

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

CONTESTED IDENTITIES: BRITISH-PAKISTANI WOMEN IN LUTON

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis is concerned with investigating the lives of British-Pakistani women and their agency in constructing and reconstructing their identities. Previous constructions of British-Pakistani women's character have deemed these women 'passive', hence my concerns have been to examine their passivity/agency in relation to identity construction processes. Identities were conceptualised using Avtar Brah's notions of identities, as difference, situational and subjective, in order to understand the nature of identities in relation to British-Pakistani women and to present the women's specificity.

Previous studies ignored British-Pakistani women's agency in their communities, which has meant an absence of literature within the social sciences relating to their experiences in contemporary Britain. The aim of this study was to redress this balance and place these women and their concerns onto the research agenda and to retheorise our understandings of the women, but also the community in which they live.

Research comprising observations, in-depth interviews, was conducted in Luton. Analyses of fieldwork data were interrogated with theory derived from literature by Black and South Asian feminists with biographical insights used to develop a specific approach which allows women a voice to speak of their experiences in order to understand British-Pakistani women's specificity and agency in (re)creating their own and future generations' identities.

The relationship between British-Pakistani women's identity creation and the empirical chapters, 'Community: Site for Negotiating and Renegotiating Identities', 'Negotiated

gender relations within family contexts', 'Intergenerational Relations: Contested Identities' was discussed. What emerged was that identities of British-Pakistani women are multidimensional and dynamic, and that women's agency in producing and reproducing these was of importance. British-Pakistani women are the bearers and upholders of traditions, but they are also modifying, changing and challenging elements of their traditions to appropriate these in a contemporary context. This demonstrated that they have fluid identities and use them to negotiate various aspects of their lives in order to maximise control over their lives. The study illuminates the contested nature of identities in this community, implying identity creation is an ongoing process, due to the multifaceted nature of the individuals' identities.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

British-Pakistani identities are complex, multidimensional, dynamic, and changing, across a number of intersecting social divisions. They are also situational and subjective (Brah, 1996) in that the individual is active in processes of constructing, reconstructing and modifying them as appropriate to their lives in a contemporary context (Bhachu, 1993). Identity constructions are based on processes of negotiations and renegotiations, within which actors adopt and/or reject certain traditions as articulated by members of a given community¹. The process itself is one, which is fluid and subject to continuous modifications according to how individuals view their position in a particular context and how they appropriate particular identities within this at a given time (Brah, 1992, 1996). British-Pakistani identities must essentially be viewed in terms of their multidimensionality and fluidity, within which gender presents challenges to ethnic and religious structures. British-Pakistani women are active agents in processes of identity creation, modification and recreation. However, British-Pakistani identity construction is not a straightforward process, made more complex by the fact that the minority and majority communities, within which individuals live, are instrumental in shaping this. I am not denying the actors' input in creating identities, but to point out that constraints on identity formation can be placed by the wider context within which individuals are situated, which brings about the contested nature of minority identities (Brah, 1996).

The role of British-Pakistani women in constructing and reconstructing identities is of crucial importance and has rarely (if at all) been documented in academic discourses (Dahya, 1965, Saifullah-Khan, 1976, 1979, Shaw, 1988, Modood et al, 1992, 1994, Jacobs, 1997). This role is of prime importance as they are the bearers of tradition, a key signifier of racialised relations and bodies in reproducing culture and generations, but they are also creating and recreating cultural traditions in order to take some control

¹ The use of the concept of 'community' throughout this study is a descriptive one. In that it describes a group of people sharing common ethnic and/or religious identities and a shared geography (Dominelli, 1989). In other words, it will not be used in its traditional sense of implying internal cohesiveness and homogeneity, instead it is used to refer to social networks whose members share common characteristics as a minority group in a Western society, and a common geographical location in contemporary Britain. The term does not simply denote the ethnic minority 'community' participants to this study are situated within, but also the wider community, ie, the mainstream British society, which also forms part of British-Pakistani's identity as British citizens. Thus the concept is employed to describe both the minority and majority communities within which British-Pakistanis live.

over their lives (Dominelli, 2000). The aim of this study is to present this group of women silenced by dominant ideologies surrounding their character and their cultural systems, and to allow them to speak of their experiences, using their own voices, in order that the dominant ideological constructions are dispelled and that their active agency is demonstrated in a variety of ways. In order to do this, it is necessary to explore processes of identity/ies² creation (Bhachu, 1993, Modood, et al, 1994, Brah, 1996) relating to a community of British-Pakistani women in Luton, and to examine the ways in which identity/ies are negotiated within this community.

In this chapter, I will be looking at the inadequacies of previous literature in understanding the complexities surrounding British-Pakistani-Muslim identity formation. I will be arguing that the literature on ethnicity and identity is deficient in explaining the specificity of British-Pakistanis women, as it submerges this group into the broader categories of 'Black' and/or 'South Asian', but it also ignores women's agency in processes of identity creation in (Saifullah-Khan, 1976, Shaw, 1988, Modood et al, 1994.1996). I shall also be arguing against the 'ethnicity' approach as advanced by (Saifullah-Khan 1976, 1977), for its tendency to situate British-Pakistani identities within a static framework. The 'ethnicity' approach situates women within a passive framework thus, reinforcing stereotypes surrounding their character as 'passive' and 'submissive', ignoring their active agency in constructing and reconstructing their own and future generation's identities (Saifullah-Khan, 1976, Shaw, 1988). In this thesis, I will be placing British-Pakistani women's agency as central in identity/ies (re)creation processes, as emerged during my observations and interactions with this community of women.

In doing this, I will discuss the different feminist perspectives – 'white', Black and South Asian, and how these may or may not relate to the subjective experiences of British-Pakistani women's lives. In particular, I will be critiquing 'white' feminist³ writers (Firestone, 1970, Millet, 1971, Barrett and McIntosh, 1983) who fail to account for the racial, ethnic and religious dimensions of British-Pakistani women's identity.

² Identity/ies is used to demonstrate the multifaceted nature of identities and throughout this thesis, I will use identity/ies, identity and identities, interchangeably.

³ The term 'white' will be used to describe the dominant population, although I am aware that it is contested in that not all white ethnic groups consider themselves as the dominant majority, for example, Irish, Eastern European and some Southern European groups.

for the racial, ethnic and religious dimensions of British-Pakistani women's identity. Black feminists (hooks, 1981; Carby, 1982; Davis, 1983; Giddings, 1984; James, 1993) recognise that 'race', class and gender are a burden for non-white women and consider it an important aspect of Black women's identities, which allows for a consideration of British-Pakistani women's lives, although their religious and cultural traditions will differ from Black women and 'race' alone would not be adequate in explaining their position within their families and community. South Asian feminists (Wilson, 1978, Trivedi, 1984, Brah, 1992, 1996, Bhachu, 1993, Bhopal, 1997) consider the cultural and religious dimensions of some South Asian women in Britain but tend to submerge British-Pakistani women's experiences into the broader category of 'South Asian', which denies their specificity. I shall be arguing that while both Black and South Asian feminist perspectives have shaped my thinking, in relation to gender, class and 'race', a particular approach is required to theorise the position of British-Pakistani women, if their agency in relation to processes of identity/ies creation are to be understood.

My ideas will attempt to fill the gap that exists in the previous literature, by giving British-Pakistani women a voice and presenting them as active agents in processes of identity construction and reconstruction, thus, challenging dominant ideologies surrounding their character as 'passive' (Saifullah-Khan, 1976). I will do this by constructing a theoretical framework that allows for an analysis that sees identities as fluid, multidimensional, within which continuities and discontinuities occur and the transformations taking place through the creation of new identities. In other words, I will be arguing against essentialist and static perspectives on identity, such as the 'ethnicity' and Afrocentric approaches (Saifullah-Khan, 1979, Shaw, 1988; Asanti 1987, 1990; Hill-Collins, 1990) which do not account for change and continuities impacting on identity formation relating to this particular community of British-Pakistani women and propose to view their identities in constant reformation (Brah, 1996, Dominelli, 2000). I will also be outlining the structure of the thesis and will conclude that British-Pakistani identities can only be understood as being in constant formation and reformation.

First of all it is necessary to view how ethnicity and identities are conceptualised in academic discourses and how, if at all, these relate to the community of British-Pakistani women I undertook this study with. I will then move onto the ways in which

South Asians in general and British-Pakistanis in particular, have been represented in previous literature, and how these representations have led to my developing a theoretical framework that will attempt to explain the lives of British-Pakistani women in Luton. Throughout this thesis, I will be using the concept of identity to understand the relationship between British-Pakistani-Muslims in Luton and the broader society and their relationships with each other as a community.

Ethnicity and Identities

Ethnic identities are constructed within specific contexts (Bhachu, 1993, Modood et al 1994, Brah, 1992, 1996). They are neither static nor fixed, but dynamic and continuously created and recreated (Brah, 1996). Individuals are active in constructing and reconstructing these, through identification with members of their community. For example, British-Pakistani men and women share experiences of racism, therefore, viewing identity constructions must consider the effects on individuals belonging to and/or identifying with specific communities. The terms 'ethnic minority community', 'the Black community' and/or 'the South Asian community', are ways in which large concentrations of ethnic minority groups in particular localities are described (Modood, et al, 1994, 1996). These descriptions suggest that these communities are internally homogenous, in terms of their social organisations. If this were the case, then the term 'Black community' would be adequate in explaining the structural position of all non-white ethnic minorities in Britain. Yet, inter-ethnic divisions exist within minority groups and are increasingly being asserted and reflected in the use of dual and multiple terms such as 'Black-British', 'British-Asians', 'British-Chinese', British-Muslims and so forth (Modood, et al, 1994) indicate the contested nature of identities among minority groups in Britain. But I would argue that within ethnic identities, gender as social relations must also be incorporated into these, for an adequate understanding of the nature of identity/ies creation processes within minority communities. While men and women of Black and non-white backgrounds share racism, women alone experience gender differentiation (Davis, 1983, Trivedi, 1984, Bhachu, 1993, Bhopal, 1997). This points to how social divisions within a minority community can mean identities become contested and demonstrates the diversity of members in a given community. Categories used to describe minority (and majority) groups are problematic in this sense, as they attempt to lump people together to present an impression of internal homogeneity (Brah,

1992, 1996) that can exclude internal conflicts and contestations to identity/ies. Specificity of individuals within the groups becomes secondary and group identities become prominent, which is misleading in relation to gender and its dimension.

The category 'white' for example, implies homogeneity, without consideration of the diversity within the European groups. To state one's ethnic status as 'white' is unhelpful and problematic for a variety of reasons, similar to those advanced by 'anti-homogenisers' (Modood, et al, 1994, 1996) criticising blanket terms such as Black and South Asian. The all-encompassing category of 'White European' contains several differentiated groups, including, 'Eastern European', 'Western European' 'Northern European' and 'Southern European', in addition to numerous national, regional and contested territories/identities within these, including for example, Basque Separatists in Spain. Within these broader categories, differences are asserted by the respective group members, in terms of their countries of origin, regions and so forth. It would be erroneous to assume that the British would consider themselves 'Europeans' alone without the sub-categories of British, English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish, among other smaller groups identifying themselves as, for example, 'Celts'⁴.

If this were the case, then why are current political processes (used by the Labour government) attempting to convince the British population to adopt a European unitary identity through economic processes such as the single-European currency? Why is there opposition to any political and economic processes appearing to submerge Britons into a broader category of European? Why have the Scottish and Welsh voted for devolution and separate governing rights from Westminster, England? Are these legitimate responses and reactions to nationhood and/or nationalism, or resistance to processes of globalisation, where individuals (and communities) see separate and distinct identities subsumed into a single unitary identity of belonging to one world? If identities are simple, fixed constructs then why are minority (and majority) identities being asserted and reasserted in a climate of globalisation? Is it the impact of global technologies - communications, economies and ecological concerns, that have impacted on processes of separate community structures and identity assertions? These questions

⁴As we have seen the assertion of separate identities has impacted on processes of devolution in Britain, where self-rule was sought and gained by the Welsh and Scottish populations.

are important in viewing community structures and changes taking place within them, particularly so as they point to the complex nature of identity construction, but for the purpose of this study, suffices to raise these questions rather than attempt to answer them. Yet, this demonstrates how individuals are concerned with asserting their specificity, in identity terms at least. And this is particularly so among British-Pakistani women in Luton, whose specificity needs to be examined in order to understand their lives in British society.

In addition to preferences for specific identity assertion, terms that describe groups are also under continuous change, depending on the context within which they are created. During the 1960s, the term 'Afro-American' was popular amongst the Black community, but this was changed due to the fact that the name 'Afro' was used to describe a hairstyle popularised by many people of African origin, in the 1970s (Davis, 1983). In the United States, the use of the term 'African-American' in the 1990s has become popular as a form of self-description. While the former term is in popular use in America, the term 'Black' remains the most preferred self-description according to a survey published by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a black research think tank based in Washington D. C (Jennings, 1992). While both terms are considered interchangeable, it has been pointed out by some observers that Black is more appropriate because it reflects the broader African diaspora (Jennings, 1992).

The term 'Black' used in Britain has been contested by, among others, Modood et al (1994) who argue against the use of 'Black' as a descriptive term for its tendencies to lump together all non-whites. Modood et al (1996) reject attempts to classify South Asians as Black for the purposes of colour-solidarity and political identity. They view this as inadequate in explaining or understanding the position of South Asians in Britain (Modood, et al, 1994). Its use has been viewed as derogatory to some South Asians, who based on their historical experiences (Brah, 1992) associate it with, low status, which distances individuals from being labelled as Black (Brah, 1992, Modood et al, 1994). The term Black for African-Americans is constructed around positive images of Blackness, and was a reaction to the dominant population in America (Davis, 1983). By inverting the category and identifying with it, has had a positive impact on Black Americans. Among South Asians in Britain however, the term holds negative connotations, dating back to prejudices within the Indian sub-continent and indeed the

Indian diaspora in general (Modood et al, 1994, Modood, 1996; Brah, 1996). British-Pakistanis too, view Black as a negative term and therefore, would not use this to describe themselves. Instead they draw on their multiple affiliations relating to their religion, region of origin in Pakistan and the broader terms Pakistani and British (although the latter is used more to demonstrate their official status, rather than to do with belonging, discussed in chapter 3).

Although Modood et al (1994, 1996) claim an anti-essentialising stance on ethnic identities; their use of the broad term 'Asian' is in itself problematic. For example, the use of British-Asian is insufficient in explaining the different categories of 'Asian'; does the category incorporate and analyse adequately the position of Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese minorities (amongst others) in Britain today? Such blanket terms are being continuously challenged leading to developments of new forms of identity constructions, such as British-Indian, British-Muslim, British-Pakistani, British-Chinese and so forth (Jacobs, 1997, Song, 1997).

While these terms may not necessarily describe individuals and/or groups adequately, they are at least attempts at understanding the multifaceted and plural nature of identities and recognise the contested nature of these for members. On the other hand, the development of the term 'hybrid', in relation to describing the multidimensionality of identities, is a source of concern and problematic. Originally the term denoted an amalgamation or mixture (of animals) but is now used to describe a dialectical articulation (Bhaba, 1994). The term is pejorative for a number of reasons including the connotations attached to it about mixed breeding and describes negatively, inter-breeding amongst animals, but it is also indicative of the racist nature of colonialism and its attempts at keeping the 'races' apart (Bhaba, 1994). According to Homi Bhaba (1994):

"Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities.... represents that ambivalent 'turn' of the discriminated subject into a the terrifying, exorbitant object of paranoid classification - a disturbing questioning of the images and presences of authority." (Bhaba, 1994)

Its use as a dialectical articulation is captured in the works of Stuart Hall on the black experience in Britain, in which he recalls a moment of homogenisation in which 'blackness' contests dominant representations of black people. Out of this awareness of commonality (of being black), comes an awareness of the heterogeneity, of diffuseness, of being part of a dispersed population - what Hall calls "diaspora-isation" (Young, 1995). In this sense, hybridity describes a culture composed of people retaining links with the territories of their forbears but coming to terms with a culture they inhabit. They have no wish to return to their 'homeland' or of recovering any ethnically 'pure' or absolute identity; yet, they retain traces of other cultures, traditions and histories and resist assimilation (Hall, in Young, 1995). As a dialectical articulation the term is useful in explaining cultural links with the 'homeland' and the 'hostland', nevertheless, its use is still disparaging and is not favoured for the purpose of this thesis.

The negative, imperialist images conjured up by the term itself, makes it difficult to employ as an analytical concept in this study, although it is accepted for its usefulness in cultural studies of dispersed populations in the diaspora, but will not be used to describe cultural processes of British-Pakistanis in Luton. Instead, this group will be viewed within a cultural 'maintenance', 'transformation' and appropriation framework (Bhachu, 1993) which brings with it elements of a synthesis model (Ballard, 1994) in viewing multiple identities and as lived experience (Brah, 1996) to demonstrate specificities. These models unlike the hybridity model, allow a consideration of the active agency of individuals involved in processes of maintaining links with 'homelands', transforming cultural process of both the 'home/host' lands and appropriating these within a contemporary British context. Thus, British-Pakistani identities have to be conceptualised within a framework that accounts for their multidimensionality, allowing for ethnic (as well as intra-ethnic, which incorporates the Kashmiri identity of many in Luton), religious, class, gender and age; the context within which these are negotiated and constructed, and as dynamic and continuously changing.

In a period where rapid global communications and technological advances are being seen, coupled with developments of global economies, a homogenising process is perhaps inadvertently taking place. But its impact on individuals is one which sees them actively presenting themselves as different and diverse through processes of identity assertions, whether these are ethnic, religious, national and/or gender identities

(Brah, 1992, 1996). To assert separate identities is challenging the given structures and dominant ideologies that have, and continue to dictate, the ways in which people's lives should be articulated. Asserting identities, such as Native-American, Native-Australian, among others, is symbolic of the history of domination impacting on these groups in their respective contemporary societies. To assert these identities today is indicative of the challenges posed to the dominant structures attempting to gloss over histories of colonisation and imperialism. Essentially, identities are situational and subject to change and modifications, depending on the specific contexts within which they are negotiated and constructed (Brah, 1992, 1996). They are neither fixed nor static, and are actively undergoing transformations (Bhachu, 1993).

Terms and labels used, as racial and/or ethnic self-description should be viewed in fluid and dynamic terms, where individuals' (and collective) agency is used to create and appropriate these (Brah, 1992). Identities, and self-descriptions are constructed within specific contexts and with the approval of those whose identifications these constructs represent. The challenges presented to homogeneous terms from various ethnic minority groups does not suggest disharmony or disunity per se, rather that separate and diverse identities need to be presented in order that generalisations (based on homogeneous categories such as Black and/or South/Asian) and stereotypes can be examined and myths dispelled. For example, the term British-Pakistani in Luton is undergoing changes to account for the multifaceted nature of individuals' affiliations and perceptions of their identities, in which social divisions including gender present a challenge.

In this thesis, I will be using terms such as British-Pakistani and British-Pakistani-Muslims interchangeably, which is an example of the ways in which terms are negotiated and renegotiated to consider the specific context within which they are created. Individuals in Luton used terms such as Pakistani, Kashmiri⁵, British-Pakistani, British-Pakistani-Muslims and so on to describe themselves. The term 'Kashmiri' itself is a contested term, as the territory is under dispute by both Pakistan and India and is therefore, a region rather than a nation, yet, a large number of British-Pakistanis in

⁵ The issue of a Kashmiri identity in relation to British-Pakistanis in Luton will be discussed in chapter 3.

Luton originating from this region use this to define themselves. The Borough Council also uses the term in its ethnic monitoring forms, which demonstrates the widespread use of 'Kashmiri' as a form of identity assertion among British-Pakistanis in Luton. This adds another dimension to the ways in which identities are contested and under continuous construction and reconstruction in a climate where distinctiveness of individuals and collectives becomes more complex by the use of diverse terms to define themselves and in which gender presents a challenge.

While Modood et al (1994) have attempted to present diversity on the basis of political identity and colour solidarity of 'Blacks' and 'Asians' in Britain, they have failed to consider the dimension of gender within this analysis. Gender identities are no less problematic than racial and ethnic identities. In a similar way to Modood et al's challenges to the use of the term 'Black' in relation to South Asians and other non-white groups in Britain, the use of the term 'Black Feminism' has been challenged by Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1990, 1992). They argue against the use of the term to describe all non-white feminists including South Asians and Middle-Easterners, who do not wish to be labelled in a way that subsumes their specificity into broader categories (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). These issues will be discussed later on in the chapter, when I will be looking at the ways in which gender is racialised. Firstly however, it is necessary to view the ways in which South Asian and British-Pakistani communities have been represented in previous discourses. I will be arguing that British-Pakistani women's position within these, place them in a passive framework which denies their active agency.

Past representations and contemporary theorisations of British-Pakistani identities

Previous studies on migration and settlement of ethnic minority communities have tended to make assumptions, which either excluded or underplayed the position of women in the migratory process (Saifullah-Khan, 1977, 1979, Ballard and Ballard, 1979; Watson, 1977). These studies are anthropological in nature and were undertaken in the 1970s, with the very few exceptions (Saifullah-Khan, 1977, 1979; Werbner, 1982; Jeffries, 1977; Anwar, 1979, 1982 1995; Shaw, 1988). The fact that the majority of these studies were conducted in the 1970s, issues of generational change and the position of 'second generation' British-Pakistanis has not been adequately documented.

These changes are crucial in that it is this generation who, in becoming adults have been instrumental in constructing, reconstructing and/or transforming cultural processes of the previous generation, for whom settlement in Britain was seen as transitory and well documented in Anwar's (1979) 'Myth of Return'. Anwar's (1979) research indicated that many migrants viewed their stay in Britain as temporary and were sustained by 'the myth of return'. Clearly, this process has not taken place and British-Pakistanis remain a permanent feature of contemporary British society. The second and subsequent generations have accepted that they are here to stay. Britain is their country too and issues of belonging become a part of identity (re)creation.

South Asians in contemporary Britain are a heterogeneous category. They originate from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, as well as parts of East Africa (Modood et al, 1994; Brah, 1992, 1996; Ahmad, 1996). There are vast diversities, within this category, again based on language, region of origin - whether one originates from rural societies in Pakistan or the urban centres – and include the dimensions of class, gender and age. These differences are significant to British-Pakistanis in Luton, as their identities are also based around individuals' origins in Pakistan. In Luton in particular, there are at least two different broad categories of British-Pakistanis, those originating from various parts of Pakistan (both urban and rural) and those from the disputed territory of Kashmir, namely Azad (Free) Kashmir. These identifications have been instrumental in the ways in which identities are constructed and articulated (discussed further in chapter 3). While previous studies have failed to recognise internal diversities impacting on identities of British-Pakistanis in contemporary Britain, this study aims to highlight these as significant in the formation of British-Pakistani women's identities.

In popular and academic discourses, South Asian women have been negatively characterised as passive, submissive and subject to patriarchal authority (Bell, 1968; Goodall, 1968; Brah, 1992; Parmar, 1982; Trivedi, 1984). Such characterisations remove their active agency in processes of transforming and appropriating cultural practices in their every day lives. To assume South Asian women are passive recipients of patriarchal relations is conforming to Eurocentric definitions of their characters without an understanding of their lived realities. It cannot be denied that patriarchy exists, but to assume that women of British-Pakistani origin are passive recipients of such relations is ignoring the active agency of these women. Such assumptions can also

ignore the ways in which these women challenge family processes and patriarchy without pathologising cultural systems of minority groups they belong to. As Trivedi (1984) and Brah (1992) rightly point out, South Asian women want to make their own choices as to how and why they challenge their own family and marriage systems rather than accept a racist definition of these. More recently however, an increasing number of studies have focused either directly or indirectly on the position of migrant women as being actively involved in negotiating and articulating cultural processes, particularly within the family and wider kin (Buijs, 1993, Bhachu, 1993). While others have demonstrated their economic activity and labour participation within the migratory process (Parmar, 1982; Phizacklea, 1987; Brah, 1992; Bhavnani, 1995).

In addition to the process of migration, other important studies have focused on the impact of immigration and nationality legislation on 'Black' women (Parmar, 1982, Carby, 1982) to demonstrate ethnic minority women's agency, and how they challenged racist assumptions about their character by confronting oppressive (and offensive) policies such as virginity testing at Heathrow airport, on newly arrived brides from the Indian sub-continent (see Brah, 1996 and Trivedi, 1984 for details of these policies and how South Asian women successfully campaigned against them). Similarly, as we shall see later on, my own research indicates that British-Pakistani women are actively challenging oppressive structures and (re)creating their identities, both within their community and the wider community they are a part of.

Difference and diversity (Brah, 1996) must remain at the heart of any analyses relating to this community of British-Pakistanis. Without valuing diversity, acceptance of and respect for, different structures and processes surrounding institutions such as the family and community would serve to pathologise the 'other' and value sameness. It is with these issues and questions surrounding existing theories of gender as advanced by traditional feminists (Firestone, 1970, Millet, 1971), and studies of South Asian communities in Britain, specifically British-Pakistani communities, and their inadequacy in explaining the position of women within such communities that this thesis is concerned with. It is also about the ways in which British-Pakistani communities have been presented in essentialist terms. By essentialist terms I am referring to the ways in which previous literature and studies surrounding British-Pakistani communities, situate members within fixed and unchanging frameworks, as

advanced by the social anthropologists adopting an 'ethnicity' approach (Saifullah-Khan, 1979, Watson, 1977, Shaw, 1988).

Theoretical Framework

Throughout this study, I will be challenging the 'ethnicity' approach (Parmar, 1982) taken by social anthropological studies (Saifullah-Khan, 1979; Watson, 1977; Shaw, 1988) which I argue, do not go far enough in explaining the active agency of British-Pakistani women, nor the complexities governing their identity formation and community structures and processes. By failing to do this, they are presenting these women as victims of cultural practices rather than actively involved in constructing and reconstructing these. Such studies also have the effects of reinforcing stereotypes by presenting British-Pakistanis in a fixed and unchanging way. Structural disadvantage is only touched upon in these studies and as such, they fail to address issues of 'multiple oppression' (Davis, 1984) - 'race', class and gender, faced by British-Pakistani women. This study recognises the disadvantages and discriminations British-Pakistani women experience living in a Western racist society such as Britain.

The theoretical concepts and conceptual framework used in this study were drawn from the data collected when undertaking this study. The focus is on the family, community and intergenerational relations as the key areas of British-Pakistani women's lives. I chose to explore these areas, because of the importance placed on them by the women involved in this study. The position of British-Pakistani women can be understood using these arenas and their voices to demonstrate their specificities and to provide examples of their struggles and agency in identity formation and reformation processes.

The arena of the family lends itself to infinite variation, including choice and flexibility for negotiation between its members over the conditions in which they inhabit a common living space. South Asian family forms differ significantly within and between ethnic groups. Characteristics of the South Asian family have been well documented (Anwar, 1979, Gardner and Shukur, 1994, Saifullah-Khan, 1979, Shaw, 1988, Stopes-Roe and Cochrane, 1990). Some studies examined the spatial patterns of settlements of Punjabi Sikhs (Ballard and Ballard, 1977, Kalra, 1980) and Pakistanis (Saifullah-Khan, 1977, 1979, Shaw, 1988, Werbner, 1979, 1990) and found that patterns recreated in

Britain were very similar to those based on village and kinship networks of the 'sending societies'. Yet, little has been documented about the experiences of women's agency in creating and recreating family and community processes and identities. Where women's roles have been discussed they tend to be situated in a framework of 'passivity' (Saifullah-Khan, 1977, Shaw, 1988). This was not the experience of all British-Pakistani women participating in this study. The family for these women can sometimes be a source of their subordination, in that they are sometimes involved (directly and/or indirectly) in maintaining patriarchal traditions, as women are entrusted with the burden of carrying the family and community *izzat* (Wilson, 1978). At the same time, women are also challenging patriarchal structures and asserting their agency in a variety of ways, using various strategies (Brah, 1996, Parmar, 1982, Trivedi, 1984).

Family structures and processes are crucial to any analysis of British-Pakistani women's lives, as it is this arena in which identities are negotiated, contested and articulated and where women's agency is demonstrated. British-Pakistani women's roles are changing to allow for the social and economic factors which impact on their traditional role that situates them within the private domain of the family (Shaw, 1988) and leads to the creation of new roles, where they are participating in the labour market for example. These new roles (working outside of the home) have consequences for the ways in which care is given to elders (discussed in chapter 5). Through their voices British-Pakistani women can articulate key concerns relating to the changes taking place within the family, the community and through intergenerational relations and how these changes impact on their identity/ies creation. British-Pakistani women are the bearers and upholders of tradition, but are also carving out identities that allow for the continuation of some traditions and the discontinuation of others, as will be seen in the empirical chapters.

By exploring the concepts of the family, community and intergenerational relations, provides an understanding of the complexities surrounding identity formation of British-Pakistani women's. It is these institutions that are liberating to women on the one hand, where they receive support from community members and family relations; are able to practice their cultural traditions while simultaneously recreating these and are cushioned from racism and cultural pathology by outsiders. On the other hand, the family and community are sites of struggles and resistance, in which women are continuously

negotiating and renegotiating gender, class and age relations. Generational relations are also important because of the ways in which women of different generations relate with each other; how sometimes they are in conflict and at others they are unified in their aims for improving the position of women within the community. For these reasons, I considered these areas of their lives to be important and because of the importance, the women themselves placed on these. I felt that by exploring these arenas, as they emerged from the data, I would gain a better understanding of their lives and experiences.

First of all however, it is necessary to look at the analysis offered by different feminists, including a critique of the dominant, 'white' feminist perspective, by arguing that it does not go far enough in explaining the position of non-white women (Parmar, 1982, Carby, 1982, Trivedi, 1984, Bhachu, 1985, Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992, Brewer, 1993, James, 1993). I will argue that 'white' feminist perspectives ignore the importance British-Pakistani women place on family life, by viewing the family as a site for women's subordination (Millet, 1970, Oakley, 1974). I will then explore the theoretical position of Black and South Asian feminists, by pointing to the divergences and commonalties between these perspectives and attempt to present a British-Pakistani perspective that allows for an understanding of British-Pakistani women's agency in processes of identity/ies (re)creation. I shall also be pointing out that while non-white feminists face common struggles around issues of racism, a Black feminist perspective is not wholly appropriate in analysing the experiences of British-Pakistani women, due to the different socio-historical experiences of these diverse groups of women and the contexts in which the different feminist perspectives were constructed. It is important to note these differences, as within commonalties of experiences and struggles, arises diversity of interests relating to the specificity of particular groups.

Gendering racialised identity as a point of departure

The South Asian experience in Britain is located in the migratory process and the diaspora (Brah, 1996), which shapes the ways in which this group and particularly women experience social and gender relations. I am not suggesting that South Asians in contemporary Britain do not share common struggles with Black women, particularly those relating to racism, differentiation, class and gender issues (Carby, 1982, Parmar,

1982, Brewer, 1993, Bhopal, 1997), but that by nature of their diverse experiences, they will necessarily experience different social and gender relations. For example, there are departures and divergences relating to say the family and community, and for the purpose of this study, it is necessary to assess some points of convergence and divergence in the lives of Black, 'white' and non-white feminists relating to these arenas.

I intend to use the family and community to demonstrate crucial differences between 'white', Black and South Asian feminist thinking, and how these differences impact on my developing a perspective that allows for the understanding of British-Pakistani women's lives in Luton. According to Brah (1996), questions of difference and convergence point to major differences in the social circumstances of different groups of women, and this will mean that their interests may often be contradictory. An understanding of the lives of British-Pakistani women necessitates in analysis around difference and diversity, as well as the unity that exists between women of different ethnic and class backgrounds.

'White' feminists have viewed the family and community as the main sites of women's oppression (Firestone, 1970, Millet, 1971). Particular attention has been placed on the patriarchal nature of family forms, which serve to repress women's development. For radical feminists, the abolition of the family would go a long way in contributing to women's emancipation (Finch, 1989). Finch (1989) points out:

"Feminist thought has long seen the family as the major obstacle to most women's ability to have power over themselves" (Finch, 1989: 13)

Radical feminism has also been criticised for treating the family and traditional community as reactionary and repressive (Elshtain, 1995). According to Elshtain, feminism has embraced individualism too completely and reduced community to an 'abstract ideology' and an 'empty term'. Elshtain (1995) praises the potential of family and traditional community to 'challenge corporate power and antidemocratic, managerial elites' and to respond to 'legitimate human needs for intimacy and security' and to turn 'disparate elements' into parts of a community with shared values, a

community that cares for its members throughout their lives and is based on a 'solemn commitment' towards this. Elshtain (1995) celebrates historic identity, traditional values, social responsibility and particular ties, while criticising, 'untempered liberalism', non-binding commitment and possessive individualism. She argues that:

"Rather than denying women the meaning their traditional world provided, even under conditions of male domination, feminists should move to challenge a society that downgrades female-created and sustained values". (Elshtain, 1995: 105)

Elshtain's (1995) claims could be viewed as anti-sisterly, for her failure to deal adequately deal with the ways traditional families and communities have perpetuated capitalism and patriarchy (Weiss and Friedman, 1995), yet, her points are relevant to some women who do consider the family and traditional community as valued institutions. Weiss and Friedman (1995) believe that criticising liberalism, which they argue is embedded in our practices of divorce, day care and public social services, 'totally neglects sisterhood' and other non-traditional communities such as women's support groups.

Embodying non-traditional communities such as support groups outside of the arena of the family, should not necessarily suggest that traditional communities are threatened. For many women traditional and non-traditional communities are an essential part of their day-to-day lives and realities (Kibria, 1996). To view the two as contradictory and therefore, problematic in terms of women's choices is to deny their agency in constructing or seeking support structures appropriate to their lives. Without the support networks such as women's groups, British-Pakistani women would experience difficulties in challenging some of the patriarchal constraints such as working outside the home, dealing with issues of domestic violence and creating new identities within their own communities.

In this sense, radical feminism fails to account for the diversity that exists in terms of women's attitudes to this contested arena and the choices they make. These choices often include accommodating the family on the one hand and resisting certain of its structures on the other, such as family hierarchies and the marriage system (Trivedi,

1984). Many South Asian and British-Pakistani women in Britain, value the informal support offered by the family and wider kin (Wilson, 1984; Bhopal, 1997). While simultaneously, they are involved in processes of resistance, including modifying, transforming and appropriating structures (Bhachu, 1993, Kibira, 1996) such as patriarchy. This study views the family within this context and suggests that women are not only instrumental in maintaining particular structures but are modifying and challenging these to take control of their lives. However, it should also be borne in mind that patriarchy does operate within the family, but how it operates and the challenges posed to it should not be underestimated, or reduced to Western conceptions of equality of the sexes.

British-Pakistani women in Luton, see their families, kinship networks and community as providing support, security and a sense of identity which cushions them from the effects of racism and discrimination articulated by the dominant 'white' society. It is within these arenas that women negotiate and renegotiate their identities. It is with this in mind that the study of British-Pakistani women and their position within the family and community can be theorised. However, I do not suggest that the family and community are positive for all British-Pakistani women all the time, but to deny the positive aspects and the choices women make, would be denying their lived experiences. British-Pakistani men and women experience racism, which means that they are united in this sense. Yet, women experience differentiation on the basis of gender too, whether this is within the family and their community or within the wider British society and its institutions (Parmar, 1982, Trivedi, 1984, Brah, 1996).

Therefore, within the common struggles of all women there are also divergences, in terms of 'race' and the discourses that situate us as racialised insiders/outside, post-colonial subjects marked by everyday practices of racism such as the use of the term 'Paki', or other such terms used to racialise people of South Asian origin (Brah, 1992, 1996). The experience of racism, sexism and classism - the 'multiple oppression' (Davis, 1984) is experienced primarily by non-white women - only with regards to 'race' and ethnicity. The commonalties between Black and other non-white feminists are located in the history of racism and patriarchy. Divergences are far greater than the unifying aspects of gender relations. This can also be said of 'white' feminisms. While the underlying issue of challenging patriarchal structures is a unifying aim for feminists

of diverse backgrounds, the ways in which these challenges are posed, necessarily suggest the differences, diversities and commonalties between and within these varying feminisms, borne out of specific social, historical, geographic and economic contexts. The differences of women's experiences impact on the ways in which family relations organised.

Characterisations of Black and South Asian families for example, have tended to present these families in a fixed and unchanging way and are often misleading, as they reinforce stereotypes surrounding the particular minority communities in question. For example, African-Caribbean families are characterised as female-headed lone-parent households, South Asian family structures are seen as premised on an arranged marriage contract, unequal gender relations, hierarchical and living in multi-generational households consisting of wider kin as well as immediate family members. (Saifullah-Khan, 1977; Shaw, 1988; Sonuga-Barke and Shah, 1995; Phoenix, 1987, 1991; Bernades, 1997). These constructions are not denied here, but the extent to which they are used to determine family life of Black and South Asians in Britain, tends to reinforce existing stereotypes without a regard for the different social and historical contexts within which these family types have been constructed and the agency of women involved in these constructions. Black and ethnic minority feminists have argued that 'white' feminists (Barrett and McIntosh, 1983) ignore issues of racism impacting on the lives of Black and South Asian women in the diaspora (Parmar, 1982; Carby, 1982; hooks, 1995, Brah, 1996). Such a perspective also ignores the support systems created by women both within their kin networks and the communities they live in.

Without a consideration of the history of slavery, and the African experience, understanding family structures of African-Caribbeans cannot be conceptualised adequately (Thorogood, 1987, Phoenix, 1987). For example, Thorogood (1987) argues that African-Caribbean family structures have developed as a systematic response to their own particular historical and political experiences. She suggests that the separation of economically active men from their dependants (and hence the prevalence of female-headed lone-parent households) has been historically engendered by West African kinship systems and the experience of slavery, colonialism and migration. As a result, she argues, the economic and emotional independence of African-Caribbean

women has evolved as a cultural norm. Therefore, making their experience of racism different from other racialised ethnic groups.

Similarly, constructions of South Asian families based around notions of reciprocity and obligations, arranged marriages, women as passive victims of patriarchal regimes, familial hierarchies and collective interests overriding individual aspirations, are circulating in academic and popular discourses (Saifullah-Khan, 1977; Watson, 1977; Shaw, 1988). The historical context within which such constructs have been articulated have been ignored. For example, in criticising the stereotype of 'the Asian family', Westwood and Bhachu (1988) pointed out that:

"Even the term 'Asian' is misleading. It was a colonial invention used to describe people of Indian descent few 'Asians' identify with this term in any meaningful way". (Westwood and Bhachu, 1988: 30)

They continue by pointing to the ways in which the different groups forming the unitary category of 'Asian' have begun to:

"See themselves as peoples of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin or identify themselves as Black people and as Panjabis, or Patels (ibid: 20)

Variations in gender organisation, challenges to patriarchy and negotiating family forms and processes, are inevitable features of the diversity between and within groups. Not only is there a great deal of diversity in social relations and arrangements along the lines of ethnic differences, but also in terms of socio-economic-historical contexts, which allows for fluidity rather than fixed notions of gender and family arrangements. Negative portrayals of diverse gender and family arrangements, have the effect of pathologising ethnic minority cultural systems, as a whole, while simultaneously reverting to racist stereotypes in order to justify and legitimate existing inequalities.

In essence, British-Pakistani women may often stress the importance of family but, by doing this, they do not necessarily accept as legitimate the hierarchical organisation of

the household, or the exercise of male power, as will be demonstrated in the chapter 4, as I found during the course of this study, British-Pakistani women are involved in a variety of struggles within the family, yet, continue to value this institution as an important part of their lives. For example, women experiencing domestic violence were mindful that this may be viewed, by outsiders, as the norm, as the constructions of South Asian families, suggest that women in these families passively accept male authority. This was not my experience of women in Luton. However, to avoid cultural pathology many South Asian (Brah, 1996) and British-Pakistani women may continue to suffer violence in the home, rather than have their cultural traditions and communities pathologised.

Black and South Asian feminist Perspectives

Attitudes towards or approaches to differences and diversities within feminism range from 'radical', socialist/Marxist and liberal feminists (Firestone, 1970, Millett, 1971, Finch, 1989, Barrett, 1980). These were seen as the broad categories of the second wave feminism that (re)emerged in the 1960s (Patel, 2000). However, beyond these broad categories are others, perhaps too numerous, and even unaccounted for, but for the purpose of this study, it is necessary to evaluate at least two other types of feminism that have impacted on knowledge of ethnic minority groups living in the West. 'Black' feminists and South Asian feminists have been active in constructing new forms of knowledge bases in order that the perspective of these groups is considered in discourses surrounding 'race', ethnicity, gender and class. Denial of differences within feminism carries difficulties of its own, as the development of such movements is necessarily rooted in their specific historical, political and intellectual contexts (Brah, 1996).

