakistan and had a stronger sense of belonging to Pakistan:



CW: Where do you feel you belong more, would you rather be in Sheffield or Pakistan?  
Robina: Pakistan!  
CW: Why?  
Robina: That is the place I know, that I know best...

Most of the young women expressed feelings of belonging to both Pakistan and Sheffield, however. These feelings coexisted, occurring simultaneously in the minds of the young women:

“...I’m not saying that I don’t like Pakistan, but this is where I like to be.”  
(Ashley)

“That [Pakistan] is a place where I, in some way, belong, but mostly in Sheffield.” (Sophia)

The young women perceived themselves as having ties, real and imagined, with Sheffield and Pakistan. Shazia, for example, felt a ‘pull’ to go and visit Pakistan from time to time:

Shazia: I, I feel like that [like it is my home] about here, cos. I think it’s good here and I’ll be alright here. I do feel about Pakistan, and I like going there. When I feel like that then I go.  
CW: It is important to you, going to Pakistan, when?  
Shazia: Yeah, when I feel like that, I go. Sheffield is my home, but I am a Pakistani.

Shazia’s views are typical of how the young women identified a sense of belonging to Sheffield and simultaneously highlighted the significance of Pakistan. Identification as a ‘Pakistani in Sheffield’ was a significant feature of Shazia’s understanding of herself. A sense of connectedness to, and affinity with,

Pakistan was essential to this identification. This was not a static identity-affinity had to be sustained. Visiting Pakistan was one way of achieving this.

The concept of belonging utilised in this chapter, therefore, rests on a distinction between feelings of *belonging in* and a *sense of affinity with* a place. This provides a framework where the young women's longer-term affinity with (rather than in) Pakistan, and their simultaneous feelings of belonging to Sheffield, can be comprehended without reducing their views to their location in a void between two cultures.

The experience and perceptions of place were central to the young women's understandings of belonging. The young women's views about place and the ties that connected them to Pakistan, sustained their multifaceted understanding of a sense of belonging with Pakistan and to Sheffield too. Description and analysis of these views will now become the focus of this chapter.

### **6.3 'It's My Parents Home'**

The young women described how they felt connected to Pakistan through their parents. Most of their parents had been born in Pakistan and were described as understanding Pakistan as their 'home':

“[My parents] they like it there, its where they grew up.” (Aliesha)

The young women situated their parents' understandings of Pakistan 'as home' as symbolic of their own feelings of belonging to Pakistan. Their parents' feelings of belonging functioned to summarise the young women's own views about Pakistan. As their parents understood Pakistan 'as home', the young women felt they were 'tied' to Pakistan too:

"I think, you know, I know more about Sheffield than Pakistan. But, you know, Pakistan would be like, not my home, but I would visit there, visit my relatives there, sometimes. That's my dad and mum's home, right, so I go and visit there, right." (Sam)

Simultaneously, this view also summarised how the young women's personal understanding of belonging was distinctive from their parents. Whilst Pakistan was 'home' for parents, the young women were distanced from this strength of feeling. Pakistan was a connection that existed primarily through parents. This represented how the young women felt connected to Pakistan, but it wasn't 'home'.

Because parents viewed Pakistan 'as home', they remained in contact with family there. The young women suggested that parents take main responsibility for this contact. Though initiated by parents, the flux and flow of information to and from Pakistan influenced the young women's sense of affinity with Pakistan. Parental connections mediated affinity with Pakistan, but were understood as an activity for parents, one the young women may or may not continue in the future:

"Well, it is mainly my mum and dad [who keep in close contact with and visit Pakistan] and, but you know. I think I would like to try to, but well, you know, who knows!?! (laughs)" (Sophia)



It would be inaccurate to depict parents as a homogenous group who all view Pakistan as 'home'. Some of the young women's parents were described as having differing views about belonging to Pakistan. Not all parents felt Pakistan was 'home' in so pronounced or committed a way:

"My Dad hates Pakistan, he really hates it, but my mum likes it cos she was born there, and grew up there and her mum is there, and actually most of her relatives are there and all of my dad's are here, so..." (Samina)

The differences in parental views reflected how patterns of migration are gendered. Patterns of migration in which single men moved to Britain, to be followed later by their wives and families (perhaps upon marriage), have been documented (Basit, 1997). Thus, parents did not have uniform views about belonging to Sheffield or Pakistan, reflecting the different contexts in which they came to be in Sheffield:

"I know my mum would love [to visit Pakistan more], she likes it here as well, but because my grandma, she lives there...she's got a brother and sister there, I think she would love to go there. But she likes it here too, if she could go back for more visits, then come back here. My dad, he likes it there as well as here, my dad came here when he was a teenager, and he's lived most of his life here, even though he was born there." (Aliesha)

The young women were aware that their position as the second-generation descendants of migrants, could lead to the suggestion that their feelings of belonging are problematic or in conflict. To some extent 'between two cultures' discourses have entered the public domain (Ballard, 1994). To the young women, the way in which the differing views of their parents were unproblematic and accepted denoted that their own understanding of belonging was also unproblematic and accepted within their families. Indeed, it was constructed and

sustained through their parents who acted as mediators, moulding the young women's comprehension of their location in Britain and connections to Pakistan.

#### **6.4 Wider Familial Connections.**

The young women understood themselves as connected to Pakistan through their wider families. In the context of mediating feelings of belonging to Pakistan, in addition to the symbolism of their parents' understandings of Pakistan as 'home', contact with family there was also significant.

Communication with family members in Pakistan regularly occurred. This was a core connection to Pakistan. The presence of family in Pakistan was a motivation to sustain an interest in it as a place. Family connections provided motivation for keeping up with events in Pakistan, out of concern for the welfare and well being of family members:

- CW:            Would you say that you are interested in Pakistan, things that happen there, what it is like there? (pause)
- Nabeela:       Yeah, but mainly cos I've got loads of other relatives who live there.

The young women described contact with Pakistan as occurring regularly. Sophia pointed out that whilst such communication did not go on 'all the time', there was a regular exchange of phone calls and letters:

"We keep in contact, not like, it's not like all the time, but, you know, we phone and then they phone, and we write letters and stuff." (Sophia)

The young women suggested they were not interested in Pakistan because it was viewed as 'home'. Rather, their interest was prompted by the location of their relatives there: connections with family members and the motivation they provided for sustaining an interest in Pakistan played an important role. There was a flow of information from Pakistan to the young women in Sheffield. This made the young women feel connected to Pakistan, sustaining their sense of affinity with Pakistan. Whilst concern for relatives was at the fore of the young women's views, sustaining their understanding of belonging to Pakistan had a role in the background.

Thus, the conclusion that family connections mediated affinity with Pakistan is not a suggestion that this was the only motivation for contact with relatives. For example, Ayesha described how contact with relatives in Pakistan became more frequent following a death in the family:

"We have just been there, and recently my mum's brother, he died in a car crash, and my mum she was really upset, so she has been phoning a lot, like nearly every day, which is a lot, but we do keep in quite close contact." (Ayesha)

As Ayesha's comments indicate, contact was about communicating with members of their family, not just 'Pakistan'. The role of communication with family, mediating a sense of affinity with Pakistan, occurred in the background of the ordinary communication between family members.

Neither does this conclusion about the role of familial connections imply that all of the young women were enthusiastically involved in communication with



members of their family. This type of communication occurred in all of the young women's families, but was often undertaken by parents (though as Samina indicates, sometimes the young women helped with writing letters, if such help was needed). Samina felt that contact with Pakistan was something she should do, but generally didn't manage to make time for:

"I would visit Pakistan sometimes, but not as often. My mum is being now, and she has being twice and I don't really like to go there again, cos it is a bit boring! (laughs) I think I would cos I miss my gran in Pakistan, I miss her, and I don't write to them as often as I should now, and I don't suppose that would change, I don't have no time to write to them, cos I'm always out, but my mum is always on at me to write a letter, cos she cannot write, and my dad is always out at work, and my brothers and sisters are just lazy, so." (Samina)

The significant part of these communications was that family was understood as something that connected the young women to Pakistan. Information about Pakistan flowed back to the young women, even if it did so indirectly via their parents. Whilst Samina's contact with Pakistan was infrequent, and even though she found visiting her relatives to be 'boring' (as any young woman of her age might), familial connections mediated her affinity to Pakistan and her identification as a 'Pakistani in Sheffield'.

### **6.5 Views about Place: 'Pakistan is Hot'.**

All of the young women referred to the weather in their views about Pakistan, describing it as a 'hot place'. The hot weather was a distinctive feature of place

in Pakistan when compared with Sheffield, and therefore was at the fore of the young women's views about Pakistan:

“You know, there, its really hot...” (Sam)

The focus on the hot weather in descriptions was not merely a neutral reflection on the physical reality of conditions in Pakistan. The hot weather had meaning in the context of describing what Pakistan is like as a place; these views were idealised, to some extent. Thus, Sophia associated the weather with Pakistan being a ‘nice’ and ‘good’ place:

“It’s really nice, you know, it’s a really nice place, hot. It’s hot. It’s a good place.” (Sophia)

Descriptions of the hot weather had meaning, therefore, within an understanding of place. These views were part of an imagination of what Pakistan is like as a place. This had a central role in the construction of a sense of affinity with Pakistan:

“It’s a kind of friendly place, you know. Some people are just friendly and some are very friendly you know, but everyone is friendly. And it is very hot. Like, now, it is like forty Celsius there and just ten or something here. It’s really good.” (Zobia)

Therefore views about place in Pakistan, such as those about the weather, represented identification as a Pakistani in Sheffield. Knowledge about place was a way of indicating to others that they identified themselves as a ‘Pakistani in

Sheffield' and sustained this sense of identity. Knowledge of trends in the weather, what times of the year were hottest and so on, was information understood as valued by Pakistanis in Sheffield, that denoted affinity with Pakistan.

One aspect of identifying as a 'Pakistani in Sheffield' was making occasional trips to Pakistan. Visits to Pakistan were common, but were not necessarily regular events for the young women, due to the costs of travel and so on (Bisit, 1997). When trips were planned, they were typically done so well in advance; knowledge of the weather was an important part of this planning, particularly as the hot conditions can be unpleasant for those used to British weather. Knowledge about the weather, suggests an interest and affinity with Pakistan, that reflects an identification as a Sheffield-Pakistani:

“[Pakistan] it's really nice that place, but now, these days, it be's really hot, really hot. So if you go in March, it be's alright. But if you go in May or June, it be's really hot, innit. Really, really hot.” (Shazia)

Though views about the weather in Pakistan were often idealised, some of the young women had negative views about the weather. For some it was too hot, making being in Pakistan unpleasant; the weather had meaning for those who did not enjoy visits to Pakistan, and preferred being in Sheffield:

“[Pakistan] It was really hot. It was okay. The streets are a bit messy and, I thought it was okay, but sometimes, when it got really hot I just wanted to come back.” (Samina)



Therefore views about the weather in Pakistan also had meaning in the context of feelings of belonging to Sheffield. Though the young women had an affinity with Pakistan, they had a sense of belonging to Sheffield. In this context, the weather represented a reason to only go to Pakistan for visits. For those like Samina who had no desire to live in Pakistan, the hot weather indicated how Pakistan was not like Sheffield (which was familiar to them).

Thus views about place in Pakistan reflected views about place in Sheffield as the two were connected in the young women's imaginations. The hot weather was associated with those aspects of a place that suggested that Sheffield was comparably a better place to live. For example, Farzana associated the hot weather with unsanitary conditions in Pakistan:

“In Pakistan it has got very hot now, and the toilet there at the school was not very good, very dirty and could get poorly, better here...” (Farzana)

Farzana had spent much of her childhood in Pakistan, had an affinity with Pakistan and identified herself as a Pakistani. Farzana felt that her move to Sheffield was a good idea, and understood Sheffield as a good place to live on a pragmatic basis. Her sense of belonging in Sheffield and views about place there influenced her perceptions of place in Pakistan. Views about place in Pakistan reflected and sustained feelings of belonging to both Pakistan and Sheffield.

## 6.6 Idealised Views About Pakistan.

Often the young women presented negative views about place in Pakistan. Many of the young women reflected on the poverty they had witnessed in Pakistan, for instance. Such views reflected on the physical, observable, reality of place in Pakistan.

They also described place in an abstracted, idealised, romanticised way; these descriptions were removed from comments about everyday life in Pakistan. For example, descriptions often focussed on mountains and other scenery in Pakistan:

“You know there’s this mountainy place, where all snow comes and everything. And really beautiful place, it’s just like heaven you know! (laughs)” (Azra)

These idealised views about place clearly depicted Pakistan in a positive light. This reflected a desire to sustain identification their as Pakistani. These views reflected the young women’s desire to identify as Pakistanis in Sheffield. In this context, place in Pakistan was something to be proud of. According to this interpretation features like the landscape were therefore presented in an idealised way:

“Cos, you know where I live there, the house it’s like it is here [indicating] and the mountains are just there, you can see them there in the distance. It’s so beautiful, the mountains there with the snow on top and everything, just like a postcard or somert! In the day the hotness gets you, then at night the coldness comes, it’s fun you know!” (Sophia)

These idealised views about place reflected and sustained their sense of affinity with Pakistan. This was also seen in the following quote where Shazia, like Sophia (quoted above) presented a sense of pride in Pakistan. The idealisation of place was associated with a sense of connectedness to Pakistan:

“It’s a beautiful place you know. It’s good, you know, it’s a really good place. And you know, the six weeks holidays in the summer, we will just go and spend it there, with our cousin’s and our own country, it’s really good. You want to go in the future, it’s a really good place!” (Shazia)

Some of the young women also provided accounts of the migration of their parents from Pakistan. These accounts were also presented in an idealised way. In the following quote Shaila recounted the story of her father’s journey from Pakistan to Britain. This account is marked with anecdotes about his journey- a significant turning point in her family’s history. Shaila noted how her father nearly missed his opportunity to come to Britain, and recounted the obstacles that he overcame just to reach the airport:

“It actually started [migration to Britain] with a few of my closer relatives, my dad he used to be there and he used to work in Pakistan, but you don’t get a lot of pay there, you know, it’s really less to us, in pounds probably not even a thousand [a year]. And he was working there from a very young age, he went to school for a while, but you know they thought they needed money, so he just worked, and soon, my cousin found out [about migration], and he came to England. My cousin, he said then to my father, cos it was very easy then, you know, to sort of come over and so he just called him, and my father didn’t know. There wasn’t a lot of transports then, in those places, and then really till there was just a week left of my dad’s papers, that they’d sent him from England, and my dad didn’t know. My cousin sent this man to my dad’s house to tell him, and my dad he didn’t know, but eventually this man came to the house and told him that he just got about two days left, cos it used to take about three days to get to airport, you know, very low transports. And when my dad found out he rushed to the airport anyhow. There was no railways, just on these horses, with erm wooden thing behind with his stuff, and pushing it across rivers and everything! (laughs)” (Shaila)



This story was symbolic to Shaila, in the context of understanding her family history and her connections to Pakistan. Shaila's description of her father's journey from Pakistan reflected her view about belonging to Pakistan. The story reflected how she was connected to Pakistan through her parents (as discussed earlier in the chapter).

The story reflected a multifaceted understanding of belonging, where Shaila has a sense of affinity with, but not in, Pakistan, and identified as a Pakistani in Sheffield. Though Shaila's description indicated a sense of affinity with Pakistan, it also placed her father's migration to Britain as a positive step. Her father rushes to the airport, with time against him, in order not to miss his chance of a new life in Britain.