Black feminist thought in Britain arises from and addresses a different history and a different situation than does Black feminist thought in America. The 'Black Power' movement in the USA borne out of a particular set of political and ethnically distinct issues, that are specific to the African/American experience. The absence of Black women from theories of the African-American experience during the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s, led many 'Black' feminist writers of the US (hooks, 1981; Davis, 1983; Giddings, 1984) towards exploring the parameters of a Black feminist

perspective and addressing issues of multiple oppression (Davis, 1983). According to Brewer (1993) traditional feminism and mainstream academic disciplines fail to address issues of oppression and exploitation governing the day-to-day lives of Black women.

“[the] ‘polivocality’ of multiple social locations is historically missing from analyses of oppression and exploitation in traditional feminism, Black studies and mainstream academic disciplines” (Brewer, 1993: 13)

Brewer rightly argues in favour of deconstructing existing frameworks of analyses within the social sciences and other disciplines and proposes theorising Black feminism by understanding ‘race’, class and gender as ‘simultaneous forces’ by:

“Reconstructing the lived experiences, historical positioning, cultural perceptions and social construction of Black women who are enmeshed in and whose ideas emerge out of that experiences”. (Brewer, 1993: 16)

According to James (1993):

“Theorising by Black feminists develops out of Black women’s experiences of multiple interrelated oppressions, including but not limited to, racism/ethnocentrism; sexism/homophobia and classism”. (James, 1993: 2)

While reflecting the diversity of its adherents it also struggles to embrace contradictions. Thus, black feminist theorising reflects a proactive/reactive stance of pragmatic activism, which addresses those issues deemed deleterious to the well being of Black women (James, 1993).

Essentially, Black feminists are arguing that theorising the position of Black women cannot take place without the consideration of the multiple articulations of ‘race, class and gender as social constructs based on the recognition of difference and signifying the simultaneous distinguishing and positioning of groups vis-à-vis one another. While it is

recognised that multiple articulations are vitally important in any analysis of the position of British-Pakistani women in contemporary British society, it is also important to note the different and common experiences of these women. With this in mind it is clear therefore, that debates surrounding gender oppression are not only differently experienced by the diverse groups of women, but that they are also challenged differently. As has already been mentioned above, the differential basis of 'the family' and marital systems of South Asians in general and British-Pakistanis in particular, and African-Caribbeans in contemporary Britain (as well as differences within and between these groups, and African-Americans) necessarily allows for the development of new ways of theorising and analysing women's experiences.

Carby (1982) notes the denial of historical relationships as a key source of the tension between Black and 'white' feminist analyses, which becomes clear in her discussion of three concepts which she identifies as crucial to feminist theory but problematic in their application to Black women's lives: the family, patriarchy and reproduction. Many white feminist analyses of women's oppression have taken 'the family' as their starting point, since this is seen to be the most immediate site for the perpetuation of patriarchal social relations, particularly where gender roles are defined using traditional notions of the males as breadwinners and females as housewives and mothers. Carby (1982) believes such analyses fail to address Black women's experiences:

"We would not wish to deny that the family can be a source of oppression for us but we also wish to examine how the black family has functioned as a prime source of resistance to oppression. We need to recognise that during slavery, periods of colonialism, and under the present authoritarian state, the black family has been a site of political and cultural resistance to racism". (Carby, 1982: 214)

In her attempts at writing the 'herstory' of Black women's lived experiences, Carby (1982) exposes the hidden connections and contradictions between 'white' and Black women's experiences of the family; while many white, middle-class women sought to escape from the narrow confines of domestic existence and enter the paid workforce, it was often Black and/or white working class women whom they employed to take over

the domestic tasks they wished to be free of. Similar arguments apply with regards to the concepts of 'patriarchy' and 'reproduction', where these terms carry different but interrelated meaning and implications for Black and white women respectively (see Carby, 1982).

Convergence and divergences are likely to occur when viewing the position of British-Pakistani women against the debates surrounding the Black feminist experiences of the United States and Britain. Some 'white' feminist theories (Barrett and Mackintosh, 1983) tend to ignore crucial issues surrounding the 'multiple oppression' thesis and therefore, are inadequate in explaining difference, diversity and differentiation based on experiences of belonging to a minority group in a Western society. Gender alone, therefore, cannot adequately explain the male and/or female experiences of British-Pakistanis. Feminisms must reflect in both its theory and practice the 'race' and class situations within which non-white women are located and their experiences of inequalities within this. Without such considerations, non-white women's active agency in challenging hierarchical structures of racist societies such as Britain, would be denied.

The writings of the Black feminists in the United States have been important in demonstrating the presence of Black women and retrieving them from obscurity. The experience of South Asian women differs in terms of not only historical and contemporary experiences but also in terms of cultural and religious differences. That is not to deny the shared experiences of 'multiple oppressions' experienced by Black women and women of different ethnic minority backgrounds. South Asian family structures and expectations of women's roles in the British context are not necessarily experienced in the same way as Black women in the US.

South Asian feminist writers have attacked notions surrounding the character of South Asian women as 'passive', by presenting their lived realities as experienced in social and economic terms (Parmar, 1982, Trivedi, 1984, Brah, 1992, Bhachu, 1993). Bhachu (1993) has pointed to the way in which East African Sikh women have transformed traditional cultural systems surrounding the marriage ritual and appropriated these within a contemporary British context. In other words, ethnic minority women, including British-Pakistanis not only uphold the traditional values of the sending

societies, but are also instrumental in constructing and reconstructing new cultural frameworks.

Trivedi (1984) rejects the ideological perceptions and constructions of South Asian women throughout history, as imperialist and racist. She attacks the myth of passivity surrounding these women and provides historical and contemporary evidence of their revolutionary activities in the political, legal and economic arenas, by contrasting perceptions of the outside world to the lived reality of their lives in Britain and in India. Trivedi (1984) argues that the negative portrayals are illusionary and have their basis in racism and imperialism. She suggests that the lived experiences of this category of women needs to be analysed in order to present a more thorough picture of their reality:

“For a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the lives of [South] Asian women, a more thorough analysis of the complexities that govern day-to-day reality is needed (Trivedi, 1984: 39).

Westwood and Bhachu (1988) have presented South Asian women as active agents by focusing on their contributions to family businesses, where they are often unpaid workers, and their participation in the labour market as skilled workers in the textile industry. Mac an Ghail (1988) has pointed to the theory of ‘resistance within accommodation’ in explaining the active agency of second generation South Asian women within the education system. Here, Mac an Ghail (1988) points to the paradox of young women valuing the education system on the one hand but rejecting the hidden curriculum on the other, which is where the discriminatory and stereotyping elements were experienced by the young women. For example, Mac an Ghail (1988) claims that the young women are aware that structural barriers (such as racism) exist, and are articulated through the hidden curriculum where, for example, teachers actively discouraged young women of South Asian origin from entering further or higher education, channelling women into occupations that require little educational experience. This channelling was guided by stereotypes surrounding South Asian family structures and processes and how the teachers viewed the role of women within these. The young women in Mac an Ghail’s study were aware of their position and

understood the value of education and the discrimination they faced, but were determined to overcome these in order to challenge the system by working within it.

Wade and Souter (1992) in their study on British Asian girls within the education system found examples of social relations that run counter to the stereotypes of male-imposed restrictions. They illustrate this point by presenting a case study of a young woman who expressed the dilemma posed by her mother's refusal to allow her to continue with further education at college, while her father fully supported her. Despite attempts to bring the mother round she refused to allow this. The case was closed and the mother's wishes were upheld. From this, we can see the complexities of power and the diversity in character of these power relations and that gender relations within South Asian families, are not always stacked in favour of the man. The idea that the mother's will has been upheld over her husband's, is an example of the complexities in gender relations and even more importantly, the complexities of cultural processes whereby power relations are continuously constructed and reconstructed. The fluidity of gender and power relations within British-Pakistani families should be noted when considering the lives of women.

Diversity exists not only between different groups of feminists, but also within these categories. It would be erroneous to assume that all 'white' women share the same concerns, as this would deny crucial differences that exist as a result of their different class and ethnic position. Working class women will essentially have different concerns and struggles compared with middle-class women and vice versa. Women of Eastern European background and some Southern European countries may be classed as 'white' but may not necessarily view themselves as part of the dominant white population, as a result of their different socio-historical experiences. Similarly, non-white women may share aspects of gender subordination with 'white' women, but will experience different struggles based on their 'race' and colour. Therefore, the heterogeneous nature of feminisms needs to be considered in any analysis of women's position in society.

Theorising and analysing the experiences of British-Pakistani women's position must consider their lived reality (Hill-Collins, 1990). Without this the liveliness of the debates cannot be adequately assessed. The political implications surrounding women's struggles must first present the diversity of women's experiences and then the variety of

strategies used in attempts at challenging oppression and ultimately any convergence of interest between the different categories of minority ethnic and Black women.

European Orientalist ideologies (Parmar, 1982, Carby, 1982), which situate South Asian women as 'passive' and subject to familial hierarchies, will be argued against throughout this study. Instead portrayals of British-Pakistani women will be presented, as they themselves perceive their position, albeit from my interpretations of the data collected.

Structure of the thesis

The study is divided into 6 chapters (including the Introduction). In chapter 2, I will be discussing the methodology and methods used to undertake this study. I will be pointing to why I chose a qualitative, ethnographic approach in which biography was used as a tool for analysis. I will be discussing why this approach was taken and how it allowed British-Pakistani women to speak of their experiences in relation to identity/ies (re)creation processes. Within this chapter I will be outlining the demographic characteristics and location of the community I undertook this research with, the research process and the advantages and disadvantages associated with using the methodology and methods I chose. Chapter 3 will look at the ways in which identities are constructed in relation to the community and how gender is negotiated, articulated and contested within this community. I will point to the complexities surrounding processes of identity creation and how social identities are contested when individual identities are asserted within the collective.

In chapter 4 I will be examining the family by looking at the marital system and how it impacts on gendered relations and identities. I will be discussing women's roles as bearers of tradition - as the socialisers of children and carriers of their heritages. Within this, the discussion will focus on the ways in which continuities and discontinuities are taking place in relation to women contesting particular structures within the marital system.

In Chapter 5, I will explore the ways in which intergenerational relations are negotiated. In the first part of this chapter, the discussion will look at the key concerns of elders in a changed and changing environment. I will be pointing to ways in which elders are the upholders and maintainers of traditional values and identities. In the second part of this

chapter the discussion will centre on young people's interactions with elders' concerns as well as the ways in which they are instrumental in creating new forms of their culture - bringing in a blend of Pakistaniness and Britishness to construct synthesised and new identities. I will be looking at the 'Asian cool' phenomenon that became prevalent in youth cultures since the mid 1990s and how this has impacted on identity constructions of young British-Pakistanis.

In the concluding chapter, I will be re-visiting the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and also the aims of the study which included presenting British-Pakistani identities as complex, multi-faceted and changing, as well to present the active agency of British-Pakistani women in their own voices. In this chapter I shall also be developing theories of knowledge derived specifically from the development of a specific British-Pakistani feminist perspective, resulting from my own experiences of being a British-Pakistani woman and the experiences of the women I undertook this study with.

Summary

Western feminist thinking and particularly dominant, white feminist thought (Barrett and Mackintosh, 1983), is inadequate in explaining the position of British-Pakistani women and their lived realities. Such a perspective wittingly, or unwittingly, not only reinforces stereotypes, but it tends to be deficient in explaining the complexities surrounding identity issues relating to British-Pakistani women. Using an 'Afro-centric' approach proposed by Asanti (1987, 1990) and Hill-Collins (1990) appears to be one which allows for a critique of Eurocentric views, not least in absolutist terms. Afro-centrists contend that the Eurocentric view has become an ethnocentric view which elevates the European experience and downgrades all others. Yet, as has been documented above, the 'Afro-centric' standpoint is insufficient in explaining the specificity of British-Pakistanis in general and the position of women in particular. Their identities are complex due to the multifaceted nature of these and are constructed and reconstructed within differing historical and contemporary contexts. Whilst experiences of gender oppression and Eurocentric ideologies representing Black and ethnic minority women are shared, there are numerous points of divergence, including their individual and distinct identities that are shaped by on-going processes of

dialectical and practical articulations within the community they are situated in, and the differing cultural practices governing their marital and family systems. Black feminist writings are borne out of a particular history (slavery) and social context (the United States, during the Civil Rights movements) and therefore, are inappropriate in providing an understanding of the South Asian diaspora, of specific identities, particularly religious ones and women's position in contemporary British society.

Different constructions surrounding the diverse groups of women necessarily presents a challenge to dominant 'white' feminist theories of women's lives as experienced within the family. For African-Caribbean women their experiences of family life differ from those of South Asian and particularly British-Pakistani women. They are viewed as economically and emotionally independent (Phoenix, 1987) as a result of their specific historical and political experiences. While South Asian women have been characterised as 'passive', submissive and bearers of patriarchal relations (Saifullah-Khan, 1979), where families are a source of women's oppression. Different constructions of the different women demonstrate the ways in which they are viewed in Western discourses and how these constructions are presented as the cultural norm of the respective groups. It is erroneous to assume that all African-Caribbean and South Asian (particularly British-Pakistani) family structures are somehow fixed and therefore, unchanging. Some families may well fall into the constructions mentioned, but others may not. Nevertheless, the aspect that unifies these women is the way in which Western stereotypes represent their character, families and communities and are engendered by racist assumptions surrounding these. Therefore, the differences between these women on the one hand, paradoxically unify them on the other, through their common experiences of racism and cultural pathology.

South Asian feminist perspectives have attempted to construct standpoints highlighting the specificity of South Asian women in the diaspora, albeit in a homogenising framework, where individual ethnic identities are subsumed into the broader category of South Asian. In a global context, separate identities are an inevitable factor impacting on individuality. The uniqueness of Indians, Pakistanis, Bangladeshis amongst other South Asians, is reflected in a variety of ways, not least through diverse languages, religions and ethnicities and the ways in which difference is articulated through the use of terms such 'our elders', or 'our people' when references are made to commonly

experienced situations such as racism or its perceptions. With these differences in mind, it is difficult to see how we can subsume individual identities within whole continents, when in contemporary Britain, which is a fraction of the geographical size of the African continent, or the Indian sub-continent, identities are being contested and reasserted through a variety of social and political processes.

British-Pakistani women's specific experiences need to be viewed within a framework that challenges the homogeneity of their experiences and subsumes their identities within larger broader categories. Instead I wish to highlight the diversities, contradictions and their active agency as is lived and articulated by them from a British-Pakistani feminist perspective. Their distinct position in terms of ethnicity brings with it a set of issues that are uniquely experienced and specific to their cultural practices, values and traditions. The values placed on the contested arenas of the family and community are not universally shared by feminists, yet, in this study, I attempt to demonstrate the positive and negative aspects of family and community as impacting on British-Pakistani women's lives.

These women are neither passive victims nor inactive in processes of negotiating and articulating their roles, albeit in a constrained way due to their structurally disadvantaged position as women and more importantly, they are women of an ethnic minority background, living in a Western society. Theorising their position as disadvantaged by patriarchy *per se*, would be inadequate as this would ignore, their racialised and/or class location in contemporary British society. An analysis based exclusively on gender oppression and the institutions responsible for this - family and community - fails also to allow for a consideration of how British-Pakistani women view the family and community. For some of these women the family and community are oppressive arenas. For others they are highly valued for a variety of reasons including security, support from extended kin, and identification in times of outsider attacks and threats to their minority and religious identities and contribute to their sense of belonging and unbelonging to a community.

By asserting British-Pakistani identities, women (and men) are actively asserting their choices and challenging the limitations of British citizenship to 'white' Anglo original people. This is reflected in the ways in which non-English speaking, for example, some

British-Pakistani women participating in this study, are able to successfully live in contemporary British society. For example, dealing with day-to-day aspects of living in Britain - children's schooling, family health, the welfare system, housing amongst other things, is conducted using various means including finding out about and drawing on support networks such as women's groups and advice centres for interpreting and official issues. These issues will be discussed further in the substantive chapters of this study, but here it is sufficient to say that despite certain barriers such as patriarchy within the home and racism outside of it, British-Pakistani women exert resistance using a variety of means including drawing on informal structures of support and articulating new forms of cultural processes.

In the next chapter I will be discussing the methodology and methods used to undertake this study and the advantages and disadvantages of using the particular methods chosen and why giving women a voice and using biography were crucial in analysing British-Pakistani women's involvement in identity/ies creation processes.

Chapter 2: Methodological Issues Relating to a Study of British-Pakistani Women

This study is concerned with establishing the processes governing identity creations of British-Pakistani women in Luton and their specificity, by using their voices to provide insights into their lives. As mentioned in the introductory chapter there is a need to investigate the lives of British-Pakistani women within their social settings to demonstrate the contested nature of their identities. This can only be done by investigating British-Pakistani women's specificity (Brah, 1996), in their own words, which will allow for an understanding of their lived realities and provide them with a voice that has previously been silenced by dominant, ethnocentric ideologies which brought about assumptions about their character and reinforced particular stereotypes surrounding the position of women within their families and intergenerational issues (Saifullah-Khan, 1976, Shaw, 1988).

In order to carry out a study viewing social systems and interactions within this British-Pakistani community, and to assess the position of women within these, it is necessary to begin by selecting appropriate methodologies to undertake this task. I decided that a qualitative, ethnographic approach (Hammersley, 1983, 1992) would be adopted, using in-depth interviews and participant observation as methods of data collection (Becker and Geer, 1957, Becker and Burgess, 1984, Hammersley, 1983, 1992, Reinharz, 1992, Baszanger and Dodier, 1997). This method was favoured as it offered an orientation to understanding the processes and structures of a given social setting and allows employment of research techniques consistent with this orientation (Silverman, 1997). However, I also used post-modern feminist insights to modify the tendency to see identities as fixed and essentialised (Bhachu, 1985, 1993, Brah, 1996, Mirza, 1997).

My intention is to allow British-Pakistani women to speak of their experiences using a British-Pakistani, feminist ethnographic approach that allows me to supplement classical ethnographic techniques (Becker and Geer, 1957) and Black and South Asian feminist approaches, with the use of biography (Woods, 1996) as a methodological and analytical tool, involving me as the researcher drawing on my own experiences in understanding and accessing the richness of the lives of the people I am studying.

In this chapter I will be looking at the methodology and methods used to collect and analyse the data, with an emphasis on why ethnographic techniques of in-depth interviewing and participant observation were favoured (Hammersley, 1983, 1992, Reinharz, 1992, Denscombe, 1998), but I will be suggesting that a particular approach that incorporates feminist thinking, is required in the study of British-Pakistani women's lives. This will involve a combination of Black and South Asian feminist approaches (Hill-Collins, 1990, Brewer, 1993, Bhachu, 1993), supplemented with biography (Woods, 1996). I will discuss issues of analysis, with particular emphasis on why a classical (Becker and Geer, 1957) and 'white' feminist ethnography (Reinharz, 1992) is not wholly adequate in explaining the position of British-Pakistani women's specificity, and my attempts at developing a distinct British-Pakistani feminist ethnography that allows for analysis of British-Pakistani women's specificity. In the second part of the chapter, I will discuss the research process by defining the community for the study, how I gained access, the sampling techniques I used, data collection and the relationship between myself as a researcher and the participants.

Ethnographic techniques: Giving women a voice and biography as a tool for analysis

Qualitative researchers take the participant as their starting point to understand the individual and his/her situation through interaction and empathy (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975, Bryman, 1988, Prior, 1997). Bogdan and Taylor (1975) for example, talk about the need for the phenomenologically inclined researcher to 'see things from [a particular individual's] point of view' (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975:14). Bryman (1988) meanwhile, says that:

"the most fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is its express commitment to viewing events, action, norms, values, etc from the perspective of the people who are being studied".
(Bryman, 1988: 61)

Ethnography is concerned with the direct observation of the activity of members of a particular social group, and the description and evaluation of such activity. It allows for a thorough understanding of the lives and cultures of the people participating in a study

(Becker and Geer, 1957). The purpose of this study was to present British-Pakistani women, their cultural traditions, kinship and community relations and the complexities surrounding their identity formation and reformation. I felt that using qualitative, ethnographic techniques such as participant observation and in-depth interviews were the most appropriate for this purpose (Hammersley, 1983). A classic definition of this technique is provided by Becker and Geer (1957):

“By participant observation we mean the method in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly in the role of researcher or covertly in some disguised role, observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people, over some length of time”. (Becker and Geer, 1957: 28)

The advantages of using an ethnographic approach include the ability to observe directly, via fieldwork, behaviour and actions of community members, rather than relying purely on statements made by participants (Bazanger and Dodier, 1997). Ethnography provides data which are rich in depth and detail (Hammersley, 1992). This technique is particularly well suited to dealing with the way members of a culture see events – as seen through their eyes (Bryman, 1988). It describes and explores the individuals’ perceptions. It also has an open and explicit awareness of the role of the researcher’s self in the choice of topic, process of research and construction of the findings. As Denscombe (1998) points out:

“[Ethnography] acknowledges the inherent reflexivity of social knowledge”. (Denscombe, 1998: 79)

However, there are some disadvantages to using an ethnographic approach in its classical sense. One of them is that there is a potential weakness of poor reliability and little prospect of generalising from the ethnographic account of a culture or event (Hammersley, 1992). Survey approaches serve a useful purpose where representativeness and generalisability of findings are necessary (Sonuga-Barke and Shah, 1994). However, the aim of this study is not to claim generalisability, but to refer

to the specificity of British-Pakistani women's experiences in processes of identity creation.

As this study is concerned primarily with British-Pakistani women's specificity, I felt that the classical definitions were inadequate in gaining insights into the women's lives relating to the ways in which they construct and reconstruct identities. As such, a feminist perspective was needed. A 'white' feminist ethnography (Reinharz, 1992), allows for a focus on:

“interpretation, reliance on the researcher's immersion in social settings, and [an] aim for intersubjective understanding between researchers and the person(s) studied” (Reinharz, 1992: 46).

The technique itself was a response to the male-oriented, positivistic methods, which Reinharz (1992) argues is 'skewed knowledge in an androcentric or male-oriented way' (ibid: 46). Positivism conforms to an aspect of patriarchal thinking which distances the researcher from individuals participating in the research (Reinharz, 1992). For this reason, I did not feel that positivistic methods for data collection would be appropriate in a study where I intended to focus heavily on individuals and their cultural systems, particularly as my intentions were to develop a relationship with participants, not to distance them (Seidman, 1990).

Having looked at the methodological techniques I used to collect data, it is fruitful to turn to issues of analysis involving giving women a voice and the analytical frame, and ask whether a feminist and/or Black feminist ethnography is adequate in explaining the lives of British-Pakistani women. This discussion will then lead on to my attempts at developing a distinct perspective for understanding the specificity of the women in this study.

Giving women a voice?

The main aim of this study is to provide British-Pakistani women with a voice, as they have previously been silenced by dominant ideological constructs surrounding their character, identities and community (Saifullah-Khan, 1977). It is essentially about the

ways in which they negotiate and articulate their identities and their active agency in resisting oppressive structures within their families and community. I realised that some form of analysis was needed which would not invalidate or undermine the women's own stories but would facilitate an understanding of the complexities surrounding their lives. Subjective accounts (Brah, 1992) of their lives are crucial for an understanding of, familial structures and the change and continuity characterising these (Bhachu, 1993). I considered it crucial to preserve and present the women's experiences (as they perceive them to be) as valuable, valid and authentic. Feminism has suggested that in conventional studies women have been invisible or unheard and has sought to give women a voice (Oakley, 1981). I decided that women's experiences would be central to the research process although it is not claimed that the transcripts with which I worked gave direct access to such experiences. As McCrindle and Rowbotham (1979) note:

“Interviews are fragments, as individual life is a fragment, and an individual caught for a moment presents a fragment of a fragment”. (McCrindle and Rowbotham, 1979:1)

Whilst recognising this, the women in the sample did provide rich accounts of their lives, which, in the first instance, were taken at face value and treated with empathetic understanding. ‘Verstehen’ was my aim - an understanding of social action through empathetic identification with the actor to get at her meaning and how choices and constraints appear to her (Weber, translated in Runciman, 1978). Giving women a voice (Oakley, 1981) is in accordance with the aim of exploring rather than assuming conventional understandings of the lives of British-Pakistani women. For example, conflict of values and normative orientations between ‘white’ and British-Pakistani women are inevitable. While ‘white’ feminists attempt at an ideal of equal partnership within the marriage (Bhopal, 1997), this is not necessarily the case for British-Pakistani women, who do not view gender equality within the home, as necessarily desirable. Yet, to dismiss this as passively accepting patriarchy would be a mistake, as women themselves are speaking about their experiences and desires, something that should not be denied.

The purpose of such analysis is not to reveal a more real or rational assessment (Reinharz, 1992) but to use sociological concepts to probe deeper into, or offer an

alternative view to the subjective accounts offered by women in this study. This approach conforms to the writings of Black and South Asian feminists who propose a holistic approach in the study of the lives of Black and ethnic minority women that allows for an analysis within a framework of multiple identities and 'multiple oppressions' (Carby, 1982, Parmar, 1982; Davis, 1983; Westwood and Bhachu, 1988; Brah, 1996), which incorporate the 'race' and ethnicity dimensions of their identities. The active agency of British-Pakistani women and their resistance to oppressive structures can only be viewed within this framework, as patriarchy alone cannot explain the choices they make within the constraints they face. Nor does it explain the contradictory accounts women gave when being interviewed. For example, contradictions and tensions between and within accounts were found during transcription and preliminary analyses of the data collected.

Women gave different interpretations of their situations, which were seemingly very similar. For example, one woman discussed her role within the family as equal to her husband's in that they were both in full time employment and shared childcare and household tasks, even though she mentioned in the earlier part of the interview how she was faced with the bulk of childcare and housework. Another woman, who worked part-time and faced the majority of household responsibilities and childcare, claimed that while she was aware of the in-balance of housework and childcare responsibilities resting on her, she felt that her role in decision-making within the home gave her equal footing with her husband.

Contradictions, tensions and the expression of fixed, tentative or incompatible beliefs also emerged within individual accounts. One participant claimed that while she was a British-Pakistani professional woman, her role as a social worker meant that her ethnic and gender identities had to be put to one side when dealing with British-Pakistani families. She later suggested, in a criticism of social services, that they ignore the fact that she is a British-Pakistani woman who has certain obligations to her community, and resented being used to 'do *their* dirty work', which made her unpopular with *her* community. The women had reflected upon some tensions, whereas of others they seemed unaware. Similar examples of these contradictions and tensions were found which indicates the highly complex nature of the experiences, interpretations and sense of self of the women in this study. Nevertheless, women speaking of their experiences

is a valid point and for this study, women's accounts will be considered as they themselves articulate these.

Analytical Frame: Is it Black Feminist Ethnography?

Social science research on 'race' has often been distorted by having been centred on the perspectives and experiences of dominant group members (Hill-Collins, 1990, Andersen, 1993, Brewer, 1993). This has resulted from either the exclusion of Black and South Asians from the general frameworks of the social sciences and/or from the application of ethnocentric concepts to the study of racial, ethnic groups (Andersen, 1993). According to Andersen (1993) Black and minority groups have always been measured against 'a set of alien norms', which has resulted in their being considered as deviating from the 'norm' – the white middle-class model. The Black framework for studies of 'race' and ethnicity seeks to:

“Build more inclusive research through incorporating the experiences and perspectives of traditionally excluded groups. One way to accomplish this has been to encourage studies of 'race' and ethnic relations by minority scholars themselves, on the assumption that they are better able to understand the nuances of racial oppression”. (Andersen, 1993)

Patricia Hill-Collins (1990) suggests researching the lives of women from their subjective experiences and to present their reality by engaging in:

“theoretical interpretations of Black women's reality by those who live it” (Hill-Collins, 1990: 22)

This is relevant to me as a British-Pakistani woman, undertaking research with other British-Pakistani women. Our identities, albeit recognising class and cultural differences between us, are shared through our ethnic and religious affiliations, and tend to provide a background understanding of each other's experiences. But does this mean only British-Pakistani women can engage and interpret the experiences of other British-Pakistani women? I believe that non-British-Pakistani women and others, for example

British-Pakistani men, or men of different backgrounds, may not be able to adequately engage in theoretical interpretations of British-Pakistani women's lives, but if they were to undertake such a study, what they find and how they engage with the women may produce different findings from mine.

The invisibility of British-Pakistani women from research into ethnic minority communities was the main impetus behind the conception of this study. Davis (1983) and Carby (1982) have noted this absence in relation to Black women and argue for an epistemology that places non-white women firmly on the academic research agenda (James, 1993, Brewer, 1993), by focusing entirely on their subjectivity and rejecting Western conceptions of their realities (Trivedi, 1984; Brah, 1996). Carby (1982) has criticised 'white' feminists' theories on non-white women, for their sweeping generalisations about 'Third World women' and their countries of origin. She observes the frequent inclusion of Black or 'Third World women' in White feminist work in merely negative ways:

"Feminist theory in Britain is almost wholly Eurocentric, and when it is not ignoring the experience of black women 'at home', it is trundling 'Third World women' onto the stage only to perform as victims of 'barbarous,' 'primitive' practices in 'barbarous', 'primitive' societies". (Carby, 1982: 222)

Alternative critiques of the dominant approach to the study of minority groups in Western societies have been proposed by Black and South Asian writers, arguing for the specificity of each group to be noted separately and in heterogeneous forms (Asanti, 1987, 1990, Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1990, Hill-Collins, 1990, Andersen, 1993). Using an 'Afro-centric' approach proposed by Asanti (1987, 1990) and Hill-Collins (1990) appears to be one which allows for a critique of Eurocentric views. Afro-centrists contend that the Eurocentric view has become an ethnocentric view, which elevates the European experience and downgrades all others. However, the 'Afro-centric' critique is insufficient in explaining the specificity of British-Pakistanis in general and the position of women in particular, as the critique is constructed around specific socio-historical contexts of the African diaspora, as was noted in chapter 1.

The lives of British-Pakistani women in Luton need to be investigated using perspectives drawn from the works of 'Black' and South Asian feminist writers (Davis, 1983, Trivedi, 1984, James, 1993, Brewer, 1993, Bhachu, 1993, Brah, 1992, 1996) who propose examining the lived realities of non-white women from the perspective of a 'triple-burden', in which class, 'race' and gender are crucial elements for analysing their lives (Davis, 1983, Brewer, 1993).

In line with this aim, and a view to leading towards developing a distinct approach – a British-Pakistani feminist ethnography, would allow an exploration and understanding of the complexities surrounding British-Pakistani women's experiences in a Western, racist society, and analysing these within a framework of 'multiple oppression' - the triple burden of class, 'race' and gender dimensions governing their day-to-day lives. It is with this, and my own experiences of being a British-Pakistani woman, that I consider the use of biography as an important tool for researching and analysing British-Pakistani women's lived realities.

The paradox in the position of British-Pakistani women, is that on the one hand they are similar to and distinct from other ethnic minority groups of women - African-Caribbean and 'white' European women included, yet, invariably there are crucial differences within and between this group, as will be discussed in the empirical chapters. These differences will necessarily involve in developing theories and methods that are appropriate to an understanding of their distinctiveness and their lifestyles to attach meanings to the ways in which British-Pakistani women create their own and their children's identities.

Biography as an analytical tool

In addition to the influences drawn from Black and South Asian feminist's methodological perspectives, biography as a research tool was important for undertaking and analysing research with a community of British-Pakistani women. Ethnography attaches significance to the role of the researcher's 'self' in the process of research, as Denscombe (1998) notes:

“The researcher’s identity, values and beliefs become part of the equation – a built-in component that cannot be eliminated as an influence on the end-product findings of the project.”
(Denscombe, 1998: 74)

In this sense, ethnographic research where using the ‘self’ as an integral part of the data analysis process, necessarily calls for introspection on the part of the researcher. I am aware that factors associated with my being a British-Pakistani-Muslim woman, and my personal experiences, beliefs and social values as a result of this background, will essentially have shaped the way that events and cultural traditions of the British-Pakistani community in Luton were interpreted. My identity in this case, allows me to identify with the group I am investigating, which has advantages and disadvantages. The advantages include, through a shared identity I am able to view certain aspects of the participants’ lives, through an understanding of the cultural practices of British-Pakistani communities. This includes understanding gender relations and ethnic and religious traditions. The other advantage was that it allowed me access to a sample, which I feel I would not have been able to, were I not of a British-Pakistani background.

The disadvantage of this approach is that bias towards participants is likely to occur, in other words I may be seen to over-identify with those participating in this study (Denscombe, 1998). In this sense validity of accounts could be questioned (Silverman, 1993), nevertheless all descriptions are bound to particular perspectives and therefore, represent reality rather than reproduce it (Hammersley, 1992). Thus, recognising and reflecting on my values and drawing on my experience of social scientific research techniques allows for an analysis that will attempt to represent the lived realities, albeit versions of reality, of the individuals involved in this study. However, in addition to the disadvantages associated with using an ethnographic technique, there were disadvantages associated with being an insider. These included my having to observe the community’s rules on how British-Pakistani women dressed, my unmarried status and being accompanied by men to visits to participants’ homes, which posed methodological problems associated with confidentiality. These issues will be discussed further in the section dealing with my relationship with research participants.

I am not denying the shortcomings of this perspective. For example, I do not suggest that others of different backgrounds would not be able to do research with this community of women, but their findings will necessarily be different from mine due to the different cultural values we bring into the research process as individuals (Peshkin, 1991). I am also mindful that I may have over-identified with the group due to our shared identities. Bhachu (1985) undertook her research with a community of East African Sikhs, a community she also identified with. Yet, through the ethnographic techniques she used and insider knowledge of the community she was studying, Bhachu (1985) was able to present the positive and negative aspects of the community on the basis of her training and position as a social researcher. Similarly, research undertaken by women with women participants (Oakley, 1981) does not necessarily suggest that an over identification will compromise the research process. In this sense, I am mindful of the disadvantages of a shared identity, but feel that the advantages of understanding cultural practices of a given community are more important in gaining access to it and developing theories about it.

My perspective developed as a response to the over-simplified, generalised and ethnocentric nature of previous ethnographic studies viewing Pakistani families (Saifullah-Khan, 1977, 1979; Watson, 1977; Shaw, 1988), which have had the effect of pathologising cultural practices conflicting with Western models. And where a lack of understanding of minority group processes - within the home and the wider community, legitimated negative portrayals and cultural pathology. My intention was to investigate the experiences of British-Pakistani women as they presented them to me, in order that assumptions around their character, families and community could be dispelled. However, this does not mean that I am unable to critique the women, nor does it suggest that I have not recognised my biases, instead I am suggesting that bias in the qualitative research process is impossible to eliminate and that through a reflexive approach (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) I was able to gain insights into these. Peshkin (1991) recommends that all researchers systematically monitor their subjectivity:

“I see this monitoring as a necessary exercise, a workout, a tuning up of my subjectivity to get it in shape. It is a rehearsal for keeping the lines of my subjectivity open – and straight. And it is a warning to myself that I may avoid the trap of perceiving just

what my own untamed sentiments have sought out and served up as data". (Peshkin, 1991: 293-4)

My standpoint and perspective is borne out of a critique of the positivist notion of the detached and disinterested observer (Reinharz, 1992, Denscombe, 1998). A biographical note therefore, is appropriate here, in explaining my position and how biography (Woods, 1996) was used to develop a specific perspective for theorising British-Pakistani women's lives.

As a British-Pakistani growing up in Britain in the 1970s my family and I used to ritually watch a magazine programme called 'Nai Zindagi Naya Jeevan'—literally meaning New Way, New Life. The programme was broadcast on Sunday mornings and it meant a lot to other British-Pakistanis living in our community. The programme was a lifeline for many South Asians living in Britain at that particular time. It was their link to the sub-continent and to their families and kin back home. Being a British-Pakistani woman, born in Pakistan and raised in Britain, and then returning to Pakistan to live there with my family for five years, gave me an insight of the differences between Pakistanis and British-Pakistanis. While in Pakistan, we (my family and I) were treated as 'foreigners' and known as 'Valiyatis'. Valiyat is a term used by Pakistanis to refer to Britain, and roughly translated means a prosperous and wealthy land. As such, throughout our stay in Pakistan we were referred to as 'Valiyatis'—people from a prosperous land.

For me, it was an interesting experience and raised many questions about my own and other British-Pakistanis' identities. Before we returned to live in Pakistan, my father always referred to Pakistan as 'our' country and where we originated, so then why were treated as foreigners? Why were we treated as foreigners in Britain and subject to various forms of discrimination? Why were Pakistani women seen as passive in Western constructs, when my experience of them was one where they exerted their agency whether this was through contributing to the family income, or the decision-making processes within the home, or working outside the home? My own experiences of living in Pakistan and not having a formal, British education between the ages of 12 and 19, did not hinder the fact that I had reached postgraduate level of education, despite the fact that I was lacking in experience of the British education system during a

crucial period of my schooling years. For me, this too was challenging the dominant ideological constructs surrounding British-Pakistani women's character as 'passive' as this was not my personal experience, nor, as I found, was it the experience of many of the women in this study.

In addition to the positive aspects of my identity there were some negative experiences of racism and Islamophobia⁶. The fact that my parents discussed racism and discrimination in relation to us as British-Pakistanis led me to believe that this was an inevitable part of belonging to a minority group in Britain – something I have come to realise over the years, is not necessarily the case and that through our agency we can challenge such relations. It also gave me a sense of what it was to be a Muslim living in a non-Islamic country like Britain, particularly so in the light of Islamophobia – a negative construct of Muslims by the West, arising from the Rushdie affair in the late 1980s (Anthias and Yuval-Davies, 1992). These issues are relevant to the community of British-Pakistanis I undertook this research with and led to my developing an approach which accounted for their specificities (Brah, 1996).

A British-Pakistani feminist approach allows for a theoretical consideration of the concepts of family, community, intergenerational relations and issues around identity within a framework of shared ethnic, religious and gender identities, as elicited from my data. Whilst the importance of objectivity and structure are by no means denied, my focus is on subjectivity and agency (Brah, 1996). Given this focus, and the aim of wanting to make as few assumptions as possible, an interpretivist approach was considered to be the most appropriate for eliciting meanings from data (Berger and Luckman, 1967, Bryman, 1988, Harding, 1987, Holstein and Gubrium, 1994). Bryman (1988) argues that:

“the most fundamental characteristic of qualitative research is its express commitment to viewing events, actions, norms, values, etc, from the perspective of those people being studied” (Bryman, 1988; 61)

⁶ Islamophobia will be discussed fully in relation to British-Pakistanis in Luton, in chapter 3, which looks more closely at the specific identities of this group.

Having viewed the methodology and analytical frame used to undertake this study and elicit meanings, I would like to turn to the research process itself and how data was collected using the particular methods I chose. This will involve defining the community under study, discussing issues of accessing a sample for the study, collecting the data and the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

Research Process: Defining and finding the community for study

Ethnic minorities comprise 5.5% of the total population of Great Britain, which was estimated at 55,000,000 in the 1991 census. Within these figures British-Pakistanis comprise 0.9% of the total population. In Luton, ethnic minorities form 19.2% of the population currently standing at 171,752, of British-Pakistanis form the largest minority group comprising 6.2% of the total population in Luton and 0.9% of the total population of Great Britain (Source: 1991 Census).

Luton was selected as a site for undertaking this research for a number of reasons. Firstly, due to the town's large British-Pakistani population - out of a population of 171,752, 27,701 were of Pakistani origin or born to parents of Pakistani origin. Secondly, for its geographical ease. Bradford and Birmingham - two cities also boasting a large British-Pakistani population with a population of 9.9% and 6.9% respectively, were situated further away from where I was based (in Southampton). The geographical convenience ensured cost effectiveness and also allowed for time constraints relating to the overall study. Thirdly, research with British-Pakistanis had not been undertaken in this particular town.

Previous research tended to focus on well-known cities like Bradford and Birmingham (Saifullah-Khan, 1977, 1979, Anwar, 1979, 1995) or in Manchester (Werbner, 1990) and London (Jacobson, 1997). Luton was chosen as a site for conducting research into social class mobility in the Affluent Worker thesis in the 1960s (Goldthorpe and Lockwood, 1969). This study looked at the Vauxhall car manufacturing plant in the town and how it impacted on people's class situation. The Vauxhall car plant has, since its establishment in Luton, attracted large numbers of Pakistani migrants living in London during the 1960s, to Luton. Particularly as the price of houses and cost of living was lower than they had experienced in London. This economic incentive was

the impetus for many of the British-Pakistanis currently living in Luton, to move here in the first place.

Fourthly, Luton was chosen for the political mobilisations taking place within the British-Pakistani community. One of the main events leading to such mobilisation was the much-publicised 'Mecca Bingo Hall' incident, which occurred in December 1997. Clashes between the Muslim community in Luton (of which British-Pakistanis are a part) and Mecca Bingo owners began as a result of the naming of the Bingo hall. (The Mecca incident and its impact on British-Pakistanis in Luton will be discussed further in chapter 3).

Another issue confirming Luton's British-Pakistani population's political activity is the increasing involvement in Pakistani, more specifically, Kashmiri politics. The politics of Kashmir filtering into Luton's Pakistani population was an inevitable process, given that the vast majority of British-Pakistanis in Luton originate from the Northern region of Azad (Free) Kashmir – part of the disputed territory of Kashmir. The involvement in Kashmiri politics in Luton has impacted on identity construction of British-Pakistanis in Luton originating from Azad Kashmir.⁷ These were the reasons for selecting British-Pakistanis living in Luton. I would like to turn to how the sample was accessed.

Accessing the sample for study

Burgess (1984) argues that access is a continual process in fieldwork research. It is a process because research is generally conducted over a period of time and it is a process, because access needs to be sought to new people, places and events as new lines of inquiry become incorporated into the research. Negotiation with different people was an ongoing process and the sampling techniques used were snowballing (Patton, 1990). Prior to arriving in Luton, it was necessary to make the relevant contacts in order that time and resources were spent efficiently. Particularly, as I was travelling to Luton from Southampton, it was necessary to establish the 'ethnically populated' areas in Luton and decide from these, which was the most suitable for the

⁷ The Kashmiri dimension of some British-Pakistanis identities will be discussed further in chapter 3.

purpose of this study. The chosen location was densely populated with people of South Asian origin, and more importantly, a large number of British-Pakistani-Muslims.

Prior to undertaking fieldwork, it was necessary to gain access into the field. This involved making telephone calls to the Borough Council, who provided me with a valuable source in the form of a Community Development Officer. From this contact, access was sought and gained to various women's groups and Women's Aid who were informed of the purpose of the study by telephone and followed up with a letter. Initial visits to the voluntary groups proved unfruitful, in that I found it difficult to elicit a sample of British-Pakistani women, as they tended to attend these groups in smaller numbers than the Indian and Bangladeshi women. Where women of Pakistani origin did attend, another problem appeared, which involved women running the groups preventing me from approaching individuals during or after group meetings.

Women running the groups were protective of their members, particularly as there had been several incidences of men (and some women) barging in on sessions using threatening language and displaying aggressive behaviour. These usually involved male and/or female relatives who feared their young, female relations were being 'corrupted' by women who ran the groups (an issue discussed further chapter 4). I understood the concerns the women running the groups faced, and did not wish to cause them further problems, so I embarked on a different lead. This involved visiting a Mosque-run advisory Centre (where I subsequently worked as a volunteer) run by men, with the exception of 2 women – one an outreach worker, the other worked as an administrator.

As this was a Mosque run advice Centre, I was aware that the majority of visitors would be of Pakistani origin (although not exclusively, as a high number of Bangladeshi-Muslims also visited the centre). Although no statistics are available on the exact number of British-Pakistani Muslims, 95% of the population in Pakistan is of Muslim denomination (source: personal enquiry: British Muslim Parliament, March 1997).

To my delight, the vast majority of people seeking advice at this centre were women. The advice sought would range from filling forms to making telephone enquiries and translating/interpreting. I began to help out at the centre and became familiar with many of the women, and a friendly rapport developed. It was through this Centre and my

helping some of the British-Pakistani women, that I was able to gain an insight, through observations and conversations with those working here and those seeking advice or assistance, of social systems and interactions within the British-Pakistani community in Luton. Incidentally, it should be noted that this Centre was situated in an area that has the highest concentration of British-Pakistanis in Luton.

The workers and organisers of the Centre were British-Pakistanis, however, were different from the 'clients' using the service, as not only were they perceived as 'service-providers' (by those using the services), but they also considered themselves in this way. They distinguished themselves from the working class clients as being middle-class, educated, from urban backgrounds in Pakistan and were or had been professionals in the social and welfare sector in both Britain and Pakistan. The men, who worked here, were also perceived by the health and welfare agencies as 'community leaders' with whom discussions and negotiations took place when discussing policies for ethnic minorities in the area.

As an outsider to the Centre (in terms of my not being from Luton), I was in a unique position to access both 'service-users' and 'service-providers', as navigating between the two proved successful in gaining the desired diversity in the sample that was required for the study. By diversity of a sample, I refer to the difference in backgrounds of the individuals attending this Centre. It became clear to be during my observations that there were crucial intra-ethnic differences within this group and therefore, I felt it would be fruitful to explore these. In order to do this, I needed to establish the class position of the individuals attending the Centre and how they perceived themselves in relation this.

Although visits to the Centre proved fruitful in that I gained access to some women and elder men, (the former being the main users of the Centre and the latter working here) it was necessary to diversify the sample, which necessitated in using 'snowballing' techniques (Patton, 1990). The aim behind diversifying the sample was to understand the multidimensionality of British-Pakistani identities among the different generations. After viewing the list of willing participants, their ages, marital status and class position, I decided that young people and elder women - the two groups that rarely attended in person, to use the services of the Centre, needed to be included in the sample. Using

snowballing techniques, by asking the people who did attend the Centre, if their elder female and younger relatives would be willing to be interviewed. From this I was able to gain access to 4 elder women⁸ and 5 young people⁹.

Eventually, a sample of 28¹⁰ participants¹¹ were selected and considered large enough to allow comparisons to be made between the participants, yet, small enough to allow a degree of in-depth knowledge of each individual. It consisted of 6 women aged between 16-25, 6 aged between 26-40, 3 between the ages of 41-55 and 5 aged 55 and over. The male sample consisted of 2 men aged between 16-25, 2 aged between 26-40 and 4 aged 55 and over. Although British-Pakistani women were the predominant participants to this study, eight men of varying ages, social class backgrounds and occupational status were also interviewed. The reason for selecting men was an attempt at establishing an insight into British-Pakistani men's attitudes towards gender issues which would provide insights into gender relations within this community, but also because I was in contact with men by working at the Centre, and became aware that men held particular views about women and their roles. The views included blaming women for problems within the family, for example, marital breakdowns.

Collecting the data for the study

The aim behind using participant observation (Hammersley, 1992, Dodier and Baszanger, 1997) as a research technique in this study was that it allowed me to be involved in the day-to-day lives of participants in their everyday settings, for example, within the home and outside of it. By working at the advisory Centre, I established a high level of contact with British-Pakistanis in Luton that enabled me to observe their actions and interactions and to understand things from their point of view.

During observations, I noted that British-Pakistani women were a differentiated category. They were divided, among other social divisions, along class lines – middle-class and working class. The former characterised themselves as 'educated',

⁸Elder women are characterised in terms of being 55 years and over.

⁹By 'young people' I am referring to people aged between 13-25 and unmarried.

¹⁰I decided after the initial interview, that no more than 30 respondents would be sought to participate in the study. This was due to the length of time each interview was taking (approximately 2-4 hours).

¹¹See appendix 1 for a breakdown of the sample in terms of their ages, class and ethnic backgrounds.

‘independent’, ‘urban’ (origins in Pakistan) and ‘modern’. This group of women were usually involved in the day-to-day running of women’s groups catering for South Asian women in the Luton area, and were the Borough Council’s first port of call, when developing or discussing services and provisions aimed at South Asians in the Borough. It was not purely women from this background that were in a position to influence policies, services and provisions for members of the ethnic minority communities, but usually it was them and/or their husbands whom the council, health authorities and social services approached and considered to be ‘community leaders’ and/or representative of British-Pakistanis in Luton.

The British-Pakistani middle-class women I encountered, characterised the second category as lacking in education (in Pakistan), ‘dependent’ (in terms of social and welfare needs, and/or husbands and families) ‘rural’¹² and ‘traditional’. I reluctantly acknowledged these categories. Reluctantly, because I felt that they were of a fixed nature. At the time I felt that the use of these categories would be confined to descriptive purposes rather than for situating respondents within these without regards for flexibility of one’s situation. In other words, I was aware that the categories were constructed using their regional origins in Pakistan as opposed to the position of women in Britain (a point that will be discussed further in chapter 3, where I will be making distinctions between ‘Kashmiris’ and Pakistanis). The categories themselves were presented to me prior to any interviews taking place and emerged through my observations, rather than me imposing these. The significance of these self-defined categories is that internal forms of ‘discrimination’ were based on such categorisations. In fact once the research was in full swing, I often found myself in an ‘intermediary’ role between the ‘urban, middle-class’, and the ‘rural, working-class’ women, as I was perceived by both groups as being middle-class, yet, approachable.

¹² During conversations with many informants in Luton, it emerged that an overwhelming number of British-Pakistanis living here (precise statistics not available, however, I was recently informed the figure is likely to be approximately 95% of those considering themselves Pakistanis) originate from Azad (Free) Kashmir. (The part of this disputed territory, affiliated to Pakistan, although it has its own socio-politico-economic systems, and independently governed from Pakistan itself). Kashmiri identity in Luton is strongly present, whether this be in official documents, where ethnic classifications include ‘Kashmiri’ as a category in itself; in terms of individual’s identifications and the presence of support for the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) which has one of its largest headquarters in Luton. Detailed discussions of this issue will be explored in future chapters, but for the purpose of this chapter, it is suffice to point out that the presence of a Kashmiri identity, has its basis in the continued rural/urban dichotomy separating ‘Pakistanis’ from Kashmiris. The former characterised as urban, while the latter as rural.

My aim was to present women's lived realities and attempt to dispel some of the myths surrounding their character. In order to do this, it was necessary to undertake semi-structured, in-depth interviews (Miller and Glassner, 1997), to gain as full a picture as possible of the participant's lives and their reflections upon them. Therefore semi-structured questionnaires consisted of identifying key areas that I intended to investigate.¹³

In qualitative research, there is greater potential than with most other approaches to face ethical problems associated with intrusion upon privacy and with gaining informed consent from research participants (Lees, 1994). Ethical considerations on interviewing on personal issues were therefore, important in relation to confidentiality. From the outset of an interview participants were made aware that they could withdraw at any point, or decline to discuss any issue they wished. Apart from a small number of women's reluctance to being tape recorded, no objections were raised, with a number of young, unmarried women actually enjoying the experience as a 'free counselling' session and an outlet, where confidentiality was guaranteed. This group mainly consisted of young women who were dating men without anyone's knowledge, not even of close friends on some occasions, for fear of gossip reaching their parents. In this respect I felt privileged to be in a position of trust and felt a strong responsibility in maintaining this.

Permission and agreement was sought from participants and potential participants prior to interviews taking place, during which time I informed individuals as to the nature of the research. Interview questions, were designed to cover qualitative data about the women's situations and as wide a range as possible of qualitative material on their experiences, thoughts and perceptions. The first two interviews I undertook were with men at the Centre I worked. These interviews not only provided a socio-economic context and a background to British-Pakistani families settling into the area, but also access to future interviewees/participants.

¹³ See appendix 2 for the initial themes and questions I had intended to investigate and why.

All participants will be referred to and quoted as individuals. Nevertheless, terms such as 'most', 'several' or 'many', will be used to demonstrate loosely, the degree to which the individual's view was representative in relation to other respondents/participants involved in the study. For example, it will be indicated if referral to the account of an individual has been made because s/he represents the general consensus or a minority view, or is an exception or an extreme example, with regard to the particular issue under discussion. It is also important to point out that although all accounts will be considered equally and in full during the process of analysis, equal weight will not necessarily be given to each account. Instead, they will be constructed around issues, which emerge as significant with regards to the research questions and themes¹⁴, which emerged from my observations prior to interviews being conducted. Consequently, some respondents will appear more prominently in the text than others.

The 28 interviews were undertaken in total, excluded conversations I had with British-Pakistani people on an informal basis. There were approximately 8 people including shopkeepers and service providers at a number of ethnic minority associations, who were not willing to be interviewed but provided me with insights into community of British-Pakistanis in Luton. I felt that 28 interviews were sufficient to allow for comparisons to be made but small enough for the participants to remain distinct as individuals, and allowed for in-depth analysis of each interview. Each interview lasted between 2 - 4 hours, some were tape-recorded others were documented in note form, and have been fully transcribed. It should be noted that all interviews were conducted in Urdu, Punjabi, Pahari (languages and dialects used by British-Pakistanis in Luton) and English. I speak and read and write fluently in Urdu and am fluent (conversationally) in Punjabi and was able to converse with participants originating from Azad Kashmir in their dialect known as 'Pahari' (translated in English means 'mountain dwellers', and is characteristic of the Kashmir region itself).

Every effort was made to ensure that the interview always remained informal and conversation-like, in order for the interviewees not to feel that they were being asked a question, which required a 'correct' or expected answer (Denscombe, 1998). This often necessitated in my avoiding carrying large note pads or tape recording equipment that

¹⁴ As outlined in appendix 2.

would be off-putting to some respondents. This strategy was employed in 5 cases, where I knew the women were wary of any 'official' type person they encountered. This observation was made whilst working at the advisory Centre, and through visits to the women's homes prior to interviews taking place.

My first interview with a woman (outside of the Centre) took the form of visiting her home with news about her house renovation grant application made to the Borough Council. I was, if you like, a 'messenger' from the advice Centre this woman visited, as this was her link to the Council to whom she had applied for a home improvements grant. It was an opportunistic interview which meant that I had to be thoroughly prepared with questions without appearing too formal or official, as this would distance me from this particular interviewee, who during the course of our meetings, conveyed her 'fear' of officials and authority. This observation coupled with a genuine reason for visiting, proved successful, to the point that 3 other interviews were arranged that day with friends of this particular participant.

All replies were greeted with empathetic understanding (Baszanger and Dodier, 1997). Many of the respondents would answer questions at length, thereby answering several questions simultaneously and providing information that would have been sought by questions intended later on in the process. Such undirected expansion on their life histories and views was encouraged as material emerged in context and perceived as significant by the individual. The aim was to acquire a balanced and respondent led account with as little direction from me as possible, as to what the significant issues in their lives were (Denscombe, 1998). Having said this, it was also necessary to ensure that the 'conversation' was, on the whole, about the participants with some sharing and exchanging of information between myself and them. Although on some occasions, particularly with elder women, curiosity surrounding my personal life tended to dominate the interview.

As visits to Luton were confined to one per week, it became necessary to ensure that participants would be available, at particular times and dates. This was not always the case and many of the interviews arranged had to be rescheduled due to the fact that participants forgot about our arrangement. Initially, this was disheartening, but I came to realise that many of the people I encountered in Luton did not fully understand my

reasons for being there, or how far I was actually travelling. One young participant aged 13, insisted I go shopping with her on Saturday (I was in Luton on Thursday), until I explained the distance involved in travelling there. On another occasion, I was invited to an Islamic poetry recital by one of the key organisers, who was also unaware of the distance I travelled when I declined the invitation on this basis.

Ethical Considerations: Confidentiality

Issues of confidentiality are important in the process of data collection, particularly in relation to sensitive topics (Lees, 1994). For this reason, confidentiality was guaranteed to participants. Although confidentiality was assured on my part, a different issue emerged and threatened this – being accompanied to women's homes with men who worked at the Centre.

I found that while I was being treated like an 'honorary male' (Warren, 1988) by these men on the one hand, where I would be invited to join in their 'complex' discussions surrounding Kashmiri and British politics (from which other women were either excluded or excluded themselves). And on the other hand, they acknowledged my gender and age by being protective of me and wanting to accompany me to my interview venues. The basis for this treatment was that I was a young British-Pakistani female; undertaking studies away from my home town and family and therefore, was considered to be the same as their own daughters, whom they would also treat in this way, although unlike their daughters, I was encouraged to join in on their political discussions.

My unmarried status also ensured that further 'protectiveness' was shown by male informants/participants, as my *izzat*¹⁵ needed to be safeguarded in the absence of my family members. In a study on Sikh migrants from East Africa, Parminder Bhachu (1985) found that being of a similar background to potential participants and taking up residence in Southall, where a large Sikh population resides, was constraining as well as being handy. The author was treated like a 'family daughter', which meant that while

¹⁵ Izzat is a term used to describe honour or pride and is often used interchangeably, depending on the context within which it is used. Izzat is an important element in this community of British-Pakistanis and is the preserve of the man. Women are expected to safeguard men's izzat, as will be discussed in the empirical chapters, which will demonstrate the gendered nature of izzat and its antonym 'Sharam'.

this can be reassuring on the one hand, it was restrictive on the other, particularly when the author attempted to make visits to respondents, that were seen to be 'too late' at night for a lone woman to be making. Bhachu (1985) believes that a degree of distance in such circumstances was necessary.

My own experience in this relationship, was not so problematic, as I did not live, or stay long term in Luton. However, as mentioned above, my *izzat* became an issue that began concerning me, particularly when male members from the advisory Centre decided to chaperone me on my visits to potential interviewees' homes. This posed ethical problems in that confidentiality was threatened by the presence of a third person; participants were not so forthcoming in co-operating, whereas previously full consent had been gained for interview purposes. There was an urgent need to adopt a strategy that neither offended my 'chaperones' nor did it breach confidentiality of potential interviewees. It should be noted here that where I was accompanied by a third person (first 3 visits only), interviews were not undertaken. Instead, I made excuses such as leaving my interview schedule behind, claiming children were a distraction and that I was not willing to get in the way of mother-children interaction etc, as well as ensuring that I was taken to participant's homes, when I knew they would be out picking up children from school, so that confidentiality was safeguarded.

A solution to this problem was found. I accepted being accompanied to potential participants' homes, as long as my 'chaperones' dropped me off and picked me up only, without entering participant's homes and being present during the interview itself. There was no simple explanation such as demonstrating the importance of confidentiality, where my 'chaperones' were concerned. They were adamant that there was nothing I would find out that they were not already aware of, thus, end of conversation. It was for these reasons that it was not always simply a matter of demonstrating protocol or rules of research, and expecting people to comply. Such explanations would alienate me from my 'chaperones', who had been instrumental in providing me with women participants for interviews, as well as the women, who may have objected to my being accompanied by someone else, when I intended to interview them about their private lives. I felt that sensitivity was required in handling the situation, if future relations were to remain amiable between my 'chaperones', the women and me. In this case, I felt that co-operation in the field involved a two-way

process, with both researcher and participants stating their agenda clearly, particularly as I was relying on data from volunteers to my study and taking up their valuable time. As a researcher, I would be walking away with information that would shape my study; as participants to this study, respondents were gaining very little, if anything from my intrusion into their lives. I decided on this basis that it would be useful to explain my position clearly to potential participants and to assess their views on whether they wished to proceed with the study.

Of the 28 interviews undertaken, only 10 were tape recorded, while the remaining 18 were taken down in note form. I had undertaken a shorthand course previously, which came in useful during this period. However, it was still difficult to engage in a form of interaction with participants and take down notes simultaneously, a difficulty overcome slightly by my shorthand training.

As mentioned earlier, the issue of tape recording interviews, was one that concerned participants, particularly the women I interviewed initially (who were elders – over 55 years), all of whom either refused to be recorded, or simply did not reply, when I asked several times during the course of the interview, if they minded being recorded. I took their silence as a refusal, sensing that they did not wish to say ‘no’ outright in case of causing offence to me. So this was noted, although, it was still necessary to ask each participant if they objected to being taped, in the hope that they would agree. Interview notes and memory were all important, so to safeguard loss of either, it was important to immediately write up observations and important points upon arriving back to Southampton.

Younger people were less objecting to being tape recorded. Their main concern was that for them to answer honestly, I would need to guarantee complete confidentiality, which I duly did. One of the reasons many of the young people were keen to be interviewed by me was that I did not live in or know the people in Luton, which meant I was not a part of the ‘gossip network’ young people were afraid of. Also because they identified with me as I too am a British-Pakistani woman, so felt that I would understand their cultural traditions. This was a major factor in my gaining agreement to interviews being recorded, or indeed the granting of an interview itself.

Relationship between the researcher and participants

Favouring a British-Pakistani feminist ethnographic approach allows for observation of a group within a framework of insider/outsider and is in line with Black and South Asian feminist approaches (James, 1993, Brewer, 1993, Brah, 1996), where on the one hand, the researcher shares aspects of identities of the participants, yet, on the other hand, there will necessarily be differences in say, class terms. I shared a similar ethnic and religious background to the participants, which placed me as an insider in one sense, yet, I was also seen as an outsider, for not belonging to the community the participants lived in; setting me apart as a representative of an institutional process - namely undertaking academic research.

Being an insider brought with it certain expectations of me by participants, particularly as I worked at the advisory Centre, which was run by the religious leaders of Mosque. These expectations included how I should behave and appear as a British-Pakistani-Muslim; for example, the way I dressed was questioned. Initially I wore Western clothes, which I modified into a variation of the traditional Asian dress – the *shalwaar-kameez*, to accommodate the men at the Centre. This in itself was an indication of how women were seen as the bearers of tradition. They are expected to dress and behave in particular ways, in order to satisfy some British-Pakistani men's beliefs that women must observe modesty in their appearance¹⁶. The men wore Western clothes and continued to do so, apart from on some occasions, such as Jumma (Sabbath) Prayers, and/or during religious festivities.

The different gender expectations within this community and particularly the expectations of women to uphold religious and ethnic traditions, also gave me a sense of my outsider position. This was demonstrated in the fact that this community was more traditional than the community of British-Pakistanis in which I grew up in, therefore, the issue of dress was more significant for the community in Luton, than it had been for me growing up in a different British-Pakistani community.

¹⁶ See Wilson (1978) who notes the issue of dress being impressed on Pakistani women, more than that in other South Asian communities. Pakistani men tended to have an in-put into the design, style and eventually how women wore their clothes, in order that their modesty was preserved.

As a result of this insider/outsider position, I maintained an informal approach as I could in relation to interviews. Interviews took the form of conversations, which often involved lengthy narratives on life histories, particularly so amongst the older generation, who spent hours romanticising about life 'back home'. In addition, participants often forgot the purpose of my visit, especially, when these visits were in their homes. More often, they would treat me as a guest, supplying food and refreshments on a regular basis and not listening to any protests on my part.

There was also a two-way interviewing process taking place. Interestingly, nearly all the female respondents and 3 of the older male respondents, were keen to establish my background, beginning with questions of my father's origins in Pakistan, where my family lived in Britain, leading on to questions surrounding my unmarried status. This was one of the 'pitfalls' of being a British-Pakistani woman undertaking a study of British-Pakistani women in Luton. Two interviewees – the couple running the Centre, began taking a keener interest in my background after several visits to Luton. It emerged that they were looking for a 'suitable wife' for their son, hence the lines of questioning which indicated that the couple wished to meet with my parents. Naïve as this may seem, throughout the time I had known them previously, it did not occur to me that this issue would ever emerge. Needless to say, the relationship was becoming problematic for me, so I sought alternative 'bases' for future visits and interviews. The alternative bases were the women's homes and other venues, such as coffee shops and women's groups.

My initial visits to the Centre involved assisting with the day-to-day running of the Centre, including making tea and assisting women with enquiries relating to benefit claims, translating documents and making telephone calls and so on, on their behalf. I developed a friendly relationship with a number of young, married women, who had arrived in Britain as spouses or fiancées of British-Pakistani men. Mainly due to the fact that translating and interpreting were a major issue for these women, particularly among those whose husbands were absent for whatever reasons. This group of women could be characterised as working class, with little or no education; from rural backgrounds in Pakistan and were either receiving benefits or on low income necessitating in some assistance from the State.

I had to allow time for building relations with respondents prior to interviews. Without a rapport between myself and participants, it would have been impossible to gain any insights into the private lives of the respondents. I intended to build a rapport (Seidman, 1990) with the participants by being involved in their day to day lives, which included my working as a volunteer in the local advice Centre and assisting women participants with their daily chores, including taking and picking up children from school, accompanying women to various social and welfare agencies for interpreting purposes, shopping and other aspects of their lives I was able to assist in. A positivistic approach would essentially have distanced me from potential participants (Cresswell, 1995) who were largely women. Adopting such an approach would have made me appear 'official'¹⁷ as I would be referring to survey type questionnaires and testing hypotheses, which would constrain me as a researcher, and the participants under study, as there would be no flowing of conversation from which many themes emerged, that I had not previously considered. And the relationship I had developed with women (and men) prior to interviews taking place, would perhaps not have taken place were I considered inaccessible by appearing official-like, and concentrating on a structured, inflexible research schedule.

Research with British-Pakistani women, requires a degree of understanding of cultural traditions prior to undertaking the research itself. My experiences of collecting data for this study on a community of British-Pakistani women conforms, to a degree, with the writings of Black and South Asian feminists proposing that research into minority ethnic communities be undertaken by minority scholars themselves (Parmar, 1982, Hill-Collins, 1990, Andersen, 1993, Brah, 1996). It is with this in mind that this study was undertaken.

Summary

Qualitative research techniques were favoured over positivistic ones for a number of reasons. Firstly, qualitative, or more specifically ethnographic techniques allowed for

¹⁷ Many of the women I encountered at the Centre where I worked as a volunteer, were wary of officials as they were unable to communicate with these, not merely due to language issues (some British-Pakistani women spoke little or no English) but also due to their lack of confidence in being able to adequately deal with complicated official issues. Once I discovered this, I avoided appearing official like, and instead attempted to appear more approachable by interacting with them outside of the Centre in which I worked.

flexibility within the field. Secondly, there was no hypothesis that required testing, as the aim of the study was not to assume behaviour patterns and actions of the individuals participating, but to understand a community and its members through observations, conversations and interviews. All of which were undertaken in an informal manner, as I had been mindful not to distance participants by using formal techniques. Some of the women I encountered had, prior to being interviewed, displayed a suspicion of official agencies, including the statutory social and welfare agencies and the workers within these. Therefore, during observations I made while attending women's groups and various other settings where I encountered British-Pakistani women, I became aware that I must employ informal techniques otherwise I may risk being alienated.

Thirdly, the aim of this study was not to claim generalisability. Instead it was to present diversity and the complexities that govern the day to day lives of British-Pakistani women in Luton. This British-Pakistani community may share commonalities with other communities, in terms of their ethnic and religious backgrounds, but is also different and distinct in many ways, particularly in terms of their cultural traditions and the ways in which identities are negotiated using ethnicity, gender and age. A positivistic approach was rejected for the fact that I did not wish to make any grand claims about the findings from this particular study. In other words, generalisability from my findings in Luton would not be appropriate for other British-Pakistani communities, although there may be some similarities between this and other communities and members. On the whole communities will differ, on the basis that members construct structures through processes of negotiation, which need to be viewed in terms of the specificity and locality of individuals within a particular community. In other words, cultural systems are constructed within particular contexts, so what may be appropriate for British-Pakistanis in Luton, may not be the case for British-Pakistanis in Oxford (Shaw, 1988), as their different regions of origins and their socio-economic position in Britain, will essentially impact on the social structures and processes each community favours.

The ethnographic approach I favoured was a combination of Black and South Asian feminist ethnography, with an attempt at creating a perspective based on my own biography to understand and interpret women's voices. Such attempts were influenced by the fact that British-Pakistanis and particularly British-Pakistani women have

previously been silenced by dominant ideologies and/or negatively portrayed in academic and popular discourses. Black feminists note the disadvantaged position of Black women on the basis of their class, 'race' and gender, which is also shared by British-Pakistani women. However, British-Pakistani women's specificity is crucial to any understanding of their lived realities and to do this, I felt it necessary to develop an approach that allowed for such an understanding. Therefore, using a British-Pakistani feminist perspective that incorporated aspects of Black and South Asian feminist approaches that allowed women a voice, I felt would be the most useful way of interpreting issues relating to the community and its members I selected for this study. My background and using biography as a tool ensured that I had some knowledge of community members in terms of their ethnic and religious identities, yet, their specificity in terms of how they create relations within and between communities could only be assessed through participating and observing in their everyday lives in a variety of settings.

Having discussed the methodological aims of giving women a voice to articulate their concerns; the methodologies and methods used to collect data and the research process itself, I would like to turn to the empirical data and the subsequent chapters that discuss these. The next chapter will be exploring how structures and processes involving communities and identities of British-Pakistanis are negotiated and articulated; how they are maintained constructed, reproduced and changed at the same time. How allegiances on the one hand, can bind community members and how they can be a divisive source on the other, will also be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3: Community: Site for Negotiating and Renegotiating Identities

There are a number of different social divisions, for example, class, age, ethnicity and gender to name a few, that make up this British-Pakistani community. It is not singular, although it may be treated as such by outsiders and sometimes even by those living within it. Identities in relation to this community must necessarily be conceptualised as multifaceted, fractured and under continuous negotiation and renegotiation. Community in this sense becomes the site for negotiating and articulating these multiple identities and the role of women in this process is significant. The public/private¹⁸ divide in identity creation and recreation is relevant as women are expected to do much of this work in the private arena of their own homes as the socialisers of children and the carriers of their heritages (Buijs, 1993). Although this process takes place within the private sphere of the family, it also impacts on the public sphere of the community where identities are asserted and articulated in ways seen as appropriate to family and community members. But are also created in the public sphere and these impact on the private one (as will become clear later in this chapter, with regards to gender identities and expectations of women).

British-Pakistani women are therefore, cultural transmitters (Buijs, 1993), a role that is often ignored and/or undermined by men within the community. Men's concerns are located within the wider political processes, governing politics of Kashmir, religion and ethnicity. These public concerns ignore the importance of the private arena of the family, in which identities are formed and reformed and articulated within the community. I will be arguing that identities are contested, not only with regards to the dominant community, but also with regards to the constituent parts of the minority community. These are the points being made and how they relate will be discussed in this chapter.

There is no universally shared concept of community (Rutherford, 1990, Hoggett, 1997), but only particular articulations that overlap, complement, or sit at acute angles to one another (Young, 1995). Community does not necessarily involve cohesiveness and shared familial ties and links as described by Tonnies' concept of *Gemeinschaft*

See Modood et al (1994) regarding the public/private divide in relation to ethnicities, and Wilson (1978) regarding gender and the public/private divide.

(community), which conforms to an ideal type based on familial ties (Bell and Newby, 1971 Hoggett, 1997). Tonnies' definition is one that is rarely used to describe community today, instead the contested nature of the concept has led to attempts to replace the term with other analytical concepts such as 'social networks' (Bott, 1957; Allan, 1991; Elshtain (1995).

According to Dominelli (1989), 'community' arises from a sense of shared geography, identity and interests with fluid borders. This definition sits neatly with the way in which I perceived 'community' through observations and interactions with British-Pakistanis in Luton. In terms of what respondents considered being 'community', depended on the individuals and their subjective experiences of community life. Reciprocity and obligations to community and kinship networks is an important aspect of British-Pakistani community relations (Anwar, 1979). Tensions and contestations of identities are a feature of this community as they are of other South Asian communities in Britain (Ahmad, 1996). For the purpose of this study, however, I consider the use of the concept of 'community' as a site for negotiating and articulating ethnic, religious and gender identity/ties. Women's roles are significant in this process, as they are the cultural transmitters (Buijs, 1993) of their own and their children's identity/ties.

Studies surrounding British-Pakistani families and communities tend to situate them within a fixed and unchanging model, in which gender; intergenerational relations and identities conform to stereotypes surrounding the 'extended family', women's subordinate position within these and unquestioned deference to elders (Saifullah-Khan, 1977, 1979, Shaw, 1988). Such characterisations of the family may be relevant to some British-Pakistanis, but do not relate to all of them. These differences will necessarily relate to the individuals involved and their subjective experiences in constructing family structures and processes. In this sense, constructions of the family will be described as I experienced these in the process of undertaking this study. Women's roles in constructing these will be of importance, as I will be arguing that they are the bearers of traditions, as well as the creators of traditions, albeit within the constraints that they are faced with.

British-Pakistani identity/ties are multifaceted, fluid and fractured. I will attempt to demonstrate how community identities impact on allegiances within and between

community members and the ways, in which the community is united on the one hand, yet, at the same time, can be a divided on the other. Members tend to be united along ethnic and religious lines during outsider attacks to these dimensions of their identities. Internal divisions, on the other hand tend also to exist within and between community members. These are located in gender relations. Men and women tend to unite when threats are posed to their religious and ethnic values, traditions and beliefs; yet, issues of gender equality serve as a dividing force within this community. The discussion will look at the ways in which social identities are articulated to serve the interests of the community, and how individual identities are negotiated within this collective. Identity is conceptualised using Brah's (1996) notions of difference:

“as experience, as social relations; as subjectivity; and as identity” (Brah, 1996: 15).

Gender and women's roles and voices in relation to community and identities, their traditional roles and how these are challenged, both in the public and private arenas of the community and family, will be discussed. The discussion will focus on women as signifiers of community; for example, the ways in which they are involved in processes of identity constructions and reconstructions. As mentioned in chapter 1, the family, community, intergenerational relations and gender are important areas of British-Pakistani women's lives, for this reason this chapter and the following 2 chapters, will focus on issues relating to community and women's roles within this. In chapter 4 this argument will be discussed further by examining family structures and processes and how this institution is important for maintaining community traditions. Women are also involved in caring for elders, for this reason, in chapter 5, I will be looking at intergenerational relations, with an emphasis on the key concerns of elders - religion and their care needs, and young people's concerns around creating new forms of identities.

In this chapter, I will be looking at how the concepts of racism, marginality and belonging serve to unite this British-Pakistani community along ethnic, racial and religious lines, by viewing a prominent social event – the ‘Mecca Bingo Hall’ incident. In this part of the chapter, I will be demonstrating how a particular form of racism based on religious intolerance (Islamaphobia), levelled at this community, served to unite

members due to their collective experiences of this and their shared identities, which impacted on feelings of unbelonging to British society. The discussion will then go onto looking at internal divisions within the community, in which I will be discussing how British-Pakistanis are divided along class lines and gender lines, using the distinctions between Pakistani and Kashmiri identity/ties and characterisations of these. Following on from this, I will be looking at gender as a dividing source, by using community and religious leaders as examples of how women remain peripheral to decision making processes relating to representation of community members to outsiders, and how community leaders often fail to consider women's needs. Finally, I will be looking at the ways in which women are active in creating community relations, by focusing on the importance they place on the arenas of family and community. The points made here will set the scene for chapter 4, in which family and gender relations will form the basis for discussion on women's agency in (re)creating identities.

Identity construction is a complex process, particularly in relation to minority communities in Britain (Modood, et al, 1994, Brah, 1996). For these communities, the issue is not merely about constructing individual identity/ies, but collective ones – where members must view the interests of the group, as opposed to seeking individual, self-interest (Anwar, 1979, Saifullah-Khan, 1977). British-Pakistani communities, need to be conceptualised within a framework that allows for consideration of their multiple identities – one in which reciprocity and obligations (Ahmad, 1996) become key to any form of identity/ties creation and recreation. Thus, such identity/ties can be better viewed as social identity/ties (Jenkins, 1996). However, within these social, or collective identities, individual identity/ties continue to be asserted. Social identity according to Jenkins (1996) is based on collective identifications. Jenkins (1996) uses the example of gay and lesbian allegiances in the light of mass public occasions such as the Gay Pride in London or the Mardi gras in Sydney, Australia:

“For individual participants these occasions may (or, indeed, may not) affirm their own particular sexual identities, but they are collective rituals of identification and political mobilisation before they are anything else”. (Jenkins, 1996: 3)

In this sense, ethnic identities tend also to possess elements of shared allegiance through collective action and political mobilisation to demonstrate a sense of belonging to a particular community, as was the case for Muslims during the Rushdie affair (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992). Muslims from around the world mobilised and through collective acts of identification demonstrated solidarity based on their religious beliefs. However, not all Muslims were in favour of action against the publication of Rushdie's Satanic Verses, yet, this was rarely, if at all pointed out (see Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992, who discuss the issue of Women Against Fundamentalism (WAF) and how many Muslim women have been attempting to dispel the negative images of Muslims).

Collective interests are not necessarily compatible with individual interests. Whilst shared, or social identities are important markers of one's allegiance to a community, self-identity is also an important aspect of one's individuality and the ways in which individuals depart from, but remain part of, a particular community. This is particularly relevant for the community of British-Pakistanis I investigated. Women's interests within this community tended to be individual interests in one sense, where gender issues were given little weight compared with religious and ethnic issues. The women themselves would often put their own interests to one side, for the sake of the collective (as will be seen in 'Mrs Sayed's case later on).

Racism, marginality and belonging

British-Pakistanis were aware of their marginal position in British society, through their experiences of racism impressing upon them, feelings of unbelonging. This had an effect on why terms such as 'English' were never used to describe their identity/ties, yet, they could use this. Why then are young people identifying with their elders in a two-way process of being excluded and excluding themselves? By excluding themselves, I am not attempting to blame the minority group in question for their marginalisation within British society, rather, to view it as a reaction against being excluded. If an individual is seen as the 'other', s/he is likely to re-assert his/her minority identifications in exaggerated forms (Bhavnani, 1994). Black and South Asian people's negative encounters with British institutions have been documented within literature on relations between black people and the police (The IRR Report, 1986) and the more recent Macpherson Report (1999), have presented accounts of racism within

the police force in Britain, and the ways in which these encounters reinforce among British-Blacks and South Asians, a sense of exclusion and unbelonging (see Gilroy, 1987; Hall, 1989; Cohen, 1989).

The issue of racism and unbelonging cuts across age. Many of the 'first generation'¹⁹ British-Pakistanis expressed a lack of inclusiveness in British society. However, this was put down to factors including different experiences in terms of socialisation, language issues preventing interactions with the dominant white population, and a sense of being an outsider. Young people also expressed their marginality and 'otherness', yet, their reasons for this were different from their elder relatives, as many of the young people were born and/or raised in Britain, therefore, participated in at least, the education system. Racism and discrimination based on religion were seen as inherent features of British society, and that by nature of their visible difference (skin colour, dress styles and so on), they are likely to be subject to various forms of discriminations. By accepting that discrimination by the dominant population is likely to be a permanent feature of British society does not mean that British-Pakistanis are not challenging oppressive structures, rather that recognising its existence can and has led to collective (and individual) action to prevent it.

'Ayesha' is in her 20s and works at the local library. She explains how the visibility of her otherness impacts on the way she is treated in her neighbourhood:

"I work in this library, which is used mainly by the local South Asians. So I am seen as one of them, because of my colour I am seen as part of this community, despite the fact that I live miles away from here. Where I live is a predominantly 'white' area, where we have been racially abused (usually by kids) on a number of occasions. It's because my husband and me are the only Asians living on our street that we are easy targets of this sort of discrimination. If we were Polish, we would still be an ethnic minority group, but no one would know our backgrounds because our skin colour would be the same as those who are

¹⁹ First generation refers to post war migrants arriving in Britain.

discriminating against us. It's a shame in a way, because both my husband and me were born in Britain, so we are British, but you wouldn't think so, the way they [dominant population] treat us. My husband wants to move back to where other Pakistanis live, because of the harassment we get where we are living".

From 'Ayesha's' response and that of the structures and institutions of British life which impress upon British-Pakistanis and indeed minority groups in general, an insistent language of unbelonging and marginality and the idea that Britain can never be home and a place of safety and acceptance²⁰, is further complicated by what Cohen (1988) terms as the 'nationalism of the neighbourhood'. The fact that 'Ayesha' and her husband considered/are considering 'moving back' to the British-Pakistani community, which despite its less than perfect ways, they feel safe living in, is an indication of the politics of neighbourhoods, where difference is not always seen as positive, and is instead used as a basis for persecuting and victimising individuals, because of their visible 'otherness'. For 'Ayesha' and her husband the safety of living in the British-Pakistani community they moved away from, appears to be appealing compared with the harassment they are experiencing in their current neighbourhood.

This is relevant, particularly as 'Ayesha' has lived in the British-Pakistani community before moving away and is aware of the gender divisions that exist here, yet, to her, moving back is preferable to remaining in a community where hostility is shown to one's ethnic, religious and cultural traditions.