This reflected an understanding that it is desirable to belong to Sheffield as well as to Pakistan (though for differing reasons). Views about place not only mediated feelings of belonging to Pakistan, but to Sheffield too. In Shaila's account, the idealisation of place in Pakistan had a role in the interpretation of connections to both Pakistan and Sheffield. The young women did not understand Pakistan and Sheffield as competing for their affection. They simultaneously looked towards Sheffield and Pakistan in their understandings of identity and belonging.

## 6.7 Urban/ Rural Comparisons.

A significant theme of the young women's descriptions of Pakistan concerned contrasts between urban Sheffield and rural Pakistan. For example, some of the young women described Pakistan as a place that seemed unfamiliar to them, as they were used to the urban way of life in Sheffield. Samina, described her initial view of Pakistan upon her first visit there:

"I thought it was going to be something like, big houses, but when I got there it was like, these little hut things." (Samina)

This comparison was not one between a pastoral understanding of Pakistan and Sheffield- it was a comparison to rural Pakistan with its intrinsic features. At the same time, the young women often drew on widely understood vocabularies about the contrasts between urban and rural. For example, urban Sheffield was described as more 'modern' than Pakistan:

"It was really different, especially the first time. Here, its like, modern, everything was completely different." (Aliasha)

The comparisons reflected understandings of the differing ways of life in Sheffield and Pakistan. This was significant to Sam who had never been to Pakistan. For those who had not personally been to Pakistan, contrasts such as that between urban/rural facilitated an imagination of place and their connections to that place:

"Its different from England cos its, erm, ... I don't know... its more, like, here you stay in all the time an that. My uncle came here from there, and he got ill cos

you get more lazy here. He says 'I know you have jobs and that to go to, but you just come back and flop in front of the T.V'...like here, you always go supermarket. There, they make everything their selves, you know, sometimes even beds, and that, they make them their selves...you know, to put outside and sleep on. [My uncle] He said 'you have to sleep outside', and I said 'I wouldn't like to sleep outside' and he said 'its not scary, its nice and hot', you can sleep on the roof sometimes." (Sam)

These views about the contrasts between urban/ rural reflected the different facets of the young women's understandings of belonging. Zobia described the different experiences of urban Sheffield and rural Pakistan as complementary-encountering both was depicted as pleasant. This reflected her understanding that she belongs to both Sheffield and Pakistan, and, crucially, that this understanding of belonging is not problematic:

"The two are different, cos here, it's like busy cities, there it's like countryside and more relaxed there and so that would be nice too." (Zobia)

The view that Pakistan is less 'advanced' than modern, urban Sheffield reflected the young women's understanding that Sheffield is a better place to live for pragmatic reasons. The positive aspects of Sheffield were stressed. The underlying apprehension about 'racism' that was central to understandings of place in Sheffield was not referred to in this context.

Descriptions reflected feelings of belonging in relation to both places; rural Pakistan was seen as quaint or quirky, but still less 'advanced' than Sheffield; there were differing reasons to sustain feelings of belonging to both places:



“There is lots of different things here, compared to Pakistan. Cos here, we have gas cookers, and there they don’t have gas cookers. They have to make a fire of their own, and then bake.” (Nasreen)

These comparisons reflected a mediation of the young women’s feelings of affinity with Pakistan and belonging in Sheffield. Comparisons between Sheffield and Pakistan reflected the way they were connected in the young women’s imaginations; they simultaneously looked towards Sheffield and Pakistan in their understandings of belonging and of themselves.

#### **6.8 Opportunities and Amenities.**

Comparisons with Sheffield were also made in the young women’s descriptions of amenities in Pakistan. The young women referred to the absence of public services in Pakistan, such as education and health care. These views were linked to perceptions about Pakistan being a poor country:

“It is very good, but it full of, erm, you know jealousy and err short of money, erm, at the end of the day it is my country, but it’s a bit mashed up at the moment. They need quite a lot of money, it is quite a poor country.” (Ayesha)

Poverty was viewed as being at the root of the lack of amenities in Pakistan, and, therefore, had meaning in the context of the young women’s understanding of belonging. Due to its public services, Sheffield was understood as a better place to reside; belonging in Sheffield had pragmatic benefits.

This understanding did not only reflect a preference for living in Sheffield. They simultaneously reflected belonging to Sheffield and a sense of affinity with Pakistan. Ayesha commented that at 'the end of the day it is my country'; like Ayesha the young women expressed empathy or sympathy with people in Pakistan who were understood as having few choices about the poverty they endure:

"As I said Pakistan is not a rich country, there is poor people in some parts, but it's not that poor, they can make money, selling materials abroad and stuff, and I just don't know what's happened to that system... in Pakistan's factories those people are not making a lot of money compared to the value of the things they make, what they get sold for here, you know, it's not really fair for them."  
(Samina)

Despite such empathy with people in Pakistan, and concern about the poverty they experience, the young women stated a preference for living in Sheffield. The young women had affinity with Pakistan, but understood themselves as different to people in Pakistan. Belonging to Sheffield meant they had choices and opportunities, denied to those in Pakistan:

"I like it here [Sheffield], cos it offers me different things. In Pakistan...here if you are ill, they can cure you, there's doctors, but in Pakistan, if you, like, have the flu, they charge you hundreds of Rupees or something, which I think is very expensive, and here you don't have to pay. And it is not only that, you know, I've lived here for quite a long time so I am quite used to Sheffield, but I really like Pakistan as well you know." (Ayesha)

This view was reflected in perceptions of identity. Identity was intertwined with perceptions of belonging. Views about place in Pakistan were central to the young women's understandings of themselves in Sheffield. Shazia, for example,

explained how she understood herself as someone who was determined to do well in education. Shazia felt she has more opportunities than people in Pakistan as a result of her residence in Sheffield. Affinity with Pakistan (i.e. the idea that she share something with people in Pakistan but has opportunities denied to them) meant that she intended to make the most of these opportunities:

“But there it’s not much facilities, in the villages. But in the cities, its like a few boarding schools that you pay for, and like, here it is much better and I think that you should take advantage, of learnings. Cos there, when you go there, you see all these village people, and they are really good and everything, but they are really poor, and they need money for there childrens to get somewhere, to educate themselves, you know. Basically there, they are really caring about their education, and erm, so. That’s why I like to work hard at school.” (Shazia)

Though belonging and identity were multifaceted for the young women, identity was not fractured or disjointed. Commentators have suggested that young Asian understand their connections to Pakistan and Britain through multiple, flexible, identities (Rassoul, 1999; Dwyer, 1998). However, the young women had a coherent understanding of themselves; Shazia’s views indicate how feelings of belonging to two different places with a coherent identification of herself as a Pakistani in Sheffield.

The young women did not just look to Britain or Pakistan in their understandings of identity and belonging. They were not ‘trapped between two cultures’. They were not preoccupied with assimilation into British culture or the retention of an ethnic identity. They looked towards both Britain and Pakistan simultaneously in their understandings. Therefore, their views about Pakistan reflected and



sustained their multifaceted understanding of belonging and perceptions of identity.

### **6.9 Conclusion.**

Within existing sociological debates about young Asian women, belonging has been depicted as relating to either their assimilation into British culture, or the retention of their 'ethnic identities'. Young women have been understood as being 'trapped between two cultures' (Knott and Khoker, 1993). This chapter has documented the need from a broader understanding of belonging, which takes into consideration perceptions of place. Views about place in Pakistan had a central role in these young women's understandings of belonging in relation to both Pakistan and Sheffield.

Views about place in Pakistan were mediated through parental and wider familial perspectives. The flux and flow of information through family connections formed the young women's understanding of Pakistan and their feelings of belonging. Therefore views about place in Pakistan sustained feelings of belonging.

Belonging can be considered to be phenomenon expressed in relation to symbolic features of place- a mythic place, such a parent's homeland (Bammer, 1992). The young women's understandings of belonging had symbolic elements but were not about a mythical homeland. Their views show how the symbolic

can be very mundane, in that the flux and flow of everyday family communications sustained their sense of affinity with Pakistan.

Belonging was a multifaceted understanding. The young women had feelings of belonging in relation to Sheffield and to Pakistan. The young women had a sense of belonging in Sheffield- they had little desire to be permanently in Pakistan. Pakistan was an important part of their understanding of themselves; they felt connected to Pakistan through their families. Identification as a Pakistani was an important part of how they understood themselves in Sheffield. Thus, the young women had feelings of belonging in relation to Pakistan- a sense of affinity with Pakistan.

Views about place in Pakistan reflected feelings of belonging and perceptions of identity. Simultaneously, therefore, views about place also reinforced and sustained belonging and identity. Views about place, identity and belonging were intertwined and mutually reinforced each other.

Pakistan and Sheffield were connected in the young women's imaginations, through their understanding of identity. The young women were placed amongst the flux and flow of connections to Pakistan from Sheffield. Their understanding of identity in Sheffield was not constrained by connections to Pakistan. They simultaneously looked towards Pakistan and Sheffield in their understanding of themselves and their multifaceted understanding of belonging to place. These

different facets of belonging were interwoven within a coherent understanding of identity, such as identification as a Pakistani in Sheffield.

They young women were not 'trapped between two cultures' neither were they concerned with the retention of a distinctive ethnic identity or assimilating into British culture. British and Pakistani cultures were both an important part of their social worlds, but were not problematic in the way suggested by the frameworks of many existing sociological investigations.

Connections to Britain and Pakistan were a largely taken for granted, mundane part of the young women's lives. Aware that their connections to two cultures/ places could be interpreted as problematic, they emphasised their multifaceted perceptions of belonging were taken for granted by themselves and their families. Rather than being 'trapped between two cultures' they simultaneously looked towards both Britain and Pakistan in their interpretations of themselves and the places they associated with a sense of belonging.



## Chapter Seven: Places to Shop.

### **7.1 Introduction.**

So far in this thesis, the young women's perspectives about 'home' have been considered through description and analysis of their views about three key places in their lives- the local neighbourhood, the wider city of Sheffield and Pakistan. This chapter extends the analysis of their views, through a focus on shopping.

Interviews revealed shopping to be an activity which all of the young women engaged in; it involved interaction in place and was connected to their perceptions of place. Shopping was something undertaken in, or associated with, the three key places in their lives.

Shopping (and consumption in a broader sense) have been associated with the construction and expression of identity, especially so for young people (Jones and Wallace, 1992; Miles, 2000). Jones and Wallace (1992) viewed consumption and shopping as integral parts of young peoples identities. Willis (1990) took this point further, arguing that consumption is the arena in which young people express their creativity, helping them to make sense of their identities.

This literature depicts shopping as something that is tied to the construction and interpretation of identities. The young women's views about shopping are described and analysed in this chapter to consider the role of shopping in their interpretations of identity and belonging. Within the broader conceptual

framework of this thesis, this analysis contributes to the establishment of a more broadly based account of the young women's views.

The idea that young people use shopping to construct their identities and secure their freedom (from parental authority, for instance) has received much criticism (Miles, 2000). Griffin (1993) questioned whether leisure activities, like shopping, are inherently liberating. The construction of rebellious, counter-cultural youth styles, has been understood as young people's main relationship with shopping (Miles, 2000). A broader perspective is needed. Socio-economic position, gender and ethnicity have been overlooked in these discussions (Miles, 2000:124). 'Youth' has been seen as the driving force for young people's identities, to the exclusion of other processes (such as gender and ethnicity). Existing accounts are, therefore, inadequate for the explanation of the views of the young women discussed in this thesis.

The shopping practices of Asian people have only been explored in a limited way in sociological research. Where research has considered the views of those from Asian backgrounds, the focus has squarely been on the role of ethnicity in guiding shopping demands and practices.

Miller et al (1998), for example, in their wide-ranging research in London, explored the role of ethnicity in relation to how people perceived places where they shopped. They noted how certain shopping locations became associated with specific ethnicities and shopping needs. Miller et al (1998) provided a valuable insight into the role of ethnicity in shaping shopping practices in major

cities like London. However, the trends they identified do not easily translate into the experiences of shopping in smaller cities like Sheffield.

Where sociological research has commented specifically on Asian women's shopping, the focus has been how their ethnicity constrains them and their shopping. The sociology of youth has been concerned with the way young people use shopping to freely construct their identities. When the focus has fallen on young Asian women there has been a preoccupation with documenting the constraints they are said to experience (Knott and Khoker, 1993). For example, styles of clothing have been seen to denote identity for Muslim Asian women. Dwyer (1998:55, 1999a,b,c; 2000:5) noted how the wearing of a veil, for example, is symbolic of a particular understanding of femininity. Wearing (and consuming) Asian clothes is understood to have both cultural and religious significance and thus to be symbolic of how these constrain young women.

These constraints have been considered to be paramount in defining Asian women's shopping. For example, Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996:213) questioned whether Asian women were interested in shopping in city centre High Street shops, because of their presumed preference for culturally specific goods (only available in shops in Asian neighbourhoods).

This is too deterministic an account of how shopping choices are shaped by ethnicity. Their personal role in constructing their own identities is overlooked. This chapter aims to go beyond existing accounts, by analysing the young women's views about shopping. The chapter maps the full range of shopping done by the young women. The role of shopping in the context of their



understandings of identity and belonging will be considered. In addition to the establishment of a broader account of the perspectives of these young women, this analysis will also contribute to debate about 'youth' and shopping in a wider sense, going beyond the determinism of existing 'youth' accounts.

The young women were involved in a number of different types of shopping; sometimes shopping was about acquiring goods, in other contexts it was about browsing and developing knowledge of goods available. In others it was about the experience of being in the place where shops are located. Shopping was both an instrumental and symbolic activity for the young women.

Though inadequate, existing sociological accounts offer two frameworks for the comprehension of their views. Firstly, they suggest that shopping is concerned with the active, conscious, construction of identities, particular those concerned with youth subcultures/scenes. Secondly, existing accounts suggest that shopping is a reflection of ethnicity. In both of these accounts identity is to the fore of views about shopping. The analytical framework adopted in this chapter, indicates the shortcomings of both of these interpretations.

Perceptions of identity and belonging did not overtly direct the young women's choices about where to shop and what to buy. Perceptions of identity and belonging played a background role, shaping the young women's understandings of themselves, the places they shopped, what they wanted to buy and their overall understanding of the experience of shopping.

Different facets of identity and belonging were often connected to views about differing shopping locations, yet still played a background role. The experience of shopping in distinctive localities offered experiences that reinforced and sustained differing aspects of the young women's understandings of identity and belonging. This analytical framework reveals how shopping was not about a conscious construction of identity for the young women; operating in the background, perceptions of identity and belonging were sustained and reinforced through shopping experiences.

## **7.2 Shopping in the Neighbourhood.**

The local neighbourhood was the scene for the young women's everyday lives. Their understanding of the neighbourhood were discussed in Chapter Four. Here, the significance of shopping in the neighbourhood is examined more closely and considered alongside the young women's other shopping.

As Nabeela indicated the young women identified with the shops in the neighbourhood:

"In my area there be's shops for groceries, clothes, that's where we go."  
(Nabeela)

The young women described a familiarity with a range of shops in the neighbourhood. This was seen as a significant feature of the character of the locality:

“You’ve got grocery shops, you’ve got fish and chips shops and takeaways around the area, you’ve also got, like banks round that area, and you’ve got a lot of things around there, you’ve got banks, erm, sweet shops, round the area, and round the area you’ve even got a shop where you buy tickets from, to travel abroad, as well, and there’s quite a few shops round there.” (Ashley)

Shopping in the local neighbourhood fell into two broad categories: shopping for Asian clothes and (other goods) and routine shopping. These two types of shopping were distinctive from one and other, but both reflected perceptions of identity and belonging. They will be discussed in turn.