Elders too felt a lack of belonging outside of their community. During an interview with an elder man in his 60s, in which we discussed the 'Kashmir situation' (a favourite topic amongst the elder men I encountered), I enquired as to why he wasn't equally passionate about the local and national politics of Britain that affected his day-to-day life. He replied:

"Here [in Britain] we will always be foreigners and what we say will make little difference. I've been in this country for 40 years

²⁰ (see the Runnymede Trust Report: Islamophobia, 1997 and the Macpherson Report, 1999 on Institutional Racism)

and heard the white people calling us ‘Pakis’ and telling us to ‘go home’, when we first arrived here, and today, it still hasn’t stopped; in fact it’s worse. They are killing our people because we are *kale*²¹ [referring to the Stephen Lawrence case]. If they [majority population] saw us as British, they wouldn’t discriminate against us like this would they?”

In the same way, some young people did not consider themselves British without adding on their minority identities. ‘Fozia’ is a 22 year old community worker. She felt that being British and being dark skinned meant that you automatically had to state your ethnicity, otherwise people will enquire of this anyway. ‘Fozia’ stated:

“It’s really difficult to say your British when you’re dark skinned. People always say, ‘yeah, but where do you come from?’ which is really annoying, but I suppose it’s curiosity isn’t it? So, you’re always reminded of your ethnic minority status, which I don’t mind, but it just gets complicated sometimes. Once you start with, ‘I’m British, but of Pakistani parents and am a Muslim’, where do you stop? I live in Luton, in this area, etc. I think it’s really difficult for British Asians, because all of us bring in religion as part of our identities as well”.

Young and elder people are aware that their identities are multifaceted, but they are also aware that with these identities a sense of unbelonging necessarily follows and relates to their difference as a social group – a minority group living in a Western racist society, in which hostilities from outsiders is a feature of their lives. However, racial and ethnic differences are not the only sources of outsider hostilities. Religion also plays a part in discriminations experienced by members of this British-Pakistani community.

Islamaphobia and unbelonging

²¹ *Kale*, literally means Blacks in Urdu and Panjabi

Racisms and discriminations based on religion can be levelled at both the individual and the collective group when communities are visibly different, particularly if they are concentrated in particular geographical locations (Dahya, 1974, Werbner, 1994). Such racisms can have the effect of uniting community members. In the community in Luton, British-Pakistani-Muslims have been involved in collective action against threats to their religious beliefs and principles, in other words, they responded to 'Islamaphobia', which demonstrated to them, their lack of belonging and/or marginal position in British society.

Islamaphobia, according to a report published by the Runnymede Trust is defined as:

“.... Similar to ‘xenophobia’ and ‘europhobia’, and is a useful shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam – and therefore, to fear or dislike of all or most Muslims”. (Runnymede Trust Report, 1997: 1)

The term emerged in the early 1990s and after the ‘Rushdie affair’, where Muslims in Britain, and indeed throughout the world, called for the banning of Salman Rushdie’s book, ‘The Satanic Verses’, on the grounds that the book was blasphemous (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992).

Perceptions of Islamaphobia by British-Pakistanis in Luton were cited to me on numerous occasions. Whether individuals discussed aspects of service provision or political participation in the Borough Council, the fact that Islamaphobia tended to creep into these discussions was indicative of the multi-dimensions of racism and stereotyping of minority groups and particularly British-Pakistanis. The ways in which discourses have racialised Muslims suggests that the added dimension of religion serves to perpetuate differentiation. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) point out:

“Since the ‘Rushdie affair’, the exclusion of minority religions from the national collectivity has started a process of racialisation that especially relates to Muslims. People who used to be known for the place of origin, or even, as ‘people of colour’ have become identified by their assumed religion. The racist stereotype of the

‘Paki’ has become the racist stereotype of the ‘Muslim fundamentalist’”. (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1992: 55)

In this sense, Islamaphobia is a particular form of racism, based on religious intolerance, but it also demonstrates a lack of belonging by those it is levelled at, who feel its existence in their every day lives. Such perceptions are shared among British-Pakistanis in Luton, and serve to unite the community as a whole, regardless of gender, age or regional origins in Pakistan. One occasion that served to unite the community was the ‘Mecca Bingo Hall’ incident, in which the community’s racial and religious beliefs were threatened.

In December 1997, Muslim leaders and members of the Muslim communities in Luton, clashed with the owners of Mecca bingo hall, demanding its name be changed. The bingo hall had previously been known simply as ‘Bingo’ and was situated within the heart of the Muslim community, where a large number of British-Pakistanis live. The name change (to ‘Mecca Bingo’) stirred up a storm of protest among Muslims, who objected to the use of the name of the holy city – Mecca, in connection with alcohol and gambling, as profane. Objections centred on the use of the name ‘Mecca’ as opposed to the bingo hall itself, which tended to be one of the misconceptions surrounding the incident.

Religious leaders mobilised local Muslims into discussing ways of solving the problem, including negotiations with the owners of the bingo hall and organising protest rallies, if negotiations with owners were unsuccessful. However, prior to any discussions taking place, the bingo hall had been vandalised and fire bombed. This resulted in police intervention and blame was levelled at the Muslim community living in the area. As mentioned earlier, the concentration of British-Pakistani settlement in Luton is clearly visible in this part of Luton. The bingo hall is situated on the ‘high street’ of this area, where very few ‘white’²² people lived, so the blame for its vandalism lay with the local minority communities. This blame, together with the aim of removing the name Mecca, united the community as a whole. One woman in her 60s, pointed out:

²² I use the term ‘white’ to describe members of the indigenous population, or those appearing as such. However, I realise that the term itself is contested, and will use this term only with reference to the dominant, Anglo population in Britain.

“This is disgraceful. Before this happened [Mecca incident] *they* [majority group] did not like *us* [British-Pakistanis] because we are *kale* [people of colour]..... Now they are turning against us because of our Islamic beliefs. We must not let this continue, as our children will never be allowed to practice their religion”. (my emphases).

Another participant – a young male, in his early 20s, held similar views, albeit differently:

“We’re not going to be treated like second-class citizens. They [the dominant majority] have treated our parents with disrespect by being racist towards them, when they first got here. Our parents accepted it because they thought they were visitors from a different country, but we’re [the young generation] not going to stand for that sort of thing. We’ve got rights and most of us were born here, we’re not from a foreign country. If they want to discriminate against us for being Muslims, then we’re going to fight back”.

Young and elder people alike shared views on their position in relation to the majority group. They were aware of their subordinate position, but did not attempt to view themselves as victims. Instead, their views were indicative of their actions, which were to challenge processes they saw as threatening their religious beliefs and/or their ethnic traditions and identities. The community’s mobilisation was rewarded, by the successful removal of the name ‘Mecca’, to simply ‘Bingo’.

While the ‘Mecca incident’ (as it came to be known in Luton) had a uniting affect on the British-Pakistani community, some majority community members were united in their dislike of minorities. Some were vociferous in their stance against what they saw as ‘pandering to Asians’. In the local press several people had written to complain about the ways in which South Asians were threatening their established institutions and cultural forms. It also gave legitimacy to xenophobia as the contents of the letters to the

local press stated. One letter published in a local newspaper stated how Mecca had been synonymous with entertainment “for many more years than people from the Indian sub-continent have been living en masse in Britain”. The letter continued:

“It should be made perfectly clear to these ‘*residents*’ that during their daily prayer ritual they not be expected to kow-tow or make their obeisance to what was formerly the Odeon. These immigrants have played ducks and drakes with our house rules to suit themselves rather than adopt the ways of the house in which they now live. Are they now able to dictate to us what words we can and cannot use in our own language?” (Luton/Dunstable On Sunday: January 11, 1998. Writer’s emphasis.)

While another suggested that the majority group was ‘caving in’ to minorities while threatening the cultural traditions of the majority:

“This is yet another instance of our – once great – nation giving in to minority groups who choose to live in our country. It is only a matter of time before our entire heritage and culture is destroyed by spineless officials who are prepared to bow to these minority groups at the expense of our traditions..... We are forever being told to respect minority cultures and be tolerant of some of their quirks and *even barbaric ways*. Yet, I see no respect or tolerance being given to the host nation... And these people have the effrontery to ask why there is so much racism in this country. When in Rome, do as the Romans do”. (Luton News, 21, January 1998, my emphasis)

The positive outcome (if one can call it that) of the bingo hall incident was that it served to unite the local Muslim and British-Pakistani communities. This unity proved valuable in that it demonstrated the mobilising skills of religious leaders who, in negotiations with community members were able to successfully overturn the decision to name the bingo hall Mecca. On the negative side, the incident stirred up racism and Islamaphobia among some of the indigenous group members, used the incident to incite

racism towards minority groups in Britain, as seen in the above letters. The implications of this are that if and when, minority groups assert their ethnic or religious identities they will be faced with a barrage of criticism, at best, and racism at worst, from some members of the majority community. Where minority groups assert visibility of ethnic and/or religious identities, hostility from the majority group seems inevitable. From the above letters it is clear that public assertion of minority identities is not tolerated, instead, incidents where political mobilisation by minority groups occurs, the majority are keen to ensure they point to the 'otherness' of such groups by not only pathologising their customs and traditions, but also showing contempt for their agency in attempting to safeguard these. Modood et al (1994) have rightly pointed to the problematic nature of 'public ethnicity' by arguing that:

"Minority ethnicity, albeit white ethnicity, has traditionally been regarded in Britain as acceptable if it was confined to the privacy of family and community, and did not make any political demands. Earlier groups of migrants and refugees, such as the Irish or Jews in the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, found that peace and prosperity came easier the less public one made one's minority practices or identity. Perhaps for non-European origin groups, whose physical appearance gave them a visibility that made them permanently vulnerable to racial discrimination, the model of a privatised group identity was never viable." (Modood et al, 1994: 3)

Outsider threats to their religious and racial identities served to unite this British-Pakistani community, which would give the illusion to the outsider, as well those living within it, of its cohesiveness and singularity. Yet, there are many internal divisions that serve to divide community members, not least, social class and gender. This British-Pakistani community is a heterogeneous group, in which class and gender (amongst other social divisions) serve as divisive sources. I would like to turn to these internal divisions and point to gendered identities within these.

Identities as sources of division: the 'Kashmiri' and Gender dimensions

British-Pakistani community relations are based reciprocity and obligations (Saifullah-Khan, 1979, Shaw, 1988). Anwar (1979) shows differences in kin support and family organisation between working class and middle class Pakistanis. Anwar (1979) states that mutual obligations are more likely to revolve around kin groups among the working classes than the middle classes. Yet, little is mentioned about the ways in which working class and middle class Pakistanis interact with and the perceptions they hold of each other. Here, I would like to demonstrate these relations by pointing to the differences within a Pakistani identity that have arisen from the use of a 'Kashmiri' identity. I will be referring to gender identities within this community, by viewing them as a source of division both in class and gendered terms. As this study is concerned with the specific experiences of British-Pakistanis in Luton, it is worth noting that identity issues have been explored according to the individual's own definitions of his/her identity. To assign a given label such as Pakistani to people from Azad Kashmir in Luton, would be denying their socio-political struggles in the cause of a separate identity. Identity construction is based around the differential regional origins and migratory processes which set apart those from rural societies - 'Kashmiris' - and those from the affluent urban areas - Pakistanis.

The distinction between Pakistani and Kashmiri is not used purely for descriptive purposes and to establish one's origins, but also as a marker of one's class position and the internal differentiations taking place on the basis of class. When discussions around class took place among British-Pakistanis in Luton, it emerged that distinctions between those originating from Azad Kashmir and those originating from other regions in Pakistan, were being made. The former were characterised as being less educated and unfamiliar with highly industrialised societies, which suggested that they were inferior to those originating from the urban centres of Pakistan, who considered themselves highly educated, economically prosperous and generally have a higher understanding and experience of industrial societies prior to arriving in Britain.

I would like to look at the class differences within this group arising from a Pakistani and a 'Kashmiri' identity among British-Pakistanis in Luton and how this impacts on women's identity creation processes. Firstly, it needs to be pointed out that 'Kashmir' is the disputed territory, which lies in the northern regions between Pakistan and India. There is no real basis for the use of such an identity, as the two countries are in dispute

over the territory, which has no separate official status. Azad (free) Kashmir²³ is subsumed into Pakistan, although it has its own political assembly governing this territory (similar to the present status of the Welsh and Scottish Assemblies in Britain). A large majority of British-Pakistanis in Luton originate from this region, and have in recent years, and through continuous links with Pakistan forged a separate identity. However, this does not suggest that 'Kashmiris' do not consider themselves Pakistani, they continue to assert this, but by presenting 'Kashmiriness' and highlighting the political situation of the region, they have become active in calls for separatism through such identity assertions. How are these identities negotiated and articulated in the Luton context? One way of viewing Pakistani and Kashmiri identities in Luton is to use class as a means of exploring the differences between the two.

The urban-rural distinction that exists among British-Pakistanis in Luton highlights the significant class differences that exist within this social group. Shaw (1988) found that Pakistanis in Oxford placed great importance on being from the village or the city. In that they were concerned about other Pakistanis' backgrounds in relation to their origins from the city or the village. In Luton, it was interesting to note that there was a difference within the community in terms of the importance placed on the urban-rural aspects of one's origins in Pakistan. To many of the Kashmiri participants, it was of little significance whether one originated from the urban centres in Pakistan, or the rural villages. Yet, those from Pakistan and the urban cities tended to make these distinctions. This was mainly to do with Pakistanis believing that they were somehow superior in that their experiences had better equipped them for living in Britain. Unlike Shaw's (1988) study, which demonstrates preferences by Pakistanis towards an urban lifestyle and the high status attached to this, those originating from villages in Azad Kashmir were proud of their background and did not consider themselves inferior to those from the cities, although they were concerned about the divisive nature of asserting a Kashmiri identity. 'Zafar' who in his 20s, suggested that:

"Pakistanis in Luton are not content unless divisions exist between them, whether these be of a religious nature [Shia/Sunni distinction among Muslims] or ethnic as in the

²³ Luton's Kashmiri population originates from Azad (Free) Kashmir which is a part of Pakistan as opposed to India.

Kashmiri/Pakistani distinction, and these days the urban/rural difference. This all serves to split the already divided community”.

This informant is of Kashmiri background himself and is dismissive of claims that villagers are considered inferior to those originating from urban backgrounds, but realises such distinctions do exist:

“Kashmiris have started to claim this identity due to the political concerns the community has in relation to politics of Kashmir, where separatism is sought from Pakistan and India. If you go to the mosques, you will hear the religious leaders discussing this and calling for Kashmiris to support the aim of a separate State”.

Women also made distinctions about the urban-rural divide. This was mainly advanced by middle-class women who perceived themselves as ‘educated’, from urban backgrounds in Pakistan, (cities like Lahore and Karachi) and different from Kashmiris. For example, 'Mrs Akhtar' is from Lahore and organises events for Muslim women within Bedfordshire and considers herself, Pakistani and middle-class. She explained how:

“People from rural backgrounds tend to be conservative in their attitudes towards issues, particularly those relating to women. It is not just the men who attempt to maintain certain norms and values relating to our community but also the older women, who are involved in this process. There is widespread reluctance to allow women to attend events of a religious nature, for fear that they are run by women and for women, so are concerned as to what is really likely to happen.....yes, you could say they are unnecessarily suspicious of women involved in activities without men being present, even if the activities are of a religious nature”.

Another woman originating from Karachi, informed me she was educated to Master's level in Pakistan, and negatively described Kashmiris as *pindu*²⁴ and *jangli*²⁵ who are uneducated and unable to adapt to Western industrialised societies, due to their lack of experience of such societies. Another woman pointed out the differences in migratory patterns and settlements between 'Pakistanis' and 'Kashmiris'. She suggested that her own experience of migration to Britain was a result of her husband wishing to complete his postgraduate studies, as opposed to the economic factors shaping migration and settlement of Kashmiris. She points out:

"Kashmiris have always been concerned with settling in Britain for economic purposes and/or obtaining a British Nationality to raise their status back home. My husband and I were not concerned with this, as he [husband] entered Britain to complete his PhD studies, while I also went to university to undertake a Masters course in Economics. Unlike the Kashmiris, we always intended to go back [to Pakistan], as the standard of living in Britain was not one we were used to. In Pakistan we had help in the form of a housekeeper, a driver, child-minder, gardener and so on. But here everything had to be done by myself and my husband".

Such views of Kashmiris tended to be circulating among middle-class women, yet, Kashmiri women rarely negatively characterised middle-class women. Where this group made distinctions they tended to confirm their inferior position and the views held by middle-class women. 'Zebun' is a working class, Kashmiri, and has lived in Britain for about 6 years. She attends many of the women's groups so that she can meet up with her friends and exchange gossip and information. 'Zebun' had no education in Pakistan or in Britain and was unfamiliar with official processes, so was nervous about approaching people in positions of authority, and the middle-class women who ran the groups. On one occasion, she wanted to know about a benefit claim she had made and

²⁴ 'Pindu' literally means villager.

²⁵ 'Pindu' and 'jangli' are derogatory terms used to describe those one considers inferior to them. Literally translated, these terms respectively mean villager and uncivilised.

asked me to approach the woman running the group, as she was dealing with this on behalf of 'Zebun'. The conversation went along these lines:

'Zebun':

"Would you [me] ask 'Mrs Siddiqui' to chase my benefit claim for me?"

Me:

"Why don't you ask her, she's over there?"

'Zebun':

"I don't like to bother her, she's going to think I'm a nuisance. And anyway, she will probably have a go at me for not being able to deal with these things myself."

Me:

"I will speak to her, if you want me to, but it would be better coming from you."

'Zebun':

"Go on, ask her, she won't mind if you ask her, because you both speak the same language and you are educated like she is and know about these things".

I did approach 'Mrs Siddiqui', and was given the information I needed to pass on to 'Zebun'. It was interesting to be used as a mediator in this way, particularly as it signified the types of interactions within this community of British-Pakistanis. Not only is the community different from other communities, but also intra-ethnic differences based on class and gender exist. My role as an intermediary was a privileged one, in that I felt that the women did not consider me to be middle-class and/or superior, as 'Zebun' and others were able to approach me as opposed to the middle-class women they knew in Luton. It also confirms the methodological position I took in understanding and building a relationship with the women as a crucial element in my developing a rapport with women of different backgrounds and identities.

Gender and Community and religious leaders

As mentioned above, ideologies surrounding British-Pakistani communities tend to conform to the model of collective interests (Shaw, 1988, Lewis, 1994) particularly so in relation to the ways in which British society and institutions conceptualise the solidaristic and cohesive nature of such communities, which paves the way for ease of access to particular members within the community, such as community and/or religious leaders (Anwar and Werbner, 1991).

Community and religious leaders are considered by both minority group members and the British institutions, including politicians and public sector agencies, such as the social and health care agencies, as representing the interests of minority communities and their members (Lewis, 1994, Anwar and Werbner, 1994). These leaders emerge as a result of their extensive experience of minority community processes, in which kinship structures, religious needs of a particular community and the wider political processes that impact on these, such as racism and policy and practice implications for members of the community they attempt to represent. By raising these issues in social and political terms, leaders legitimise and secure their position through the idiom of 'acting for and on behalf of their community' (Shaw, 1988).

Community and religious leaders become the focus for British politicians and institutions, such as the health and social care agencies (Shaw, 1988) that view the communities as internally homogeneous, and therefore, assume that one or two individuals can represent the interests of all members, regardless of the differences that exist between members and in particular, between the leaders and other members of the community, in terms of age, gender, class position, linguistic and cultural differences.

In Luton, I was not aware of any processes of selecting these leaders, but was aware that these were overwhelmingly elder men, or influential businessmen, who developed ways in which they became prominent to members of the minority as well as majority communities through their activities. These activities usually took a variety of forms including political mobilisation during times of threats to minority ethnic and religious structures; raising the health and social care needs of specific groups within the minority community (for example elders) to service providers; competing in local politics; using the support of minority community members whose interests they claim to represent, by nature of their familiarity with British institutional life as well as through their use of the

English language and more importantly the economic clout that ensures all of this is possible in the first place.

For these men, the interests of the community as a whole may not necessarily be their aim in pursuing leadership and/or representation of minority communities. Instead, their aim is, often, paradoxically, self-interest and status enhancing, rather than raising the plight of individuals within the community they are meant to represent.

Women were rarely invited to participate in community and/or religious leaderships, particularly as so many of the wives of leaders tend to be on an equal footing to their husbands, in terms of social class, education, community and religious knowledge and knowledge of British institutions. Their experience tends to be confined to the informal structures of community life, which are valued less than mainstream political participation. nevertheless, these women are instrumental in raising concerns of members of the community to health and social care agencies through their community activities, such as women's social and self-help groups. These activities hold little value to men within the community and are therefore, not seen as significant in raising the profile and needs of the British-Pakistani community to outsiders. Nevertheless, this has not deterred women from organising such activities and the groups are often a good way of getting women to talk about the issues that affect them and their families.

When I enquired as to who the community and/or religious leaders were, the responses were interesting. 'Anwar', a youth worker in his 30s, believes that officials, from the Borough Council and/or health and social care agencies, tend to designate the role of 'community leader' to anyone seen as prominent within a minority community:

"They're [community leaders] the ones who are visible to the council or social services, because, they have either worked for them, or are working in community based agencies. You see, the public sector likes to think it's politically correct by trying not to stereotype, but they still do, by approaching older, men from our communities, because of the stereotype of religious and community leaders representing Asian communities".

'Jameela' an outreach worker described how public sector agencies cannot gauge the needs of a whole community based on a few, male 'leaders'. She states:

"Community and religious leaders are not in touch with the real world sometimes. They have particular interests in the community, usually to do with securing their own position, so for that reason they are not likely to be in touch with the real issues affecting British Pakistani families in Luton. Particularly issues to do with women and young people.... They definitely don't represent women, because they're more concerned with themselves and their own standing in the community. If young people are involved in drugs, their solution is to take them to Pakistan or marry them off, to 'calm them down'. When they are faced with controversial issues like these, they sweep them under the carpet, which denies those who need professional and practical support, with nowhere to turn. It's ridiculous, because they are so out of touch, they can't represent us and some people are being left on their own because they haven't or won't conform to their [community/religious leaders'] ways."

Male leadership is challenged at a variety of levels, not least by younger people and women, whose interests are not always represented adequately. The interests of young people and women become important for leaders when attempting to gain funding from service providing agencies, otherwise their interests are often subsumed as the interests of the community as a whole or the political aims of particular community and/or religious leaders and their supporters. As 'Noreen' states:

"If funding is available from the Council or the Health authorities towards women's issues, or issues affecting care of elders, then suddenly the community leaders will become interested in these matters. They will pursue, every woman that they have previously put down for whatever reasons, and will go visiting the homes of elders to find out what they need, claiming they will put these concerns to the relevant agencies, in order that they can

gain better facilities for them. When in reality, they are just using these vulnerable people for their own aims of improving their status within the community”.

The views of men will often pander to stereotypes, where they will be presenting the needs of British-Pakistani women from a perspective best left in the 1960s. In other words, rather than presenting a reality of their experiences, they are likely to view women in a particular way, that situates them within the domestic sphere (which is the case for some but not all British-Pakistani women), thus, presenting this to officials requiring knowledge of them for purposes of providing appropriate services. As ‘Jameela’ pointed out:

“The leaders don’t consider the fact that some of us women work and so can’t care for our elders, so we need help from the social services. But community leaders assume we [women] are all at home, and so don’t raise these issues to the health and social services agencies, until the agencies say that they will provide money for certain services that may help women.”

Without adequate knowledge of family and gender issues these leaders will, in partnership with the agencies they are supposed to inform of their communities, perpetuate and reproduce gender stereotypes and assumptions based upon these, without challenging existing notions surrounding minority communities and the changing nature of women’s identities.

Women, family and community

Women’s role as bearers of traditions (Wilson, 1978, Bhachu, 1993) is an important aspect of this community and is linked to identity/ties creation – its creation and recreation as multidimensional and fractured and where women are the carriers of future generations’ identity/ties. Their role is connected to the public/private dichotomy of family and community, where they are the upholders of tradition and the transmitters of cultures. In this sense, the importance placed on their appearance and the ways in which they socialise their children, were of significance. Dress, for example was an important

marker of a woman's character and identity. One of the key workers in an elderly support centre, commented on my clothes (trousers and a dress, a Westernised version of the *shalwaar-kameez* suit worn predominantly by Pakistani women) stating that he would be unwilling to accept 'this type of dress' on his daughter, although he pointed out (after I enquired as to whether he would prefer me to wear traditional dress next time I arrived) that he realises:

"You are studying and live away from your family quite a lot, I'm sure your family is pretty liberal minded, if they have let you study away from home, so I don't have any objections towards you wearing English clothes. But our women should be concerned with observing modesty and tradition".

It was clear that this participant *did* actually object, to my not wearing shalwaar-kameez but did not wish to impose his preference upon me. This was significant in that dress became a marker of my identity as a British-Pakistani-Muslim woman, as it did for other women. For this individual, dressing in a traditional manner was synonymous with being a good Pakistani and Muslim woman. My clothes demonstrated 'Britishness' (his view) rather than 'Pakistaniness', which is how he perceived me. On the other hand, women and young people were intrigued by my dress and saw it as incorporating two ethnicities – British and Pakistani. As 'Meena' pointed out:

"I like the way you've made trousers and a dress look like a shalwaar-kameez is interesting. I think it's good to be able to show both identities through clothes. My parents are constantly objecting to the clothes I wear – usually trousers and a shirt or a long skirt. But I don't want to wear shalwaar-kameez all the time, because a lot of my friends who are not Pakistani have the option of wearing different types of clothes.... My parents think that 'doing fashion' is not the right thing to do. They think I should forget about fashion and what's trendy and look my mum and grandmother instead."

‘Doing fashion’ – that is to say, following particular styles of clothing, was seen by some parents as young people’s way of rebelling against traditional values. Men viewed women ‘doing fashion’ as inappropriate, and expected women to dress in modest and traditional ways, which has significance for women as bearers of tradition, as the same was not expected from men. One woman - ‘Mrs Sayed’, who regularly visited the advisory Centre, arrived one day and demanded that she speak to the wife of the Centre manager – ‘Mrs Qadar’. This woman was in her 50s and was distressed over her daughter’s insistence on wearing a trouser suit to an interview for a job. ‘Mrs Sayed’, insisted that ‘Mrs Qadar’ visit her home and advise her daughter against wearing the suit, and instead wear the traditional shalwaar-kameez for the interview. ‘Mrs Qadar’ agreed to doing this, but felt uncomfortable, as she did not impose such restrictions on her own daughter’s dress style. Incidentally ‘Mrs Sayed’ is a working class, Kashmiri, while ‘Mrs Qadar’ is of middle-class background. When ‘Mrs Qadar’ visited ‘Mrs Sayed’s’ daughter, she decided against advising her to wear the shalwaar-kameez, after listening to the daughter’s reasons for wanting to wear the suit (to create an impression on her future employers and to be taken seriously). Instead she advised ‘Mrs Sayed’ to see her daughter’s point of view and to respect the choice in what she wanted to wear, as the interview was clearly important to the young woman and she did not wish to ruin the opportunity by not appearing professional. After some persuasion, ‘Mrs Sayed’ came round to the idea of her daughter wearing a trouser-suit to attend the interview, after which she got the job.

‘Mrs Sayed’s’ reasons for objecting to her daughter’s dress was due to her concerns of what other family and community members may think, if they saw her walking down the street in Western clothes, as her husband was a respected man in the community and she did not want people to disrespect him over his daughter’s appearance. Yet, the fact that ‘Mrs Sayed’ was distressed over the issue was due to her husband’s standing as opposed to how she herself felt about the ways in which her daughter dressed. She was upholding the male tradition of expecting women to signify community, as opposed to realising her daughter’s individual aspirations. This demonstrates how women are the bearers of tradition as well as the reproducers of tradition. A woman’s dress, in this sense, symbolised the identity of the community, as opposed to the identity/ties of the individual. And while ‘Mrs Sayed’ loved her daughter and was pleased that she got the

job, she was mindful of what impact this would have on her husband's and her family's reputation.

The family and community are important sites for British-Pakistani women. This is where they create and recreate their identities through their relationships with kin and community members. South Asian women in Britain are actively involved in producing, reproducing and maintaining social relations within their families and communities (Bhachu, 1993, Brah, 1996). I found British-Pakistani women in Luton were actively involved in such processes. The women created lively environments with other female relatives and friends, in which they exchanged advice and information on topics ranging from lifestyle issues, such as fashion, cookery, tv programmes, to issues like women's rights, violence within the home and kamettis²⁶. These environments impact on the ways in which cultures are transmitted to future generations and therefore, have an impact on community relations. Women are the bearers of tradition, as well as the producers and reproducers of cultures (Bhachu, 1985, Buijs, 1993), as socialisers of children and carriers of their heritages. This responsibility lies with them and therefore, through their interactions and involvement with kin and community members they are continuously negotiating and constructing cultural traditions – continuing some and discontinuing others, which are appropriated within the public arena the community (discussed further in chapter 4).

The role of the family, and particularly of women, in (re)creating community structures and processes is of vital importance. From socialising children to the care of elders, the responsibility lies with women. The people I encountered lived in households that varied from the 'nuclear' types (Bernades, 1997), in which a husband, wife and their children lived, to 'extended' households (Bernades, 1997), which also included grandparents and unmarried siblings of one of the spouses²⁷. Women themselves chose the types of households they wanted to live in. Preferences for particular types were not clear, as this depended on the socio-economic circumstances of the families involved and the individuals themselves. However, some women arriving in Britain as

²⁶ A 'Kametti' is where a group of women (I did not encounter any men involved in this) puts a set amount of money into a kitty. One woman is charge of the kitty, and each week the women take it in turn to receive the weekly sum gathered from everyone's contribution. This proved to be a valuable income for many women, as this money would be theirs to spend as they chose.

²⁷ These are usually the husband's siblings, as traditionally, after the marriage women move to live with their

fiancées/spouses of British-Pakistani men, preferred the extended household, as this is the type they were used to in Pakistan. As 'Sara' pointed out:

"Before coming to England, I lived in a house, with 2 sister-in-laws, their children, 3 unmarried siblings, grandparents, as well as my parents. When I came to England, it was just my husband and me in a one-bedroom flat. It was so depressing, because I was used to all these people being around me all the time, that I insisted my husband ask his mother to move in with us, but she refused, as there was not enough space for her to stay with us".

To British-Pakistani women in Luton, being surrounded by family members is important, as the family is an important and much valued institution, where support, advice and company is readily available. However, there are features of the family that are problematic for women, particularly violence within the home and marginalisation in cases where women are either divorced or separated. This is when women-centred spaces are a useful resource and lifeline to women. Domestic violence²⁸ is an issue that affects this community as it does others (Hanmer, and Maynard, 1987; Mama, 1989; Dobash and Dobash, 1993). British-Pakistani men tend to ignore this, until it impacts on community processes, for example, when women leave their husbands and initiate divorce proceedings. Divorce, initiated by women in particular, is of concern to men within the community, who view this as a threat to the community structure. This in itself signifies that women's roles in producing, reproducing and maintaining traditional structures and identities is of vital importance to the well being of the community.

Women's agency in organising and challenging male dominance in the community is also important, as this suggests that they are not accepting male authority as legitimate, but are questioning this by using strategies that appear to safeguard men's interests, while simultaneously creating spaces for women to articulate their concerns in a safe environment and one which men cannot object to. Elder middle-class and previously worked in occupations including social work, teaching and equal opportunities are

husbands and their families (Shaw, 1979, Shaw, 1988).

²⁸ I will be discussing domestic violence and family issues, including arranged marriages and 'marital mismatches' in chapter 4. Here it is suffice to briefly outline why the family and community are important sites

currently involved in community work including organising women's groups including health awareness classes. By successfully organising women's groups and activities, they have gained some credibility with men within the minority community, as well as being able to influence some types of service provision from the mainstream social care agencies, by raising issues about elder care and women's health such as post-natal depression. These women are seen (by men) as 'honorary men', due to their educational attainment, ability to communicate with men, women and mainstream health and welfare agencies and perhaps more crucially, because they have successfully raised a family, which means that men will see them as a good influence on younger women, and will encourage their daughters and other relatives to keep the company of these women. As 'Mrs Dawood' pointed out:

"They [men] don't feel threatened by us older women, as we are not in a position to 'corrupt' their daughters – we're too old for that! But there are some elder women who are being discriminated against, particularly if they have been divorced. Fathers and brothers will prevent their daughters'/sisters' from interacting with these women; they see them as a threat to their daughters'/sisters' *izzat*".

Elder women have been able to use their position in a positive way, to create various groups and have actively encouraged younger women, through holding religious poetry classes, exercise classes; classes where skills such as sewing and cooking are taught, to attend these. The intention behind these classes has been to provide women with the necessary peer support and to share their experiences in a safe environment. The women who run these groups are mindful that husbands of women attending the classes will be suspicious as to what is happening at these women-only meetings. The negative side of the development of women-centred groups is the fear circulating amongst men in Luton that women's groups serve to 'corrupt' their wives by 'putting ideas into their heads', and influencing them to leave their husbands.

A key worker - 'Parvez' - at one of the women's groups specifically for women experiencing forms depression, stated how men saw her group and other similar ones as contributing to family break-ups. 'Parvez' is a respected member of both the minority and majority communities she is a part of. By nature of her age and reputation she is respected within the minority community and by knowledge and experience of this community's structures and processes, she is respected by the council and health and social care agencies whom she advises and informs on policy and practice issues relating to British-Pakistani women's health concerns. 'Parvez' is a middle-class, 'urban Pakistani' originating from one of the main cities in Pakistan. While she herself was not openly criticised by men, she felt that they harboured bad feelings towards her and other women attending the group:

“When I first began doing this work, I made it clear that these groups were a place for Pakistani women to meet and share their experiences of depression, and that men were banned from entering the classes, except for picking up their wives/relatives and dropping them off. In our community, depression is not given the serious attention as a broken leg or other illnesses that are visible. I had been working with a group called Befrienders who deal with issues of depression and how they can be tackled through friendship and preventing victims from being isolated. As you can imagine, the men were not happy with my ‘women-only’ policy, so they began to conjure up stories of what actually takes place within our groups and classes..... some of the things are unmentionable. Despite this, I have maintained my position in relation to excluding men from my groups, and at times when they have tried to sneak in, I have made it clear to them that they are not welcome, because they have no basis for their suspicions. Our men are the worst for this kind of thing.”

‘Parvez’ is clearly a no-nonsense person and I experienced first hand her treatment of men who dare attempt to cross her. On one occasion when a man attempted to enter the class held at that particular time, Parvez ran to the door and began shouting:

“How many times have I told you, no men are allowed in my classes. Have some respect for other women present. Your wife is not the only woman here, other women also attend and their husbands would not be happy to hear another man had been allowed into the group. Please leave now, and I don’t want to have to repeat this to you again”.

‘Parvez’ is a very strong and determined woman, whose reputation lies within this strength and the respect she has from British-Pakistani men. She appealed to their sense of pride in relation to how they believe women should not have contact with men unless they are related to them, by pointing to the man that other women were present and their husbands would object to his presence. This was a clever way of safeguarding women’s interests but also preventing men from being suspicious as to what she, or the women in the group were doing or discussing. Not all women running groups were able to gain the same degree of respect or trust, as ‘Parvez’ was able to. ‘Sameera’, who is in her 30s and runs a sewing class, where women are taught skills in sewing and using machinery in order to improve their chances of homeworking²⁹ to earn extra money, had been subject to criticism by many men who accused her of threatening their family, by encouraging their wives to seek paid employment. ‘Sameera’s’ experience was one that saw her as a home-wrecker and someone who was putting ideas into their wives/daughters/sisters’ head.

“A brother of one of ‘my girls’ came to pick up his sister, well that’s his excuse anyway. I think he came to check out the other girls. When I asked him to wait outside he became abusive, using foul language and threatening behaviour. I warned him that if he didn’t leave I would call the police this made it worse and he left calling me a ‘pimp’ and that I was not running a sewing class but a brothel! Can you imagine that?”

Had ‘Sameera’ been older, the reaction of the male she encountered would have been one of shame and embarrassment, as was the case in ‘Parvez’s’ group. Yet, by nature of

²⁹ ‘Homeworking’ is a popular form of paid employment taken up by British-Pakistani women. Its popularity stems from the fact that women can combine childcare and housework with paid work.

'Sameera's' age, she was subjected to a tirade of abuse. This suggests clearly that older women are seen as preserving the interests of the community, that usually means the interests of the men, while younger women in similar situations are seen as a threat. Older women are powerful to an extent, in that they are viewed by men, both old and young, as allies and therefore, the activities they are involved in, such as organising women's groups, are seen by most men, as 'safe' and non-threatening to their position. Through gaining respect from community and religious leaders, elder women have been able to highlight problems affecting the family, as articulated to them by younger women.

Given men's concerns and suspicions surrounding what their wives will be getting up to at these classes, women organising or running them attempt to mask the 'hidden agenda' of those attending. By hidden agenda, I am suggesting that women can discuss any issue affecting their lives, not necessarily to do with the class they are attending, in the safety of a 'respectable' group with older women present. The types of discussions taking place in these environments often include family problems such as mother and daughter-in-law conflict, their husbands' infidelity and/or lack of commitment to their families, domestic violence and how women can flee such situations and problems surrounding marital arrangements. These spaces are important for British-Pakistani women, as they rely on their female peers, elder women and sometimes women relatives to support their interests as women, but also as British-Pakistani-Muslim women. In these groups women can raise issues of gender subordination within the home and community without worrying that outsiders will necessarily seek to explain this by pathologising their ethnic and religious traditions. They are aware that other women they are interacting with will attempt to support and assist them on the basis of their gender and not view them as victims of 'barbaric practices', but as women who are experiencing difficulties and a such require appropriate support in dealing with these.

Summary

For British-Pakistanis in Luton, community is a site for negotiating and renegotiating identities. It is within the community that class, gender and age become prominent and identities become contested. Class, in relation to the distinctions between Pakistanis

and Kashmiris, structured community members' allegiances to their regions of origin in Pakistan and served to distinguish Pakistanis as middle-class and Kashmiris as working-class. However, a shared geography, in terms of Pakistanis' settlement patterns in Britain, demonstrated the importance of allegiance to a group based on reciprocity and obligations placed on its members. In this sense, community has implications for binding individuals to the collective, towards whom they have obligations; these obligations comprise maintenance of group identities and often refer to representing the interests of the community in the face of outsider hostilities. Community also has implications for gender divisions, which emerge as a result of internal differentiations, in which women are negotiating and renegotiating their identities within the collective.

However, the community is fragmented along gender lines, as the interests of women become secondary to the interests of the collective, seen as the interests of men. What is contradictory is that during the 'Mecca incident' British-Pakistanis felt a sense of unbelonging to British society, due to the negative images and hostilities levelled at them and their cultural traditions, by outsiders. Yet, within the community itself, gender oppression exists and is not recognised by men, who fail to consider that women feel marginal to community processes which men attempt to exclude them from, and as a result of this, women may also feel a sense of unbelonging to the minority community they consider themselves a part of. Clearly women view themselves as part of this community, but their exclusion from processes of representing the community and/or their input in important community issues becomes secondary to men, unless it enhances their social standing, through formal agencies providing funding for particular causes.

This necessarily suggests that gender identities are contested and continuously negotiated within the collective. Differences between men and women emerged from my interaction with these. One of these was the difference in male-female perceptions and attitudes towards the local and wider socio-political processes. For example, men were largely concerned with the wider political processes involving British-Pakistani-Muslims living in Luton. Women's concerns rested in the private sphere of the family, in which they negotiated and renegotiated identities, which were articulated within the community. Elder women were challenging male authority, by organising women's groups they ensured that other women had a space to articulate their concerns and shape

their identities in positive ways, without the fear of pathologies from outsiders against their cultural and religious traditions. In this sense, British-Pakistani identities, are multifaceted, fluid and fractured, and are under continuous negotiations and renegotiations.

For women the community can be a liberating and simultaneously, a constraining institution. 'Ayesha's' experience of living outside of the community proved that hostility in the form of racism is far greater than the sexual subordination she may or may not experience within the British-Pakistani community. She was aware of her unbelonging outside of her community therefore, considered returning to the safety of the minority community she felt she belongs to. However, for others like 'Jameela' and 'Noreen' community excluded women and where women's interests were highlighted, they necessarily served the interests of community leaders (men) in that their social position would be enhanced through securing funding from statutory agencies, and by being seen by community members as having the influence to represent their community.

Women's roles within the family and community are important in the structuring of their own and their children's identities. They construct, reconstruct, maintain, transform and modify cultural traditions within the private arena of the family and articulate these within the public arena of the community. In this sense they are 'cultural entrepreneurs' (Buijs, 1993), skilfully bearing traditions while simultaneously creating new ways of living, without appearing to challenge male authority and/or community traditions. Their ability to do this, has gained them respect and support from men in continuing with their activities. However, this support is conditional and subject to change and/or withdrawal if women are seen to threaten the izzat of the community. In the next chapter I will be discussing British-Pakistani women's roles within the family and the marital process and demonstrating their agency in constructing and reconstructing identities within this arena.

Chapter 4: Negotiated gender relations within family contexts

The previous chapter looked at the importance of community as a site for negotiating and articulating identities. How these identities serve to unite community members along ethnic and religious lines on the one hand, and divide them along class and gender lines on the other. The arguments centred on the ways in which community interests shaped identities and how religion and ethnicity are intricately linked and underlie ideologies of racisms and belonging.

In this chapter I will attempt to illustrate the importance of community further by viewing the family as a site for the continuations and discontinuations of community activities. In this sense, I will be looking at how gender relations are negotiated within family contexts. Using the marriage system, I shall be arguing that men and women's experiences in this process are different, by nature of their different gender, and how these arrangements are negotiated to fit in with ideologies surrounding community interests. The reasons behind using marriage and family life in this chapter are due to the importance placed by British-Pakistani women on the family and their relationships within this. As mentioned in the previous chapter, women are the bearers of tradition, as well as the transmitters of cultures, in that they are the socialisers of children and the carriers of their heritage, therefore, their roles in the private arena of the family, in producing future generations' identities is of prime importance.

I will be arguing that the family is a contested arena in which women are continuously negotiating and renegotiating gender relations and cultural traditions of the community. The community becomes both a site where families are located and (re)created, at the same time families are crucial in creating and recreating communities as vehicles for identity formation in ways that maintain continuities and create innovations within them (the latter, a point which I develop further in chapter 5 with regards to young people and the 'Asian cool' phenomena).

The family is a contested arena (Westwood and Bhachu, 1987, Wilson, 1978), not least because of the ways in which women within families have been portrayed as subordinate and oppressed (Firestone, 1970, Millet, 1971). White feminists (Barrett, 1980, Finch, 1989, Oakley, 1974) have argued that the family is the key site for

women's oppression, and call for its abolition to achieve equality for women. Black feminists on the other hand (Carby, 1982, Spellman, 1990, Phoenix, 1987), stress that Black families are qualitatively different from those that 'white' women are involved in, therefore, Black women's experiences of the family will necessarily be different from 'white' women's experiences.

I would argue that family forms and processes vary between different ethnic groups (Black, 'white' and 'others') but also within the ethnic groups themselves. This British-Pakistani community is composed of people from different regions in Pakistan which impacts on class differences (as mentioned in the previous chapter) linguistic and cultural traditions. There are certain features that characterise this group as distinctive from Westerners. Firstly, the primacy of family over the individual, it is the family rather than the individual which is the basis of social structure (Ghuman, 1994). To ensure the smooth running of a unit which includes several adults, a hierarchical and authoritarian structure can often evolve (Pillai, 1976). This then produces certain goals and emphases in child rearing and family interaction patterns for both males and females (Robinson, 1986). Family values for women become pronounced (Shan, 1985). Important decisions are made by, and for the group, rarely, if at all, by the individual (Ahmad, 1996, Brah, 1996). Familialistic orientation centres on the fulfilment of role obligations and expectations towards kin members. Moreover, it is women who are entrusted with the burden of carrying the family and community *izzat* (Wilson, 1978).

There is no one definition of a British-Pakistani family, as these will vary according to the communities and individuals who are continuously negotiating the structures and processes of the family at a given time and place. When discussing the family reference is made to the conventional (Oakley, 1982) or nuclear family type (two parents and their offspring) against which other models are measured (Bernades, 1997). This in itself is misleading; as such families are in short supply, given that an increase in divorce rates and single-parent households (Bernades, 1997) is indicative of the challenges presented to this model. Other challenges to the conventional/nuclear model include extended family forms, which are characteristic of many South Asian families in Britain (Wilson, 1984, Brah, 1996). South Asian and British-Pakistani family structures have been characterised as being extended families, in which grandparents, their unmarried

offspring, parents and children are included (Ballard, 1979, Saifullah-Khan, 1979, Ballard, 1982).

Some studies have pointed to the negative aspects of extended family forms, in which intergenerational conflict (Anwar, 1979, 1982, Watson, 1977), women's subordination (Shaw, 1988) and family hierarchies operate (Pillai, 1976). These studies ignore women's choices and agency in the creation and recreation of family structures and processes. There is no denying that some British-Pakistani families will experience forms of intergenerational conflict, women may be oppressed within the home and that family hierarchies do operate. However, to ignore women's choices in continuing to remain within such families is denying their cultural differences and agency in creating identities. British-Pakistani families, like 'white' and Black families, do not take a particular form, as some households I encountered could be characterised as 'nuclear' types (Bernades, 1997) and others were extended households. The preferred marital match is between cousins, or endogamous marriages, as this ensures that ties are strengthened between kin through the union of their offspring (problems associated with endogamous marriages in Britain will be discussed further in the sub-section below).

It is in the family that many migrant women's roles flourish as cultural transmitters for which they have been viewed as cultural entrepreneurs (Bhachu 1993, Buijs 1993). Through their interactions with each other, British-Pakistani women are actively constructing structures that provide them with the support they need. In times of adversity, particularly when experiencing patriarchal relations, the network of support women create becomes their source of strength. In a study of gender conflict within a Vietnamese community in the United States, Kibria (1996) found that 'bargaining with patriarchy' was a feature of women's lives within this community. Kibria (1996) analyses women's strategies that affect the nature and scope of resources available to women and men, and suggests that on the one hand, women were involved in maintaining traditional patriarchal authority within the family, while simultaneously protecting:

"the interests of individual women who were in conflict with male authority in the family". (Kibria, 1996: 209)

In other words, negotiations and renegotiations of gender relations are a feature of British-Pakistani women's lives in Luton. As will be seen, women resist and accommodate cultural traditions of the community, simultaneously (Mac an ghail, 1988). For example, in this British-Pakistani community, women were upholding male authority in some ways, through the maintenance of particular traditions within the marital system, while simultaneously challenging oppressive structures, such as violence within the home. In the women's groups, key workers adopted strategies that seemingly supported male authority within the family and community, while covertly challenging these at another level, by supporting individual needs of the women attending (highlighted in chapter 3). In this sense, I consider this process as being one of 'resistance within accommodation' (Mac an ghail, 1988), where on the one hand it would appear that women are accepting male authority and/or male traditions on marriage and family life, while also resisting what they consider to be oppressive to them. It is within this framework, and considering the specificity of British-Pakistani women, that an analysis of their lives and the complex interactions they are involved in within the family can be conceptualised.

In order to illustrate the points being made, this chapter attempts to deal with the relationships between men and women and the relationships between women and other women. I will be discussing the ways in which gender is negotiated within the family using the marital system as an example, of patriarchal constraints faced by women, and how women are challenging certain features of the marital system, such as endogamous marriages and skin shade. The maintenance of patriarchal traditions will be demonstrated within these processes. The family itself will be conceptualised in gendered terms in order to consider the public-private dichotomy and how these are gendered in terms of the male being the public 'face' of the family while the female is considered the private 'face'. Intimate relations are constructed around this divide and 'face' is used as a concept linking women with '*sharam*'³⁰ and men with '*izzat*' within the public/private divide and how these relations are negotiated and reproduced.

Throughout the chapter, I will be pointing out how men's concerns towards the family occur only when their ethnic, religious and cultural traditions are threatened, for

³⁰ 'Sharam' literally means shame in Urdu and Punjabi.

example, during increasing divorce rates, particularly if women initiate these. Women's agency within the family and marital processes, is conceptualised through a framework of 'resistance within accommodation' (Mac an ghail, 1988) - where women are upholding some family traditions they consider important (the marital system itself) while challenging others, that oppressive to some individual women, such as intra-caste/endogamous marriages.

Gendering the marital system

Arranged marriages have been a feature of South Asian families and communities for centuries (Bhopal, 1997). The traditional system of marital arrangements is based on parents, extended family members and/or community members' arranging a union between two people that considers the ethnic, religious, caste and cultural traditions of the communities involved. In this process, input from the potential spouses was rarely, if at all, sought (Ballard, 1979, Saifullah-Khan, 1979). The practice of arranged marriages is not only confined to the Indian sub-continent but also in the diaspora (Saifullah-Khan, 1977; Bhachu, 1985, Shaw, 1988, Bhopal, 1997). Studies in Britain have demonstrated profound differences between Western notions of marriage and the South Asian arranged marriage (Stopes-Roe and Cochrane, 1990). Socialisation in the West emphasises individuals rights and autonomy in relation to marriage, whereas, South Asian youth are not socialised into the rituals and mechanisms of selecting a spouse themselves (Brah, 1978, 1996). South Asians are not a homogeneous category, but diverse in cultural and religious terms (Brah, 1992). Differences between Hindu, Sikh and Muslim marriages are significant, particularly in relation to the groups from which a partner is drawn. Muslims tend to marry within their kin group (Shaw, 1988), while Hindus and Sikhs may not do so, but are likely to marry within the caste or occupational group to which they belong (Bhopal, 1997).

For British-Pakistani-Muslims, marriage is a contractual union, whereas for Hindus and Sikhs, marriage is based upon a sacramental union, which suggests the attitudes towards remarriage and divorce are also likely to be different (Gardner and Shukur, 1994, Bhopal, 1997). However, similarities between these groups in terms of the relationship of the individual to the family, the social and economical importance attached to

marriage, family structures and the possibilities for mate selection are important (Wilson, 1978), as is the arranged marriage itself.

According to those not experiencing arranged marriages (for example, many Europeans and Americans) the concept conjures up images of an out dated practice, disallowing choice by the prospective couple (Saifullah-Khan, 1979). Yet, for a large number of South Asians, arranged marriages are very much in existence and are commonly practised (Bhachu, 1993, Bhopal, 1997). In Luton, almost all British-Pakistanis undergo such marriages, and there is little indication that this practice is likely to decline in the near future. However, challenges by women have impacted on a change in attitudes towards marital arrangements (as will be seen with regards to 'Ayesha' and 'Rabia').

Parents and/or kin and community members, as opposed to the couples themselves, arrange the marriages, although increasingly this pattern is changing in Luton and input from couples is being sought (discussed further in relation to 'marital mismatches'). After their marriage, women are expected to move in with their husbands and in-laws, and rarely does the man move in with his wife's family, with the exception of when a fiancé/husband arrives in Britain to be reunited with his fiancée/wife. Once the woman is married, her duties rest with her 'new' family, and her parents will absolve themselves of any responsibility for her behaviour and actions and sometimes, even when she is facing conflict with in-laws, they will avoid being involved. The preferred marital matches among British-Pakistanis in Luton are endogamous marriages, a tradition rooted in the socio-economic structure of Pakistani society, in that socially these marriages are seen as strengthening ties between kin, and elders are considered to be better cared for by a relative rather than an outsider. There is an economic imperative to such marriages too. Whatever is given to the bride/groom in the form of a dowry (particularly where property forms part of the dowry system) will remain within the kin group, as opposed to outsiders benefiting.

Endogamy and gender

Pakistani marriages are based on endogamy (Saifullah-Khan, 1977, Anwar, 1979, Shaw, 1988, Bhopal, 1997). Marriages between cousins are the preferred matches in Luton. This tradition stems from the belief that blood is thicker than water therefore, marriages

between two families - usually marriages within the extended family - tend to take preference over marriages between non-relatives. There is a fear amongst elders and parents that marrying a son to an outsider would result in parents and elders being shunted off to an old people's home in later years. However, if a daughter and/or son in law were a relative³¹, these problems would be avoided (Anwar, 1979, Shaw, 1988). Socially, the welfare of the extended family unit and the collective interests are seen as safeguarded through such unions. They are seen to cause minimal problems to all members concerned, after all, everyone is related, and therefore, their interests will be shared. In Luton, most marriages tend to be between a British-Pakistani man and a Pakistani woman, or vice versa and tend to be between cousins, (however, as will be seen later in this chapter, this is not always the case, particularly among women). These were the preferred matches as parents arranging them felt they were complying with the tradition of marrying within their kin group (see Gardner and Shukur, 1994 on similar preferences among British- Bengali families). They also felt they would be helping relatives 'back home' to elevate their social and economic position by bringing over a child of say a brother or sister to Britain. As 'Nargis', a mother of 3 and in her 40s points out:

"...In our community, we prefer marriages between our children and our nephews or nieces in Pakistan, because this helps our relatives to improve their position by marrying their children with someone from abroad.... It also helps the families back home, because their children can send remittances to them".

An elder woman 'Mrs Qazi', supported such marriages in that they provided elders with the assurance of being cared for, when the need arises:

".....If we marry our children to relatives, from Pakistan or England, we can be sure that they will be more inclined to look after us, as we are related for a start and also because their parents will ensure that they fulfil their obligations and duty to us".

³¹ The preferred choice is the niece of a father, as opposed to the mother, although these do take place. The reasons for this is that after marriage a woman is supposed to devote her life to her in-laws, therefore, strengthening ties between her husband and his siblings through marrying her children to theirs, is seen as her

Essentially, cousin-marriages have their basis in the socio-economic structures of Pakistani society, and are upheld as a tradition in Luton, to ensure that kin members in Pakistan are provided with the necessary economic support through the sending of remittances and to fulfil the social care needs of elders. Such marriages are about the unification of two families, as opposed to the union of two individuals. Based on this, the individual must forego his/her individual interests for the sake of collective interests. Forsaking community interests brings with it penalties, particularly for women. Some women transgressed from the endogamous marriage preference and maintaining collective interests, by seeking personal, individual fulfilment through marrying according to their own choices. 'Ayesha' is one woman who broke away from the traditional custom of intra-caste and endogamous marriages, by marrying someone from outside her kin group and from a lower caste to the one which she and her family belong to.

'Ayesha's' case

Ayesha is 23 years old and is a librarian. She moved to Luton from Staffordshire³² with her husband, shortly after their marriage. Her family and the community within which she lived considered the marriage as controversial. The reason for the controversy over the marriage is that 'Ayesha' belongs to a caste which is considered of high rank among Muslims³³ while her husband belongs to a lower caste. The couple had met at school and developed a relationship. However, 'Ayesha's' parents had discovered their liaison and objected to their intentions of marrying. 'Ayesha' explains:

“When my family found out about us [relationship with future husband], they kicked up such a fuss, involving family members from Pakistan and in Britain.... The whole community in Stafford was up in arms about the issue.... my parents were outraged - the

duty.

³² I have used Staffordshire and Stafford instead of the real place 'Ayesha' originated, in order that her family and community cannot be identified.

³³ 'Ayesha' belongs to the Syed/Shah caste. Although caste differentiation is against Islamic principles, its practice continues, particularly within the arena of marriage. A person belonging to the Syed/Shah caste is a direct descendent of the Prophet Mohammed, thus for members of this caste, marriages outside of their kin and/or caste are not desirable as this is considered a form of tainting the genealogy of this group, which dates

atmosphere was terrible. My mother made me feel guilty about my younger sisters, saying that no one would want to marry them because of my actions. But I was not going to change my mind”.

Ayesha’s determination to continue with the marriage of her choice was matched equally by her parent’s determination to prevent it:

“In a desperate bid to stop the marriage, my father invited his brothers and cousins from Pakistan to settle the matter. Two of my uncles made it over to England. One of them sided with the views I had already heard, you know, all this about how my marriage would lower the status of the family and so on. But the other uncle was brilliant. He referred to the Quran as a basis for his arguments by pointing out that what my family was objecting to [inter-caste marriage] was actually anti-Islamic.... Islam does not permit discrimination based on caste and therefore, the arguments used by my family and the rest of the community to prevent us marrying were anti-Islamic”.

Her husband’s family were also against the marriage because of the caste that ‘Ayesha’s’ family belonged to. ‘Ayesha’s’ mother-in-law also had difficulty coming to terms with her son’s marriage:

“My mother-in-law found it really hard to accept our marriage, but for different reasons to my parents. She felt that her son had insulted my family by marrying me and found it hard to treat me as a daughter-in-law, who is of lower rank to her, when she had always looked up to our caste, even those that are younger than her”.

Pressures from the community can impact on the attitudes within the family in relation to important issues such as marriage. The marriage eventually took place but Ayesha’s

parents needed convincing from relatives from Pakistan, who informed them that it is unacceptable to differentiate on the basis of caste and that they should be pleased he is a Muslim, particularly as they are living in a multi-ethnic/racial/cultural society, where couples could be from entirely different, backgrounds. In this sense, validation from the country of origin was crucial in changing attitudes. It is significant that social changes taking place in Britain, have to account for the changes and continuities that take place in Pakistan, otherwise kin in Pakistan show their disapproval by cutting ties with relatives in the diaspora (Shaw, 1988).

In 'Ayesha's' case, it is likely that here uncle who invoked the Quran to allow the marriage to take place, was also aware that he had the responsibility of giving his seal of approval, as some kind of 'expert' in Pakistani and Islamic traditions, by nature of his living there. Yet, the uncle, could well have attempted to control and regulate 'Ayesha's' intentions of marrying outside of the family and caste, by virtue of the influence he clearly had (seen in his being called from Pakistan to mediate between 'Ayesha' and her family). He, like 'Ayesha's' mother, could well have used guilt and shame to coerce her out of marrying her future husband. Or he could have asserted that 'Ayesha's' intentions to marry someone from a lower caste were against Pakistani and Islamic tradition and that she must forego her personal fulfilment to protect her family and community's *izzat*. This was a situation that 'Sajda' faced.

'Sajda's' case

'Sajda' is 21 years old and unmarried. She has lived in Luton all her life and is currently working as a community worker. Her intention is to undertake a degree and become a social worker. 'Sajda's' father has objected to her going to university, on the grounds that she has a duty to her family to marry a cousin from Pakistan. The cousin is the son of 'Sajda's' paternal aunt, and as such, her father wishes to fulfil his obligation to his sister, whom he had promised, when 'Sajda' was born, to marry with her son:

"My dad promised my aunt over 20 years ago, that he would marry me to her son - that was before I could even speak.... And now that I'm older, he has been putting pressure on me to marry this cousin".

Matters are complicated for 'Sajda', who not only wishes to move away from Luton for study purposes, but also because her boyfriend is a British-Indian (her parents are unaware of her boyfriend) and lives in London³⁴, where 'Sajda' intends to study:

"I know it sounds selfish, something my Dad keeps telling me I am, and that I've got no shame bringing *beizzatty* to the family, but I want a career and the choice to marry someone I love".

'Sajda's' father was using her gender, the obligations she has to her family, and *his* obligations to the community, as a means of achieving conformity from her:

"Whenever the subject of me going to university comes up, my dad brings up the marriage issue. Recently he has gotten quite angry and become aggressive, warning me that if I don't agree to marry my cousin, he will disown me and then the community can deal with me, as they want... It's because I'm a women he is putting this pressure on me... He's not so strict with my brothers who have also refused his [fathers] choices of wives for them... It's us women, who have to maintain *izzat*, and if we disagree with men then we are punished by our family's lack of support for us. That's why he [father] say's that he will disown me, because he knows that the community will also condemn me and if I don't have any support I will come running back to him and agree to his demands".

'Sajda' is aware that without her family's support and particularly that of her father, the community will ostracise her, yet, within her home, she is currently being ostracised by her father and brothers:

"The only people who support me at home are my brother and my sister, who is younger than me. My father and older brothers

³⁴ 'Sajda's' boyfriend does not live in London, but I decided to use this city as opposed to the one in which he lives and where 'Sajda' intends to study, to conceal both their identities.

have tried to make me feel guilty by reminding me that if I was to do my own thing, what's going to happen about my sister? No one will want to marry her, after hearing about what I have done".

'Sajda's' male relations have used guilt, shame and gender as tools in their attempts to make 'Sajda' see that the consequences of her 'selfishness' would impact on the family as their *izzat* within the community would be ruined. By disowning her, 'Sajda's' father and brother can be free of the community's ostracisation and their *izzat* would remain intact by nature of their refusal to be a part of her life, if she does not fulfil her obligations to the family. In the eyes of the community, they will be seen as 'victims' of an insubordinate daughter/sister, and as such the community (particularly men) will sympathise rather than condemn them. Incidentally, 'Sajda's' mother has taken sides with her husband and son. 'Sajda' explains:

"She [mother] just keeps telling me to listen to them as they know best. Sometimes, she gets really angry and just starts crying, but doesn't say anything, except for shouting things like; 'why do you have to be so stubborn?' and things like that".

It is clear, in both 'Ayesha' and 'Sajda's' cases that the rule of the family is to ensure the continuity of the community through the maintenance of traditional customs. Women may not always be a part of the process of negotiations where community structures and process are concerned, but they play a central role in the upholding of [male] family traditions for the well being of the community. Men were rarely pressured in the same way to marry from within their kin and caste groups. One father explained to me the reason why intra-caste marriages were not as crucial for men as they were for women:

"....Women cannot marry men from lower castes as this lowers the status of her whole family and clan. But if a boy marries a girl from a lower caste, he is elevating the girl's status".

However, some men were pressurised by families to undergo intra-caste/kin marriages while others were not. Yet, differences in the treatment they received, compared with

the women, were striking. I found that some men had experienced pressure from their families to marry kin from Pakistan, but this tended to be more persuasion rather than the pressure that was placed on women who were being told they would bring *sharam* to the family if they did not conform. One man in his mid 20s has been married to a second cousin from Pakistan for 3 years. His family arranged the marriage as they felt that their son was becoming unruly and disruptive. Prior to his marriage, he had been involved in street gangs, drugs and staying out all hours of the night. His parents were of the view that if he got married to a 'good Pakistani girl', his rebellion would be curbed:

"I was a real worry for my parents, going out with the guys and just cruising about all night. Then I got involved in drugs, which was a real nightmare for them....Their [parents] solution was to take me to Pakistan to marry someone, so that I would calm down... My father told me that if I wasn't happy in the marriage, I could do what I wanted afterwards.... They just wanted to keep face in the community, so that people would think that they [parents] had done their duty and the best they could for us.... They didn't say that if I did not marry someone I would shame the family, just things like, once you are married you can do what you want after that".

Another man in his 30s, who works at the local community centre, also pointed to the fact that men were less likely to be pressured to conform to tradition in the same way as women:

"In our community, we let men get away with murder... You see many men are married to Pakistani women, but have a white girlfriend, with whom they may be living with as well. Parents turn a blind eye to this, because the sons have fulfilled their obligation to their family and so feel they have the right to do what they want now... When women get married they have another set of problems; they're expected to listen to their husbands, once they've fulfilled their obligation to their

parents.... I think it's a bit unfair, especially, when we tolerate our men going off with other women when they have got their wives at home. Their excuses are usually that, 'I don't get on with my wife because she's from a different culture and doesn't understand the British way of life', so the family and community feel sorry for him and condone his bad ways. But if a woman said that she didn't get on with her husband for the same reasons, we [men in the community] wouldn't be so understanding. For women it's harder because they can't go out at night and have boyfriends etc, all they can do is either put up with it or get a divorce, and getting a divorce just brings more problems for her - like everyone putting her down".

For men, cultural differences between married couples seem to be a valid reason for their infidelity. Their behaviour is tolerated because they are not seen to be threatening the *izzat* of the family. Men are expected to uphold and maintain collective interests, but this is only done as a means of curbing their rebellious behaviour, which is frowned upon by elder members of the community. However, unlike women, once men marry, they are encouraged to seek individual fulfilment, once as they have fulfilled their obligations to their family, by undergoing an arranged marriage. Women on the other hand, are expected to put up with the burden of carrying men's *izzat*, even when they disagree with elements of marriage and family life, such as intra-caste/kin marriages.

Skin-shade: commodification of women's bodies?

Selecting a husband of one's choice, and/or refusing to marry someone that the family has selected are not the only times when emphasis is placed on the woman to conform to (male) traditions of the community, the process of partner selection also brings with it pressure for women. A woman's appearance, in terms of her beauty, is seen as an important commodity in the marital selection process. The lighter the skin, the more chance a woman has of marrying into a good family. It also has an economic imperative, in that if the woman is light skinned, her future family will settle for this commodity as opposed to expecting a large dowry from her, which is useful for parents who are unable to provide this. This emphasis on skin shade is not only important for

British-Pakistanis, but also among other South Asian (Bhopal, 1997) and Black communities (Weekes, 1997).

When I visited Pakistan, in 1997, I was surprised at the amount of billboards, newspapers and magazines advertising skin-lightening products. Prior to this visit, (and as mentioned in chapter 2) I had lived in Pakistan for 5 years with my family and was aware of people's preoccupation with fairness of skin. Some elder women talked openly about using various methods of achieving this, including the use of homemade facial 'masks'. This in itself was not a problem, provided that these women were in control of the ways in which they used these homemade 'treatments' and that these were not imposed on them for marketability purposes. Sadly, upon returning to Pakistan, some 13 years after I had lived there, I found that women were being bombarded with advertising campaigns to achieve a lighter shade of skin. The adverts almost always showed a picture of a 'white' woman (usually Northern European and/or Northern American) fair skinned, blonde haired and blue eyed. These pictures themselves were selling an image of beauty and desirability that many Pakistani women were unable to meet.

The skin lightning creams that were being advertised contained harmful ingredients including bleach. Yet, when I spoke to some female relatives about the dangers of these products, the response was usually something like: 'It's alright for you to say these creams are dangerous, but tell that to a women who has been turned down for marriage by potential a husband and his family, because she is dark skinned'. And/or 'what about those poor women, who have no education, wealth etc, and rely on their physical appearance to secure a marriage'. They had a point. I felt that in the context of Pakistan and the social economics of marriage, which necessitated in attempts, by women, at appearing lighter to attract a mate, women's choices were limited. During visits to Luton, for fieldwork purposes, I was faced with similar concerns over preferences for fair skin.

Alison Shaw (1988) during her research with a Pakistani community in Oxford found that skin shade was an issue amongst this community. Shaw (1988) notes how:

“... Fairness is coveted; it is desired in a bride and associated with the high castes who traditionally keep their women in *pardah*³⁵. Magazines abound with pictures of... pale-faced women in advertisements for creams to lighten skin colour. Relatives of families in Oxford would ask about the skin colour of the relatives in England, for they expected it to lighten in Britain, and mine to darken in Pakistan.” (Shaw, 1988:140)

This was also true of some British-Pakistanis in Luton. Preferences for lighter skin shade remained with elder members of the community or in women who arrived from Pakistan as wives and/or fiancées. During an interview with one woman ‘Salma’, we were interrupted by her next door neighbour, who came in bearing photographs from her relatives in Pakistan. She had popped around to show them to her neighbour, as often happens when news or other items from Pakistan arrive (relatives in Britain tend to share their news and inform others of any developments that have occurred or are currently taking place in their villages back home).

I terminated the interview and began viewing the photographs the neighbour had brought round. While viewing the photos, the two women began discussing marital prospects of one of the women in the pictures, who happened to be the younger sister of the neighbour. The discussion centred on her physical appearance, and skin shade as commodities that would stand her in good stead when proposals began arriving for her marriage. The neighbour pointed out:

“She is really fair skinned, unlike me-that’s why I’m married to this monster [jokingly refers to her husband]”.

‘Salma’ replied:

³⁵ ‘Purdah’ is a process of sexual segregation, where the woman is required to keep away from men she is not related to. Women in *pardah*, often wear a ‘burkah’ – a type of coat, covering them from head to toe – when going outside of the home, to safeguard their modesty and to avoid interactions with men they are not related to.

“She’s definitely good looking, there should be no problem finding someone for her from England. Have you said this to your parents?”

Neighbour:

“Yes, but then life in England is not all that great, is it? No matter how good you look, when you come to your in-law’s home, they can still treat you badly – especially your mother in law.....She’s [sister] still young and needs to get an education. In this day and age, you need more than good looks to make a marriage work.”

The conversation continued along this track until the final photograph was viewed and everybody in the pictures was adequately gossiped about. I was curious as to why emphasis on skin shade was placed on women and not men, so I attempted to put this to ‘Salma’, who explained:

“In our culture, men’s looks aren’t all that important..... sometimes, our women’s marriages are arranged with old men... even if the woman’s about 19 or 20 and the man’s in his 50s, it doesn’t matter, as long as your family thinks the man is a decent person and will be able to look after his wife, they will marry you off to an older man.”

Gender differences in appearance as an important aspect of marriage, rests with women. Men are not expected to be fair skinned, or ‘good looking’, but to be seen as providers and to originate from a ‘decent’ family. The importance placed on skin-shade, or beauty of women in the marital selection process, signifies the extent to which male held views affect women’s views. In discussing the appearance of her sister in relation to her chances of marriage, ‘Salma’s’ neighbour was reinforcing male held views. The neighbour’s comments about physical appearance not being enough for a successful marriage appeared to hold little weight. In saying this, I expected her to believe in what she had said and, that she meant it. Yet, throughout the photo viewing session,

emphasis had been placed on everyone's appearance (except the elder members) in terms of women's attractiveness linking this with their marital prospects.

From conversations with the women above, it appeared that skin-shade emphasis was a one-way system, in which women were the bearers of this tradition and men escaped it. However, I did find another interesting twist to the gendered emphasis on skin-shade. Some women were expected to be 'grateful' that a man has chosen to marry her, depending of course on her fulfilling their criteria of being from the same caste and kin group and being physically attractive according to men's definition of this. Where there is a case of a darker skinned women married, or about to be married, to a fair skinned man, the community expresses surprise and/or jump to the wrong conclusions about his ethnic origins. This was the case for 'Fozia'

'Fozia' is a social worker and is married with 2 sons. 'Fozia's' father originated from Karachi, which is situated in the southern part of Pakistan. 'Fozia' has a dark complexion compared to the majority of British-Pakistanis, as her mother originates from Kenya (although she was born to Indian parents). 'Fozia' mentioned that she was married to a Pathan³⁶. I asked 'Fozia' about the significance of her mentioning her husband's ethnicity (as I had not asked her about this) and she replied:

"Pathans are quite different from the rest of us Pakistanis....You might see him one day and think he's not Pakistani. When most people see us together, they think I'm married to a non-Pakistani, because I'm so dark compared to his pale skin, brown hair and green eyes. A lot of women comment on his looks, especially when I deal with British-Pakistani families in the area [referring to the geographical area where British-Pakistanis are concentrated in Luton]]. I was out shopping with him once on a Saturday, and in the following week I visited a family about child abuse allegations. Obviously, the family were defensive. They began shouting and ranting and calling me names like slag etc.

³⁶ Pathans originate from Afghanistan and are an ethnic group concentrated in the Northwest region of Pakistan. They are usually distinguishable from other Pakistanis (who are mainly dark haired and dark eyed) in terms of their physical appearance, which is similar to some Europeans - fair skin, reddish-brown or fair hair and eye



When I asked why they called me this, the father said ‘you come here with your big ideas, look at you, hanging around with foreign men. I saw you in town with that ‘gora’³⁷. Don’t come here telling us we are abusing our children. You’re a disgrace to your family and community”.

I asked:

“Are you sure he wasn’t having a go at you because you were investigating serious allegations against him, as opposed to the fact that you were married to a ‘foreigner’?”

‘Fozia’ replied:

“Obviously he was upset by the nature of my visit, but his wife had already told me earlier that she had seen me in town on Saturday, ‘with someone’. That suggested to me that they didn’t think he was my husband, or that he was of Pakistani origin. Physical appearance plays a big role in this community, where people are very much similar in terms of their colouring. Also Pakistanis are surprised when they see dark skinned women with fair skinned men - it’s usually the other way round”.

Appearance, like intra-caste marital preferences, tends to be emphasised in women rather than men, and women are expected to maintain male traditions in relation to appearance. Emphasis on women’s appearance can be linked to the commodification of women’s bodies (Shilling, 1993). The commodification of women’s bodies signifies the unequal nature of gender relations when considering marital matches. As mentioned above, women are supposed to be of a particular skin shade and physical appearance, while such an emphasis is rarely, if at all, placed on men’s appearance, where men are lighter skinned than women, misunderstandings result as the culture of the community relating to appearance tends to rest with women.

colour which tends to vary in shades.

³⁷ ‘Gora’ refers to a ‘white’ man, while the feminine tense is ‘gori’, referring to a ‘white’ woman.

Divorce: 'Izzat/Sharam a gendered process?

Appearance may not necessarily threaten men's *izzat*, but divorce, in this community does. Divorce, and the reasons behind this, rest with women. Women are expected to maintain the family and their marriages without threatening their husband's/father's/brother's *izzat*, and bringing *sharam* into the family. For example, differences between men and women in the process of spouse selection were seen above in relation to endogamous marriages. Men were able to refuse and/or select a partner without being seen to be subverting cultural traditions. Women on the other hand were expected to uphold traditions, in order that men's *izzat* remained intact. In a similar way, if women who are considered to deviate from their responsibilities in upholding men's *izzat*, become subject to marginalisation with their community. However, by upholding norms and values of the family and community, some women (usually elders) are seen as the preservers of family and community *izzat*, and are used as examples to women considered 'deviant', who have brought *sharam* to their families.

Deviant women are those that are seen as disregarding family and community interests for their own, and their 'punishment' is usually being marginalized from their family and community. These women for example, are either separated and/or divorced from their husbands, often through no fault of their own, and are used as examples to young unmarried women, of the types of treatment they are likely to receive if they consider transgressing from the norms of the community. 'Razia's' parents originated from Azad Kashmir and were of a traditional disposition, in that they took 'Razia' out of school when she was 15 to marry her to her cousin from Pakistan. After a few months of being married 'Razia' became pregnant, shortly after, her husband left her. This was becoming a pattern in their marriage. The husband would return briefly, 'Razia' would become pregnant and he would leave. 'Razia's' had 4 children when I met her, the youngest of which had not met his father, as he disappeared 2 years earlier. 'Razia' spoke of her marginalized position within the community, as a result of her husband leaving her:

"Since we have been married, it's been like a cat and mouse game. The first time my husband left was after the birth of our

second child. He left the house to get some milk and I didn't see him for two years. He stayed with me for about five months, during which time I was pregnant again....he then left again, using the same excuse as before [going to the shop] and I saw him about 18 months later....Since then, I have had our 4th child, I have not seen him. I have also tried, unsuccessfully to trace him through my solicitor....The worst thing about all of this is that it's not my fault he keeps leaving, when he's back I'm too scared to ask him why he left, in case he disappears again. The community leaders at the advise Centre have been telling parents to keep their young, unmarried daughters away from me, like I'm sort of a jinx or a witch, and if they come near me, they maybe infected by the same 'disease' that I'm inflicted with".

'Razia' is not alone in her marginalized position within the community. 'Rehana', (whose parents also originate from Azad Kashmir) was also treated in a similar way. The breakdown of her marriage resulted in her being ostracised by some family, kin and community members:

"....The first people to put me down after my marriage broke up, were my male relatives; then it was the others in the community... I heard people were advising their daughters and sisters to stay away from me, like divorce was contagious or something".

This was not the experience of all women. 'Farah', for example, did not experience marginalisation from the community after her marriage broke down. Her family were from an urban city in Pakistan, highly educated (both parents were educated in Pakistan and gained Masters degrees in Britain) and were middle-class. 'Farah's' parents were highly respected members of this British-Pakistani community and as such, were less likely to be criticised by others, as her father was one of the 'leaders' within the community from whom others sought advice and guidance:

"When I met my now ex-husband in Pakistan, I agreed to marrying him, particularly as we were both equally educated

[have degrees] and had similar views about things. When he came over to Britain after we married, he seemed different; I can't explain it, but we just didn't get on. My parents realised this and advised me not to rush into having children and to test the waters with my husband before any children arrived....Eventually we decided we could not live with each other and said so to my parents, who advised us to get a divorce....The community has been fine about it all; I've not experienced any bad feelings or blame from any of them”.

The difference in experiences of these three women is significant in that the former two were of working-class backgrounds and from the region of Azad Kashmir. While ‘Farah’s’ class background, her parents region of origin and their living outside of the inner city area where British-Pakistanis are concentrated meant that ‘Farah’s’ divorce did not impact negatively on her as it did on the other two.

From observations and conversations with participants, I found that divorce rates amongst British-Pakistanis in Luton were on the increase. The issue of divorce and attitudes towards this are a cause for concern for many parents, which has led to a reassessment of the process of marital arrangements where input is increasingly being sought from potential couples. Many reasons for this increase have been advanced, but one of the most convincing is that of socialisation differences between the couples. ‘Parvez’, explains how different socialisation experiences of the couples involved, impact on different expectations from marriage:

“Parents place undue pressure on their children to marry a relation in Pakistan, despite many of our religious leaders, advising against such marriages, which have proved in recent years to be failing due to the difference in expectations of a Pakistani man and a British-Pakistani woman and vice versa.... We call these marriages ‘mismatches’, because Pakistani men maintain a functional view of marriage that sees duty and obligation to wider kin as being important. Conversely, women

in here [in Luton], emphasise the romantic notions attached to marriage, and so, do not share their future husband's commitment to their family and community, as being of primary importance, over their commitment to each other".

'Mrs Akhtar' also explains how different outlooks on marriage and family life is rooted in the socialisation experiences of the couple:

"What happens is that our community does not recognise that people socialised in two different continents, no matter how similar they look, or if they come from the same family will not necessarily have the same outlook on life. We found this out during the arrangements of our own children and the difference education, socialisation and the country of birth make in deciding suitability of marriages between two people".

A decline in successful marriages, amongst British-Pakistanis in Luton, has been attributed to 'marital mismatches', a term used by many concerned parents and elders of the community to describe the incompatibility of the couples involved. One of the main concerns over marital mismatches is that an increasing number of women in Luton are initiating divorce proceedings through the British courts as well as within the community itself. This has concerned men whose authority is threatened, particularly among the men working at the advisory Centre. Conversations here centred on the subject of the increasing numbers of divorces taking place among British-Pakistanis in Luton. It is important to note that British-Pakistani men in Luton have little reason to divorce their wives, as they are allowed to do as they please once they have married, (as was seen above, parents will turn a blind eye to their behaviour) compared with women. Also, under Islamic rules, a man can marry up to 4 times, while this is rarely practised, this suggests there is little reason for a man to obtain a divorce from his wife.

Consultations between the potential marital partners are gaining favour amongst some British-Pakistanis in Luton. I found that some parents were keen for their offspring to meet future suitors and to spend time with them to get to know each other. 'Parvez' for

example, believes that children's input is necessary in marital arrangements. She points out:

"We must start listening to our children more, otherwise marriages will not last. We already have a problem of a high divorce rate because we are not considering our children's views when arranging their marriages".

Such flexibility in spouse selection is a new feature within this British-Pakistani community, which accounts for changing attitudes towards traditional institutions such as marriage. This is not to suggest that the previous arrangement was oppressive, or inflexible, but it is worth noting that previously held views on marriage amongst British-Pakistanis conformed to those held by Pakistanis in the 1960s (Saifullah-Khan, 1976). As 'Mr Dhaya' points out:

"...We brought with us to Britain, traditions and beliefs of Pakistan, that are no longer valid in the country of origin, particularly marriage, which, I found on returning to Pakistan, in the late 1980s, had become a more negotiable process".

He proceeded to explain what he meant by a 'negotiable process':

"I'm talking of consultations with the potential couple, who are as active in setting up, or even preventing a match, as are their respective parents.... We [British-Pakistanis] didn't always ask the couple themselves as to whether they wished for the marriage to go ahead".

The need for consultations between potential couples prior to any marriage taking place is increasingly being viewed as important in this community, particularly if marital breakdowns are to be prevented.

'Rabia' is 26, and works at a women's refuge. Her marriage took place without any consultations between her and her future husband. 'Rabia' felt that difference in

socialisation meant that she and her husband differed in their expectations of marriage – he was from a village in Pakistan, while she was born and raised in Britain. She got married after travelling to Pakistan to attend her aunt’s wedding. The marriage lasted a year, during which time ‘Rabia’ was unhappy with the differences between her husband and herself, including the fact that she viewed marriage as a romantic union whereas her husband viewed it as a contractual one:

“.....I thought I would give it [marriage] a go as far as I could, but then I just couldn’t take it anymore. There was no communication between us, we didn’t talk or anything. There was no romance, which I believed a marriage should have, so I thought this was ridiculous, it’s [the marriage] not worth the effort I am putting into it”.