### *7.21 ‘Asian Shopping’ in the Neighbourhood.*

The presence of Asian shops in the neighbourhood was significant to the young women. Whilst many of the young women’s views about their understanding and identification with the neighbourhood placed an emphasis on ‘mixing’ with white people, they also valued the presence of Asian people. Asian shops were symbolic of this presence:

“I think it’s good you know, all the shops round here...it’s good we have our own shops and shops that are for everybody too.” (Shazia)

Whilst the young women valued the presence of these shops in terms of the presence of Pakistani people in the neighbourhood, the shops themselves were largely described with a sense of disdain. They were viewed as smaller, more expensive and as offering less choice than shops elsewhere:

“...Those shops in our area, they’re okay, convenient, but small and not much choice, and can be expensive.” (Ashley)



These complex views can be understood if the way they reflected underlying views about identity and belonging is recognised. Views that valued the presence of Asian shops and those that described them with disdain reflected differing facets of the young women's racialised identities. Racialised identities underlay their perceptions of place in the neighbourhood and were concerned with feelings of belonging there. These understandings were reflected in the young women's views about shops, which were understood in racialised terms and known as 'English' or 'Asian' shops,

"... Well, there are more shops which have Asian's in it, but most of them are just like clothes and that, and there's only one shops, no, three shops around here that are like sweet shops, and most of them are Asian, err, err English sorry. On London Road, 'cos I go down there sometimes, and they are more white than Asian" (Sophia)

A key view of the neighbourhood was an understanding that it is a place that has a smaller Pakistani population compared with other places in Britain. This perception was important in the context of how place was imagined in relation to underlying apprehension about 'racism' and how identification as Pakistanis was sustained.

The neighbourhood could not be understood as a 'Pakistani place in Britain'. This perception lay behind the way young women described Asian shops in the neighbourhood with an air of disdain.

Though underlying perceptions of identity and belonging were reflected in views about the Asian shops in the neighbourhood, they were simultaneously

understood in instrumental terms too. Whilst the young women described the shops as inferior, going to better clothes shops involved significant a journey; the shops in the neighbourhood were also an important local resource on a pragmatic basis:

“...So we have got four shops round there, clothes shops. If we like, can't go to Firth Park, or if next day we need them, we just go there.” (Aliesha)

Asian shops in the neighbourhood were understood as 'convenient', but were still regarded as inferior to shops in 'Pakistani places'. Identification as a Pakistani, and racialised identities in the neighbourhood, provided a backdrop to these views. Perceptions of racialised identities were also reflected in views about 'routine' shopping in the neighbourhood.

### ***7.22 Routine Shopping in the Neighbourhood.***

The young women described their routine use of newsagents, corner shops and so on. They often called in shops to buy sweets or drinks, or on errands for their parents. This shopping was not understood as 'going shopping' in the way trips into the city centre or to Bradford were:

CW: Do you do most of your shopping around where you live, or?  
Aliesha: No, I mostly go into town, or to Firth Park. Not really, I would say, mostly for things like sweets and that.

This is indicative of how views about this shopping reflected the young women's identification of their neighbourhood as a place (therefore also reflecting racialised identities).

The young women's views about the neighbourhood were underlain by a sense of apprehension about 'racism'. Addressing this sense of apprehension was at the core of the young women's understanding of their neighbourhood and their sense of belonging in it. They could not understand racism as being addressed through the presence of a large Asian population. How this sense of apprehension was addressed was discussed in detail in Chapter Four; 'mixing' with white people, to gain knowledge of them and of the chances of their being 'racist', had a central role.

Shops were identified by the young women in Chapter Four as having an important role in the context of meeting and interacting with white people. Where white people and Asian people routinely encounter each other in shops (like newsagents) this was understood as functioning to create a view of the neighbourhood as 'mixed' (and, therefore, as one where 'racism' was unlikely).

Whilst the young women generally understood the neighbourhood as a place where the chances of experiencing racism were reduced, concern about racism was a pervasive feature of their views. As views about routine shopping reflected understandings of the neighbourhood, apprehension about racism was at the core of these views too. Many of the young women were concerned with how shops in the neighbourhood appeared to be spread out, for example:

"[I'd like] more shops close by I think, like, on the main road there is a wide choice of shops, but they are stretched out a bit." (Zobia)

As noted in Chapter Four, if people, houses or shops were viewed as 'spread out' this offered heightened apprehension of racism. In 'spread out' places, Asian



people were understood to 'stand out', with a lessened chance of rescue should a racist attack occur (reflecting the young women's familiarity with living in close proximity to relatives). The young women wanted to understand their neighbourhood as a place where racism was unlikely; this was reflected in their views about wanting more shops within close proximity:

"It can take five minutes or more if you walk to a shop that is open on the main road from our house, and there can be a queue, but if it was on our street you could be there and back straight away, so if there was a sweet shop or general shop and perhaps chip shop too, that would be better." (Ashley)

At the heart of the young women's understandings of the neighbourhood were racialised identities and apprehension about racism. This was reflected in views about Asian shops and 'routine' shops. Shopping had a role in the interpretation of the 'neighbourhood'. Views about shopping in the neighbourhood reflected and sustained identification with the neighbourhood. Yet, these processes of identification were not a conscious part of shopping, they had a background role.

### **7.3 Shopping for Asian Clothes Beyond the Neighbourhood.**

Shopping for Asian clothes was not just confined to the neighbourhood. This reflected perceptions of the inferiority of local shops and the relatively small Asian population in the neighbourhood. Shopping for Asian clothes (i.e. material or ready-made salwar kameeze) was undertaken in geographically dispersed places.

Shopping was undertaken in Firth Park (an Asian neighbourhood in the north of Sheffield) and in other cities in Britain (those associated with large Asian

populations, like Bradford). I will describe this as 'translocal' shopping. Shops were understood in a relational way, in 'tiers' according to perceptions of the best places to shop at different times or for different occasions.

What 'bound' these places together in the young women's imaginations were perceptions of the connectedness of these places to Pakistan, and the visibility of Pakistani culture there. As clothes were associated with identification as a Pakistani, the strength of connections between a place (or a specific shop) and Pakistan determined the desirability of the clothes on sale. The closer the connections between shops and Pakistan, the greater variety of fashionable clothes it was perceived to offer. The general visibility of Pakistani culture in a place, reflected the size of its Pakistani population; such places were viewed as 'Pakistani places' in Britain, making them desirable places to go shopping.

Places with (relatively) large Pakistani populations, like Bradford, were the best places to shop, therefore. The neighbourhood was the bottom tier of places to shop; its smaller Pakistani population meant shops were perceived to have weaker connections to Pakistan. This 'tiering' was described in a number of ways.

Shops in Bradford were described as 'bigger'. These shops were understood to offer more choice than shops in Sheffield as a result:

"...But Bradford and Birmingham are still better cos it's much bigger and there is more choice, but it's all really expensive compared to what you would pay in Pakistan." (Aliasha)

As Aliesha also indicated, economic reasons were also given when describing the 'tiering' of places to shop. Shops were described as cheaper, according to the strength of their connections to Pakistan. Accordingly, Pakistan itself was understood as the place where clothes were cheapest:

"But here, like, our clothes, they are a lot more expensive, compared with Pakistan." (Robina)

The 'fashionableness' of the clothes on sale was also referred to. 'Fashionableness' was understood as decreasing down the tiers of places to shop, as connections between places in Britain and Pakistan lessened. Zareena described how shops in other cities stocked new fashions first:

"The ones in Birmingham are best...and Bradford, cos what they have there, next in a few weeks they will have it in Firth Park, and then a few more weeks after that in the shops in our area." (Zareena)

Although the young women understood places to shop in tiers, this was not a fixed, rigid hierarchy. This is illustrated by the following discussion about a new shop that opened in the neighbourhood during the course of the interviews. It was viewed as having strong connections to Pakistan (particularly when compared with the other shops in the neighbourhood):

Ayesha: [A shop] has just opened recently on [] Road, Kashmiri Fashions.  
CW: Yeah, I've seen that, and to me, I don't really know, but from just seeing it, it seems better than some of the others?  
Ayesha: Yeah, it is cos that man who owns that he's from Pakistan, and you know in Pakistan they're really into fashion and clothes and stuff and he brings all his clothes from there...he gets everything from over there, and it is up to date fashions.



Generally, places beyond the neighbourhood were viewed as having closer connections with Pakistan, because their neighbourhood was perceived as having a relatively small Pakistani population. However, specific shops could be viewed as being distinct from the general trend within a place.

This 'tiering' connected a number of geographically dispersed places (associated with 'Asian shopping') within the young women's imaginations. At the core were perceptions of connections with Pakistan, reflecting identifications as Pakistanis. It is this sense of identity that took the young women shopping beyond their locality.

Commenting on the trend amongst Asian people to regularly shop beyond their own locality, Taylor et al suggested that the majority of white shoppers would oppose this. From this point of view, in a 'consumer society' shops should exist in the locality and the city to meet the needs and demands of consumers:

*"The idea of travelling to a city as far afield as London in order to buy goods at an affordable price would, of course, be anathema to the majority population of Manchester or Sheffield. Their expectation would be that 'their own city' should be able to provide all the basic items of shopping for them. Ethnic minority groups cannot routinely claim that of the cities in which they live."* (Taylor, Evans and Fraser, 1996: 214)

This interpretation overlooks the role of connections to Pakistan. The places where the young women shopped for Asian clothes were not viewed as geographically distinctive, or disparate. In the young women's understandings these places were associated with each other through their connections to Pakistan:

“...Yeah, there’s so many (Asian clothes shops) Slough, Birmingham, there’s a lot of population of Asian’s there, you know, all the clothes shops there, in Pakistan, I’ve been there recently as well, and they are say, about, a thousand rupees, and that’s not very much for us, you know, but for people who live there that’s a lot, a thousand rupees. And say, a thousand rupees, that’s a really fancy outfit, but you know, when you come and see it here, around your Asian shops, you got there and it’s around sixty, seventy pounds! Near a hundred pounds, possibly a hundred pounds! You know, if there is a cousins wedding here it cost a lot of money. So people from here you know, their parents have to go to Pakistan, and shop around for their daughters, you know for these dresses, for salwar, for sari suits and stuff, you have to get them from there cos they are really cheap. I don’t really blame the people here, cos they need to make money as well, but...”(Shaila)

Crucially, the decision to shop in places connected to Pakistan was mediated by the young women’s underlying understanding of their identities and feelings of ‘belonging’. Shopping in these places was motivated by a longer-term affinity with Pakistan and identification as a Pakistani in Sheffield. It was also motivated by the sustenance of this affinity, represented at the fore of Shaila’s views (above) as a desire to wear fashionable Pakistani clothes at events like a cousin’s wedding.

The point that Taylor missed was that regardless of ethnicity people shop in places beyond their locality for symbolic reasons, in addition to the desire to acquire a bargain or simply the things they need. Globalisation and a globalised consumer culture mean that people desire goods that are symbolic of specific places, cultures or identities. Therefore, going beyond the immediate locality to find a bargain, or items associated with other places, or a particular identity, is perhaps not so uncommon.

Would shoppers reject the idea of travelling beyond the limits of their town or city to shop in a place that they somehow connected with their identities? Many



people routinely travel to shop in Ikea (with the nearest store to Sheffield being in Leeds) or out of town 'designer' outlets. Often this shopping may be motivated by instrumental reasons ('designer' clothes are substantially cheaper at discount outlets), or for more symbolic ones related to identity too (such as the desire to buy 'designer' clothes). 'Distinctive' identities can spur the consumption of goods not provided by high street shops, that reflect a 'mainstream' culture. This can motivate travel to other cities to acquire goods that denote identity, as Hodkinson (2002) has documented with regard to the Goth scene. This shopping is, to some extent, comparable with the young women's shopping trips to buy Asian clothes (as they reflect and sustain perceptions of identity).

However, the young women's shopping in other cities was different from the symbolism of going out of your way to shop at a designer outlet, or sustaining a 'subcultural' identity such as that expressed by Goths. It was about a sense of belonging with a particular place, sustaining a longer-term affinity with Pakistan. The young women's views, about shopping for Asian clothes, related 'translocal'<sup>1</sup> connections, and how these reflected their understandings of identity and belonging, will now be explored further. The dynamics of their views about two places where they shopped will be considered - Firth Park and 'Pakistani places' like Bradford.

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<sup>1</sup> Connections with shopping districts in other neighbourhoods and cities.



### *7.31 Translocal Shopping: Buying Asian Clothes in Other Sheffield Suburbs.*

Firth Park is in the north of Sheffield, and has a larger Pakistani population than the young women's own neighbourhood. Firth Park has a stretch of Asian shops, selling groceries, jewellery, music and videos, a specialist travel agent, and clothes shops (descriptions focussed on the latter).

Within the young women's descriptions of 'tiers' of Asian shops, Firth Park was understood as a 'better place to shop' than their own neighbourhood. As Farzana noted, the relative proximity of Firth Park to their neighbourhood (perhaps a twenty to thirty minute journey across the city), made it a popular place to go:

"If possible we tend to go to Firth Park." (Farzana)

Though places to shop for Asian clothes were viewed in relation to their perceived connectedness to Pakistan, the decision to shop in Firth Park was described as a pragmatic one. The value of Firth Park as a place to shop, was viewed in instrumental terms:

"There's a few [shops] close by at Firth Park, and they're quite good." (Zareena)

"In Firth Park, the shops they're better, more choice." (Ashley)

Unlike either the young women's neighbourhood or places like Bradford, Firth Park did not have further significance in terms of identity and belonging. Asian shops in the neighbourhood had significance in the context of identifying the neighbourhood. Shops in Bradford had significance in terms of experiencing a place 'like Pakistan' and sustaining long-term affinity with Pakistan. Thus,

Bradford was associated with the purchase of clothes for special occasions associated with being a Pakistani, like Eid. Firth Park, however, was for everyday clothes:

“For Eid clothes I have been to Leeds, but no, I usually go round my own area, and to Firth Park.” (Nabeela)

Aliesha: If you just want some clothes, you go into Firth Park, but for something special...

CW: You go to somewhere like Bradford?

Aliesha: Yeah.

The decision to shop in Firth Park reflected identification as a Pakistani (which motivated choices about the type of clothes to wear). However, views about shopping there indicated that Firth Park was not associated with sustaining identification as a Pakistani, in the way translocal trips to places like Bradford were. Firth Park was described as convenient place, that had more choice than shops in the neighbourhood,

CW: So you say that you sometimes go to Firth Park for clothes.

Aliesha: Yeah.

CW: And things?

Aliesha: Yeah, there are a few Asian shops...clothes shops. They are all the biggest round there...they have got more variety and that, so we tend to go there...we've got about four or five shops around and about where we are, in our area, but they are quite small, you know.

CW: Yeah?

Aliesha: there's not a big a variety as what we've got in Firth Park.