‘Rabia’ then attempted to obtain a divorce from her Pakistani born husband and was aware that her own experience was different from that of her parents – who were socialised into a different way of life, in a different time and place:

“It’s taken another five years to get a divorce from him [husband], because I had the *Nikah*³⁸ done in Pakistan and didn’t get the marriage registered in Britain, so I was unable to get a divorce in England.....It was harder to get an Islamic divorce from my husband, who didn’t want the marriage to end due to the shame he would have to face from the community.... It was different for my parents; they were brought up in Pakistan, in a different era from the one we are living in. They probably didn’t have the same choices we have today”.

Differences in socialisation of the couple impact on the success or failure of a marriage. From ‘Rabia’s’ experience of marrying a Pakistani, it is clear that she felt she did not relate to her husband, and despite the likelihood of being ostracised by her family and

³⁸ ‘Nikah’ is the Islamic marital contract.

community, she went ahead with obtaining a divorce, based on the couple's different socialisation differences.

One young woman's parents provided another example of a 'mismatched' marriage. Their daughter, 'Suraya' was educated in Britain up to degree level and they wanted to arrange her marriage to a 'poor relative' in Pakistan, with the intention of 'helping out' their relatives. They took their daughter to Pakistan so that she meet her potential suitor and decide whether the marriage should take place. 'Suraya' went along with her parent's wishes and the couple were married. A year later the husband was granted permission to join his wife in Britain leading to his being granted permanent residency as a British citizen. The couple's problems began with the husband's lack of experience and understanding of male-female interaction in Britain. In Pakistan (particularly in rural communities) women's interaction with men is confined to close relatives. This had been the experience of 'Suraya's' husband, who was unable to accept male-female contact between those not related, for example, he was unwilling to accept the usage of the term 'friend' applied to a male unrelated to a women. At his wife's birthday party, his temper flared when one of his wife's male 'friends' approached her for a dance, to which the husband responded by attacking the male in question.

This outburst resulted in 'Suraya' leaving her husband and her parents, and moving into a flat by herself. She has since sought a divorce and has sited her parents, as pressurising her into an arranged marriage against her will. It should be noted that during divorce proceeding, the judge enquired as to whether the marriage was one of convenience - for the purpose of the husband gaining British citizenship. This enquiry prompted 'Suraya' to blame her parents for pressurising her into a marriage against her will. Her parents are upset that she has 'turned against' them and claim that no pressure was involved in the arrangement.

The divorce has been granted and the couple now live apart. 'Suraya' has not been reunited with her parents since she left her husband, and is adamant that she will not do so in the foreseeable future. Her parents meanwhile, feel that their daughter took things 'too far' when she filed for divorce, and cited them as pressuring her into an arranged marriage against her will. 'Suraya's' mother voices her feelings about the shame their daughter has brought upon the family:

“She should never have done this [divorcing her husband], how are we going to face our relatives in Pakistan?...‘Javed’ [‘Suraya’s’ husband] is living with us at the moment and we have not discussed how to break the news to his family in Pakistan”.

Again, *sharam* rests with the woman. In this case, ‘Suraya’s’ parents see their daughter as being in the wrong for divorcing ‘Javed’ as opposed to the fact that ‘Javed’ could have attempted to relate to her life as a British-Pakistani. Instead, as a man he gained support from the community and ‘Suraya’s’ family, including her mother, who blames her daughter for the divorce.

Other women have blamed a lack of concern on the part of elder men, who they feel should give the family and particularly women’s concerns within these, more attention if divorces are to be prevented. ‘Najma’ is a volunteer at the Centre and is also an outreach worker involved with young South Asian women in Luton. ‘Najma’ points out:

“These men [elder men, at the Centre] are out of touch with problems affecting our families. They are more concerned with politics of the Middle East or Kashmir than to address the real issues that need their attention”.

“What do you think are the real issues here?” (I enquired)

‘Najma’:

“Our women are facing the burden of all the family’s responsibility. Yet, when things don’t run smoothly in the home, they are the ones who are blamed, not the husbands. These elder men are in a position where they can influence younger men to face up to their responsibilities within the home, yet, they turn a blind eye to their behaviour.... even when men go off with other women. Instead they sit there criticising the women for being

unreasonable. The truth is it's easy for them to blame women or British society for being permissive, for all the problems facing the family. But they will rarely look at the gender inequalities within the family and how important these are for women, who are ultimately seeking ways of escaping such situations - sometimes resulting in them leaving husbands".

'Najma' was right in her observation of elder men's lack of interest in gender inequalities. I too had found that raising this issue in relation to marital breakdowns and family disputes would usually result in men either ignoring it completely or I would risk alienation. So I decided to tackle the subject, tentatively, and play an 'advocacy' type role on behalf of the women, I had interviewed, or interacted with, during the course of the study. My conversation with one of the elder men at the centre, who appeared keen to hear my views on why women were leaving their homes and how the elders could prevent this, was a fruitful one. I explained how I had interviewed a number of women who had experienced violence from their husbands and that they preferred some type of mediation to prevent this rather than leaving their husbands, families and community. To which 'Mr Sultan' replied:

"In our community, women get ideas about freedom and how they would enjoy this more if they were not living in the Pakistani community. From the outset of their marriages, they are trying to separate husbands from their parents-which is not a good basis for negotiating household arrangements, as our men are very close to their parents and will not allow their wives to ruin their relationship. Maybe women need to employ a more subtle way of negotiating moving away from the extended family, which is clearly not suiting them, otherwise they would not wish to live separately".

I was not entirely convinced of this, as my interactions with women from this community suggested otherwise. So I asked 'Mr Sultan', how he suggested women this, to which he replied:

“Women can be quite persuasive when they want to be. Rather than giving ultimatums of moving away from parents or they will leave them-which happens here all the time, they must try to suggest practical reasons for moving. In the case of my daughter, who originally lived with her in-laws, she pointed out to her husband the practical problems of living with his parents. She was pregnant at the time and suggested that they needed more room when the baby arrives, which was not going to be possible in their present house.... I wouldn't say that it was a straightforward move, but it worked in the end, with minimal animosity on either side. It can be done.”

When I pointed out that gender issues could also be tackled by using subtle means, he enquired as to what I meant by this. I explained:

“Using your position as elders, you too can influence men into thinking that treating women unequally is wrong. Particularly if you point out that women do not wish to leave their homes or their community to gain some ‘freedom’ elsewhere, but that they wish to remain with them as long as their views are listened to. What I am trying to say is that maybe you need to talk to men more and dispel some of their concerns surrounding women seeking independence from in-laws and the community, to pursue individual interests”.

Mr Sultan:

“But isn't that what women want?”

Me:

“Not from what I've heard. I have spoken to some women experiencing domestic violence, yet, when I have enquired as to why they don't leave, they are adamant that they have no desire to face the outside world by themselves. They are, on the whole happy and proud to be part of this community. Leaving their family and community is

considered the last resort. So if they do leave, it's because they have been pushed into doing so."

Mr Sultan was listening intently, while I continued briskly so as not to be interrupted by anyone, which may have resulted in the conversation being terminated, and perhaps never returned to again.

Me:

"Everyone is proud of this Centre, the mosque and all the other symbols representing British-Pakistani-Muslim identities. Would you want these to be derelict and unused in a few years time?"

Mr Sultan, looked confused:

"Why do you say this, dear?"

Me:

"Because if the women are driven away from their homes by husbands and/or in-laws, then they are likely to take their children with them and move to where they won't be found. The negative experiences they may have of living in a British-Pakistani community could result in them ensuring their children are not raised as Muslims or Pakistanis. Then, who will use these majestic buildings you and others have worked so hard for? You will not just be losing women from the community, but also the future generations of British-Pakistani-Muslims."

Mr Sultan pondered over this, when we were interrupted. My feeling was that he would take little or no notice of what I had said, but I was pleasantly surprised. After Mr Sultan had finished dealing with one of the 'clients', he turned and said:

"You have made a very good point about the children losing their religious and cultural identities if their mothers' experiences are not good within her own community. I think this is a useful starting point for future discussions around family problems. Before you mentioned this [the children], we only ever focused

on the husband, wife and in-laws. This adds a new dimension to the seriousness of the problem”.

I was pleased that ‘Mr Sultan’ took note of what I had said, particularly as I was unable to provide an insight through observations and interviews with women themselves. Unfortunately, I have not seen the ‘benefits’ of our conversation as yet, perhaps this will happen when the Centre provides a mediation service for British-Pakistanis in Luton.

Having looked at the relationships between men and women and how inequalities emerge through the process of marriage, it is fruitful to view relationships among women themselves, and how some women uphold elements of patriarchy for the sake of family interests, while others contest it through their support for other women. The examples used are a mother and daughter relationship, in which the mother puts the interests of her daughter before the interests of her family and community. Secondly, I will be looking at the relationship between a mother and daughter in law, which stemmed from the hierarchical nature of the family household. The points being made here are that family life is complicated and gender relations within these are further complicated by the support, or lack of it, received by women from other women and how this can have positive and/or negative effects on gender relations within the community itself.

Women’s relationships with other women

“If my son and particularly my daughter, were to consider marriage outside the Pakistani community – whether this happened in Pakistan or Britain, then I would not acknowledge their existence. I have spent my life instilling values that I was taught by my father and am grateful to him [father]. If his teachings were good for me and he had my interests at heart, then my children should accept that I have their interests at heart, so if I were to disagree with their marrying an outsider, then I know what is best for them”.

This quote was from a young father, who overheard a conversation between one of the male volunteers at the Centre and myself. This man was of the view that parents [meaning fathers] had the final say in their children's marriages. Marital arrangements, like so many important events affecting the family and community, are considered the father's responsibility. Mothers too have an input in such arrangements, but this is done in a manner that upholds the male traditions of the family, as family *izzat* remains a burden on women.

In Luton, the view of mothers in relation to marriage, are expected to be in line with the wider interests of the family, kin and community. If, for example, she values her child's decision not to undergo a particular marriage at a particular time, then she too has to face the consequences of deviating from collective interests to that of her child's individual interests. 'Tazeem' is a mother of seven children. She arrived in Britain in 1995, after spending 18 years of married life in the service of her in-laws in Pakistan. It was after her father and mother in-law died, that her husband decided to invite 'Tazeem' and their children to Britain to join him.

'Tazeem' was pregnant with her 7th child when we first met and was living separately from her husband, after being in Britain for only a year. The reason for this separation was due to her husband's insistence that their older daughter, 'Shahida', who was 17 years old when I first met the family, marry his nephew in Pakistan. 'Tazeem' refused to allow this to happen, for a number of reasons. Firstly, because she did not want her daughter to spend a life in service to her in-laws, as did 'Tazeem'. Secondly, she felt that her daughter should have an education so that she could get a 'good job' and stand on her own two feet. Thirdly, 'Shahida' knew her cousin and did not want to marry him due to their incompatibility - he was in his 30s, living in a rural society and had no education. These reasons were put to 'Tazeem's' husband who refused to even listen, and instead threatened to leave his pregnant wife with their 6 children, one who is disabled and requires 24-hour attendance. 'Tazeem' stood her ground and watched her husband leave the family home.

My contact with the family was regular, as I was involved in assisting 'Tazeem' with Attendance Allowance benefits, in respect of her daughter's disability. I was also

accompanying her on school runs and antenatal appointments, as well as taking her older daughter, 'Shahida' to the careers advice service situated in the local community centre. 'Tazeem' had not mentioned her separation from her husband for some weeks and I had not enquired about this, although his absence was noted, as whatever time I arrived at 'Tazeem's' home, he remained absent. It was during conversations with her about 'Shahida's' future education and employment intentions that I enquired as to whether her husband would approve of their daughter taking up full-time studies, to which 'Tazeem' replied:

"He [husband] does not approve of anything me and the children do. To him, I was a servant who tended to his parents until they died, and then I came to England and found that my disabled daughter would have been better treated if I arrived in England earlier. He [husband] is selfish and inconsiderate of his own family.... I am so upset that we didn't arrive here [England] before; my daughter would have had the necessary help she needed. Instead I was stuck in Pakistan, looking after others [her mother and father in law] and neglected my own children's health and education. Today he [husband] expects me to marry my eldest daughter to his nephew? What has he done for us, his family? He has left us now, because I refused to marry my daughter to his nephew".

'Tazeem' is understandably upset and I attempted to comfort her by pointing out how much she has achieved since arriving in Britain and in such a short space of time. I reminded her of her visits to the Centre, where we initially met, and how she had sought to improve her own and her children's life through her struggles within the community. In particular, I reminded her how she overcame criticism from men at the Centre³⁹, who looked down on her because her husband had left her, and they blamed her for not 'obeying' him. I also pointed out that she had been able to understand the complex benefit system, even though she claimed to be 'uneducated'.

³⁹ It was through 'Tazeem' being criticised by the men at the Centre, that I attempted to establish relations with her in order that she would not necessarily have to deal with the men and their attitudes towards her. I had suggested that she call me when she had any queries relating to her benefits, etc, and used the excuse of her

On another visit to Luton, about 6 weeks after my last trip, I bumped into 'Tazeem' in the local supermarket with her new baby boy. She was in better spirits and told me that her husband had returned home and that he had agreed to their daughter pursuing further education and gaining a job of her choice, and that her marriage plans had been shelved. 'Tazeem' had been able to convince her husband, to consider their daughter's individual preference in relation to marriage, as opposed to their kin and community's expectations of her. He clearly saw the interest of his daughter, and the support 'Tazeem' gave to her, as being more important over collective interests of the group, otherwise he would not have returned to the family home.

'Tazeem' had used her own life experiences to ensure that her daughter's marriage was delayed until she had fulfilled their own personal goals. She resisted patriarchal views that required her to fulfil her role as a dutiful wife and forego personal interests over group interests. For 'Tazeem', and her children's happiness came first, even if this threatened her own position within the family and community. As mentioned above, the advisory Centre where I met 'Tazeem', the men were critical of her and showed little interest in helping her with her problems. Instead, when women like 'Tazeem' who were separated from their husbands, arrived at the Centre, the men would automatically point them out to me and say:

"There's someone you may want to interview. Her husband has left her, just like her neighbours' husband has left her".

To these men, it was a running joke, that women like 'Tazeem', were seen as the 'problem' instead of the men who were placing demands on them, which left them little or no choice but to stand by their children. The fact the men would ridicule 'Tazeem' was an indication of the views they held on gender relations. However, as 'Tazeem's' husband has returned to his family, she is the one who has achieved her demands – that her daughter not be married to their relative in Pakistan, and that her husband return to the family home. 'Tazeem's' husband's return raises questions about whether all men within the family and community share views on emphasising collective, or group

being pregnant to visit her at home, instead of her visiting the Centre.

interests as opposed to seeking individual interests. Perhaps in this case 'Tazeem's' husband was, covertly, in agreement with 'Tazeem' and their daughter, but wanted to make a point to family and community members about his views being in line with theirs?

Domestic violence: a different dimension?

Domestic violence affects women of all social-economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds (Dobash and Dobash, 1993, Mama, 1989, Hamner and Maynard, 1987). Women of diverse backgrounds experience different forms of violence within the home, due to the diverse nature of family structures and processes. Issues of isolation, unequal power and gender relations and access to resources affect all women (Mama, 1989). With the development of Women's Aid and refuge provision since the 1970's in Britain, victims of domestic violence are no longer expected to suffer in silence and remain in unbearable conditions (Hamner and Maynard, 1987). Yet, despite this, research suggests that overwhelming numbers of women return to their violent partners/spouses (Ahmed, 1986, Bhatti-Sinclair, 1995). Domestic violence is as much an issue in Luton amongst British-Pakistanis as it is elsewhere. However, the nature of violence within the extended family households adds a different dimension to the problems of domestic violence, experienced by women from women.

'Riasat' is a 28 year old woman, who arrived in Britain from Pakistan as a bride of a British-Pakistani, with her baby son. Since arriving here 5 years ago, she has been living with her husband's parents and siblings, along with her 4 children, all under the age of 7. A woman that worked at the local refuge introduced me to 'Riasat'. 'Riasat' had left her husband and his family because she had been suffering violence and abuse from her mother-in-law. When we met, 'Riasat' looked in poor health, having been at the refuge for a few weeks, she was finding it difficult looking after her children without the support she was used to from her extended family.

Over a period of a few weeks, I had developed a good rapport with 'Riasat', who was initially wary of me, due to the fact she had not seen me in Luton before. I explained that I was doing fieldwork with British-Pakistanis in Luton and that during an interview with one of the women that worked at the refuge, was able to meet with her. Once

'Riasat' realised that I was not from Luton, yet, spoke Urdu and Punjabi, as well as being familiar with the official processes that she was having difficulty understanding (social and welfare agencies), she made use of my visits, giving me tasks such as filling out forms, or accompanying her to agencies such as the Department for Social Security and/or the council offices to chase up her claims.

'Riasat' had been happy living in the extended family household she was living in, as she had been living in a similar one in Pakistan, where her parents, married brothers, their wives and children lived. Therefore, such household arrangements were familiar to her and she preferred these to living in a smaller household. What was surprising to 'Riasat', however, was the fact her husband took little responsibility for his wife and children's well being, leaving this to his mother. The mother-in-law had from the outset, explained to 'Riasat' that she would be living with them and not to get any ideas about independence and moving away from her in-laws' home. 'Riasat' explains:

"She was very adamant that my husband and me should continue living with the family [in-laws] which is what I had expected and preferred to do anyway".

However, a few months into 'Riasat's' arrival and living with her in-laws, relations between 'Riasat' and her mother-in-law deteriorated, and particularly after the birth of her second child. 'Riasat' expressed concerns over her mother-in-law's behaviour towards her to her husband, who felt that she was over-reacting and that things were not that bad:

"He just kept saying 'don't worry, it's not a big thing, she's the elder, you ought to ignore it', which would just make me feel worse, because I thought my husband was blaming me for the friction between the two of us [mother-in-law and 'Riasat']".

Finally, matters came to a head when the verbal abuse turned into physical violence. 'Riasat's' mother-in-law began to beat her after an argument they had had, while 'Riasat' was hand-washing some clothes in the bath:

"She [mother-in-law] had been shouting at me, but I couldn't hear what she was saying, then I felt this thud on my head and turned to see my mother-in-law holding a rolling pin, which she had hit me over the head with. I became hysterical and she continued using the rolling pin to beat me. When I told my husband, what had happened, he used the same line of, 'ignore her, she's an elder', but I was so angry I gave him an ultimatum. Either we live separately from his [husbands] family, or I would leave him."

'Riasat's' husband did not take her seriously, so she took her children to a refuge. Riasat has since returned to her husband who has promised, through social workers, to live separately from his family with his wife and children. He provided evidence of the house he had arranged for them to live in, but this was a temporary measure to satisfy the social worker whose concerns were lay with the well being of the children. Once 'Riasat' moved out of the refuge and into the rented house with her husband and children, she was faced with the stigma and shame of being a 'loose woman'. Her husband's family accused her of going off with other men while she was at the refuge. This angered her husband, as he felt that his wife leaving him and moving to a refuge had ruined his *izzat*. His response was to accuse 'Riasat' of causing all the problems between his mother and other family members. And that had she put up with his mother without turning the issue into a public one, he would not suffer the *beizzatty*⁴⁰ he was suffering:

"He blames me for the shame I have brought on his family. If I had not left to go to the refuge then he would not have to suffer the taunts and *beizzatty* from his family and others in the community, that my leaving has caused."

Sharam and *izzat* were used to achieve conformity from 'Riasat', who has since been pressurised into moving back to the situation she attempted to flee in the first place. She is currently back living in the extended family home, but this time, she feels that she cannot escape because her husband had persuaded her into telling the social workers

⁴⁰ 'Beizzatty' is the opposite of *izzat* and is used interchangeably with *sharam*.

that she had made up the whole issue of being assaulted by her mother-in-law and that she was happy with her husband. He had convinced 'Riasat' that if she did not do this, the family would be under constant surveillance and intervention by social services, which would in turn, be seen by the community as a shameful thing. This has left 'Riasat' in a situation where she is now feeling helpless and unable to draw on the support that existed when she first left her home.

The community sided with the mother-in-law and views 'Riasat' as a troublemaker and one who airs her dirty linen in public. However, were the community interested in the situation in the first place and/or attempts to settle the dispute without 'outsider' intervention, then perhaps more women would wish to remain within the family until an amicable settlement was reached.

The hierarchical nature of the British-Pakistani families, has meant that the mother-in-law, by virtue of her experience as an elder and one who has upheld traditional cultural norms and values of the community, is seen as the one who is in the right.

As mentioned in chapter 3, elder women can often impact on the ways in which elder men within the community view family disputes. These women are in a position to make positive changes within the community, by challenging the patriarchal nature of conceptualising the family, in which women uphold men's *izzat*. On the other hand, men are affected adversely if the woman deviates from her responsibilities in maintaining their *izzat*. Some elder women have and do inform men of their responsibilities by stressing the need for more attention to family issues as opposed to merely being concerned with the politics of Kashmir and/or Islamic issues. Others tend to uphold the patriarchal traditions of the community with an emphasis on blaming younger women for wanting their freedom and independence therefore, they are the cause of their own and their family and community's problems. 'Mrs Iqbal' is an elder woman who regularly speaks to elder men at the advisory Centre on a variety of matters relating to the family and community:

"To the outsider we [British-Pakistani community] seem to be a cohesive group, with little internal problems. But the issue of violence against women, either from their husbands and/or

mother-in-laws, must be discussed, if we, as a community, want to be seen to be family and community spirited. Yet, these men [elders at the centre] are so preoccupied with Kashmiri and Islamic politics that they are ignoring the plight of our young women and children, who are also victims in this."

'Mrs Sayed', however, did not agree with this and felt that:

"....Our women are getting out of control in their search for freedom. All they want is to separate sons from their mothers, so that they can control them themselves. They are not concerned with protecting the community from outsiders....They just want to give us [British-Pakistanis] a bad name".

While some elder women were challenging violence within the home, others, like 'Mrs Sayed' share male held views of young British-Pakistani women seeking some type of freedom, rather than experiencing violence and/or abuse at the hands of family members. For 'Mrs Sayed', it would appear that such a problem does not exist, and that women who present this to outsiders are traitors to the interests of the community.

Summary

For British-Pakistanis in Luton, marital and family issues are gendered, in that women are the upholders of traditions, while men escape these. The family is essentially, the site for renegotiating gender relations, in which marital processes play a critical role for women. Women are entrusted with the burden of *izzat*, in which 'face' becomes an important concept in the maintenance of *izzat* and where constructions of *sharam* and *izzat* become pronounced. *Sharam* rests with women and *izzat* is the preserve of men, the family and the community, who will ensure that women's actions do not threaten this. Women are resisting patriarchal structures despite opposition from the community. They are actively attempting to raise issues concerning the family and the position of women, without accepting marginality.

Through their active agency women are challenging oppressive structures. 'Ayesha' challenged an old-aged tradition within her family, by marrying someone of a lower caste, despite fears of being ostracised by her family and community. 'Ayesha' stood her ground and opted to fulfil her personal needs as opposed to bowing to pressures from her family, as she had received support from an uncle in Pakistan, who invoked Islam in order to convince 'Ayesha's' family that it was they who were in the wrong to discriminate on the basis of caste, and not 'Ayesha' for going against the family's wishes. Since her marriage 'Ayesha' has been able to maintain contact with her family in Staffordshire, while also works⁴¹ in the British-Pakistani community in Luton, where she is not marginalized for marrying according to her own wishes.

'Rabia' demonstrated her active agency by challenging her family and husband and ultimately gaining a divorce from him because of her unhappiness within the marriage. 'Sajda's' ambition to continue with her education rather than get married as is expected of her by her family is one that she has taken. She realised the risks involved in going against her family, but is prepared for this, as she feels continuing her education will allow her the opportunities for a career and also the choice to marry someone of her choice. That's not to say women do not value their families support but in the absence of this, they must make choices that are appropriate to their lives. As women, we cannot be seen as mere preservers of cultural traditions, but actively constructing and reconstructing cultural traditions to fit our contemporary situations.

Gender inequalities necessitate in women challenging oppressive structures both within the families and the community and have been able to effect change. For example, women have been instrumental in raising awareness of marital 'mismatches' ending in divorce, which has led to a recognition that marriages between Pakistanis and British-Pakistanis need to be reconsidered, and has resulted in increased consultations between potential partners. And in 'Tazeem's' case, she had been able to withstand criticisms from men at the Centre where she attempted to gain support, after her husband had left her; prevented her daughter's marriage to a cousin, to ensure she had a good education, and was reunited with her husband on her own terms. 'Tazeem' and others were able to do this with the support of their female peers and/or relatives, however, this support is

⁴¹ 'Ayesha' lives just outside of the geographical area where a high concentration of British-Pakistanis live - though she is considering moving back to this area.

not always forthcoming and as I noted above, in 'Riasat's' case, where she was subject to violence at the hands of her mother in law.

Sometimes, some women can be seen as identifying with the oppressor, in that they take on the cultural characteristics of men and can be part of patriarchy that operates within this community. Some elder women find it difficult to understand the 'freedom' that the younger women have, compared to when they were young. While some women find it encouraging that younger women are actively creating structures by challenging oppressive ones, others will find it difficult to understand the insubordination of these women. They, have by accepting aspects of patriarchy throughout their lives, come to believe that women must maintain the man's *izzat*, regardless of his actions.

The specific cultural norms and values of British-Pakistani families may be reinforced through different forms of patriarchy experienced by women. The family will necessarily be oppressive for some women, while being a source of support, security and protection from other forms of discriminations based on one's ethnicity, class and religious beliefs (Trivedi, 1984, Brah, 1996). For British-Pakistani women, the family is an environment in which they create cultural traditions that are appropriated within their kin networks, peer groups and the community itself. Women create spaces for themselves within the private sphere of the family, and separate from men's space which tends to be situated in the public sphere of the community, and the wider political concerns surrounding the community.

Nevertheless, for British-Pakistani women, the family is an important arena in which they are continuously negotiating gender relations and (re)producing identities. Community is the site where families are situated and (re)created, but families are also crucial in creating and recreating community as a vehicle for identity formation in ways that maintain continuities and create innovations within them, this latter point will be developed further, in the next chapter in relation to young people and the 'Asian cool' phenomenon.

In chapter 5 I will be looking at the ways in which intergenerational relations are negotiated and will be pointing to the contested nature of identities amongst elders within this community and young people. I will be viewing age as both gendered and

racialised, and point to elders being the upholders and maintainers of traditions, while young people are carving new images and innovations in relation to their identities.

Chapter 5: Intergenerational Relations: Contested Identities

In the previous chapter, the discussion centred on the marital system to demonstrate the importance of family life to British-Pakistani women and how this impacted on their position within their community and the ways in which gender relations were renegotiated. In this chapter, I will be looking at how identities are contested in relation to the elder and younger generations of British-Pakistanis in their community. To do this, I shall be viewing intergenerational relations and how these are negotiated and articulated within this community. I will be looking at elders both men and women, who are over 55 years old and their relationships with the younger generation, who, in this case, are between the ages of 16 and 25 years. The reasons for using these two generations is to demonstrate the interactions they have with each other and how these differ in relation to their own concerns. I shall be arguing against the culture-clash model (Watson, 1977 Anwar, 1979), which situates young people and elders in a conflict framework. Instead, I will be suggesting that young and old people are interacting with each other's concerns, as well as highlighting their own concerns in relation to their own identities. Age is conceptualised as being both gendered and racialised (Blakemore and Boneham 1994) as well as cutting across generations (Pilcher, 1995) – old and young (ages) in which elders are the upholders of traditional values and identities (Buijs, 1995), while the younger generation is concerned with creating new forms of identities through a synthesis of their ethnic, religious and British identifications.

Pilcher (1995) describes age as a combination of physiology, life course, cohort membership and 'generation', relating to kinship relations such as parent-child grandparent-grandchild relations. While physiological age cannot be escaped in terms of the appearance and capabilities of our physical bodies over time, the life course model of age is more appropriate for the purpose of this chapter. The life course model of age is concerned with grouping people together on the basis of their similar age and by the typical behaviour patterns and social roles culturally expected to be associated with that age (Pilcher, 1995). Pilcher (1995) points out:

“As human beings we live in societies, each with culturally defined expectations of how persons of particular ages are

supposed to behave. As a person grows older, she or he is generally expected to progress through a series of statuses, positions and relationships according to that culture's definitions and markers." (Pilcher, 1995: 5)

Like social class, ethnicity and gender, age is a social category through which people define and identify individuals and groups within society. While age can be seen as a biological aspect of human life, it is, (like gender and ethnicity) also influenced by the particular social environment in which people live. In other words, as with gender and ethnicity, age must also be considered to have more to do with culture than biology (Pilcher, 1995).

However, in this British-Pakistani community, age is also linked to gender and 'race', in which elder women are the upholders of traditional values and identities that are transmitted to future generations of British-Pakistanis. Young people's identity/ies creation borrows aspects of their traditional cultural and religious norms, but they synthesise these with new ideas resulting from their interactions with their peers of non-British-Pakistani backgrounds, thereby, producing new images and identities in which their specificity as British-Pakistanis is demonstrated.

Previous studies on British-Pakistani families and communities, characterise intergenerational relations as problematic by pointing to the 'culture-clash' and/or 'between two cultures' thesis (Anwar, 1979, 1982, Saifullah-Khan, 1979), which suggests that young people are experiencing an identity crisis, which necessarily means that they will not relate to elders in their community. Such a perspective situates British-Pakistanis in a passive framework and denies their active agency and proficiency in navigating between the different cultural traditions they identify with. It also suggests that they are perhaps somehow detached from elder's concerns as a result of the 'culture-clash' they are experiencing, which I found to be the opposite and shall be seen later in the chapter, in relation to young people's attitudes towards elder care and their own identity/ies formations.

Intergenerational differences are a feature of most societies and cut across minority as well as majority communities (Blakemore and Boneham, 1994, Pilcher, 1995).

Differences in socialisation experiences (as mentioned in the previous chapter, in relation to marital mismatches) and the time and place within which socialisation occurs, will necessarily impact on intergenerational relations. Within migrant families, difference between older and younger generations is further marked by the traditional/modern dichotomy that views the older generation of migrants as the upholders and maintainers of traditional cultural practices (Buijs, 1993), while subsequent generations are seen as being ‘between two cultures’ (Anwar, 1979) – that of their parents’ countries of origin and the British society they have been born and/or raised in. There have been concerns that the younger generations of South Asians in Britain will move away from the traditional structures of family and community that will lead towards the decline of community and the extended family structures as the central focus of social activity. This decline has been noted in Modood et al’s (1994) study on ‘Changing Ethnic Identities’. The authors’ note:

“First generation respondents.....appreciated that this [decline of the extended family] was likely to be a continuing process as the second and third generations began to increasingly take on ‘white’ values and live more individualistically, concentrating on their immediate family and themselves”. (Modood et al, 1994: 29)

However, according to Ballard (1994):

“...the popular view that young people of South Asian parentage will inevitably suffer from “culture conflict” as a result of their participation in a number of differently structured worlds can be dismissed. Rather they are much better perceived as cultural navigators, with a sophisticated capacity to manoeuvre their way to their own advantage both inside and outside the ethnic colony” (Ballard, 1994: 31).

I would argue that while there is a process of changing family structures taking place in this community of British-Pakistanis, young and old people continue to retain elements of their ethnic and religious traditions, but also discontinue some elements which are

modified and/or changed, rather than young people taking on 'white' values per se (Modood, et al, 1994). In line with Buijs (1993), I shall be arguing that British-Pakistani elders in Luton are the upholders of traditional cultural values and identities. I shall also be arguing against the 'between two cultures' thesis (Anwar, 1979) that situates British-Pakistani young people in a fixed and passive framework. As will be seen, my findings suggest that they are active agents in processes of identity formations and reformations.

Women's voices are important in demonstrating how relations between women are carried into intergenerational relations, as the emphasis in this community on care of elders, is sometimes placed on women within families. I will be viewing the socio-economic changes taking place within this community and how these impact on elder people's concerns. For example, I will be arguing that women's increased participation in the labour market and the changing nature of living arrangements - moving away from the inner city setting where British-Pakistanis are concentrated, towards the suburbs of Luton - impact on care arrangements and gender roles within this community.

The chapter is divided into two sections. In the first part of the chapter I will be exploring elder people's key concerns, such as religion and attitudes and expectations towards their specific care needs and how social and economic changes taking place within the community and particularly in relation to women's roles, impact on the need for new care arrangements of elders. Within this section, I shall be looking at the attitudes of young people in relation to elders' care. In the second part of the chapter, the discussion will centre on how young people are carving out their own images and identities, creating new and dynamic forms. I shall be arguing that identities are contested, not only with regards to the dominant community, but also with regards to the constituent parts of the minority community. Here, I will focus on the 'Asian cool' phenomenon to demonstrate young people's agency and contested nature of identity/ies formation in this community.

Elders as upholders of traditional values and identities

Elders from minority communities are seen as the upholders of ethnic, religious and cultural traditions of their countries of origin (Buijs, 1993, Modood, et al, 1994). Explanations for this are located in the traditional/modern dichotomy, where elders are characterised as being traditional, while future generations, by nature of their upbringing in Western societies are likely to incorporate modern, contemporary aspects into the traditional features of their ethnic and religious origins. In this sense, British-Pakistani elders in Luton, consider it to be their responsibility to transmit their traditional values and identities into future generations. This challenges characterisations of elders in Britain, which situate them as dependents rather than active (Blakemore and Boneham, 1994), and denies their attempts at carving out roles for themselves, and also being valued in their roles as cultural transmitters, albeit in traditional terms.

As is the case with many elder people (Blakemore and Boneham, 1994) British-Pakistanis may sometimes feel a sense of isolation and marginalisation in terms of their participation in social activities within the community, yet, as was seen in chapter 3 and the Mecca incident, elders were instrumental in mobilising the community towards their aim of challenging structures that threatened their religious beliefs and customs. Thus, elders in this community are active in creating roles for themselves to prevent feelings of isolation and marginalisation. Some elders are involved in community work with young people and have attempted to provide advice and guidance to parents wanting this in relation to problems affecting their children. These roles allow elders to retain a sense of independence, as well as a sense of being needed by younger members of their families and community. In this sense, they view their roles as the upholders and maintainers of traditional values and identities and see this role as important for the socialisation of future British-Pakistani-Muslims in Luton.

Some elder women were active in voluntary work within women's groups, while others (men) were based in Mosques and other religious centres. Elder women were involved in the former, and through the development of women only groups, where young and older women attended. Through their work in these groups, elder women created a role for themselves while providing spaces for younger women to seek religious and cultural

guidance, when this was sought. 'Mrs Akhtar' is an elder, who runs a group for Muslim women in Luton. She believes that organising religious and cultural groups is crucial for the maintenance of ethnic and religious identities, in that future generations need to be aware of these for their continuity:

"Some young women who attend the group, are not aware of their religion, although they say they are Muslims, they don't actually know what it is to be a Muslim. In this group, I organise a lot of activities such as inviting religious speakers – usually other women, so that younger women can see the real Islam and not the brand that their husbands, fathers and brothers preach to them [men suggesting that patriarchy is located within Islam and justify its assertions through this by oppressing women] but to show them how women can benefit from Islamic teachings, and pass these on to future generations, so that they too can be good Pakistani, Muslims".

Elder men were also involved in religious guidance to young people and/or their parents in accordance with Islamic principles, although their roles were situated in the public spaces, such as Mosques and/or religious centres. They also viewed their 'advisory' role as important because they felt that without their experiences and guidance, younger British-Pakistanis would become 'secularised' by nature of their lives in a secular society such as Britain. 'Mr Dhaya', one of the volunteers at the Centre and in his 60s, pointed out:

"It is our [elders] duty to instil cultural and religious values into the younger generations. We have to remember who we are in a society sometimes hostile to *our ways* and cultural traditions. Young people need to know that they will always be special in Islam and within their own communities. If they experience racism from the 'white' community, then at least they know they have their religion and culture to turn to". (My emphasis)

In this way elders have created roles in order that they are not viewed as mere dependants, through the importance they place on cultural and religious guidance to young British-Pakistani-Muslims. The difference, however, in the ways in which men and women provide cultural and religious guidance is clearly gendered. For example, 'Mrs Akhtar' places importance on her role as a cultural and religious 'teacher' by ensuring that younger generations of British-Pakistanis are aware of their ethnic and religious traditions, yet, she is also concerned with dispelling myths surrounding 'sexism' in Islamic teachings. She is concerned that young women attending the groups arrive with notions of patriarchy and sexism being part and parcel of Islamic principles.

The majority of women attending 'Mrs Akhtar's' group and other groups are working class and/or from Azad Kashmir. They have little or no formal education, therefore, rely on men's version of Islam, which perhaps impacts, sometimes, on their acceptance of patriarchy and sexism. Therefore, 'Mrs Akhtar's' and other elder women's roles in providing cultural and religious guidance to younger British-Pakistani women seeking this, is important in challenging male held views and providing women with a sense of their importance in religious and cultural terms. 'Parvez', is an elder, who also runs a woman's group, although this group does not attempt to provide any religious guidance, it is more about the cultural aspects of being British and being Pakistani at the same time. 'Parvez' believes that young British-Pakistani women must be aware of their traditional customs in order that they can challenge erroneous male held views on these, and they must also know their rights with regards to being a British citizen. 'Parvez' explains the purpose of her group and the significance of her role as an 'advisor':

"....Young women need to be aware of what it is to be British, as well how to be a good Pakistani, Muslim wife/mother/daughter/sister. The emphasis on being a good Pakistani woman stops many women from finding out what their rights are in Britain.... The men in Luton are not going to teach these women [those attending her group] how to access particular services, as women's awareness of such things threatens their position..... Us older women have a responsibility to the young generations, to make sure that they are aware enough about their Pakistani and British traditions, so that these women can pass

their experiences onto the next generation, without feeling that their own traditions are oppressive to them”.

Thus, elder women, see their role as being one where they must necessarily ensure the continuity of community structures, and they are aware that it is women who will pass on community traditions.

For elder men on the other hand, merely providing religious guidance to the younger generations is adequate in their fulfilling their roles. Their concerns do not necessarily extend to attempting to challenge the social structure, but to ensure its maintenance in patriarchal ways. ‘Mr Dhaya’s’ assertions of religious and cultural guidance to young people may or may not be as important to young people, as he suggests, but for him, nevertheless his role is significant for his own personal fulfilment. It provides him with a sense of being needed in his community, particularly by the younger generation, and prevents him from perceiving himself as someone who is dependent.

In addition to maintaining cultural and religious values to younger British-Pakistanis in Luton, elders are also concerned about their care needs and how their younger kin will meet these. As mentioned earlier, British-Pakistani family relations have been characterised as being based on reciprocity and obligations (Saifullah-Khan, 1979, Shaw, 1988, Ahmad, 1996). Within this, elder care is seen as being met by younger relatives, usually children and/or grandchildren, which suggests that they will be ‘looked after by their own’ (Atkins and Rollings, 1996). This is not always the case for British-Pakistanis in Luton, as social and economic changes are impacting on the type of care elders are currently receiving. These changes have implications for elders’ expectations in relation to their care and the attitudes of young people in relation to this.

Elders’ expectations towards their care

Contrary to the writings on Pakistani families in the 1970s and 1980s (Saifullah-Khan, 1979, Anwar, 1979, Shaw, 1988) which saw the family as a static entity within which care arrangements for elders would be met by family and kin members, the trend in Luton suggests that British-Pakistani elders are experiencing changes in the ways they are being cared for. Where once the responsibility lay with younger kin to care for

them, today that responsibility lies mainly with voluntary and/or statutory agencies, although the family and community are still involved in highlighting the concerns of this particular group and their specific needs, to those attempting to provide appropriate services for them. These changes have impacted on the attitudes of elder people some of whom consider themselves a burden, or feel ashamed at receiving help from 'outsiders' (non-family). Others feel abandoned and betrayed by kin particularly as some elders feel that they have sacrificed much to ensure that their children and grandchildren have a better future in British society. These feelings are significant in that they demonstrate the expectations of elder people and the realities of their experiences.