### *7.32 Translocal Shopping: Shopping in 'Pakistani Places' in Other British Cities.*

Within the young women's 'tiered' understanding of places to shop for Asian clothes, the 'best place to shop in Britain' was in other cities, like Bradford, Manchester, Leicester and Birmingham. Places like Bradford, were described as having a greater number of larger shops, up to date fashions and lots of choice:

"The clothes shops there are good, and they have lots of choice, lots of latest fashions, so they are good." (Ashley)

The connectedness of places like Bradford to Pakistan was evident to the young women, in a number of ways. They had large, visible, Asian/Pakistani populations. Many of the young women had relatives who lived in other cities. They saw family as a key connection between themselves and Pakistan; family also connected the young women to other 'Pakistani places' in Britain. These translocal connections provided other reasons for visiting these cities, and shopping trips were often combined with visits to relatives:

"...There is some cousins in Bradford and if we go to Bradford, we will go to the clothes shops there, whilst we are there." (Ashley)

Shopping in Bradford was a way of buying clothes that corresponded with fashions in Pakistan. These clothes were significant to the young women as they reflected an understanding of themselves as Pakistanis. Wanting to wear the latest fashions from Pakistan was important to the young women- it indicated knowledge of, and a sense of affinity with, Pakistan. This had the function of signalling identification as a Pakistani in Sheffield:



“...You go to Bradford, like, cos they’ve got, like, from Pakistan, India, they bring them straight over, they’ve got the latest designs and everything in Bradford, ready made and everything.” (Aliesha)

At the heart of these views, therefore, were understandings of a racialised identity and multifaceted belonging. Though these understandings acted in the background, and were reflected in views about shopping, these concerns sometimes came to the fore. For example, Ayesha felt that going shopping in other cities was important because it makes you *‘feel good when your race is around you’* and *‘at home’*:

“And there’s quite a lot of Asian shops in Bradford, Birmingham, Leicester, and quite good, a lot of ready made clothes, which you don’t really get in Sheffield. And you know, when it is weddings, or Eid and stuff we go to those cities, and you can find loads of good clothes there and it makes you feel really at home and everything. You know, it makes you feel good when your race is around you.” (Ayesha)

These shopping districts were understood, therefore, as centres of Pakistani culture in Britain. Whilst these were pragmatically good places to shop (to get the latest fashions, for example), the experience of being in these places was of equal significance to the young women. An experience of ‘Pakistani culture’ was available; for example, the experience of being in Manchester around the time of Eid celebrations was described:

“I have been to Manchester and Birmingham, and like in Manchester, there is a really long road, full of Asian shops, and that is quite nice that one, and when it’s like Eid or something, they always have music and things, and that’s nice that, and it’s like a mini-Moor<sup>2</sup> but all Asian shops and that’s nice that, all Asian shops” (Zobia)

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<sup>2</sup> A shopping precinct in Sheffield city centre.

Zobia also commented that if she were to move away from Sheffield (to live in Manchester or Birmingham) she would look forward to the experience of being in a place that was like a 'miniature Pakistan', by which she meant that these cities had elements that closely resembled Pakistan:

"It would be like, if it was Manchester or Birmingham, more culture and everything. It would be like a miniature Pakistan and everything!" (Zobia)

Shopping districts in Bradford, Manchester and so on, were viewed as offering an experience of Pakistan and, therefore, were understood as 'Pakistani places'.

The young women's feelings of belonging to Pakistan, as noted in Chapter Six, were not static. These feelings had to be maintained, especially as they were a significant part of a multifaceted identification as a 'Pakistani in Sheffield'. The sustenance of affinity with Pakistan (integral to this identification) was done in several ways; through visits to Pakistan or from the experience of being in a place 'like Pakistan' in Britain.

As already noted (see Chapter Five, for example), Sheffield did not offer this kind of experience because of its relatively small Pakistani population. One reflection of a larger Pakistani population was a large number of shops. Shops gave an experience of Pakistani culture, sustaining belonging to Pakistan. As this experience was not available in Sheffield, it was accessed in other cities. In the background of the young women's views about shopping in translocal places, therefore, was a desire to sustain a sense of identification and belonging in relation to Pakistan. Additionally, translocal shopping was also motivated by perceptions of place in Sheffield.

This can be observed in how shopping trips to Bradford were often made in relation to specific special events associated with Pakistani culture, for example, Eid or a wedding. Going shopping for new clothes for Eid, or to attend a wedding, was a symbol of identification as a Pakistani,

“Well, in Sheffield, we have got loads of them, but Bradford, I think has more, like the whole street. Loads of people, for a wedding or for Eid, tend to go to Bradford.” (Aliessa)

“I go for Eid clothes and if there is a wedding, perhaps.” (Salika)

Simultaneously, perceptions of Sheffield were connected to perceptions of symbolic shopping in Bradford. Shopping trips to Bradford were not just considered in symbolic terms; they were planned in instrumental ways. For instance, shopping trips were combined with visits to relatives, for practical reasons (as already noted).

Often the young women acquired clothes from other cities without going there personally. For example, Zareena said that her father made frequent trips to Birmingham on business, and purchased items for her and the rest of the family whilst there. Whilst the experience of being in and around shops was valued and sustained a sense of belonging in relation to Pakistan, the clothes were desired, however acquired, and had an inherent value:

CW: So when do you go shopping in places like Birmingham?

Zareena: Well, when I go there to visit, I will go to the warehouses and that. Sometimes when my dad goes he will pick up things, like, tend not to go their special, but when we are there for something else.



Though Zareena did not always get the experience of shopping in Birmingham, wearing clothes bought from there seemed to have symbolic significance in terms of her understanding of identity and belonging.

#### **7.4 Shopping in Sheffield City Centre.**

The city centre is a popular location for shopping in Sheffield (Taylor et al, 1996). Despite the popularity of the large local shopping mall, Meadowhall, many people continue to routinely shop in the city centre. Despite a variety of shops in the city centre, none sell Asian clothes (or other goods). This led Taylor et al (1996: 213) to question whether young Asian people would be interested in going to the city centre to shop.

Despite shopping in a number of places for Asian clothes, the young women went shopping in the city centre too. The absence of culturally specific goods did not dissuade them from shopping in the centre of Sheffield:

“I really like going to town, cos looking at things, that is fun.” (Nasreen)

Many of the young women’s views about the city centre are discussed in Chapter Six, in the context of their understandings of ‘Sheffield’. This section will explore the young women’s descriptions of their shopping trips into the city centre and consider how perceptions of identity and belonging featured in these views. Shopping for Asian clothes, especially beyond Sheffield, was connected to identification and feelings of belonging in relation to Pakistan. However,

views about shopping in Sheffield city centre were connected to other facets of identity, not necessarily or immediately connected to place.

The young women described shopping in the city centre as routine. They described regular routes around the shops- city centre shopping areas were familiar:

“I get off the bus at the Moor and I walk up, and I go in the shops as I walk up.”  
(Nabeela)

While shopping is often an instrumental activity (to buy needed items), much of the young women’s shopping in Sheffield city centre was not about the purchase of goods. The emphasis of their descriptions was on browsing around shops:

“Mostly, if I am going to town I like to go straight into Jonathon James<sup>3</sup>, and see what new shoes they have got and then after that I like to go in the shops around that area, like Mark One and that and Tiptop<sup>4</sup> and see all the clothes, yeah.”  
(Ashley)

The young women focussed on how they liked to look around certain shops. Generally, these were inexpensive (often independent) fashion clothes shops, and High Street chain stores selling fashionable clothes (those aimed at teenage women, like Topshop):

Zobia: I like clothes shops, like Mark One and Tiptop, and err, some other shops like that, that area, but I can’t think what they are called now.

CW: There’s a few clothes shops round there, isn’t there?

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<sup>3</sup>Jonathon James sells shoes, and is known as being inexpensive.

<sup>4</sup>Both of these shops sell ‘teenage fashion’ clothes at low prices.

Zobia: Yeah, Melody, Mark One, Tiptop<sup>5</sup>...

Like Ashley (quoted previously), many of the young women described their interest in looking around these shops, emphasising the need to '*see all the clothes*', rather than buy them. The young women did not wear clothes from these shops, despite their interest in them. Yet, they bought certain items that they wore with their salwar kameeze, like jackets, shoes, hair accessories, jewellery and so on.

The emphasis on browsing (and the purchase of specific items) indicates that the young women's views about their shopping in Sheffield city centre reflected and sustained understandings of identity and belonging. Identity and belonging were multifaceted for the young women- views about these shopping trips were not underpinned by one facet alone. I will now consider the role of these facets in connection to shopping in Sheffield city centre.

As Taylor et al (1996) noted, many different aspects of everyday life bring people into the centre of cities: work, socialising in bars, restaurants, the cinema, theatre and so on. The main activity that took the young women into the centre of Sheffield was shopping. Therefore, views about shopping in the city centre were connected to understandings of 'Sheffield':

"I like our town, it has got just about everything, not as much as Meadowhall, but just about everything. Sheffield is the bestest place there is!" (Ashley)

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<sup>5</sup> All of these shops sell inexpensive 'teenage fashions', stocking very similar kinds of clothing and are inexpensive when compared with larger chain stores like Topshop or River Island. Melody, in particular, is known as selling styles of (revealing) clothing worn clubbing.



Understandings of femininity formed another facet of identity and belonging reflected in views about shopping. I understand femininity as related to processes of identification. It concerns everyday views about how they should behave as young women. Femininity, in this context, was composed of the young women's perceptions of how they viewed themselves and how others viewed them as 'young women'<sup>6</sup>.

Like identity (in a broader sense) femininity was composed of a number of interwoven facets. Two aspects of femininity were reflected in views about shopping in the centre of Sheffield. Firstly, browsing around fashionable clothes shops reflected an understanding of femininity based on a sense of identification with all young women in Sheffield, regardless of ethnicity. These shops were specifically understood as appealing to young women. The young women were concerned with being knowledgeable about these styles:

- CW:           What kind of shops do you like going to the most, in town?  
Nabeela:      Mostly shops aimed at young people.  
CW:           Clothes shops?  
Nabeela:      Yeah, and cosmetics, and I like stationary too.

City centre clothes shops offered clothes for young women that were less defined by ethnicity, especially when compared with Asian clothes shops. Many of the young women's white and Black colleagues at school would buy and wear clothes from these shops. The shops, and the clothes they sold, were imbued with meanings about femininity. Having knowledge of the styles available in shops (and buying certain items from them), reflected perceptions of femininity i.e. identification with young women of other ethnicities in Sheffield and sharing

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<sup>6</sup> Understandings of femininity are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Eight.

aspects of femininity with them. Therefore, at the fore of their views, these shops were understood as ‘young women’s’ or ‘teenagers’ shops, not shops for young white or Black women,

“I like going into erm, Mark One, yeah, I like going there cos it’s kind of a teenagers’ shop, you know. I like to go in there and look at slippers there, they’ve got clips there, jewellery, and that’s my type thing, you know, so when I go to town that is the kind of shop that I go into, there or Jonathon James, or, basically, go to Debenhams as well and try perfumes, stuff like that.” (Shaila)

A significant feature of their descriptions was the importance of being away from parental supervision. It has been argued that this is a key feature of shopping for young white women (Griffin, 1985; Taylor et al, 1996). As Zareena noted, shopping in town was significant as it was concerned with having fun away from the gaze of parents:

“(I like) going in shops that normally wouldn’t and having a laugh, looking at stuff...that is better, cos when my dad goes he says ‘no, no, no we have to buy this and buy that’ and tell us not to mess about looking at things! (laughs)” (Zareena)

While the young women perceived themselves as sharing much of their understanding of their identity and belonging with their parents, they also saw their identities as distinctive from their parents because they were ‘young women’. Young Muslim Asian women’s views are not inherently distinct because of their ethnicity, but may be understood as both similar to and different from views of white young women. The idea of city centre shopping as a way of escaping parental supervision was one potential continuity with white girls. Shopping with parents was described as ‘boring’; young women of other ethnicities could share this view:

“But when I go with my Dad too, it is really boring, cos I have to follow him everywhere and it is really boring! (laughs) ...and we have to go to C&A with him to find some clothes for him, and it’s really, really boring, cos he’s not that fat, but he is a bit fat! (laughs)” (Samina)

Griffin (1985), in her study of young white working class women, suggested that although they had little spending power, town centres were the chosen spaces of seeing and being seen. The white young women in Griffin’s study (1985: 63) spent their day hanging around, window shopping, shoplifting, watching other young people and ‘winding up’ the police. Although the young women did not suggest involvement in shoplifting, going shopping in the city centre was largely about having fun with friends, identifying with friends as ‘young women’:

“Well, in town, I like going to shops which have got more clothes stuff in and shoes, and. But I really like going to Debenhams and some of the shops, where they have got those escalator things, we, me and my friend, we just like going up and down and up and down! (laughs)...and don’t do any shoppin’, and we went once, me and a couple of friends and this guy stopped us and kicked us out! (laughs)” (Sophia)

Shopping in the centre of Sheffield reflected aspects of femininity that were concerned with identification regardless of ethnicity.

A second facet of femininity, connected to ethnicity, was also underlay views about shopping in Sheffield city centre. This was seen in views about shopping with sisters. While the young women preferred to go on their shopping trips without their parents, they often went with their sisters. Some of the young women placed shopping with sisters in the context of how they understood themselves as ‘Muslim young women’. At the fore of the young women’s views



was an understanding that shopping with sisters provided 'protection' from potentially problematic aspects of the city centre:

"I do not like going town with friends, and there is boys. Cos I am Muslim, innit, I choose to go with sister, I choose sister, go with no friends..." (Saika)

This was less prominent in some of the other young women's views. Shabnam, for example, described her choice to shop with her sisters as routine and taken for granted, reflecting gendered roles within the family. Perceptions of their shared Muslim/ Pakistani femininity were in the background:

"I go into town. My brothers they go to Meadowhall, but I go into town mostly with my sisters. Yeah, I like going to town with my sisters. Sometimes, if we're going with my Dad we go to Meadowhall, but mostly I go to town with my sisters." (Shabnam)

Other young women placed their decision to shop with their sisters in the context of the other facet of femininity reflected in their views about shopping in Sheffield (i.e. identification as 'young women'). At the fore here was a view that shopping with your sisters is like going with friends. Many of the young women described themselves having fun with their sisters (away from parental supervision):

"I go with my sisters mostly, my big sister and my little sister, we like going around looking at things, you know, havin' a laugh." (Shabnam)

Views about going to town with sisters reflected perceptions of femininity, whether associated with an identification with young women of all ethnicities, or related to the ethnicity and identifications they shared with their sisters.

Shopping in Sheffield city centre reflected different facets of identity and belonging, compared to shopping elsewhere. Nevertheless, as in views about shopping elsewhere, perceptions of shopping in the city centre not only reflected but sustained facets of identity and belonging: in this context those concerned with femininity.

### **7.5 Conclusion.**

This chapter has documented the young women's views about a diverse range of shopping, undertaken in a number of places. The complexity of their shopping activities reflected the multifaceted nature of their understandings of identity and belonging.

Views about shopping in the local neighbourhood, reflected understandings of the neighbourhood. At the heart of this understanding were perceptions of racialised identities and a sense of apprehension about 'racism'. The young women's descriptions of Asian and 'routine' shopping reflected these views. As shopping was a key way in which the young women engaged and formed their views about place in the locality, it both reflected and sustained their understandings of the neighbourhood.

Asian shopping was undertaken in places other than the neighbourhood. This translocal shopping reflected an understanding that their neighbourhood had a small Pakistani population, and, therefore, a relatively small number of shops, with a limited range of Asian clothes on sale. Places to shop for Asian clothes

were understood in a relational way; they were understood in 'tiers' according to their (perceived) connectedness to Pakistan.

It was perceptions of connections to Pakistan that were at the heart of the young women's views about places to shop for Asian clothes. Places with closer connections to Pakistan were understood as the best places to shop, both pragmatically and symbolically. The visibility of connections to Pakistan in places like Bradford, meant that they were viewed as 'Pakistani places' in Britain.

The young women also shopped in Sheffield city centre; their shopping was not restricted to shopping for Asian clothes, or in 'Pakistani places'. Views about shopping in the city centre reflected understandings of identity and belonging.

Shopping in Sheffield city centre reflected understandings of 'Sheffield'. The young women were interested in 'teenagers' shops', exploring elements of femininity not specified by ethnicity. They used shopping trips as experiences of being away from parental supervision. Therefore, shopping in Sheffield city centre reflected and sustained facets of identity connected to understanding themselves as 'young women' and as 'Muslim young women'.

The young women's views about shopping were connected to their perceptions of identity and belonging. Rather than being at the fore of their views about shopping, as some have suggested (e.g. Willis, 1990), perceptions of identity had a role in the background. Thus, going shopping was not motivated by a conscious desire to construct or express identity. Identity operated in the background



shaping orientations to shopping. To some extent, shopping choices were a reflection of identity and belonging.

Though acting as a backdrop, shopping did have a role in both the interpretation and sustenance of identity and feelings of belonging. The young women's identities were not static. Though motivated by perceptions of identity, the experience of shopping, in certain places, contributed to this processes of maintaining identity.

The diverse range of shopping undertaken by the young women was a reflection of the way in which their identities (and feelings of belonging) were multifaceted. Their identities encompassed connections to Pakistan and residence in Sheffield. This was a taken for granted part of their lives. They were comfortable with the way they simultaneously looked towards Sheffield and Pakistan in their perceptions of themselves and where they belong.

As a mundane social activity, shopping had a role in the maintenance of a version of Pakistani culture in the young women's cultural landscapes in Sheffield/ Britain, therefore. This was a central part of the processes through which the experience/ perceptions of shopping sustained identification as a 'Pakistani in Sheffield'.

The description and analysis of the young women's views about shopping has also revealed the centrality of perceptions of place in their perspectives about 'home'. In the context of both local and translocal places and perceptions of Pakistan, views about place had a central role in processes of identity and

belonging. Although perceptions of identity and belonging provided a backdrop to views about shopping, this activity brought experiences of place that fed back into perceptions of identity. Therefore, whilst having a background role, identity and belonging were inextricably linked to the young women's shopping and viceversa.

## Chapter Eight: Femininity: Place, Identity and Belonging.

### **8.1 Introduction.**

Asian women are commonly understood as being repressed, having little say over their own destinies. Understandings of gender roles and notions of 'appropriate femininity' (Dwyer, 1999c), have been seen as crucial to the experiences of young Asian women in Britain. There has been much discussion about the constraints that (young) Asian women face. Patriarchal cultures are understood to control and constrain young Asian women. Additionally, Muslim women have been understood as oppressed by the strictures and practices of their religion (Knott and Khoker, 1993).

Young Asian women are generally understood to be repressed in a number of ways, having little power to make choices about their own lives (Bhachu, 1991; Basit, 1997). They are expected to go from childhood straight to marriage and motherhood. It is supposed that other possible roles (employment, for instance) are not imagined for women emerging into adulthood. It is believed that their education is inconsequential to their families and their future roles in life. Women have been viewed as subjugated to the decision making of men and their families. Arranged (and forced) marriages have become a symbol of repression and the limited choices of these women, who are seen as not even having a choice over their marital partner. Such stereotypical understandings of Asian women have been widely critiqued. Bhachu (1991:401), for example, questioned



this negative portrayal of Asian women, based on an image of them as powerless, passive; their identities have been depicted as static.

These concerns about the roles of Asian women have been central to sociological research in the area. Research that has adopted the 'between two cultures' view of Asian women, in particular, has depicted women as facing a conflict between the expectations and roles offered to them by their family and culture and the opportunities that are potentially open to them in Britain.

Existing research is inadequate. Young women's identities are viewed in a one dimensional way. Whilst notions of 'appropriate femininity' have been considered central to the experiences of these young women (Dwyer, 1999c), the dynamics of their own views about femininity have not been documented. This chapter aims to go beyond existing debates, to establish a more broadly based account. The intention is to go beyond generalised description, and beyond a restrictive 'home/school in conflict' dichotomy (Dwyer, 1999c: 142), and beyond unitary views about the experiences of Asian women in Britain (which are often depicted as a single experience regardless of age and place of residence within Britain).

I understand femininity as being related to processes of identification. It concerns everyday views that anticipate how women should behave. Specifically, femininity is explored through the views expressed by the young women themselves about their own understandings and interpretation of being a young

woman, and their views about how others view them (how they expect them to be).

One recurring focus of discussions about Asian women has been 'freedom' or constraint (as already noted). Asian women have been viewed as experiencing a particular form of patriarchy, which is challenged when placed in the context of British society. 'Freedom' is posed as a core issue for (young) Asian women in Britain, where opportunities and cultural differences in Britain reveals to them the constraints they have traditionally faced.

Therefore, there is a danger of seeing 'freedom' as the only significant theme of Asian women's lives. This ethnocentric view would essentialise the young women who participated in my research. To avoid this danger, I focus on views expressed by the young women themselves; my conceptualisation of femininity facilitates this.

Assessing the extent to which the young women have 'freedom' is not my focus. The young women themselves, however, described things they were, or were not, allowed to do. These views may be interpreted as being about perceptions of 'freedom'. My aim is to analyse these views in a broader context, going beyond existing debates, with their focus on constraints. My analysis of these views focuses on processes of choice and constraint, to explore the dynamics of the young women's own views in greater detail.

This frame of interpretation reveals young women making choices within the constraints they faced. Rather than revealing their freedom, or lack of it, this chapter reveals their agency. This reinforces the inadequacy of the view that Asian young women inherently have less 'freedom' than white young women.

Analysis of the young women's views about femininity also reveals the role of femininity (and their agency) within perceptions of place and processes of identification and belonging. The construction and mediation of femininity contributes towards the maintenance of aspects of Pakistani culture in Sheffield. This reflected a sense of affinity with Pakistan, but belonging in Sheffield. I will demonstrate how the young women were not the passive absorbers or transmitters of their culture, but were actively involved in its construction.

## **8.2 Perceptions of Femininity.**

In this section, the young women's perceptions of femininity are discussed. Describing their views, the young women had three key reference points; the femininity of white young women in their locality, young Pakistani women in their locality and young Pakistani women in Pakistan. Underlying these were differing versions of femininity and patriarchy.

Several key perceptions about femininity can be identified within the young women's views. One of these was the issue of whether they go out or not around



the neighbourhood after school<sup>1</sup>. Whilst patterns of and attitudes towards going out varied, it was identified as an element of femininity.

In the following quote, for example, Samina described how she went out with her friends frequently and how this might be viewed as problematic. She commented on her father's worries that she might '*get spoilt*'. This indicated how her behaviour was seen as going against the grain of an imagined version of femininity. The comment that she might '*get spoilt*' indicated that her femininity was understood as being placed in jeopardy:

- CW: So how do your parents feel about that, are they happy for you to go out with your friends, or do you think that they would prefer you to stay at home like the some of the other Asian girls?
- Samina: They are happy, but I like go out three times a day, after I get home from school! (laughs)
- CW: Yeah?
- Samina: And they want me to cut that to a bit less, cos I'm out more than I am at home, and he is worried that I'll get spoilt if I do that!

Femininity was understood as being vulnerable; their reputations as young women need to be protected. The protection of virginity, being pure and untainted, was associated with being marriageable. This may be a view projected by parents, but was one the young women understood within their perceptions of femininity. Although these young women were not old enough to get married, their reputation can be 'spoilt'.

Though there was a general perception that Sheffield was a place where young women can go out more (compared with other 'Pakistani places'), it would be

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<sup>1</sup> This is explored further on page 239.

inaccurate to say that all of the young women described going out on a regular basis.

Comparisons with white young women were made. Many said that they had white friends at school, or in the locality. Young white women were described as going out after school more. Some said that they met up with white friends outside school, others not.

Samina linked friendships with white young women with her view that her neighbourhood was a 'mixed' place. 'Mixing' was referred to, to describe the how the neighbourhood was felt to be a place where 'racism' is not a problem. The neighbourhood was understood to embody this identity. Friendships with white young women were depicted as reflecting the identity of the local neighbourhood, and enabling or encouraging young Asian women go out more. Samina linked this to her ability to go out, but this interpretation was presented in relation to understanding how her Asian friends go out little:

"I just think it is good [that my area is mixed] because, if it was all Asian's and that would be like, I don't know how to describe it, it would be...less fun than it is. Cos, you know, all my friends go out and stuff, and really all the Asian girls, that I know, they stay at home and they don't do anything, so whenever I want to go out, I can go out and call on my friends, my white ones, cos all my Asian one's are sat at home doing nothing." (Samina)

Another aspect of femininity concerned aggressive behaviour. Farzana, who was critical of the how Asian girls at her school often became involved in fights, highlighted this. Young women should avoid being confrontationally aggressive in her view:

- Farzana: At this school...Asian girls, there is a lot, there is a lot that are not good!
- CW: In what ways are not that good?
- Farzana: They are always, like, getting into fighting.
- CW: Yeah?
- Farzana: Getting into trouble, being noisy.
- CW: Do you think, are they not really supposed to behave like that?
- Farzana: No, they should not be's getting into fighting all the time!

Views about sexuality were another feature of understandings of femininity. Saika, like Farzana, had spent a lot of time in Pakistan and was also critical of how Pakistani girls in Sheffield behave. In particular, she was critical of how girls flirted with boys. Saika identified the young Pakistani women in the neighbourhood as being like her, shaped by the same expectations about femininity (i.e. there should be a continuity between Pakistani young women and Pakistani young women in Sheffield). Yet she also understood them as sharing some views with white young women, and was critical of the attitudes of both:

- Saika: I like it here but it things, things like all girls here, Pakistani, they are fancying boys, and doing all like that, and that is not good.
- CW: Yeah? Why?
- Saika: They should not be fancying boys, they are Muslim.
- CW: So you think that as Muslim's they shouldn't be doing that?
- Saika: No, girls should not be doing that, and you know, all girls at the school be's fancying boys and you know a girl, an English girl, was pregnant!
- CW: Yeah?
- Saika: She was pregnant and she was, she was smiling!

Being a Muslim emerged as significant within this understanding, as revealed by Saika in her comment '*they should not be fancying boys, they are Muslim*'. Being a Muslim meant not being overtly sexual with boys i.e. following specific norms of 'appropriate' feminine behaviour.



The young women identified being a Muslim and their femininity as bound together and a way of identifying who they were. Being a Muslim led to particular expectations about how to behave as young women:

Robina: ...In Pakistan girls are not fancying, here they are fancying, and, and what is the point of fancying boys? I am not understanding it, they should not be doing it.

CW: Yeah, why do-?

Robina: [Interrupting] They are Muslim aren't they? Muslim girls are marrying like, not be's fancying boys!

White young women the same age as Robina may have also shared her scepticism about 'fancying boys', for different reasons. Lees (1992), Skeggs (1997), and Holland et al (1998) have documented how being labelled as being 'sexually available' is problematic for young white women, for example.

The point being made about how the young women perceived their femininity is not a deterministic one about them holding certain views because they are Asian, or Muslim. Some young Asian women obviously do fancy boys and have boyfriends. What is interesting about Robina's view was that she placed her criticism of flirtatious girls in the context of how she perceived being a Muslim as an identity, bounded with an understanding of feminine behaviour and connections to Pakistan.

This reveals the role of views about femininity within broader processes of identification. Robina's views were about processes of identifying as similar or different to others; about the type of young woman she was and was not. Thus processes of constructing femininity (and a wider sense of identity) were in

relation to the three key reference points (the femininity of white young women in their locality, young Pakistani women in their locality and young Pakistani women in Pakistan) that the young women drew on in their understanding of femininity.

Whilst similarities and shared elements of perceived femininity with white young women were identified, being Muslim was seen as one of the key differences between Asian and white women. Being Muslim indicated features about anticipated behaviour, such as actions around young men.

Yet, the young women simultaneously viewed identification as Muslim as being about more than behaving in sexually appropriate ways. For example, white young women were viewed as not being interested in religion (whatever the religion) in the same way:

“...They [white young women] like going out and stuff and there’s not a lot places you can go in our area. There’s adventure park, so they probably go there all the time, but I don’t know how much they like it. And also; like, I spend time reading the Koran and stuff and I don’t think they would be doing things like that.” (Ayesha)

Not all of the young women were supportive of ideas about how young Muslim women should behave. Some of the young women would agree with the idea that their ‘freedom’ is constrained:

“...It’s totally different down there [Pakistan]. Put it straight. Girls down there aren’t allowed to walk out of the house alone. And down here, we’re allowed. We’re not allowed to do exactly what we want, but our parents are strict as well, in certain ways. But down there, girls wouldn’t be allowed to, say, like, ‘we’re going down the shopping centre’, cos that be’s packed out with boys and men,

and we're not allowed to do that, so...Girls down there, hardly ever go shopping. They're parents, brothers, get them everything they need. They're not allowed to go, even with their families. I wouldn't want to be stuck in the house! So, no!" (Azra)

The young women's views demonstrate that they were not passive recipients of these meanings. They were involved in their construction and reconstruction. Their views about femininity revealed processes of choice and constraint, which they negotiated in defining themselves. This was seen in the way some young women were supportive of culturally specific constructions of femininity, others not.

This was also demonstrated by the more complex stance some took towards femininity and the issue of 'freedom', making choices within the parameters of perceived constraints. This further emphasises the conclusion that these young women were not passive, but displayed agency within a framework of constraints. They negotiated their way through the three key reference points for femininity: the femininity of white young women in their locality, young Pakistani women in their locality and young Pakistani women in Pakistan.

Echoing some of the conclusions of Jacobson (1997) and Dwyer (1998, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000), the notion of 'freedom' adopted by these young women was not in conflict with their commitment to Islam, or their families. Identification as a Muslim was understood as a way of enabling choices about their own lives (negotiating the boundaries of constraints).



Jacobson (1997) and Dwyer (1998, 1999a, 1999b, 1999c, 2000) suggested that young Muslim women are now attracted to a more global 'fundamental' Islam. They found that young women drew distinctions between Islamic and 'traditional' Pakistani cultural practices. It has been suggested that this understanding of Islam was a useful tool for young women, who wish to pursue education and careers. Their status as devout Muslim women offsets perceptions of them as young women who were challenging and extending the boundaries of what is fitting for them to do.

Paralleling this, some of the young women in my research suggested that their open commitment to their religion and an apparent conformity with culturally specific ideas about femininity, meant that their behaviour whilst out and about in place was scrutinised to a lesser degree. The young women interpreted this as having greater 'freedom'.