Certain changes within the community itself have had an effect on the caring of elders and elders' expectations of their own care. These changes are of a social and economic nature and include women's increased participation in the workplace and the desire of families to move away from the traditional community settings, that elders had been instrumental in creating. These changes have steadily taken place since the arrival of wives and children from Pakistan, whose arrival has challenged many assumptions about settlement of Pakistanis in Britain (Anwar, 1979). The arrival of wives and children signalled new attitudes towards living in Britain and ensured that many British-Pakistanis are now permanently settled in Britain. Permanent settlement has impacted on living arrangements, which has resulted in smaller households as opposed to the traditional households where extended family members shared a house (Shaw, 1988) and elders' care was ensured through family obligations. Another concern among elders impacting on their care arrangements was the change in living arrangements. As I had mentioned in the previous chapter, British-Pakistanis in Luton are concentrated in a particular area, close to the town centre. This was a result of the ways in which preference was given to 'community' life – recreating the rural settings from which many of the Pakistanis had originated. It is this group of elders who constructed these settings to ensure that a part of the sub-continent remained with them in a new and unfamiliar country. For this generation, the desire for continuing and maintaining traditional cultural norms and values was linked to the construction of communities that would ensure these traditions were passed on to subsequent generations, as well as to the idea that elders would necessarily be looked after by their offspring.

Younger family members are concerned with upward mobility, which includes moving away from the traditional community setting located in the inner-city area of Luton towards the suburbs. I would suggest a process of 'suburbanisation' is taking place and impacting on traditional care arrangements of elders. I use the term 'suburbanisation' to refer to the process whereby individuals and families seek to move away from the inner city locations, once considered popular settlement areas of British-Pakistani communities, towards the suburbs (Shaw, 1988, Werbner, 1994). The shift itself is not a new phenomenon, as upward mobility has been a feature of South Asian communities whose premise for arrival to Britain is predominantly guided by economic factors (Saifullah-Khan, 1979, Anwar, 1979, Werbner, 1994).

In Luton today, some British-Pakistanis are increasingly involved in the process of 'suburbanisation', whereby a desire to move away from the inner city areas is considered the 'modern' and progressive thing to do. The desire to live in a leafy suburb away from other British-Pakistanis is one that is invoked during times of dissatisfaction with family and community members (which may include seeking privacy over matters relating to the family, and/or conflict with other members of the community). However, individuals' desires of personal advancement, in terms of social mobility and social status, or the desire to demonstrate one's success through their living arrangements and location of residence is a likely reason for the move towards suburbia⁴². How does 'suburbanisation' impact on elders feelings towards their care? For elders who have moved away from the minority community - either on their own terms or with younger members of their families has meant a process of adjustment to their new life. The shift away from the 'traditional' concentration of British-Pakistanis in inner city areas and into the suburbs of Luton has an impact on elder British-Pakistani's traditional care arrangements.

'Mrs Kazmi' is in her 60s, and has moved with her son, daughter-in-law and grandchildren into the suburbs of Luton, approximately 5 miles away from the Pakistani community she has been living in for the past 20 or so years. She has mixed feelings about moving to the suburbs and away from all that is familiar:

⁴² See Werbner (1994), who found the desire among 'Pakistanis in Manchester' to move away from the deprived, inner city areas they had been occupying since arriving to Britain, in the post-war years.

“I do like it here [her son’s home], it’s very quiet and peaceful. But I miss seeing the other women and the hustle and bustle of shops and the activities of the community centre. I used to organise a group for Muslim women at this centre, but since we moved away, it has been difficult to keep things like that going.... I try and go back for visits once every two weeks, usually to ‘Apna Ghar’⁴³, but it’s difficult because my son and daughter-in-law both work and I can’t take the bus because of arthritis in my knee, which makes it difficult to walk down to the bus stop – it’s a quite a way from here. I do get some home help though, so I can’t complain.”

The social services department of the Borough Council has provided ‘Mrs Kazmi’ with part-time ‘home care’, which she receives 3-4 days per week, as ‘Mrs Kazmi’ is unable to attend ‘Apna Ghar’, due to the distance involved in travelling to the Centre. ‘Mrs Kazmi’ is therefore, experiencing difficulties accessing appropriate care, and although she feels she shouldn’t ‘complain’ about her situation, she realises that living within her community would have enabled her to use the local facilities. This is evident as she continues to hold fond memories of living within the British-Pakistani community and discusses her participation within the community and her work at the local community centre:

“I used to organise cookery and sewing classes, when I first began to volunteer at the community centre. Because a lot of the young girls would always ask me where they can learn to sew shalwaar-kameez suits and cook traditional food. Then I started Islamic poetry recitals, with some other friends and we regularly organised events for all Muslim women in our community. I enjoyed living there, because it was always so lively – people visiting, or I would visit friends. There was always something going on that I was involved in - weddings, birth of children and

⁴³ This is a fictitious name I use to refer to the Day Centre catering specifically for the needs of Elder South Asians in this particular part of Luton. British-Pakistani elders were the main ethnic group using this area, because of its geographic convenience.

religious celebrations. There was a sense of community spirit, which I don't find living here, and to tell you the truth it can be quite lonely".

'Mrs Kazmi' continues by explaining her position in her new neighbourhood:

".....here, our neighbours are English and they keep themselves to themselves. So I leave them to it. My son moved here because he felt that it was a good, quiet area to bring up his children in. He's right. But they are missing out on attending the mosque learning the Urdu language at the local schools, because of the distance, and they [son and daughter in law] don't have time to take the children down to there [where she had previously lived]. Times have changed; what was once important to my generation is no longer so with younger ones... we wanted our children to teach our children our cultural traditions, at any cost, but they don't seem that concerned with it".

For 'Mrs Kazmi', old age and health problems mean that she has little choice in her living arrangements, nevertheless she is aware of the changing priorities for the younger generation. While she and others of her generation valued religious and Pakistani cultural traditions as important elements of children's upbringing, she is aware that this is less important to her son and daughter-in-law's ways of bringing up their own children.

The need for day care centres catering for the needs of the diverse groups of South Asian elders and the specific needs of British-Pakistani elders, is often a practical solution rather than one where family and kin are deliberately shying away from their responsibilities in relation to elder care. The fact that such responsibilities often lie with women is also significant in that while male unemployment is high within this community, increasing numbers of young women are in full-time paid work, which, impacts on the type of care elders receive within their home from family and kin.

During observations of the day-to-day running of 'Apna Ghar', I found that there was a sense of embarrassment by some of the elder people attending, when I offered assistance, in terms of helping with meals or taking them to the washrooms. On one occasion I assisted an elder woman with her meal, when she became quite emotional and began crying:

"You don't have to do this, you know. There's paid workers here who can do this. My own family think I'm a burden, so why should you help me?"

I was left feeling guilty, although not knowing quite why I was feeling this; I approached one of the care assistants and enquired as to why this woman was so upset. 'Rabina', is 24 years old, a mother of two and works full-time as a care assistant at 'Apna Ghar'. She explained to me the elder woman's reasons for being upset:

"It's because our elders are having to face up to the fact that their relatives can't look after them at home anymore. It's really hard, because take me for example, I've got an elderly grandmother at home, who I can't look after because I'm in full-time work. It's strange really, because that's my job – looking after elderly people, but that's just it, once I finish from here, I have so little time and energy after being in work going home to look after my two small children, who my mother looks after while I'm in work, that I don't have time to care for my grandmother."

Another woman, 'Rahila', also expressed concerns over her responsibilities to her immediate family and her full-time work commitments, that leave her little time to deal with the care of elders:

"....It's difficult having a full-time job, arranging childcare and going home to do the housework and caring for your elders..... Obviously, my husband doesn't have the same responsibilities, because he hardly does anything around the house, or with looking after the children, so he doesn't realise how difficult it is

for us working women..... There's just not enough time to be able to care for elders as well. I know it probably sounds awful, but, there's places that our elders can go to and be looked after, like 'Apna Ghar'. The social services are there as well.... it's too much to expect women to carry the responsibility of looking after elder relations".

Changing work patterns and an increasing number of women's participation in the work place, has impacted on the ways in which care is given to British-Pakistani elders. The fact that women are increasingly taking up full-time employment, in addition to commitments to their immediate family has meant that elderly people's care needs have to be met by outsiders – the voluntary and statutory organisations - with some care given by family members.

In addition to these social and economic changes, the attitudes of elders themselves have changed in relation to where they are cared for, by whom and/or where they wish to be buried. Elders, previously wished to return to Pakistan upon retirement (Anwar, 1979) to be cared for by their kin, because the social structure of Pakistan is based on obligations and reciprocity (Shaw, 1988), therefore, elder care is ensured within the family and community. Today, this view is not so prevalent, as some elders expressed a desire to remain in Britain with their children and grandchildren and some even requested that their burials take place in Britain rather than in Pakistan.

As 'Mrs Akhar' pointed out:

"I had always believed we would go back home when the children completed their education. But when that happened, we were settled here. Then we had other things to worry about like arranging our children's marriages. Our families in Pakistan were expecting us to marry our children with theirs, in order that we could improve their status by bringing over their children. That's how things work with Pakistani families. It doesn't matter what your own personal feelings are about such matters, we had obligations to our kin. Our children had ideas of their own. They

wanted to find good jobs and make use of their education. Now that we have fulfilled our obligations to our children and families in Pakistan, we no longer wish to return. I want to spend the rest of my life with my children and grandchildren, who are more important to me than moving back to Pakistan. At least if I'm buried here, they will be able to visit my grave. They won't be able to do that if I'm buried in Pakistan".

It is clear that 'Mrs Akhtar' does not expect her family and kin to care for in Britain, in the same ways that kin members care for their elders in Pakistan, yet, she chooses to live in Britain (and wants to be buried here) and remain with her family rather than return to Pakistan.

'Mr Din', also stated that whereas previously he had intended to return to Pakistan, today, his position has changed to remaining in Britain with his immediate family:

"My dear, it's not that easy now. My children have attended school in this country, now they are working here and have children of their own. I cannot go back to Pakistan now.... When I first arrived in the UK, I had full intentions of returning to Pakistan, once I had made my fortune and made sure my biraadari⁴⁴ in Pakistan was well off. But when I married and decided my wife should come and join me, so that she could look after me [laughs]... we had children, who went to school in this country. The children's schooling was not the only reason we remained in England. Other reasons were that when I was sending remittances to Pakistan, I sent small amounts of money which lasted a long time over there, because living in Pakistan is cheaper than Britain. But when the wife and children came, my wage had to pay for us to live here; my family in Pakistan, and there was little left to save up for our return to Pakistan. By the

⁴⁴ 'biraadari', is an Urdu and Panjabi term used to describe wider kin and/or family lineage.

time I had enough money to return, no one wanted to go back with me [laughs again].”

‘Mr Din’ articulated the complexities and contradictions surrounding the ‘myth of return’ (Anwar, 1979) by pointing to the very factors [economic] that brought him to Britain in the first place and which also ensured his stay here was permanent. His wife’s arrival to Britain, and the birth of their children, meant that ‘Mr Din’s’ plans of returning were less likely to occur.

Having looked at the socio-economic factors impacting on the changes needs and care arrangements of British-Pakistani elders in Luton, it would be fruitful to look at the ways in which young people are interacting with elders and to assess the attitudes of young people towards traditional obligations of supporting and caring for elders.

Attitudes of younger people towards care of elders

It was interesting to note the ways in which care of elders was seen by some young people, as the responsibility of women. Unlike ‘Rabina’ and ‘Rahila’ (cited above), who felt they were unable to care for their elder relations due to their commitments relating to work and their immediate families, yet, still felt guilty about not being able to do so. Other young people did not feel that it was their individual responsibility to care for elders, or saw caring as the woman’s role.

A youth club set up for young South Asians living in the area, and situated close to ‘Apna Ghar’, was an interesting place to assess young people’s attitudes towards elders, and particularly in relation to their care needs. Interestingly enough the youth club tended to be used mainly by young men, which made for fascinating observations and interactions for the purpose of establishing their attitudes and if at all they felt a sense of obligation towards elder relations. I found that the young men using the club were very much into their ‘street culture’ – music, clothes and of course machismo. I endeavoured to enquire as to how they felt about elder British-Pakistanis being cared for by outsiders, as opposed to relying on their family and kin. This was directed at two of the young men, whom I knew to be British-Pakistanis. One ‘Salman’ replied:

“It’s a shame that they have to be sent to these places [‘Apna Ghar’] instead of being looked after at home. I think our women are becoming more and more English in their attitudes towards the community.... All the women want to do is to go out and about, and forget about their duty to their families..... Because of that our elders are being pushed into care homes..... Shame or what?”

His friend ‘Javed’ added:

“I know what you’re saying; it’s true that our women aren’t bothered about their duty to their family and especially our elders. We should respect them [elders] without them we wouldn’t have a culture or know our roots”.

These young men clearly had some respect for elders and whose roles as cultural and religious advisers were recognised. Yet, both tended to lay responsibilities for the care of elders firmly with women. Neither was prepared to take on the responsibility of caring for elders themselves, even though they expressed regret at the ways old people were being looked after by outsiders. Nor did they mention that other men could perhaps take on this role. Instead, they clearly viewed women as the carers and blamed them for working outside of the home. I asked ‘Salman’ if he would take on the task of caring for his grandparents, to which he replied:

“.....Me? I can’t even look after myself, how can I look after my elder relatives? What about you Jav? What do you think? She [me] wants to know why we can’t look after our grandparents, if our women can’t do it.”

Javed’s response:

“Are you joking, I haven’t got time for that..... Anyway, it’s supposed to be the women who do that isn’t it?”

Not all British-Pakistani men believed that care for elders was the sole responsibility of women. One man in his 20s - 'Amjid' – felt that care for elders within the family was becoming increasingly difficult given that social and economic factors such as smaller households and employment of women were contributing to the increasing need for care within the community. By community, reference was being made to the wider and minority communities.

“...In our community there's few extended families now, compared to the past when our parents and grandparents came to Britain. Which means that less of us are able to fulfil our obligations to our elders because we're either in full-time education or employment..... I don't think it's a women's place to look after the elderly. My parents look after their grandchildren while my brother and sister-in-law go out to work. If they had to look after their parents as well, it would be very difficult for them. That's why they've had to look into alternatives. My mum won't consider putting my grandparents in a home, because that would be *beizzatty* [shame] on the family. People in the community would think we had abandoned them after everything they have been through for us. But the day centres are a really good option. Elders are there during the day, and at home in the evening. Which is good, otherwise they would probably be on their own all day, while everyone else is out and about getting on with their business.... I think the local authorities should help more with the day care facilities and home help. As these are things most of us want. We don't want our elders in nursing homes, that would be really hard for them – and us”.

Care for elders is becoming a pressing issue and young people's attitudes towards this are important in that they are considering the socio-economic changes that are taking place and how these impact on caring for elder relatives, in order that appropriate care can be provided. Some, like 'Amjid', clearly are aware of the difficult decisions that families are faced with when considering care of elders and are attempting to establish

appropriate types of care provision, that leaves, elders and family members' *izzat* intact within the community.

Following on from discussing elders' roles as upholders and maintainers of traditional values and identities, their expectations in relation to their care and young people's attitudes towards eldercare, in the next section, I would like to discuss the lifestyles of young people. This section is about the ways in which identities are contested, in which young people are carving out their own images and identity/ies. Looking at the 'Asian cool' phenomenon, I will be arguing that identities are contested, not only with regards to the dominant community, but also in relation to the constituent parts of the minority community. Women are a part of young people and are themselves involved in processes of identity/ies creation. They too are participating in 'Asian cool', and through their own voices, articulate their concerns over this phenomenon and its impact on British-Pakistani identity/ies formation processes.

Lifestyles of young people: The 'Asian cool' phenomenon

Young British-Pakistanis, like other young people differ from the older generation in terms of their cultural traditions (Blakemore and Boneham, 1994, Pilcher, 1995), as they too are active in processes of creating structures to fit in with their lives. They differ in terms of the ways in which they construct and reconstruct their identities and are concerned with creating their own images, setting them apart as a distinct group. Young British-Pakistanis, like other young British-Asians, are concerned with asserting their visible difference compared with their parents, who had attempted to keep a low profile, in order not to attract negative attention, in the form of discrimination (Modood, et al, 1994, 1996).

This generation is concerned with resisting racism and other forms of discrimination through the assertion of synthesised and subversive forms of identities. By synthesised and subversive I am suggesting that a blend of positive aspects of both British and Pakistani cultural traditions are employed and can be seen in, for example, language and fashion styles, which can be seen as attempts at challenging stereotypes surrounding their identities. The rebelliousness is seen in the attitudes rather than actions.

Interestingly, the contradiction here is that while young people are asserting synthesised identities, drawing on the multiplicities of their experiences and allegiances, their material circumstances are clearly at odds with such attitudes. Hall (1987) articulates these contradictions in relation to young black people in London:

“I’ve been puzzled by the fact that young black people in London today are marginalized, fragmented, unenfranchised, disadvantaged and dispersed. And yet, they look as if they own the territory. Somehow, they too, in spite of everything are centred, in place: without much material support, it’s true, but nevertheless they occupy a new kind of space....” (Hall, 1987: 44)

Attitudes of young British-Pakistanis, and the ways in which their identities are contested must be viewed as mechanism of resistance to dominant structures and the discriminations levelled at this group by the majority population.

The centring of young people in their ‘yard’⁴⁵ is a form of cushioning from the outsider, who in this case, is clearly in a superior material and cultural position to their own (Hall, 1987). In this sense, the outsider – the dominant society/community – will not be encountered and the sense of inferiority – which is the reality, given that minority cultures are measured against the dominant cultural traditions - will be diminished through the assertion of a [false] confidence that displays an attitude at odds with the reality of their position (Rattansi and Westwood, 1994). It is in this contradictory sense that many young British-Pakistanis resist dominant ideologies and cultural forms on the one hand and accommodate them on the other (Mac an ghail 1988) - by choosing certain features of the dominant population, such as Western fashion styles and resisting others, for example, racism. This process is complicated further by the dominant society’s adoption of ethnic styles in the popular culture arena. It is fruitful to look at the ‘Asian cool’ phenomenon, which became popular during the mid 1990s, to demonstrate the points being made.

⁴⁵ Many young people referred to the area where they lived as their ‘yard’, suggesting that the yard belonged to them and was possibly a haven from ‘outsiders’.

'Asian cool' and young British-Pakistanis

Since the mid 1990s, mainstream youth cultural forms have incorporated South Asian styles including fashion and music into the mainstream arena⁴⁶ and became known as 'Asian cool'. In the music arena, British-Asian musicians such as 'Apache Indian', 'Cornershop', 'Bally Sagoo' and 'Asian Dub Foundation', have all been successful in breaking into the mainstream popular music scene (Hutnyk, et al, 1996). They have all appeared in the media and are viewed as inspirations for the young generation of South Asians in Britain, as well as influencing young people from the dominant population into adopting South Asian styles. However, it is not merely the success of these 'new' musicians that young people are concerned with. There are allegiances to *desi*⁴⁷ musicians and music such as 'Bhangra' – traditional Panjabi folk music, which young British-Pakistanis (as do other British South Asians) are also being influenced by (Hutnyk, et al, 1996).

The styles and music of South Asian pop groups and South Asian people themselves, have also been incorporated into the mainstream, and include accessories traditionally worn by women of South Asian origin, including bindis (a jewel or painted spot worn on the forehead) and henna paintings. Indian style dress was also becoming popular, particularly the sari, *kurtas* (tunic style long shirts) and the Westernised version of the shalwaar-kameez – trousers and a dress/tunic. Madonna popularised both the bindi and henna paintings in one of her music videos, which demonstrated the popularity of South Asian styles among Westerners, particularly as Madonna is a successful mainstream singer. So how has 'Asian cool' impacted on young British-Pakistanis' identity/ies creation? Is it a phase after which all things 'Asian' will disappear from the mainstream cultural arena?

I would argue that it is a trend that will pass and be replaced with another, as others have before it. In the 1970s, a similar situation occurred within the popular youth culture arena, which saw young 'white' people adopting the styles of Black (African-Caribbean) youth, including music, hairstyles, clothes and other symbols indicative of

⁴⁶ See Hutnyk et al (1996) regarding the new Asian dance scene that emerged in the 1990s and impacted on identity/ies creation among young South Asians in Britain.

⁴⁷ 'Desi' is Panjabi word literally meaning 'home' or 'homeland'. The term is often used to describe traditional customs such as 'desi' music which refers to music from the Indian sub-continent, for example, Bhangra music.

Black cultural forms, or more specifically, modes of resistance as articulated by young Black people in Britain at that particular time (Hebdige, 1979). A variety of musical influences from the Caribbean impacted on young people's identities in Britain including reggae, which was a style of music developed by those who followed the Rastafari philosophy (Hebdige, 1987). Rastafarianism originated in the West Indies and was popularised in the music of Bob Marley – one of the main advocates of Rasta philosophy.

Bob Marley, popularised Rastafarianism through his music and the following he gained as a result of his 'protest' songs. Following Marley's popularity among Westerners, the 'Black cool' phenomenon had emerged and as such 'dreadlocks' (matted hair) symbolised a following of this movement. The adoptions of Black cultural traditions by the dominant majority were the positive aspects of this trend. The negative aspect was that young Blacks in Britain were being characterised as social problems, in terms of their participation in education (see Rattansi, 1988) and in literature on the relations between police and Black people (IRR, 1986). In psychiatry Black people (and particularly Black men) were characterised as 'mad or bad' through a variety of mental health discourses including schizophrenia characterising Black men in pathological ways (Westwood, 1994).

Thus, the contradictions that the perceptions of Black people created, became unique in that on the one hand, they were respected and revered by a category of people, who were often accused of 'wanting to be black', or even more derogatively 'Paki lovers'. Yet, by another group, and this is where the power rests – the institutions of British society and those who uphold the power structure of these institutions, Black people were characterised in pathological terms (Westwood, 1994). Similarly, for British-Pakistanis, the fact that 'Asian' things are cool, does not necessarily suggest that they themselves will be viewed in this way. Their religious and ethnic identities through which they define themselves (Jacobs, 1997) are not necessarily seen as 'cool'⁴⁸. And their experiences of British institutions (such as the police, housing provision and healthcare) have not always been positive (Anwar, 1995).

⁴⁸ This was seen in chapter 3 and during the Mecca Bingo hall incident, where British-Pakistani-Muslims faced racist and Islamophobic diatribes by some members of the dominant 'white' population in Luton.

In Luton, I found some young people were critical of the use of minority symbols, such as bindis and/or henna paintings by celebrities as 'ripping off' our cultural traditions, while others saw it as a positive way of bringing minority cultures into the popular cultural arena, which gave some young people and women in particular, a new found confidence. 'Anwar', a 20 year old man, was critical of the 'Asian cool' and expressed his views on this by arguing that:

"They [the dominant white population] don't understand anything about our culture, and used to ridicule us for wearing traditional clothes, or listening to Bhangra music. Look at them now; they think it's trendy because people like Madonna, wore a bindi. But what's funny is that if we [British-Pakistanis] carry on wearing these things, like we always have, then it's still considered weird.... We've always worn these clothes and things [bindis, etc], or listened to Asian music, even when it wasn't trendy, but before it became popular, the white people [peers at school] used to laugh at us for being different."

'Anwar's' view is one that suggests that validation of minority cultural traditions is only achieved through Western adoptions of these. Without this validation, the styles would still exist, but whether they would be seen as beautiful or 'cool', as they do now, is a different matter.

'Imran' is a 20 year old man, confirms this view:

"...You'd think that the 'new Asian cool' means that before the West decided to take on our traditional styles, we weren't cool. We were 'cool' before *they* made it 'respectable' for us to show our ethnic identities through the styles we chose to adopt".
(Imran's emphasis)

'Faizy', a 22 year old woman, was more positive about such trends and their impact on young British-Pakistanis today:

“I think it’s great that white people are taking on Asian styles. It makes me feel really proud of my culture and ethnicity. When I was in school though, white girls would always poke fun at me for having to wear trousers to school, because my parents’ did not allow me to wear skirts. That was a bit embarrassing because of the fuss that was made about it in my school. My teachers would always point out that I was wearing trousers because of my cultural difference; this made it difficult for me to forget about my background. Today, these pop stars have made it easier for other Asians to wear traditional clothes without being seen as different”.

The ‘Asian cool’ phenomenon has, for ‘Faizy’, been instrumental in providing young British-Pakistani women with a confidence to embrace the styles of their parents without the threat of outsider pathology. ‘Meena’, is a 17 year old woman, who also sees ‘Asian cool’ as being a positive thing for young British-Pakistani women. ‘Meena’ explains:

“....Before people like Madonna and other pop stars started having henna paintings and wearing bindis and Asian influenced clothes, me and my friends used to be embarrassed about having to wear traditional clothes when we went out.... People used to make fun of us, and say things like ‘oh deary me’, in an Asian accent, when they saw a group of us all dressed up in our clothes. Now it’s different. We don’t feel embarrassed, instead we feel proud that the English are adopting some of our traditions, which makes me feel good wearing Asian clothes and things.... I don’t feel like I’m being forced into wearing them by my parents anymore, because I sometimes choose to wear them myself.”

For ‘Meena’ the effects ‘Asian cool’ were seen as positive, particularly as it is women, and not men, who face pressure from family and community to wear traditional clothes, based on notions surrounding women’s roles as upholder’s of men’s izzat (as was noted

in chapter 3). However, 'Meena' is also aware of the fact that 'Asian cool' is a phase that will pass, after which it may not be cool to be an 'Asian':

".... I don't think 'Asian cool' will last, because, it's like anything else, isn't it – just a temporary phase, that will pass, then everyone might go back to being racist or whatever, if they see a woman wearing Asian clothes.... At the moment, though, I'm glad that it ['Asian cool'] has happened, because I can wear a tunic and trousers, that my sister in law makes for me, that my parents will accept, and it won't make me look like a granny, when I go out with my mates."

The mixed reactions to the 'new Asian cool' phenomenon are demonstrated in the differences between men and women's views in relation to this. The fact that 'Anwar' and 'Imran' felt South Asian cultures were cool long before they permeated the mainstream indicates that some men are resisting the imposition of Western notions surrounding Asianness. On the other hand, women see 'Asian cool' as allowing them a choice to modify the shalwaar-kameez, (ie, dresses and trousers etc) which is not seen as threatening the family and/or community's izzat, as well as allowing young women to wear a personalised style that is appropriate for when they interact with their peers.

In addition to the popularity of South Asian fashions in Britain today, curry has become the nation's favourite dish. Its consumption cuts across class and ethnicity. On the one hand there are connoisseurs of food and cooking, espousing the delicacies of spicy foods, on the other, we are presented with images in the media of late-night drinkers dropping into their local curry house to indulge in their favourite dishes, while being able to continue with after hours drinking. Here, again there are contradictions. Enjoying a curry is a favourite pastime for many Britons, yet, the taxi driver taking them to the restaurants or take-aways, or the staff in these places themselves, are often victims of racial abuse by customers⁴⁹. Thus, it is clear that while many aspects of

These incidents have been documented in the South Asian newspaper *Eastern Eye*, which is published on a weekly basis and informs of issues of racism against South Asian communities in Britain. Some of the incidents reported in *Eastern Eye* are rarely picked up by the mainstream press, which can be misleading, as the incidents of

South Asian cultures tend to influence our modes of consumption, racism and discrimination clearly continue to remain features of British society.

The contradiction in the dominant society adopting British-Pakistani styles via 'Asian cool' is that it is the styles rather than the people themselves who are cool. While South Asian styles are popular in the mainstream, very few South Asian models are used to model these fashions, instead the South Asian inspired products are being advertised by Westerners; suggesting that the Blonde hair, blue-eyed people are the only ones beautiful enough to sell these products. 'Asian cool' in this sense, becomes an anti-racist struggle and presents challenges to the dominant group, who want to adopt Asian things, yet, it is a two way process, in which 'Asians' wear jeans, and 'white' people wear saris, so both are appropriating aspects of each others identities, which demonstrates the contested nature of identities.

Summary

Two of the main changes to take place in Luton in recent years and impacting on elders' care, have been the process of 'suburbanisation' and women's increased participation in the labour market. 'Suburbanisation' - moving away from the traditional inner city settings that have previously characterised the settlement of British-Pakistanis (Werbner, 1994), which has meant that many of the elders arriving to Britain in the post-war years are experiencing a climate of change in their living arrangements. The generation known as the 'second generation' has come of age. Like their parents before them, they are seeking ways of improving their situation through education and employment. Unlike their parents, they are less likely to move to a different country to seek their fortunes, but like their parents, are moving to places that are considered more desirable than the inner-city setting they were raised in. Being raised in families where the desire and opportunity for upward mobility saw people move approximately 5,000 miles away from their country of origins, it is not surprising that this would impact on the intentions of future generations to do the same. In a way the process of social change is also a process of continuation.

With changes in living arrangements and women increasingly taking up full-time paid employment outside of the home, elderly people are seeing changes in the provision of care they receive. The shame felt by some elders at being looked after by outsiders is offset by the guilt often felt by young (female) relatives who, for a variety of practical reasons, cannot 'look after their own' (Atkin and Rollings, 1996). However, to avoid a dependent status, British-Pakistani elders, are actively attempting to carve out roles for themselves, to prevent being a burden to family and kin. This was seen in elders' concerns in maintaining traditional values and identities, relating to their cultural and religious traditions.

British-Pakistani elders' social care needs are shared by the dominant 'white' population of elders in Britain (Blakemore and Boneham, 1994), yet, their existence on the margins in terms of their ethnic and religious specificities requires specific services and policy provisions in the delivery of their care. And for service providers not to rely on family and kin as necessarily the key care providers of their elder relations. A partnership between ethnic minority organisations and statutory care providers is crucial in this aim. Neither one is sufficient in meeting their needs alone. The minority organisations are experienced in the cultural and religious traditions of the minority groups they aim to support, but often these lack the resources to meet the needs. Statutory agencies must support these services and agencies through resources to provide the necessary and appropriate support elderly people need.

Young people's attitudes are changing from those of their elders. The latter were socialised into beliefs that family and kin relations were essentially based on obligations and reciprocities. Young British-Pakistanis today are socialised within the home and the British education system, where they interact with their peers and so their views on of elders will necessarily conflict with those of their elders. This generation does not see care of elders as their responsibility per se. Instead their attitudes tend towards the belief that caring for elders must be viewed as a combination of family and kin, informal structures such as the day care centres and statutory agencies such as health and social care providers. However, feelings of guilt about meeting elders' care needs have tended towards blaming women's participation in the labour market, for the need to seek outside help towards elderly relatives' care, which is based on traditional notions

of women as carers (Ungerson, 1987). This reinforces the arguments throughout this thesis, that women are the bearers of tradition, and is demonstrated in the views held by young men in this chapter.

Contrary to the 'between two cultures' theory (Watson, 1977, Anwar, 1979), the proficiency and ease with which young British-Pakistanis in Luton navigate between the minority and majority communities was clear from their attitudes and behaviour in relation to their interactions with elders and the creation of new forms of identities in relation to themselves.

Young British-Pakistanis in Luton are aware of elders concerns and articulate these by acknowledging the needs of elders as well as deferring to their history of settlement in Britain. There is no denying that clashes between different generations will occur, due to the different societies both generations' upbringing took place, which will sometimes see young people and elders in conflict over some issues relating to group and individual identity/ies. Differences in experiences impact on attitudes of individuals which often cause the resultant 'culture clash/conflict' situations documented by other writers (Anwar, 1982, Shaw, 1988), yet, viewing closely inter-generational relations within this British-Pakistani community, commonalties between the two were also prevalent.

A shared ethnic and religious background has meant that issues of discrimination that affected the older generation are still prevalent among the younger generations. Their visible difference in relation to the majority society, in terms of colour, dress styles and other symbolic representations are clearly perceived by both elders and young people as impacting on the ways they are treated by 'outsiders'. For the 'first generation' racism was experienced in overt ways; it was direct and open, where the absence of political correctness and various legislation outlawing the practice of discrimination based on 'race', ethnicity and gender were yet to be enforced. However, despite the development of various anti-discriminatory legislation, aimed at protecting individuals from being persecuted on the basis of their colour, gender, 'race', the subsequent generations are still experiencing forms of discrimination based on their ethnic and religious allegiances.

The various legislations to prevent racism, sexism and religious discrimination have not prevented, racist attacks, gender inequalities and Islamophobia. Stephen Lawrence's death and the inquiry by the Macpherson Report, which categorically stated the Metropolitan Police's handling of the case, demonstrated the types of 'institutional racism' that exist within the criminal justice system. Levelling charges of institutional racism against the 'Met' may seem to be a breakthrough discovery, but as members of minority groups in Britain, we have experienced institutional racism from the outset of our participation within British society and its institutions – from the education system to inequalities in employment (Mirza, 1992, Bhavnani, 1994). As British-Pakistanis we were seen – and continue to be seen - more as Pakistani immigrants than British citizens.

Young British-Pakistani women in Luton, are encouraged by the 'Asian cool' phase, which they feel allows them a degree of choice in the ways they dress, particularly as women's dress is an important marker of their identities in this community and was documented in chapter 3. Therefore, young women feel a sense pride when their styles are being shown in the mainstream media and/or taken up by Western celebrities, such as Madonna. However, young men and women alike, are aware that 'Asian cool' permeating British youth cultural activities is a marketing tool, used by commercial industries who capture the mood of the public who suggest how and what we consume at any particular time. Therefore, 'Asian cool' is linked both directly and indirectly to commodity fetishism and conspicuous consumption of goods and products, such as bindis, henna tattoos and Indian influenced styles in both clothes and within the home, which are viewed (and sold) as exotic by nature of their difference.

We live in a climate where difference and diversity in terms of identities is not always valued, yet, the preoccupation with the consumption of products that demonstrate our difference in style terms is highly valued. Young British-Pakistanis are aware that it is not *they* (as British-Pakistanis) who are cool; rather that it is their cultural styles and the marketability of these styles, that appeals to the dominant 'white' population. They are under little illusion that their cultural traditions under the guise of coolness are revered in the same way as their styles are. Therefore, young people continue to value minority traditions through their ethnic and religious identifications, and are also aware of their disadvantaged position within British society. Understandably, they are rarely flattered

by the fact that Westerners consider their styles as being cool, rather they feel insulted that in a particular climate they will be cool and then discarded in favour of a different fad in a different time; perhaps Latin American music and styles, which currently tend to be creeping into the popular cultural arena?

Having discussed intergenerational relations and the contested nature of identities of British-Pakistani elders and young people in Luton, in the concluding chapter I will attempt to draw conclusions about the multidimensional, fluid and fractured nature of identities in relation to this community of British-Pakistanis in Luton.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

This thesis aimed to examine British-Pakistani women's agency in processes of identity/ies constructions and reconstructions. By undertaking research with a community of British-Pakistani women in Luton, living in a racist society, my intention was to give a voice to this community of women and to re-theorise our understandings of it (Oakley, 1981, Reinharz, 1992, Brewer, 1993, James, 1993). Previously this community had been subsumed into a generic category of 'South Asian', which denied British-Pakistani women's specificity, and who had therefore, been written out of much of social science research (Wilson, 1978, Westwood and Bhachu, 1987, Bhopal, 1996). British-Pakistani women's specificity has been highlighted in this study, to demonstrate, their commonalities with other women, but also their difference in relation to their subjectivities and identity/ies (Brah, 1992, 1996) and the ways in which they negotiate and articulate these in a contemporary British society. Their identities must be viewed as multidimensional, dynamic and fractured (Dominelli, 2000) and constructed and reconstructed as an ongoing process.

The empirical chapters which looked at, 'Community: a site for renegotiating identities', 'Negotiated gender relations within family contexts' and 'Intergenerational relations: contested identities', emerged from my data and were found to be important to British-Pakistani women's lives. These areas allowed me to explore the ways in which identities were contested within this community and the commonalities and divergences between members in terms of social class, gender relations, relations between elder and younger people. It is within these relations that identities were contested, requiring continuous negotiations, renegotiations, constructions and reconstructions and appropriation in particular contexts. Points of convergence for members of this community were those that related to the overall well being of the community's ethnic and religious traditions, where a threat to these traditions resulted in community members uniting and safeguarding their collective interests. The chapters also highlighted the divergences within this group, in relation to gender, social class and age, which impacted on the nature of identity/ies suggesting their multidimensionality and fluidity across and within these social divisions.

Following on from the analysis of empirical evidence relating to the contested nature of identities, the aim of this concluding chapter is to draw some conclusions about the questions underlying this study, namely those relating to identity constructions and reconstructions and how women negotiated these in relation to themselves, their families and community. Their agency in these processes and their voice in articulating their concerns has been demonstrated in the empirical chapters, which lays to rest the myth of passivity surrounding British-Pakistani women's character (Saifullah-Khan, 1977). Their identities are fluid and dynamic and they use these to negotiate various aspects of their lives in order to maximise control over their lives. This can sometimes mean that they are upholding traditional expectations and at others they are being creative with regards to them and at other times, they are challenging them (Dominelli, 2000). The processes of identity creations and recreation that have been highlighted in the empirical chapters will be referred to, as these emphasise the dynamic nature of identity which both changes over time, but retains continuities which are important to the people involved.

This chapter is organised around 2 main themes, which will refer to the methodological aims of giving women a voice and the processes of identity/ies creation that have been highlighted in this study, which emphasise the dynamic nature of British-Pakistani identities. Finally, I will be pointing to some questions relating to future research with this and/or other British-Pakistani communities.

Methodological Aims

Developing an appropriate methodology that provided insights into British-Pakistani women's agency in negotiating in (re)constructing identities, was crucial to my findings and has implications for future research with communities of British-Pakistani women. As my intention was to view the qualitative nature of the women's lives I adopted qualitative, ethnographic techniques, using observations and in-depth interviews for data collection (Reinharz, 1992, Hammersley, 1992). The aim of this study was not to make any generalisable claims about the findings, there, this study would not be replicable using positivistic methods, which necessarily involve aims of generalisability and quantifying the experiences of those participating and are rooted in male traditions (Reinharz, 1992, Cresswell, 1995).

One of the aims of this study was to examine dominant ideological constructs, which situated British-Pakistani women's character in a passive framework (Saifullah-Khan, 1977) and therefore, male held views of British-Pakistani community structures and processes were highlighted, ignoring women's input in these processes (Shaw, 1988). I attempted to redress the balance, by highlighting women as the main units of analysis in this study (Oakley, 1981, Brewer, 1993, Bhopal, 1997). In order to this, I attempted to investigate British-Pakistanis women's agency in (re)constructing identities (Brah, 1996), using women's voices (Oakley, 1981, Carby, 1982, Parmar, 1982, Davis, 1983, Westwood and Bhachu, 1988, Reinhartz, 1992, Brewer, 1993, Brah, 1996) and my interpretations of these. Giving women a voice, allowed for women's specificities to be considered, from an empathetic perspective (Carby, 1982, Collins, 1990). By allowing women to speak of their experiences I was able to investigate the myth of passivity surrounding their character (Saifullah-Khan, 1977) and demonstrate their agency in processes of identity constructions and reconstructions.

British-Pakistani women share certain aspects with other women, including gender, class and racial oppression (Davis, 1983, James, 1993, Brewer, 1993, Brah, 1996). But are different in that they have distinctive needs, relating to their specificity (Brah, 1996). In making these claims however, I am not suggesting that I would be the only person who can research the lives of British-Pakistani women. I believe that other British-Pakistani women would be best equipped to undertake a study relating to the specificity of the women's lives they are investigating. This together with the researcher's aims to examine identity/ies (re)productions, by giving women a voice to dispel myths surrounding their character, and to view these assumptions as having a basis in racialised discourses and ideologies (Phoenix, 1987, Andersen, 1993, Brah, 1996), would allow other British-Pakistani feminist researchers to undertake a similar study.

These points are important as in addition to placing British-Pakistani women's specific experiences on the research agenda, British-Pakistani feminist researchers will not be seen by women participants as pathologising their cultural traditions. In this sense, I would maintain that researchers need to share a certain amount of values to study identities of a group. In particular sharing a language with those one is researching would be helpful. If researchers want to research a community and the constructions of

identities within this (whether this be a British-Pakistani community, or a different group), they must share elements of their identities. However, we must be mindful that even when ethnic, religious and gender identities are shared, there will be differences relating to age and ethnicity. Different generations of a particular community will have different values, linguistic skills and attitudes towards family life (as was seen in chapter 5). Therefore as a young researcher, although belonging to a similar group these other concerns would need to be considered.