Zareena, who wore a hijab<sup>2</sup> style veil, suggested how 'choice' was important to her in expressing her faith and her identification as a Muslim. Zareena felt that electing to wear a veil sent a message about her, enabling her to participate in public places in the neighbourhood and the city without coming under suspicion. Zareena understood this as a 'freedom' to construct her own identity:

"...like, you know, this scarf, I wear it now cos this is something that I have chosen to do, yeah...but there [Pakistan] I would have to wear it cos I have to, your parents would say that you have to. Here you can talk to people on the street, boys, white, Asian, black, and if that is all it is, talking to them, then your parents don't mind, there you couldn't do that." (Zareena)

While Western onlookers could interpret the veil as a symbol of constraint (Dwyer, 1999b), the young women themselves used this symbol in their own way, to construct their own sense of identity. This existed in relation to the socially constructed meanings about femininity that the young women encountered in their everyday lives. Views were put in the context of perceptions of being a Muslim, bounded with an understanding of feminine behaviour and connections to Pakistan.

These views also indicate the role of femininity in the context of belonging. These choices reflect the young women's affinity with Pakistan. The desire to make the most of opportunities available to them because of belonging in Sheffield did not lead to a questioning of feelings of affinity with Pakistan. Indeed, affinity with Pakistan and identification as a Pakistani in Sheffield was often a motivation to pursue educational opportunities<sup>3</sup>.

According to this understanding of femininity, 'freedom' was not depicted by the young women as something that was endlessly desirable. Their views resonated with those participants of Basit's (1997b) research who wanted 'more freedom, but not too much'. The choices and constraints that they negotiated within processes of identification as young women were not about rejecting their culture (associated with Pakistan) and the constraints that may be identified as being part of that culture.

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<sup>2</sup> A type of veil where a non-transparent material is used to completely cover the hair.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Six pp 188.

This indicated how some aspects of Pakistani culture were maintained within the culture of the young women in Sheffield, through choices and constraints in processes of identification. The young women's views indicate a desire to attain the personal freedom that they want (to go to university, for example) without rejecting their identification with their cultural or religious background within boundaries that they defined as legitimate.

### **8.3 The Gendering of Place in the Neighbourhood.**

The young women's views about femininity indicated how processes of identification (of which femininity is an important element) shaped views about place.

Perceptions of femininity and masculinity were important ways through which place was given meaning and described. Place was viewed as gendered; place was understood as reflecting notions about femininity and masculinity. Underlying this understanding of place, were the three key reference points of femininity (white young women in their locality, young Pakistani women in their locality and young Pakistani women in Pakistan).

An example of this was how the young women viewed place as characterised by a distinction between the inside and the outside of the home. This reflected a public/private dichotomy, which is widely recognised as an aspect of gendered social relationships (McDowell, 1999).



In this context, place outside the family home, i.e. the street and urban localities, was viewed as male space. This did not mean that gender relations were absent from the family home, or that the home was a female sanctuary. What it meant was that young women's presence on the street was not viewed as being unproblematic, or their 'natural' place to be. The actions of young women came under surveillance and scrutiny outside the home (in the young women's understanding of place).

Often the young women described their neighbourhood, in Sheffield, as a place where this sense of surveillance was less pronounced, when compared with other 'Pakistani places'. Yet the young women still viewed place in the neighbourhood as shaped in relation to this understanding- as enmeshed with expectations about femininity.

This view of place is not necessarily specific to the young women, it may apply to all women (McDowell, 1999). General views about place and those specific to the young women intersected. What was specific to the young women were the reference points they drew on in their understanding of femininity, reflected in their views about place.

Connections with Pakistan were one reference point the young women drew on in their understandings of femininity and place. The young women often described Pakistan as a place where gender roles are clearly differentiated. They also indicated that ideas about femininity from Pakistan were also understood as

relevant to them and their lives in Sheffield. This was reflected in views about place, where Pakistan was viewed as a place where young women stay indoors:

“...There [Pakistan] you would have to stay in, sit down, wear a scarf, but my parents don't say nothing to me.” (Sophia)

Norms about feminine behaviour in Pakistan were viewed as applying to them in Sheffield to some extent:

“I can go out with my friends, that is nice, you know there [Pakistan], if you are not wearing veil, then, there is people watching you, I can go out with my friends here.” (Farzana)

The young women saw themselves as simultaneously similar and different to young women in Pakistan. This sense of comparison with people in another place informed the young women's views about place in their locality in Sheffield. Perceptions of place characterised by the inside/outside distinction is a key example of how these views were expressed:

“And they had to do all these things, like they had to put scarves on their head and they had to wear slippers. It's like, they had to stay in all the time, which were really boring, but here, it's really good, cos I can go out and they have to stay in, and I really feel sorry for 'em.” (Samina)

This gendering of place will now be examined further in the context of views about Sheffield, before turning to explore further the role of Pakistan as a reference point for femininity.

## **8.4 Hanging Out in the Neighbourhood.**

A key way the young women used place in the neighbourhood was as a space to go out with friends, brothers or sisters in their spare time. The young women, in the interviews, mentioned specific destinations within the neighbourhood, the local park, youth centre and so on. These were understood as 'youth spaces'. Their views about this are explored in this section, to consider further the relationship between femininity and views about place.

Description and analysis of the young women's views reveals their understanding of the gendering of place. Examination of their decisions about going out (or not) to youth spaces in the neighbourhood also extends our understanding of the processes of femininity, wider identities and perceptions of place.

### ***8.4.1 Hanging Out: The Gendering of Youth Spaces.***

Those young women who said they often went out after school, reported going to specific locations within the neighbourhood, which may be described as 'youth spaces'. These included the local park, which includes within it an 'adventure playground' and floodlit football pitches where young people hang out. A local youth club was also identified as a place where young people went. Others just talked about hanging out on streets near their home, with siblings, cousins or friends.



Within the young women's descriptions of youth spaces, a pattern emerged of an understanding of the gendering of these spaces. The young women indicated how youth spaces were clearly demarked as whether they were the domain of boys or girls. Sam described how girls congregated around the sandpits, which are 'nice', whilst boys occupied the football pitches and the adventure playground:

"Yeah, but it closes at six, but they've got a court where they get, they've got lights on now- flood lights, its like a pitch or something. The boys are there, like and, the girls are always in the sandpits, cos that's nice and that. There's a snooker table and there's a tuck shop there, so you can stay there for ages..." (Sam)

In addition, Sam went on to talk about the local youth club. This was depicted as mainly the domain of boys, where 'girls can go too':

"Err, and there's the [youth club] as well, which you can go to....which my brother goes to, and they have cricket teams and everything. Girls can go there too, they have loads of trips and everything, and they go swimming." (Sam)

A picture emerged of youth spaces being used and occupied by both young men and young women, but with a clear understanding of how gendered social relationships were located in these spaces.

This link between perceptions of gender and place was reflected further in the young women's attitudes towards youth spaces. Shabnam indicated that she only went to the park when she babysat her younger cousin. She also talked at length about the need for a space in the neighbourhood for boys to play, but did not indicate the need for similar spaces for girls. Young women's role within these spaces was understood as minimal:

“I go there cos, sometimes [the park], my small cousin he starts crying, so we take him there, and it’s okay, but it’s quite small, and you soon get bored again. And we’ve got this car park, near the park, like, the parks here and the car park’s here [*indicating*] and boys they do play cricket there, and my dad gets annoyed with them, cos sometimes they can end up breaking cars, smashing windows, so they need a proper place where they can go to play cricket... they should make a place to play cricket, cos that car park, that’s a bit dangerous, and my brother goes there sometimes, cos his friends go, and it’s a bit dangerous really. So that park, they should make it look a bit bigger and make a place for the boys to go an play.” (Shabnam)

Perceptions of youth spaces were shaped by, and contributed to, understandings of how gender relations, femininity and masculinity were located in place. Further, how the young women identified with their local neighbourhood was revealed as being influenced by perceptions of gender and place. Femininity was central to how place, identity and belonging were understood.

#### ***8.4.2 Hanging Out After School: Attitudes and Choices.***

In this section the young women’s decisions about how they used place in the neighbourhood will be explored further. The reasons why the young women went out and about to various places in the neighbourhood were not only determined by whether their families allowed them out of the house or not. The young women made choices too, for a variety of reasons. Choices were made in the context of perceptions of identity.

For example, Sam said she rarely went out after school because of her involvement in sports at school:

“My sister goes [to the adventure park], but I don’t go that much cos its after school, cos after school as well, I mostly stay in school [for sports clubs].” (Sam)

Other young women, particularly those who were just about to sit their GCSEs preferred to stay in and do their homework. Some of the older young women, who were 15 or 16, said that they had also grown out of going to parks. Ayesha, for example, favoured staying in and was keen to study medicine at university. After school, she preferred to do her homework, or other activities indoors:

“No, I prefer to stay in- I have got too much homework, so I just stay in, do my homework, help with cooking sometimes, but mostly I am doing my homework or being on the internet! (Laughs)” (Ayesha)

Some of the young women, like Robina, talked about choosing to go to mosque school. This was the only activity she was involved in outside of the home. Like some others, Robina talked about staying in and helping out with cooking:

“...Some days I do go [to Mosque], not everyday, but after school I do go home and help my mum, help do cooking. That is same as Pakistan, there I did go home and help my mum with cooking” (Robina)

Young women like Ayesha and Robina (quoted above) indicated that they were involved in (gendered) activities in the home. This may be construed as restricting their freedom to participate in other activities. However, views about going out were shaped in relation to processes of identification. Ayesha, for instance, placed staying in within the context of her identification as someone who would rather concentrate on her studies.



These views indicate a range of choices about what they do after school. Staying in or going out, were not just about what they are allowed to do, but what the young women saw themselves choosing to do. Processes of choice and constraint shaped views. Processes of identification (such as Ayesha's view of herself as someone who stays in to study) incorporated these choices and constraints.

### **8.5 Mediating Femininity: Flows of Meaning From Pakistan.**

In their understanding of femininity, comparisons with Pakistan and flows of meaning from Pakistan were a key reference point for the young women. The young women's views often focussed on how gender relations in Sheffield were different to those in Pakistan. Yet understandings of femininity in Sheffield were also viewed as being shaped by meanings originating from (or associated with) Pakistan.

Though prompted to compare their experiences with people in Pakistan, the young women's views revealed a sense of having something in common with young women in Pakistan, on a general level and specifically in terms of femininity. Connections with Pakistan meant that the young women felt that they have an affinity with young women there.

Shabnam unravelled the subtle similarities and differences between the everyday routine lives of a girl in Pakistan and herself. The idea of similar expectations being applied to both their lives was indicated in her comment that *'It's not right for us Asian girls to be in front of men'*:

“...When I went to Pakistan, the girls there used to wake up at five o’clock in the morning, and from there, they used to go to school, and they finished about four o’clock and when they come home, they just stayed home doing all the housework. Like here, I go to school, when I get home, I go to mosque, some times, and I do a bit of the housework, and then I go out. They weren’t even allowed to go out, not even across the road, cos there was all these men there and it’s not right for us Asian girls to be in front of men.” (Shabnam)

When Pakistan was referred to as a reference point for understandings of femininity in Sheffield, this was expressed in terms of patterns of behaviour in Sheffield being divergent from that associated with Pakistan.

One example of this concerned the wearing of a veil. This was viewed as being commonplace and expected in Pakistan, but not so in Sheffield. Farzana, for example, who had lived in Pakistan, saw the necessity of the veil as a key difference between Sheffield and Pakistan:

“...Yeah, it is really different! In Pakistan, I come home, go outside, only if wearing veil, you know we have veil?” (Farzana)

As discussed previously, some of the young women in Sheffield suggested that they used the wearing of a veil, particularly a hijab, as a way of defining and making choices about how their own femininity was perceived by others. For some the veil was described as being used as a way of defining themselves as Muslims and simultaneously negotiating access to higher education and careers.

In the context of views about Pakistan, the necessity of wearing a veil was described as a compulsory, non-negotiable, marker of femininity. This was contrasted with Sheffield, where the young women felt that they had choice and a sense of personal control over the wearing of a veil. Their wearing of a veil, in whatever context, however, drew on meanings associated with Pakistan.

A further element concerned how understandings of femininity were constructed and maintained. The young women suggested that symbolic elements of femininity, such as wearing a veil, were 'policed' by men in Pakistan:

"[*Here*] people can't say do this, do that, like if they were a member of your village. Some Asian guys [*in Pakistan*] come up to you, that I don't even know and say 'What are you doing you should be at home', or 'Put your scarf on'." (Shaila)

A sense of surveillance of femininity was identified as being present in Pakistan but not in Sheffield. The young women talked about this sense that their behaviour was watched and scrutinised by men in Pakistan:

"Erm...you know, in Pakistan, we cannot go out, and if we do go out, people say, men they come and say to your Father, 'Your daughter was there'! 'She was going there, she was doing this'. Here it is not like that, it is not like that." (Farzana)

Dwyer (1998, 1999b, 1999c) and others (for example, Taylor, Evans and Fraser, 1996) have identified surveillance as experienced by young Asian women in Britain. The difference in the views of the young women in Sheffield and those in Dwyer's research indicates the role of perceptions of place and how views and experiences may vary in different, distinctive, localities.

It also indicates the significance of age. Slightly older young women, who are of an age where marriage may be considered, may experience a higher level of scrutiny. Young women over sixteen may experience a greater level of surveillance due to the more immediate need to protect the pureness of their femininity for marriage.



Connections to Pakistan and the flow of meanings about how to be a Pakistani young woman mediated the young women's understanding of femininity in Sheffield. Pakistan was a key reference point for femininity in Sheffield, but reference points located in Sheffield mediated femininity too. Thus, the context of locality is important in understanding the experiences of young Asian women in Britain, as experiences in Sheffield may be different to young women in other parts of the country, despite shared connections to Pakistan.

As understandings of femininity were mediated by connections to Pakistan, femininity was an important part of wider views about Pakistan, and, therefore, feelings of belonging to Pakistan. The young women's views about femininity reflected their multifaceted understanding of identification and belonging, as femininity was mediated through multiple reference points.

Thus views about femininity were often referred to when describing feelings of belonging to Pakistan. For Azra, for example, different expectations about how men and women should behave were central to her reasoning as to why she has a sense of belonging in Sheffield:

“Well, lets put it straight, if it were up to me I would go to Pakistan once in every err ten years. I would just go for a short visit. I prefer Sheffield, it's my home. Cos, it's totally different down there. Put it straight. Girls down there aren't allowed to walk out of the house alone. And down here, we're allowed, we're not allowed to do exactly what we want, but our parents are strict as well in certain ways. But down there girls wouldn't be allowed to say, like 'we're going down to the shopping centre'. Cos that be's packed out with boys and men, and were not allowed to do that, so. Girls, down there, hardly ever go shopping, there parents, brothers go, get them everything they need. They're not allowed to go even with they're families. I wouldn't want to be stuck in the house, so, no!”  
(Azra)

Azra understood herself as being connected to women in Pakistan, reflecting an affinity with Pakistan, but her understanding of femininity was also mediated by her sense of belonging in Sheffield. Flows of meaning from Pakistan meant that understandings of femininity in Sheffield only reflected those in Pakistan to some extent. The femininity of young women in Sheffield and the choices and constraints they experienced, were not a direct translation of those experienced by women in Pakistan. Nevertheless, the mediation of femininity was a central to the way aspects of Pakistani culture were sustained in the cultural landscapes of the young women in Sheffield.

#### **8.6 Pakistan: Marriage and Global Connections.**

Another aspect of connections with Pakistan, that has particular relevance to understandings of femininity and masculinity concerns marriage. The young women discussed examples of marriages between people from Sheffield and Pakistan. Marriage was not a focus of this research, but some information emerged in the interviews about the complexities of marriage, particularly in terms of the maintenance of connections to Pakistan through marriage.

Marital practices have often been viewed as potent issue for Asian women (Khan, 1999). Generalisations and negative conclusions about the practice of arranged marriage are too easily drawn. There is a wide variety of experiences.

It is worth bearing in mind that the young women had a different view of marriage to the typical contemporary western view. Marriage was viewed as

more of a social contract, as much about status within the family and community as about romantic love.

Some of the young women talked about marriage as resulting in connections with Pakistan that were maintained. Perceptions of gender relations, of masculinity and femininity emerged as being a significant element of these connections.

Connections to Pakistan took a number of forms. As already noted, Pakistan was a reference point for understandings of femininity in Sheffield; flows of meaning from Pakistan mediated femininity. Connections through marriage often brought this reference point closer to home; the practice of marriage between people in Sheffield and Pakistan mediated femininity too, therefore.

Zareena's brother had married someone from Pakistan. She suggested that marriage between people from Sheffield and from Pakistan was an important reason why she should have knowledge of what Pakistan is like and go on visits there herself. Knowledge about Pakistan was described by Zareena as a kind of cultural capital that allowed her to communicate with people from Pakistan, which went beyond an ability to speak the same language. Zareena felt that she should have this knowledge in order to welcome her sister-in-law, and get along with her:

“My brother just got married and my sister in law, has come here from Pakistan, so that if I know about Pakistan it makes it easier to make her feel at home, I can talk to her.” (Zareena)



Marriage practices, therefore, not only mediated understandings of femininity, but also provided motivation for being knowledgeable about Pakistan- sustaining a sense of affinity with Pakistan.

Others discussed the less positive aspects of marriage to people from Pakistan.

Azra explained that her older sister had recently got married to someone from Pakistan and that things were not going well for her. Azra said that her brother in law's lack of knowledge and understanding about Britain, and British Asian women were a source of problems. At the core of these problems were differing perceptions of femininity and expectations about gender roles within marriage:

Azra: ...My brother in law has just come and err, you know, he doesn't fit in.

CW: Yeah?

Azra: We don't really get on!

CW: Yeah, is that your older sisters husband?

Azra: Yeah, you know, it's different views, and that we're totally different. Me and my sister, we're more modernised and he is more, you know, typical minded.

CW: ...Do you think you will have a marriage arranged with someone from Pakistan?

Azra: Well, I would have, but now, cos my sister is having difficulties, cos he was from over there [Pakistan], and I don't think that my parents would want to be getting involved with that again. And I think that's brilliant, cos I certainly wouldn't want to get involved with people from over there. They are totally different minded over there. They would want us to be like, housewives, look after their children while they go out to work. And me, I want to get somewhere in life, I don't want to stay home and do the dishes!

Whilst Azra identified as a Pakistani in Sheffield, she understood her femininity (and that of her sister) as being constructed in relation to multiple reference points, not just Pakistan. Therefore, young women in Sheffield may have different understandings of marriage than those from Pakistan.

Discussions about young Asian women in Britain often quote arranged marriage (particularly when the marriage is to someone from Pakistan) as symbolic of the constraints faced by young women (Knott and Khoker, 1993; Dwyer, 1998). As a result of this narrow focus, the wider role of marital practices has been overlooked. Discussion of marriage in interviews was marginal, as marriage was not the focus of my research. The role of marital practices in mediating, and often challenging, understandings of femininity and masculinity has been indicated by my research. There is a clear need for further, more broadly based research to consider the role of marriage further.

### **8.7 Pakistan as a Reference Point for Femininity: The Significance of Other Cities in Britain.**

Comparisons with young women in Pakistan were a key reference point in the young women's understanding of femininity. Other cities in Britain with larger Asian populations than Sheffield were significant in this process too, as they were understood as 'Pakistani places'. These cities were understood as resembling Pakistan (more so than Sheffield), mediating understandings of femininity associated with Pakistan:

- Samina: My Dad's sister [who lives in Birmingham], she is kind of a really strict person, and she does not let them go out, not that much, and when she finds out that we go out nearly all the time she gives us a gob full! (laughs)
- CW: Yeah!?! (laughs)
- Samina: Really, I think it's a bit weird up there, I really wouldn't want to live up there, cos you are not allowed to go out.

The gendering of place in cities like Birmingham was viewed as reflecting notions of femininity associated with Pakistan. The counter view of Sheffield as adhering to Pakistani ideas of femininity to a lesser degree, was viewed as the primary reason why young women in Sheffield could make more choices about femininity:

“...It is similar [in Birmingham to Pakistan], but do, like, go out now and again, but not as often as we do down here, and in Pakistan, they stay in all the time, and in Birmingham they do go out sometimes, but most of the time they have to stay in as well, and if they want something they have to tell their older brother to go and get it for them as well.” (Aliesha)

It may be questioned whether white young women would compare their experiences with young women in other cities in the same way. Whilst their views were partly a response to prompting in interviews, they readily discussed young women in other cities, displaying a knowledge and interest in the way things were there.

While white young women may also have family members who live in other towns and cities, these young women had a particular connection with other cities, which were viewed as ‘Pakistani places’. Cities like Bradford, Birmingham and Leicester, were viewed as having closer connections to Pakistan. This was seen as being due to larger Pakistani populations there, and was reflected in, for example, the larger number of Asian shops in these cities (as discussed in Chapter Eight).

These views were also linked, therefore, to the processes through which Sheffield was imagined. As discussed in Chapter Six, Sheffield was imagined as



a racially 'mixed' city, because of its smaller Asian population. The young women's perceptions of femininity were also shaped by the local context of their views about the neighbourhood and the city, and vice versa.

Perceptions about differences in the gendering of space in different cities were not only confined to views about femininity. Perceptions of masculinity in other places were also significant and were often related to ideas about femininity.

Azra suggested that her parents saw young men in other cities as being more likely to seek contact with their daughters, in a way that contravened their ideas about what is appropriate. Perceptions of young men, as well as young women in Sheffield, were viewed as different, and a further reason why young women felt that they were allowed to go out more than those who live in other cities:

"London there boys are more urrh type, they like come up to you in London and say things, like that. And like, in Sheffield, Asian boys don't do that that type of thing, so parents think it is not like that, but it is, obviously it is, but us girls we can go out." (Azra)

Views about 'Pakistani places' in Britain played a role in the mediation of femininity. Whilst Sheffield was viewed as being different to places like Birmingham, experiences of these cities as centres of Pakistani culture played a role in the maintenance of a culture (Pakistani) within a culture (Sheffield). This was connected to feeling a sense of affinity with Pakistan, but in Sheffield, as identified in Chapters Six and Seven.

Visits to other cities are more frequent than to Pakistan. Whilst Pakistan was viewed as the source of a particular imagining of femininity, cities like Bradford were seen as reflecting an understanding of what Pakistan is like, more so than Sheffield. Visiting cities like Bradford, to go shopping and to visit relatives, gave the young women experience of everyday interaction in a place where understandings of femininity associated with Pakistan was a feature of place.

### **8.8 Conclusion.**

This thesis has sought to understand the relationships between perceptions of place, identity and belonging in the young women's views. Femininity was central to this relationship.

Femininity was a central part of how the young women viewed themselves and was a constitutive part of processes of identification. Views about femininity had a connection to views about (broader processes of) identification, place and belonging in a number of ways.

The young women's understandings of femininity drew on a wide range of meanings, some of which were associated with places. Meanings and notions about femininity mediated views about place. Understandings of femininity and masculinity were reflected in the young women's views of place.

Place was viewed as being shaped by meanings about femininity and masculinity. This was visible, for example, in the spaces in the locality used predominantly by young people.

The young women's views were mediated by a range of different meanings about femininity, some located in the locality, others not. They drew on three key reference points in their understanding of femininity, white young women in the locality, other Pakistani young women in the locality and young women in Pakistan. Their views about femininity had much in common with 'general' understandings of femininity, sharing elements with women of all ethnicities, therefore. Simultaneously, flows of meanings across place, associated with Pakistan (not only from Pakistan, but from cities like Bradford which were viewed as 'Asian centres') made the young women's understandings of femininity distinct from that of white young women.

The young women showed an awareness of their families and other Pakistani people in Sheffield's views being shaped by perceptions of the way things are in Pakistan. Whilst the young women often viewed their experiences as being quite different to young women in Pakistan, understandings of femininity associated with Pakistan still mediated the young women's understanding of femininity.

How femininity played a role within understandings of identification, place and belonging, highlights three features of these processes. The first point relates to how processes of identification were characterised by the negotiation of constraint and choice. Previously in this chapter, I discussed how the experiences



of young Asian women are often seen as being concerned with the issue of 'freedom'. The analysis of the young women's views has revealed how they themselves interpreted notions of femininity, negotiated perceived constraints (what they viewed as constraints, and what they felt others may view as constraints) and exercised their own choices, within a process of understanding identification. These young women had agency.

Secondly, how the young women negotiated constraints and choices reveals the limitations of 'between two cultures' accounts of identity and belonging. As discussed in Chapter Six, young Asian women are often depicted as being trapped in a void between British culture (which offers freedom) and Pakistani culture (which enforces constraint). These young women were not trapped between these cultures; the ways they drew on multiple reference points in mediating femininity is indicative of how they were not trapped, but simultaneously looked towards Britain and Pakistan in their understandings of identity and belonging.

A final feature concerns the maintenance of Pakistani culture and belonging. Meanings about femininity flowed from Pakistan (and from cities like Bradford- 'Asian centres' in Britain) and subsequently shaped views about place in Sheffield (through the relationship between views about identification, place and belonging). Therefore, views about femininity played a role in the maintenance of a version of Pakistani culture (reinterpreted according to views about identity, place and belonging in Sheffield) in the young women's cultural landscape in

Sheffield. Femininity played a role in the maintenance of affinity with Pakistan while belonging in Sheffield.

This point about the role of femininity in the maintenance of elements of Pakistani culture, within British culture, is of relevance to debates about the role of women within Pakistani 'communities' in Britain. Young Asian women's status has often been seen as significant for an understanding of the 'community', where women are seen as having a role as cultural transmitters.

Dwyer (1998, 1999b, 1999c), for example, argued that the 'cultural and moral young woman' was an element of an articulation of discourses of identity that constructs a spatial 'local Muslim community'. Therefore, the surveillance of femininity was an element of the maintenance of a constructed Muslim community, through the preservation of discourses about the 'cultural and moral young woman'. The imagination of femininity was seen as being central to the maintenance of a Pakistani Muslim community in Britain.

However, Dwyer's arguments are problematic. Dwyer focused on the discourses that shape how locality is imagined. Dwyer's focus on the significance to the articulation of a 'Muslim community' of discourses about femininity privileges the community's views, rather than young women's own understandings. This means that the views of male 'community leaders' are privileged. My research, on the other hand, reveals the significance of the young women's own agency.

My research indicates that views about place are constructed through an intersection of these views with processes of identification and belonging. Therefore, a question raised in terms of Dwyer's account is: whose understanding of place is this and how do young women themselves view discourses about femininity?

The young women's views, though they were general in many ways had elements that were specific to them. Understandings of femininity associated with being a Muslim, for example, would mean something different to young women themselves than they do to other members of the community. The negotiation of constraint and choice by the young women meant that general meanings about young Muslim women (held by the 'community') were interpreted by the young women in ways specific to themselves. This was seen in how the young women interpreted choices about their status as Muslim women (through wearing a veil, for example) as exercising a sense of 'freedom'. A focus on discourse is problematic, as it overlooks the relationship between views about place and processes of identification, focussing only on one version of the identity of place.

Further, the analysis in this chapter has not found these young women to be 'cultural transmitters' in the sense indicated by Dwyer (as symbolic figures for the 'community', and as cultural educators). What it has revealed, however, is the way that femininity played a role in the relationship between place, identity and belonging.



Rather than women being cultural transmitters, femininity played a role in multifaceted views about belonging, sustaining affinity with Pakistan and belonging to Sheffield. They were not passive absorbers and transmitters of their culture; they played a role in its construction and maintenance.

## 9. Conclusion.

### 9.1 Introduction.

This thesis has described and analysed the views of young Muslim women from Pakistani backgrounds, who live in the same neighbourhood in Sheffield. The aim of the thesis was to document their perspectives about 'home'. More specifically, this thesis has considered how the young women constructed and sustained their social world, with particular reference to perceptions of identity and belonging. Description and analysis of their views about place was a key element of the conceptual framework of the thesis. This has facilitated the establishment of a broader based account of their understandings of identity and belonging.

This chapter considers the young women's views documented in the main body of this thesis further. Two key processes central to their interpretation of their social world will be considered in further detail. Firstly, the role of perceptions of 'race' will be considered. Secondly, I will discuss the way in which how views about place mediated perceptions of identity and belonging. I will consider the implications that my analysis has for wider sociological debates about the perspectives of young Asian women in Britain.

## 9.2 'Race' and Apprehension about 'Racism'.

Racialised understandings had key role in the young women's interpretation of their social world. Meanings about 'race' had a background role, underlying views about place in the neighbourhood and Sheffield more widely.

Background meanings about 'race' led the young women to feel apprehensive about encountering 'racism' in place. The young women felt that Asian people can encounter 'racism' from white people. For the young women 'racism' was harassment or violence perpetrated by white people in urban space. 'Racism' was a constant, pervading all places in Sheffield. Hence, apprehension about 'racism' provided a backdrop for a range of other meanings about place and feelings of belonging to it.

This underlying apprehension about racism could be a potential barrier to belonging. Racial violence and harassment have been understood as challenging the residence of minority ethnic groups (Holdaway, 1997; Hesse, 1997). Taylor, Evans and Fraser (1996) argued that the hegemonic culture of Sheffield meant that to achieve a sense of belonging, ethnic minority groups have to challenge this culture. However, apprehension about 'racism' did not bar the young women from having feelings of belonging to their neighbourhood or Sheffield more widely.

This can be comprehended through understanding identity and belonging as connected to perceptions of place. In particular how meanings about 'race' and



racism had a background role in mediating views about place and feelings of belonging to them, needs to be recognised.

To have feelings of belonging to place, background apprehension about 'racism' had to be addressed in some way. This did not mean that this apprehension was eradicated. Places were understood as 'non-racist', 'mixed', where racism was unlikely; racism was not eradicated. Racism's pervasive role, providing a backdrop to views about place and belonging, remained. Racism was not an overt barrier to belonging, as the interpretation offered by Taylor et al (1996) suggests, because it had a background, mundane role.

This research, therefore, is a reminder of the mundane role of 'racism'. The concept of 'racism' is often distanced from mundane experiences. For example recent interest in 'institutional racism', sparked by the McPherson enquiry into the Stephen Lawrence case (McPherson, 1999; Solomos, 1999), placed 'racism' at the heart of institutions. 'Institutional racism' has, however, been criticised for conceptual inflation (Miles, 1989). It results in the focus of debate being taken away from the everyday experience of 'racism' and racialised social relations.

Cases like the murder of Stephen Lawrence and sociological debates about racial violence in many instances focus discussion on the worst incidents of harassment and violence. These cases are worthy of attention and are significant in understanding 'racism'<sup>1</sup> but so too are mundane experiences. The young women's mundane experience of racism was not one of personal experiences of

harassment and violence. It was one of apprehension about encountering such attacks, an apprehension that was invasive, shaping perceptions of their social world and perspectives about 'home'. Whilst, generally, they had personally not been 'victims' of 'racism', the young women's everyday lives were mediated by 'racism'.

The meanings of 'racism' in the contemporary era have been widely debated. There has been a proliferation of meanings associated with 'racism', despite the rejection of the concept of 'race' (Cohen, 1994). The identification of the mundane role of 'racism', in this research, is a reminder that what is significant is not what academic debate defines as 'racism'. Rather, the job of sociology is to trace how 'racism' is understood in people's own interpretations of the social world, lending meaning and direction to their conduct in everyday life (Goldberg, 1993).

This more nuanced understanding of the role of meanings about 'race' and 'racism', in the context of identity and belonging, also adds to existing sociological literature about young Asian women's experiences. Existing literature has little considered the role of 'racism' in relation to their perspectives about 'home'.

In the existing literature about young Asian women in Britain, belonging is largely understood as a cultural affiliation; hence, young women face choices between belonging to British or Asian cultures. Problems with feelings of

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<sup>1</sup> Such incidents, particularly those that receive lengthy media attention, shape underlying

belonging to Britain arise through the affiliation to Asian culture, or being trapped 'between two cultures'. As a result, the mundane role of 'racism' has been overlooked, as Asian culture is understood as the main barrier to belonging. However, my research reveals the inadequacy of this interpretation, through highlighting the central, pervasive, role of 'racism'. Literature specifically concerned with the experiences of young Asian women is discussed further, on page 267.

### **9.3 Place, Identity and Belonging.**

This thesis has considered the young women's interpretations of identity and belonging through the description and analysis of their views about place. Across the thesis, the focus has been on the three 'key' places significant to the young women- their neighbourhood, the wider city of Sheffield and Pakistan. This section draws together, and considers further, the key outcomes of this description and analysis.

This analysis has revealed that views about place have an important role in the interpretation of perceptions of identity and belonging. Views about place mediated identity and belonging. Often views about place reflected perceptions of identity and belonging; in doing so, these views also sustained these perceptions.

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apprehension about racism, as they are evidence that there is a threat of attack that represents a 'real' danger (Holdaway, 1996).



This mediatory role of perceptions of place also indicated how belonging (and identity) was multifaceted. Belonging was not a one-dimensional understanding- such as a sense that a specific place is 'home'. The young women had a range of feelings of belonging to place.

This conceptualisation of belonging provides a framework through which the young women's views about their connections to Pakistan, and their feelings of belonging in this context, can be comprehended. Rather than viewing Pakistan as 'home' (or not) the young women had a more complex understanding of their connections to the place from where their parents originated.

The young women understood that they have ties, real and imagined, to Pakistan. This reflected a long-term sense of affinity with Pakistan, rather than a sense of belonging there. This long-standing sense of affinity reflected identification as a Pakistani in Sheffield. This understanding of belonging was mediated by views about place in Pakistan and in Britain too.

Place in Pakistan was viewed in a way that reflected a long-term sense of affinity with Pakistan. For example, landscape and scenery in Pakistan were often described in an idealised, romanticised way, reflecting a sense of pride about Pakistan (reasons why the young women should want to feel a sense of affinity and identify as a Pakistani in Sheffield).

Views about places in Britain also reflected these feelings of belonging. Places with substantial Pakistani populations, reflected in their large Asian shopping

districts, were understood as 'Pakistani places'. Translocal connections and experiences of translocal shopping sustained a sense of affinity with Pakistan too. Thus, the experience of being in a place had an important role in the context of the construction and interpretation of identity and belonging.

In Sheffield city centre, for example, the experience of being in a place understood as presenting a greater chance of being a victim of 'racism', or in places relatively 'safe' from 'racism', had a role in perceptions of belonging to Sheffield. These experiences reinforced background underlying meanings about apprehension of racism and a view that meanings addressing this apprehension were central to the imagination of feelings of belonging to Sheffield.

The experience of being in a place reinforced views about that place, therefore sustaining feelings of belonging to that (or other) places. This process is clearly evident in the young women's views about shopping for Asian clothes in 'Pakistani places' like Bradford, as discussed in Chapter Seven. The experience of being in a place can sustain feelings of belonging to other places and aspects of identity related to those feelings.

The processes through which spaces in cities like Bradford were viewed as 'Pakistani places', sustained affinity with another place (Pakistan) and a sense of identifications as a 'Pakistani' (in Sheffield/ Britain). These processes meant that a version of Pakistani culture was maintained in the young women's cultural landscapes in Sheffield.

The relationships between place, identity and belonging were complex. Whilst views about place reflected and sustained feelings of belonging, other aspects of identity mediated views about place too. For example, views about femininity shaped perceptions of place. For instance in Chapter Eight, views about 'youth spaces' were discussed. In the local adventure park there were clearly defined boys and girls spaces. Place was viewed through the lens of femininity.

Yet, femininity also had a role in mediating views about feelings of belonging to place. Femininity was constructed in relation to three key reference points; the femininity of white young women in their locality, young Pakistani women in their locality and young Pakistani women in Pakistan. Underlying these were differing versions of femininity and patriarchy. The interpretation of femininity therefore reflected and sustained perspectives about 'home'.

Views about place were complicated. They reflected and sustained multifaceted understandings of identity and feelings of belonging to place. However, other views had a role in the interpretation of identity and belonging too. For example, affinity with Pakistan was not only mediated by views about place. Parental and wider familial perspectives (such as flows of communication between family members in Pakistan and Sheffield) also mediated this sense of affinity. Nevertheless, views about place had a central role, mediating the young women's understandings of identity and belonging.



#### **9.4 Young Asian Women, Identity and Belonging.**

In this section I will consider the findings about the processes through which the young women interpreted their identities (linked to feelings of belonging) in closer detail. I will consider the implications of my analysis for wider debates about the perspectives of young Asian women in Britain.

This thesis had the aim of producing a more broadly based account of the views of young women from Pakistani backgrounds, especially in the context of their understandings of identity and belonging. The description and analysis of the young women's views has revealed the dynamic and complex nature of their perspectives, producing a more nuanced understanding.

As discussed in the literature review (Chapter Two), research that considers the views and experiences of similar young women has largely understood belonging in a one-dimensional way. Belonging was understood as being defined by cultural affiliations, with young women facing choices and conflicts between their affiliations with British and/or Asian cultures. This understanding often directs the conceptualisation of young women's identities in this literature, which are defined by their position 'between two cultures'.

This position defined early accounts of young women (for example, Watson, 1977) and has had a pervasive influence (for example, Ghuman, 1999; Anwar, 1998). As already noted, the young women had multifaceted understandings of belonging; they were not confined by the necessity of making a choice between two cultures, nor by the conflicts between the cultures.

In this research, I have understood identity as socially constructed. I looked beyond one-dimensional static conceptualisations of identity, but also rejected postmodernist concepts of multiple identities, defined by discourse (as adopted by Dwyer, 1998, 1999c). Identity can be multifaceted, but the different facets are connected- related to a coherent sense of self.

This conceptualisation of identity as multifaceted, accounts for how the young women had feelings of belonging to both Sheffield and Pakistan. Feeling that they belong in Sheffield, but have an affinity with Pakistan, did not cause 'conflict' for the young women. They incorporated these feelings of belonging within a sense of identification as a Pakistani in Sheffield- a coherent and accepted understanding.

Therefore, the young women were not 'trapped between British and Asian cultures' when interpreting their sense of identity. They simultaneously looked towards Britain and Pakistan in their understandings of self. Both of these places were important to them, in differing ways. This was accepted; processes of identification did not generate conflicts.

This understanding of identity not only enhances existing critiques of 'between two cultures' explanations. Other research has had the aim of going beyond the confines of this perspective too. Dwyer (1998, 1999c) for example, adopted a postmodern understanding of identity as multiple, defined through discourse. My description and analysis of the young women's views also reveals Dwyer's

interpretation to have limitations. If identities are multiple, this suggests that different identities exist independently from one and other, perhaps being adopted in differing times or spaces (as Dwyer, 1999c, suggests).

However, the different facets of the young women's identities were interwoven. Perceptions of place had a role in this context. Analysis has indicated that views about place mediated perceptions of identity and belonging. As the young women simultaneously looked towards Britain and Pakistan, views about place did not just sustain one aspect of identity at any one time. Certain aspects of identity may often be at the fore of the young women's views; however, identity was always a coherent, multifaceted understanding.

This can be observed in the young women's views about their neighbourhood, described and analysed in Chapter Four. Their complex and dynamic understanding of their neighbourhood reflected multifaceted perceptions of identity and belonging.

Hence, the young women's understanding of their neighbourhood reflected a multifaceted understanding of identity. It reflected racialised facets and the centrality of meanings connected to a sense of apprehension about 'racism', the desire to be in a place with other Pakistani people (reflecting both a racialised identity and affinity with Pakistan), and feelings of belonging to Sheffield (identification as a 'Pakistani in Sheffield'). How these differing facets of identity were interwoven within a coherent understanding of place indicates that the young women did not have multiple, but multifaceted identities.



The understanding that young women are 'trapped between two cultures' is representative of broader trends that have been identified as occurring in British society at the national level, as it adapts to its multiethnic population. A tension has been identified between unity and diversity (Pilkington, 2003: 179). According to Parekh (1998:1) this is a tension between a desire for 'cohesion and a common sense of belonging' and a desire to 'preserve' and sustain a distinctive way of life. The young women's views indicate that a focus on broad, national, tensions may be misleading with regard to comprehending their perspectives.

If such tensions exist in British society, then the young women's views indicate that rather than being played out at a national level, the local spaces of everyday life are where 'tensions' are being negotiated. Local spaces are where residence alongside white people and feelings of belonging to place are constructed and sustained. The description and analysis of the young women's views indicates a complex pattern of relationships with white neighbours. Whilst the focus of debate about 'multicultural' Britain is often at the national level (Parekh, 1998; Hall, 2000) the local context is of significance too.

In addition, supposed tensions are not so clear cut. For the young women, a sense of belonging to Britain was not dependant upon having a common sense of belonging with white people. Racialised identities meant that their perceptions of place and belonging in it were distinctive from the perceptions of white people. Because their perceptions of belonging were multifaceted, however, apprehension of racism, views about place different to those held by white people and long-term affinity with Pakistan, could all be incorporated in

constructions of belonging in the locality. Though a sense of belonging to 'Britain' may be unappealing, the young women articulated a sense of identification with and belonging in their neighbourhood.

Therefore, this research is indicative of the role of locality in young Asian women's perceptions of identity and belonging. This and other research focussing on young people in urban neighbourhoods (e.g. Back, 1996) shows that to understand how members of minority ethnic groups experience identity and belonging in Britain sociology must look beyond the role of the nation.

### **9.5 Conclusions.**

This thesis has broadened sociological knowledge about young Asian women's perspectives about 'home'. More specifically, it has extended knowledge about how the young women understood identity and belonging in relation to their views about place.

Description and analysis of the young women's views revealed two points about their perspectives about 'home'. These have been overlooked by existing sociological accounts that are limited by one-dimensional conceptualisations of belonging.

Firstly, the young women's views have revealed the role of meanings about 'race'. Apprehension about encountering 'racism' was a constant that pervaded the young women's understanding of place in Sheffield. This did not prevent

belonging, as other interpretations of the identity of place may suggest (for example, Taylor et al, 1996). It was integral to the young women's imagining of the neighbourhood and the city and their feelings of belonging to them.

Therefore, the findings of this thesis call for a reappraisal of how young Asian women are understood sociologically. 'Racism' was a core, mundane element of their social world. Their experience were not just defined by the issues surround their culture or their affiliation to British or Asian culture. Rassoul (1999) argued that racism has a central role in the views of young Asians. My thesis emphasises the pervasive role of 'racism'. This role of 'racism' has to be given greater attention.

My findings also call for recognition of the mundane role of 'racism', as perceived on an everyday basis in wider debate. Racism is not just something that has a concrete role in society, such as leading to disadvantage in employment. It is part of the mundane fabric of the social worlds of groups like the young women, underlying their constructions of identity and belonging.

Secondly, the young women had feelings of belonging to Sheffield, but this did not mean that they did not have any feelings of belonging to Pakistan. They had multifaceted identities that incorporated multifaceted feelings of belonging.

They identified as Pakistanis in Sheffield, reflected in a long- term sense of affinity with (rather than belonging in) Pakistan. Views about affinity with Pakistan were mediated through parental and wider familial perspectives, in



addition to views about place. A sense of belonging or 'home' is often depicted as having symbolic qualities. My research has shown how the symbolic can be very mundane.

The young women drew on a number of reference points in their interpretations of identity and described the complexity of their identities. The young women described how the different facets of their identities were not independent from each other, as the concept of multiple identities suggests, but were interwoven. This was seen in their identification as Pakistanis in Sheffield, where affinity with Pakistan and a sense of belonging in Sheffield were interwoven. The young women simultaneously looked towards Sheffield and Pakistan in their understandings of themselves; they were not trapped 'between two cultures'. Identities were multifaceted, not multiple. Views about place mediated these perceptions, which the young women took for granted as part of the fabric of their social world.

## Appendix I.

### **Interview Guide.**

#### *School*

- What has been your experienced as a student in this school? Explore views.
- Why did you come to this school?
- Hopes for the future?
  - What would you like to do after school?
  - What do you think you will do?
  - Where would you like to live?
  - What does your family think about this? What do you think they would like you to do?

#### *Family*

- Could you tell be about your family?
  - When did your family move here from Pakistan?
  - Do you know why they decided to do this?
  - Do you think life here met their expectations?
  - Have you always lived in Sheffield?
  - Do you think Sheffield/Britain has me their hopes?
- What kinds of things do you do at home? What do you do at weekends, for example? Do you have responsibilities, what are they?
- Do other members of your family live in your area? What do you think about this?
- Do you have friends who live near you? Do you meet up with them out of school? What do you do?
- Does your family keep in touch with family in Pakistan? Do you think it is important to have this connections? What do you think about this? Do you think you will maintain contact in the future?

#### *Views about the neighbourhood.*

- Tell me about your area? What kind of place is it? How would you describe it to someone who had never been there?
- Are there places that you use/go to in your area, facilities such as a youth centre, shops etc? How important are they to you? If you don't use them, why?
- What do you think of the shops in your area? Do you use them? When, why and what do you buy?
- Do you think there are things that could be improved about your area- could it be made a better place to live?
- What do you like about living in your area? What do you dislike?
- What do you think other people living in your area think about it? A white young woman, for example?
- How do you think your area compares, as a place to live, with other parts of Sheffield? Prompt different neighbourhoods.
- What do you think it would be like to live in another part of Sheffield?

#### *Views about Sheffield.*

- Do you go to the city centre? When, why, who with?
- What do you think about going to the city centre?
- Do you ever visit other parts of Sheffield? Why- relatives, shopping?
- How do you think Sheffield compares with other cities? Do you ever go to Bradford, Birmingham?
- When people from outside Sheffield talk about the city, they often focus on things like the steel industry, and talk about white people- do you think this is an accurate view about what Sheffield is like? How would you describe the Sheffield that you live in?
- Would you say that you feel that your neighbourhood or Sheffield (or both) feel like there your home? How do you feel about Pakistan? What does this word 'home' mean to you?
- How do you think your family and friends feel about this? Where do you think they call home?
- Do you think your view about this is different to other people in your neighbourhood? What about white and black people who live near you?



- Prompt card- Looking at the terms of this card (Pakistani, Asian, Muslim, Black, Sheffielder, British, English, Northern), do you think you would use any of them to describe yourself? What do you think about these terms? Are there any that you would use that aren't there?

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