Different identities of the researcher and those being researched will necessarily produce different findings and will depend on the researcher's aims in relation to the study being undertaken. This would work not only with minority groups in Britain, but also with regards to 'white' identities and the diversity that exists within these groups. In saying this, researchers must be mindful not to impose their cultural values on any group that is under investigation, as this will necessarily lead to an ethnocentric approach that may have the effects of pathologising, rather than exploring and describing a particular social group and its structures and processes.

British-Pakistani women in Luton may not necessarily be forthcoming about certain elements in their lives to outsiders, for fear of their religious and ethnic systems being pathologised (Parmar, 1982). For example, in chapter 4, the issue of domestic violence raised the importance of violence between women - mother and daughter-in-law, which was demonstrated in 'Riasat's' case. This is perhaps an issue British-Pakistani women would be reluctant to raise, for two reasons. First of all it has implications for women seeking support within the community, as the elder women within the community who are able to affect some sort of change in their situation, may not be so forthcoming in doing so, if another elder woman was being accused of beating her daughter-in-law. Secondly, the wider community, where violence against women within the family is conceptualised⁵⁰ as between a male and female partner, the issue of mother and daughter in law violence may be seen as pathological aspects of their cultures, which, has the effect on women remaining silent about this issue, to protect their cultural and ethnic traditions from outsider attacks. This is compatible with the responses shown by

⁵⁰ In this case, I am referring to conventional understandings of domestic violence in which a male partner is violent towards a female partner (Hanmer and Maynard, 1987, Dobash and Dobash, 1992, Bhatti-Sinclair, 1995) as opposed to other forms such as child (including physical and sexual) abuse and/or incest.

community members during the Mecca Bingo Hall incident, noted in chapter 3, where the community united to safeguard its religious and ethnic traditions from outsiders.

The issue of violence at the hands of mother-in-laws was raised to me, by the respondent, because of my insider position and as a result of this, I would not be pathologising their cultural traditions. However, it should be noted that this position was not always advantageous. Being an insider, brought with it problems that I mentioned in chapter 2. For example, as a British-Pakistani woman, I was expected to observe the rules of the community in relation to my gender, in terms of dress and being accompanied by 'chaperones' when visiting potential participants in their homes. Researchers must be mindful of these issues, if they are to embark on research with a community of British-Pakistanis.

I would maintain, in line with Hill-Collins (1990) who suggests that we must engage in the lives of those whose lives we are attempting to investigate. Therefore, in addition to British-Pakistani feminist researchers, other South Asian women can investigate British-Pakistani women and their agency in creating identities, particularly concerns surrounding the marital system and family processes, which Parminder Bhachu (1985) noted in relation to her study of a community of East African Sikh women, in which she found that women were instrumental in creating and recreating East African Sikh identities. Bhopal (1997) looked at gender relations in her study on South Asian women and the racialisation of this group in academic and popular discourses. However, this study tended to look at South Asian women in general, which denies the specificity of the women constituting this group (Brah, 1996).

In this sense, 'white' feminist researchers, allowing women a voice to articulate their concerns and to place an emphasis on their specificity, may be able to undertake a similar study. However, this may well pose other problems, for example, some of the women I encountered, spoke little or no English, therefore, the ability to speak the relevant languages is a factor that researchers, but particularly 'white' researchers, must bear in mind, if they are to represent a community of British-Pakistani women, using *their* voices to articulate *their* concerns.

Following on from the methodological concerns, I would like to look at the processes of identity/ies construction highlighted in this thesis and women's roles in negotiating, articulating and contesting theses and gender subordination in this community of British-Pakistani women.

Processes of identity constructions and reconstructions

Identity constructions and reconstructions are complex, permeable and situational, depending on the context within which they are negotiated and articulated (Brah, 1996). British-Pakistanis in Luton navigated within and between their multiple identities. Influences on the ways in which these were shaped are drawn from at least the ethnic, religious, and class of the individuals involved. However, there is the added dimension of reconciling these identities with gender, class, age and Britishness. Individuals asserted Britishness during participation in the local political processes, and through an understanding and awareness of their rights as British citizens, seen in chapter 3. Yet, despite being aware of Britishness as a part of their identities, there was a sense of unbelonging, arising from community members' experiences of racism during the 'Mecca incident'. Due to a sense of unbelonging in relation to their British identities, community members were protective towards their minority and religious traditions, which gave them a sense of belonging.

Belonging and unbelonging necessarily impact on identity creation processes (Modood, et al, 1994). If individuals sense that they are not incorporated into a particular community then they will feel marginal and therefore, attempt to challenge the dominant structures in order to be recognised as part of that particular social system. Similarly, it is not only with ethnicity and religious exclusion that feelings of belonging and unbelonging surface, adding gender to the dimension necessarily poses further complications. For example, in this community of British-Pakistanis, the 'Mecca incident' brought home to members, their marginal position in British society and as a result of this marginality, members felt it necessary to assert their Pakistaniness and Islamic identities to present a unified, cohesive unit to outsiders. Yet, gender relations and identities within this community are a source of division. The community views collective interests over individual ones and therefore, collective interests in this community are the interests of men. Individual interests are women's interests, which

are less likely to occupy a space within the collective, whose ideology excludes individualism and or anyone threatening the social structure of the community. Therefore, in the same way that the community perceives itself to be marginal to the dominant society, women too are feeling this both outside of their community and within it, by nature of their gender and power structure they are situated in as a result of this (Brah, 1996). Hence, the challenges presented by the community as a whole to the dominant society, are also taking place within the community itself, where half its members are contesting the dominance of men, in decision making processes surrounding their community.

Women's sense of unbelonging has necessarily meant that to avoid marginalisation in community processes, identities will be contested if women are to place themselves onto the community agenda, which they are doing by asserting their gender identities through means that are acceptable within their community (Kibria, 1996). For example, elder women's attempts at establishing women's groups in order that women have a space to present the issues that are important to them. They are also challenging men's leadership within their community, by pointing out women's peripheral roles in decision-making, and are aware that they are exploited by leaders during times when they are seeking economic support for causes relating to their community members needs. So it would appear that contradictions relating to community ideologies surrounding collective and individual interests are fraught with tensions and have implications for identity formations and contestations.

Nevertheless, the institution of marriage and the family are important in the structuring of identities in this community. It is within the family that women's roles as cultural transmitters (Buijs, 1993) emerged. They were the socialisers of children and carrier's of their heritages and identity/ies (Dominelli, 2000, personal communication). The family and community are also constraining for women, in that collective interests (male interests) override women's individuality and their specific needs are ignored, such as family hierarchies and gender oppression. However, British-Pakistani women did not accept gender relations as legitimate, but challenged these at a variety of levels, which saw them upholding cultural traditions, at other times they were modifying and/or challenging these to take control of their lives.

I am therefore, suggesting that identity/ies in relation to this community were multifaceted and dynamic (Dominelli, 2000, personal tutorial), within which women used their agency to negotiate and renegotiate gender identities. Cultural traditions of this community demonstrated throughout this thesis, suggested that collective interests and identities took precedence over individual interests and identities. Within the collective, members' were expected to protect and safeguard minority community structures threatened by outsiders during racisms levelled at this community, and seen in the 'Mecca Bingo Hall' incident, where British-Pakistanis mobilised to challenge racist and racialised diatribes aimed at their community by the dominant 'white' population. Social divisions, including gender, generations and class were thrown to one side in the interests of the well being of the community, yet, the well being of the community did not always account for the well being of women.

The collective was constructed around male ideologies of what constituted a British-Pakistani community, and as such male power in the processes of constructing a British-Pakistani-Muslim identity, sometimes excluded women's identities and their agency in maintaining, as well as discontinuing traditions. Women within this collective were the bearers and upholders of tradition, in that they were entrusted with the responsibility of continuing with cultural traditions of the community as a whole, yet, simultaneously, women considered their subjectivities (Brah, 1996) and attempted to challenge notions surrounding community and identities to incorporate their specificity as women, and as British-Pakistani-Muslim women. In this sense, identity/ies became contested and multidimensional, with difference being asserted by women in renegotiating their own identities within the collective they consider they belong to.

Difference is necessarily conceptualised in gender terms within social relations (Brah, 1996) and in the public/private divide of the family and community, in which 'face' becomes a burden for women (Wilson, 1978), as it necessarily places them within the *izzat/sharam* divide. By 'face' I am referring to male held views of women as the upholders of their *izzat*, where women transcend from this role, *sharam* becomes the consequences of their actions and they become marginalized and/or ostracised from the collective. In the family women are expected to uphold cultural traditions associated with being a Pakistani and being a Muslim, yet, Britishness was rarely, if at all, accorded the same importance as ethnic and religious traditions and identities of the

community. To claim Britishness would necessarily suggest a sense of belonging to British society. The contradiction here is that while individuals were aware that they were British, in official terms at least, a sense of belonging to British society was absent, particularly when the community saw their ethnic and religious traditions being pathologised by outsiders. Men tended to be more concerned about their minority identities and safeguarding these, while women tended to incorporate Britishness into their identities, this was prominent in young women and 'Asian cool', where women were encouraged by the dominant society's adoption of their styles. It was also seen in young women's participation in the labour market in which women asserted their Britishness by demonstrating their individual choices and independence, which was in line with those of the dominant population (Bhavnani, 1995) and conflicted with community (male) ideologies.

Analysing the experience of women within this community of British-Pakistanis has necessarily meant a journey into the processes women were involved in to create and recreate their own and future generations' identities. In this sense, women become cultural transmitters (Buijs, 1993), in that they were constructing new and changing identities, sometimes directly, as in cases where women's dress becomes a marker of their identities and within the family, where marital arrangements and processes were changing to incorporate women's subjectivities and choices to contest the cultural traditions of their community.

British-Pakistani men in Luton, rarely see the need to change and/or challenge traditional values and identities relating to their membership of their community, particularly as these tend to support their overall interests. Women on the other hand will, and do, challenge oppressive structures, as they are not willing and/or prepared for gender inequalities to continue and perpetuate. In this sense, social change is occurring, or likely to occur as a result of women's activism in relation to women's rights and their position within the community, yet, simultaneously the process of continuation of structures also exists. This process tends to be a male preserve, in that men are concerned that too much change would necessitate a lack of minority structures being continued. For example, the issue of divorce and separation within this community, arising from 'marital mismatches' conjured up images of women seeking their freedom and wishing to leave the community. Men saw this as a sign of women's disloyalty to

the community. Contrary to their beliefs, women did not wish to leave their community. This was indicative in the fact that women who experienced violence within their home wanted to remain within the minority community, but they also wanted it to be a safe place for themselves and their families. British-Pakistani women in Luton were aware that the wider societal structures outside of their minority community, were likely to be more oppressive and worse still they would be subjected to racism as well as the gender oppression they experienced within their community. This demonstrated the complexities and differences surrounding male-female notions of what constituted collective interests and identities in relation to this community. It also demonstrated power imbalances between men and women, in the community, which necessarily rested with men, while women were expected to uphold traditions without considering their specificities in relation to the collective. This explains to some extent, why women were instrumental in renegotiating identities and family and community structures and processes, as opposed to men, who preferred the maintenance of traditional identities and structures, which necessarily involved women as the bearers and upholders of tradition and male *izzat*.

When women transcended from male expectations of them, their position became one of *sharam*, suggesting that *sharam* rests with women in this community while *izzat* is the male preserve and must be safeguarded by women. The *izzat/sharam* dichotomy is one indication of the gender inequalities that permeate through this community of British-Pakistanis. British-Pakistani women share this aspect of carrying the burden of men's *izzat* with other South Asian women (Wilson, 1978). Wilson (1978) found in her study on South Asian women that young women's reputation in relation to preserving men's *izzat* was a burden to them:

“... The idea that a girl's reputation is important is almost universal, but for Asian girls it is not just important; ‘reputation’ is the bane of their lives from adolescence to the early years of their marriage. It controls everything they do and adds a very tangible danger to any unconventional action.” (Wilson, 1978:103)

In this sense, South Asian women are not only entrusted with the burden of carrying the man's *izzat*, but they are likely to be penalised for transcending this convention (Bhopal, 1997). British-Pakistani women's *izzat* lay with men's conception of what constituted a 'good' Pakistani-Muslim women. For example, in chapter 4, I looked at women's roles as the bearers of tradition, while at the same time they were the upholders of tradition and in chapter 3, I pointed to how men viewed women in terms of their dress. In both instances the emphasis was placed on women to uphold men's *izzat*, in the public/private divide of the family and community.

Women also carried the burden of *sharam*, as was seen in the ways in which identities were negotiated in the public arena of the community (chapter 3), in chapter 4 relating to the marital process within the family ('Ayesha's' case), where identities were (re)negotiated. And in the 'Asian cool' where young women were carving new images by using synthesised identities to create new forms appropriate to their contemporary situation ('Meena'). For example, dress became an important marker, and women who were considered to be dressing inappropriately were seen to be transcending male conceptions of what constituted a 'good Pakistani-Muslim' woman. 'Asian cool' allowed young women to transcend male views on women's respectability, as through this, women were able to carve new images for themselves and create new identities, on the basis of Westerners choosing to adopt some of their styles, while they in turn adopted Western styles by blending these with their own. Thereby, challenging notions of the elder generation and men who objected to women 'doing fashion' before 'Asian cool' gave women the confidence to modify and transform their traditional styles of dress, with ones they felt comfortable wearing. As a British-Pakistani woman, albeit an outsider to this community, I too was subject to men's perceptions of what constituted appropriate dress for British-Pakistani women.

Men objected to women 'doing fashion', as was my experience and also seen in 'Meena's' case, where she felt that wearing traditional clothes made her appear like her elder relatives. 'Meena' had used the 'Asian cool' situation to challenge dress restrictions placed on women, despite her parent's protestations. 'Meena' was encouraged by 'Asian cool' which she felt allowed her to transform her style, despite her parents' objections to her wearing Westernised versions of South Asian styles. 'Meena', transcended family and community norms and values relating to collective

interests and sought instead to pursue individual interests, by going against what men in the community consider the correct appearance of a British-Pakistani-Muslim woman. In her home, her family objected to her dress, but she continued, because her interactions were not confined to minority community members, but she also socialised with her peers (of different ethnic backgrounds) and wanted to 'do fashion' how she felt was appropriate to her life at a particular given time.

In this sense, 'doing fashion' for 'Meena', was to fulfil her individual desires and aspirations of what she felt was an appropriate way of dressing for her. Her subjective experiences of being a woman (Brah, 1996) and being a British-Pakistani impacted on how she recreated her identity as a British-Pakistani woman. However, 'Meena' is also aware that her subjectivity in relation to her being a British-Pakistani woman is also bound up with her allegiance to the collective, in that she is aware that her dress is necessarily a subversive response to community ideologies surrounding women's appearance. Therefore, 'Meena' must work within her community by negotiating and renegotiating her subjectivity through dress, in order that she retains elements of the community's cultural traditions. For example, the 'Asian cool' may have meant for 'Meena' that she, like her Western counterparts, could wear mini-skirts, shorts, short dresses, etc, to demonstrate her multiple identities, yet, she was happy to modify the traditional Pakistani styles with Western ones that retained some modesty, and would to an extent, be acceptable, within her family and community. In this way, the subjective does not necessarily work against the collective, but with it, to reproduce social situations that are conducive to her and her environment (Brah, 1996).

While changing one's style may not appear to be a groundbreaking thing to do, in this community of British-Pakistanis, some elders (including parents of some young people) were strict about women's appearances, as I noted in chapter 3. As such, 'Meena's' decision to wear Western, Pakistani and/or a blend of the two, is, in this context, challenging community norms surrounding what constitutes a 'good woman'. In this sense, young women are contesting the imposition of male and traditional identities (Bhachu, 1993) that threaten their choices and/or rights, by carving out images and identities for themselves, using the dominant community's adoption of their styles as a means of legitimating to elders in their family and community, that by 'doing fashion'

they are not rejecting traditional structures per se, but are asserting their specificity (Brah, 1996) as young, British-Pakistani-Muslim women.

Similarly, traditions relating to marriage were seen by some young women as suppressing their individual choice and input. Again, this position is one where women are not seeking to break away from the structures of the community, but to remain within these to effect changes of particular traditions through contesting traditional values and identities (Brah, 1992, Bhachu, 1993). Cultural traditions relating to marriage and women's input in these processes appeared to contest community identities, shifting the onus from collective interests to individual ones to create new and dynamic identities and processes.

For example, 'Ayesha' contested and transcended cultural traditions by marrying a non-kin member and someone who was from a lower caste than she and her family belonged to. As mentioned in chapter 4, British-Pakistanis in Luton, prefer endogamous marriages and/or within the caste group one belongs to. 'Ayesha's' family tradition was in line with these traditions which continued up until 'Ayesha' challenged this in 1995. Despite realising that she was transcending a centuries old tradition within her family, 'Ayesha' nevertheless, sought personal fulfilment over her family's preferences of whom she should marry, resulting in the discontinuity (in her family at least) of the endogamous and inter-caste marital tradition. In seeking personal fulfilment 'Ayesha' did not wish to be separated from her family and community, but wished to remain within this, in order that she could continue asserting her identity as a British-Pakistani woman. Yet, she wanted to change the cultural tradition surrounding marriages which were clearly gendered, as I mentioned in chapter 4. By allowing her family to draw on their sources of support in their arguments against her marriage (her uncle from Pakistan), 'Ayesha' wanted a solution that would allow her to continue to be a part of her cultural traditions, rather than being marginalized and/or ostracised.

In both 'Meena' and 'Ayesha's' cases, the women transformed and/or modified traditions and their own identities and images to account for their personal fulfilment as well as continuing with cultural traditions that seek interests of the collective. But the fact that both women wished to remain within the community, despite having experienced negativity in relation to their specific actions and behaviour is an indication

of the importance of family, community and traditional values in the lives of British-Pakistani women. Men, on the other hand, were rarely, if at all subject to the same restrictions on marriage as the women. Gender differences impact on the reasons behind women increasingly challenging and/or modifying, transforming and articulating new cultural forms and identities, whereas men do not need to challenge cultural traditions in their community, as these are stacked in their favour.

The contradictions surrounding women's oppression and community solidarity are significant. The community itself, as a minority group in Britain, has experienced discrimination and hatred from outsiders (Patel, 2000), who have threatened their religious and cultural traditions, yet, this same collective fails to consider discrimination on the basis of gender. A silent solidarity exists among men to ensure that they are seen to be acting on the advice of elder women, yet, somehow this rarely impacts on the familial processes in any challenging way. What I mean when I say men ensure that they are seen to be 'acting' is that they will show that they are in fact 'assisting' women, through their work at the Centre, which is used mainly by British-Pakistani women (and some British-Bangladeshis). Yet, contradictorily, rarely had I witnessed an incident where a man was reprimanded (albeit informally) or advised against ill-treating his wife or shirking from family responsibilities. Yet, I witnessed instances (in 'Tazeem's' case) where women were ridiculed and talked about in ways that viewed them as the problematic elements, and men justified doing this by focusing on women's desire to leave the community in search of some 'freedom' that they had not achieved in their current situation within their families.

From my observations and interviews with women, I found that this was not the case. Some women had expressed the view that they would wish to live outside of the community, but more for upward mobility purposes, seen in the process of 'suburbanisation', rather than to leave their community. Yet, the belief that women wish to leave their husbands, families and communities, in search of some abstract notions surrounding freedom per se, is one that justifies a perpetuation of patriarchy through notions surrounding women's lack of concerns relating to community interests.

As was demonstrated in chapter 4 and my discussion with 'Mr Sultan', women victims of violence were aware that if they leave their husbands, more often than not, they will

lose the support of their families, communities and may find that the State, and statutory agencies are unable or unwilling to provide the appropriate support they need. With this in mind, few women are likely to leave for some abstract notion surrounding 'freedom'. In fact, in the cases that I came across, none of the women intended to leave the community, but instead wished to be free of their violent situations, and wanted a type of mediation that they could draw on without being persecuted on the basis of their gender, ethnicity and religious beliefs. Therefore, to view women's position as passive, denies their struggles and strategies to make a better life for themselves within the family and community they live - regardless of whether action is taken or not, they are aware that a process of negotiation must take place in order for change to occur, particularly for the next generation, as was the case in 'Tazeem's' family.

To situate British-Pakistani women within a framework of passive is denying their contribution to the construction of familial and community processes and identity/ies (re)creation processes. Not only were women challenging oppressive structures internally, but they were also challenging assumptions surrounding family structures and processes that are based on reciprocity and obligations (Saifullah-Khan, 1977, Ahmad, 1996). In this sense, some traditions were being continued while others were discontinued. Why does this take place and what is the basis for continuities and discontinuities? Does social change impact on changing identities?

Social change is often achieved through questioning particular forms of life and presenting an alternative way. For example, feminism is united in its aim to challenge patriarchal relations and is borne out of recognising gender inequalities and women's oppression (Oakley, 1981, Davis, 1983, Trivedi, 1984, Brah, 1996). In the same way, the meaning of 'community' is being challenged by British-Pakistani women in Luton, to incorporate rather than exclude them in community processes.

In this community, changes were taking place in relation to traditional values and identities. For example, sometimes traditions were being continued and at others they were being discontinued, and women's agency was prominent in these processes. Whether they were struggling against gender oppression and class inequalities within their community and/or their relationship with the dominant community, where 'race'

necessarily becomes a differentiating factor for women (and men) of colour (Carby, 1982).

British-Pakistani family and community traditions are under continuous negotiations. Traditional structures and processes of Pakistan are being modified to take into account the settlement of this minority group in a Western society. The changes that are taking place may not always appear visible or groundbreaking, such as global changes of the past including industrialisation and the spread of global technologies and economic markets across the world (Featherstone, 1990, Giddens, 1990). Nevertheless they are happening and perhaps not always visible to the 'outsider', who may see the concentration of a visible minority group in a particular area and view it from the perspective of a 'traditional' community. Particularly, so in relation to British-Pakistani communities, where visibility of difference in terms of colour, dress and cultural traditions appear to present a unified community with a singular identity. Yet, those who live in these communities, and others like myself, who belong to a similar British-Pakistani (or indeed, other South Asian communities) community, albeit with differing class and regional traditions, experience change and continuity as a process that occurs given that at different times, different members will have different needs.

It is only when we encounter minority community processes either through research and/or personal experience that we can establish the types of relations and the complexities that exist in minority communities (Hill-Collins, 1990). For example, if I did not undertake this study in Luton, I may consider all British-Pakistani communities in Britain are the same in their forms and processes. Yet, arriving in Luton and undertaking observations and interviews with community members, I discovered that change is something that takes place in a variety of forms involving negotiations and renegotiations based on the collective interests of the particular community in question. However, to suggest that all British-Pakistanis seek collective interests over individual ones would be erroneous. This is not a fixed position and increasingly people in Luton are seeking individual interests, yet, are aware that being a part of a community also has its advantages. Individuals involved in processes of suburbanisation were viewing their moves into the suburbs as a sign of their economic prosperity - a situation most, if not all economic migrants seek within the society they settle in (Werbner, 1994). It was not to move from the community because they no longer shared its values in relation to

collective interests. Rather, that they wanted to mark their social and economic success by living in a more prosperous area than the one from which they had previously lived in. The process of 'moving away', in itself is now becoming accepted as the norm, although for many elders, this practice is seen in negative terms as they feel isolated in suburbia, which has little, or no signs of Pakistaniness and/or Islam. Yet, despite these feelings, some have moved with their children and grandchildren forsaking what they considered familiar and safe surroundings of the community they once lived in and were active in constructing.

In this thesis, I have demonstrated the ways in which British-Pakistani women have, and are continuing to, challenge familial and patriarchal structures seen as oppressive. In doing so, they are constructing and asserting identities and allegiances with and apart from British-Pakistani men in the community. Women were maintaining some traditions and discontinuing others. In this sense, their subjective experiences of their difference (Brah, 1996) lead them to develop allegiances with women of different South Asian groups living in Luton, with whom they have close contact, either through employment and/or through informal women's groups. They attempt to develop strategies that will necessarily be viewed by men as in the interest of the community as a whole. But these strategies are clever in that they remove the element of 'individual interest', which is unacceptable in this community, by presenting their concerns in a holistic manner and for the good of the collective. Young women (especially women experiencing domestic violence) have allied with elder women to give their arguments and needs some credence that would otherwise be absent. Women are aware that they have to continuously negotiate their position within the community, but are not deterred from doing so - even when they are threatened with bullying tactics employed by men.

Some questions for the future

Future research needs to be done into constructions of *izzat* and *sharam* in young British-Pakistani women's sub-cultural activities, as although I touched upon these in relation to 'Asian cool', I feel that more work needs to be done in this area to account for the up and coming generation's outlook towards the importance of *izzat* and *sharam*, as currently there is a gap in the knowledge on young British-Pakistani women's

identity/ies creation and recreation which needs to accounts for their Britishness as well as their ethnic and religious identities⁵¹. Will future generations place a gendered emphasis on izzat/sharam as is currently occurring in Luton? Questions of this nature relating to future research will produce interesting insights into the ways in which continuities and discontinuities take place.

The gendered nature of the marital system resulted in concerns among men (and elder women) relating to 'marital mismatches', fuelled by women initiating divorce, which has led to a reassessment of the present marital system, demonstrating women's agency in effecting change through asserting their gender identities. Men are increasingly seeing that women will leave the community (along with their children), if they are not being heard. Therefore, men realise the importance of women's input, in negotiations and arrangements relating to their marriages. Does this suggest that the arranged marriage system will be threatened by increased choice, negotiations and women's input? On the contrary. I feel that the marital system will continue, but won't be strictly adhered to by young people in the same way as their parents. It will continue as a tradition for two reasons, firstly because it is the most important aspect of family and kinship ties and relations. It is viewed as an institution that strengthens existing ties between kin, particularly as first cousin marriages (endogamous) are the most popular amongst British-Pakistanis in Luton and indeed Pakistanis in elsewhere (Saifullah-Khan, 1977, Shaw, 1988, Anwar, 1979).

Secondly, the arranged marriage is seen as preferable to marriages of choice, which are seen as superficial and lacking in binding families and kin together (Shaw, 1988), particularly as the couple may not necessarily marry someone from their kin circle, which may impact on family and community. This latter point is of prime importance not only to first generation British-Pakistanis in Luton, but also to the subsequent generations, who believe that as a minority group in a Western society, they continue to face discrimination by the dominant society, which tends towards young people re-

⁵¹ Having said this, Jacobs (1997) attempted to demonstrate dual and alternative sources of identity among young British-Pakistanis in London. However, the sample was overwhelmingly male, which would suggest that young women's identities constructions are ignored or subsumed into male versions of young British-Pakistanis identities. Interestingly, Jacobs is a non-Pakistani woman, who undertook this study with young British-Pakistanis, which supports my argument (discussed later) that only South Asian and British-Pakistani feminist ethnographers will be able to adequately document issues of identities relating to this, and other communities of British-Pakistani women.

asserting their ethnicity via certain customs and traditions brought to Britain by their parents. Bhavnani (1994) believes that it is discrimination faced by minority groups that leads to young people reasserting their ethnic and religious identities - often in exaggerated forms in order to protect them against pathologies relating to these identities, for this reason, I feel that the marital system will continue but in a modified form.

It would be fruitful for future research to look at marriage as a process of negotiation between couples in different British-Pakistani communities and assess whether this is taking place in these communities, or whether traditional structures are being maintained. Has the migratory and settlement process been instrumental in providing different ways of arranging marriages? Have Western notions of choice and individual interests in the partner selection process impacted on the ways in which British-Pakistanis are considering/will consider future marital matches? Will the 'arranged marriage' survive in its current form, where preferences towards endogamy and inter-caste marriages are the norm? Although this subject was touched upon in relation to 'Ayesha's' case, who had modified and transformed this tradition by seeking personal fulfilment as opposed to collective interests which would have meant that 'Ayesha's' marital prospects would have otherwise been limited.

How will future generations of British-Pakistanis maintain and/or change the 'arranged marriage' system which will incorporate their changed and changing identities? Will they be able to retain the structures so fiercely guarded by previous generations? These and other questions are important in providing an understanding of the ways in which future generations of British-Pakistanis will view their subjective and collective identities, as British, Pakistani and/or Muslims.

It would appear that British-Pakistani women in Luton need to negotiate and work with men within their community (Kibria, 1996) in order for modifications and changes to take place and incorporate women's identities in these processes. Women are aware that their subjectivities and specificities are intimately bound up within the social relations of the community and therefore, with men themselves, working within the collective is seen as preferable to being marginalized. As Brah (1996) points out:

“Questions of identity are intimately connected with those of experience, subjectivity and social relations. Identities are inscribed through experiences culturally constructed in social relations. Subjectivity – the site of processes of making sense of our relations to the world – is the modality in which the precarious and contradictory nature of the subject-in-process is signified or experiences as identity. Identities are marked by the multiplicity of subject positions that constitute the subject. Hence, identity is neither fixed nor singular; rather it is a constantly changing relational multiplicity”. (Brah, 1996: 123)

Hence the relationship between personal biography and collective interests and history is complex and contradictory. While personal identities always articulate with the collective experience of a group, the specificity of a person’s life experience situated in their lived social relations, produces routes that do not simply mirror group experience. Similarly, collective identities are irreducible to the sum of the experiences of individuals. Brah (1996) explains:

“Collective identity is the process of signification whereby commonalties of experience around a specific axis of differentiation are invested with particular meaning. In this sense, a given collective identity partially erases, but also carries traces of other identities. That is to say that a heightened awareness of one construction of identity in a given moment always entails a partial erasure of the memory or subjective sense of internal heterogeneity of a group. But this is not at all the same as saying that the power relations embedded in heterogeneity disappear. How and if patterns of social relations change would be contingent upon the power of the political challenges which specific discourses and practices are able to effect”. (Brah, 1996: 125).

In this sense, the subjective experiences of some British-Pakistani women are bound up with their group identities, in which a space is being continuously negotiated and renegotiated to allow for their specificity to emerge from within the collective.

Summary

The methodology and methods I chose to undertake this study, allowed me to develop a distinct approach to the study of specific experiences of British-Pakistani women in Luton. Incorporating a Black and South Asian feminist ethnography (Trivedi, 1984, Brewer, 1993, Bhachu, 1993, James, 1993) and supplementing this with my experience of being a British-Pakistani woman, living in a racist society such as Britain, led me to the aim of giving other British-Pakistani women a voice to articulate their concerns.

Through a shared understanding of our cultural and religious traditions, I was able to find that British-Pakistani women have and continue to assert their agency in a variety of ways, and were actively involved in identity/ies construction and reconstruction processes, in which they maintained, modified and transformed certain features of their identity/ies and family structures and processes. It is within the family that women's roles as cultural transmitters (Buijs, 1993) flourished and in which continuities and discontinuities were taking place. As the socialisers of future generations and the carriers of their children's heritages and identity/ies, women were on the one hand, upholding traditional structures, while simultaneously discontinuing others as they emerge to be important to them. It is women's responsibility to ensure that the family adheres to the expectations of the community, while women's expectations of living in a safe environment are considered less important, or somehow masked over by men.

Patriarchy remains a feature of this community as it does so in the wider society (Brah, 1996). The family is clearly the site for community activities, based on ideologies surrounding the interests of the collective as opposed to individual interests. In this sense, individual interests are women's interests, whereas collective interests are men's interests and their ideologies surrounding the welfare of the community. However, when concerns are being shown to gender issues, there is a sense amongst men that women's interests are somehow bound up with the interests of men, yet, it is women

who are the bearers of *izzat* and *sharam* and not men. By demonstrating British-Pakistani women's agency in their day to day settings, I can conclude that identities in relation to this community are contested by nature of their multidimensionality. The dynamic aspect of identities highlighted in this study, necessarily suggests that identity/ies are both changing over time but retain continuities, which are important to the people involved.

Therefore, identities are situational, fluid and subjective depending on the context within which they are constructed (Brah, 1996). On a daily basis as an individual, I consider my own identities to be multiple and situational. I am a daughter, a sister, an aunty, a postgraduate student, a friend, a colleague and so on. These identities are articulated differently and are dependent on which I am faced with at that particular time. Within these articulations there are wider concerns of being a female of Pakistani origin, raised in Britain with the added dimension of class and its loose boundaries. I say loose boundaries, because being a woman of Pakistani origin is somewhat fixed by nature of biology and birthplace, yet, class is something that is more fluid and changeable. For example, Weber's analysis of class tends to shift away from the Marxist stratifications based on economic factors, which has the effects of determining one's position in a fixed way (Ritzer, 1992). For Weber, class is multifaceted, where society is stratified along the lines of economics, status and power (Ritzer, 1992). This then allows for changes in one's class situation, given that opportunities exist for such mobility. Marxist analysis of class, stratification is based on economic factors which determine the individual's class position, yet, these factors can and do change. For example, the process of migration has been instrumental in changing the class position of Pakistani migrants arriving to Britain. Through economic advancement and social standing via this, many British-Pakistanis have engaged in processes of class mobility (Werbner, 1994). As Werbner (1994) notes:

"Not only has the immigrant enclave been shifting, but Pakistanis seldom settle down permanently in a [particular] house or neighbourhood. Their settlement patterns are characterised by an exploratory, persistent seeking of more valuable or advantageous properties in better neighbourhoods." (Werbner, 1994: 240)

In the same way that class position is subject to changes dependent on one's social and economic situation, identity/ies too are changing and situational and need to account for the subjective experiences of individuals at a given time (Brah, 1996). The identities of British-Pakistanis in Luton, must be viewed in contested and multidimensional terms. It is insufficient for us as British-Pakistanis to assert a singular and absolute identity - as victims of racism, as this detracts from us looking critically at the internal dynamics of our communities. And as I have demonstrated British-Pakistani identities are not singular as (in addition to other social divisions) gender is a crucial element in the production of identities and should be viewed as such by outsiders. As Pragna Patel (1997) from Southall Black Sisters points out:

“[as] Black women our struggles often arise out of our experiences within our communities, and in fighting to force these onto the wider political agenda we have also often had to fight against the imposition of a singular identity either on ourselves or on our communities.” (Patel, 1997: 256)

These are uncomfortable realities, which are often denied as a result of our given identities that tend to situate us within the parameters of a shared community sense (Patel, 2000). And as I have pointed out throughout this thesis, the internal dynamics of this British-Pakistani community support this view in that within the framework of collective interests, women's interests are either ignored or subsumed into the good of the community. Their distinct and separate needs are placed on the minority group agenda when a threat is posed to male power. These are the issues that need to be placed on the wider political agenda, which currently views the position of ethnic minority women as connected with the interests of men (Modood et al, 1994). The separate identities and interests of British-Pakistani women can only be met by the wider community, through liaising with informal women's support groups as an initial point of reference, rather than seeking advice in relation to women's issues from the so-called 'leaders' within the community, who at present, are overwhelmingly men - although elder women are increasingly attempting to raise the plight of women and the family. Of course, there is no denying that British-Pakistani men and women share experiences of racism and religious discrimination, but gender inequalities are faced by

women alone and these are shared across, class, 'race' and ethnicity.

British-Pakistani women needs and concerns need to be addressed both within the communities they are living in and the wider community we are a part of. As women and human beings we share commonalities with other women of diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds; experiencing violence within the home is one aspect of that connectedness. However, we must also account for the specificity and the subjectivity of British-Pakistani women's experiences (Brah, 1996) and consider that they will continue to negotiate, renegotiate and articulate identities as they see appropriate to them and their children's lives.

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Appendix 1

Sample = 28

<u>Interviewee</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Educational Background</u>	<u>Waged</u>	<u>Unwaged¹</u>
1	16-25	F	Kashmiri	Secondary School	Y	
2	16-25	F	Kashmiri	Further Ed.	Y	
3	16-25	F	Kashmiri	Secondary School		Y
4	16-25	F	Kashmiri	Further Ed.	Y	
5	16-25	F	Kashmiri	Secondary School		Y
6	26-40	F	Kashmiri	No education		Y
7	26-40	F	Kashmiri	Further Ed.	Y	
8	26-40	F	Kashmiri	No education		Y
9	26-40	F	Kashmiri	No education		Y
10	41-55	F	Kashmiri	No education		Y

¹ Unwaged includes, mothers at home, unpaid carers and other volunteers

	<u>Interviewee</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Educational</u> <u>Background</u>	<u>Waged</u>	<u>Unwaged</u>
11		55+	F	Kashmiri	No education		Y
12		55+	F	Kashmiri	No education		Y
13		16-25	F	Pakistani	Further Ed.	Y	
14		26-40	F	Pakistani	Further Ed.	Y	
15		26-40	F	Pakistani	Further Ed.	Y	
16		41-55	F	Pakistani	University	Y	
17		41-55	F	Pakistani	Further Ed.	Y	
18		55+	F	Pakistani	University		Y
19		55+	F	Pakistani	Further Ed.		Y
20		55+	F	Pakistani	University		Y
21		16-25	M	Kashmiri	Secondary school		Y
22		16-25	M	Kashmiri	Further Ed.	Y	
23		26-40	M	Kashmiri	Further Ed.	Y	
24		55+	M	Kashmiri	No education		Y

<u>Interviewee</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Educational</u> <u>Background</u>	<u>Waged</u>	<u>Unwaged</u>
25	55+	M	Kashmiri	No education		Y
26	26-40	M	Pakistani	Further Ed.	Y	
27	55+	M	Pakistani	University		Y
28	55+	M	Pakistani	University		Y

The sample consisted of 12 Kashmiri and 8 Pakistani women. In the former group, 5 were aged between 16-25, 4 between the ages of 26-40, 1 aged between 41-55 and 2 aged 55 and over. Those of Pakistani origin comprised, 1 aged between 16-25, 2 between the ages of 26-40, 2 were aged between 41-55 and 3 aged 55 plus.

The male sample consisted of 5 Kashmiris - 2 aged between 16-25, 1 aged between 26-40 and 2 were 55 or above. There were 3 Pakistanis, of which there were none aged between 16-25, 1 aged between 26-40 and 2 over the age of 55.

In addition to these respondents, who were actually interviewed, there were numerous others with whom I had conversations. This was due to the fact that I worked at the advisory Centre where I was in contact with many British-Pakistanis, and therefore was able to gain an insight into community life.

I wanted to diversify the sample in order to understand the multidimensionality of British-Pakistani identities among the different generations. After viewing the list (which I had drawn up by approaching people as they attended the Centre) of willing participants, their ages, marital status and class position, I decided that young people and elder women - the two groups that rarely attended the Centre, needed to be included in the sample. To include these, I asked people who did attend the Centre, if their elder female and younger relatives would be willing to be interviewed. From this I was able to gain access to 4 elder women and 5 young people. In addition, more elder women and young people were accessed using snowballing techniques.

Appendix 2

Semi-structured interview questionnaires were constructed around themes that emerged during my observations of the community and whilst working at the Centre as a volunteer. Some of the questions I went into the field with included, what is the role of women within the family and community? How do women negotiate their position within these arenas? Are women passive recipients of gender relations? In what ways do women demonstrate their agency within the arenas of family, community and within the wider community? In pursuit of answers to these questions, the key areas – family and kinship networks, community, gender relations, elders and the marital system - emerged as being important to the women participating in this study. I felt that investigating these would provide an understanding of the contested nature of identities within this community.

In addition, I felt that exploring these areas would provide an understanding of relations between family and community members and how these were negotiated and articulated. Other themes began emerging while I was exploring the key areas I had identified. These included intra-ethnic differences arising from the rural-urban division of members' origins in Pakistan, and the Kashmiri dimension of British-Pakistani identities. These differences were important to observe and document, as each group - Pakistani and Kashmiri - held different perceptions of each other, which led me to develop a typology based on social class. This meant that from the data, I was able to establish that those from the urban centres in Pakistan characterised themselves as being middle-class and non-traditional, while those from Azad (Free) Kashmir (a rural region) were characterised by the former as being traditional and working class (see chapter 3 for details of perceptions held by each group of the other).

Despite the Kashmiri-Pakistani differences within this group, I found that unity was found when outsiders threatened the religious and cultural traditions of the community as a whole. This was a theme that emerged during interviews and observations and my understanding of community processes. I felt it was necessary to present internal diversities in terms of ethnicity and gender, but to demonstrate solidarity where this existed. The Mecca incident provided a good example of unity within the community along gender, ethnic and age lines, and demonstrated the importance of collective interests overriding individual interests (see chapter 3 for details of this).

When I set about interviewing women initially, about their families and communities, my intention was to explore these arenas and women's roles within them, but I was not sure what aspects to focus on. What I did intend to do however, was to explore their active agency in relation to their roles. What emerged from the first two interviews with women, in which I asked respondents to tell me what it means to be a British-Pakistani living in Luton - was how the family and community were very much gendered, in terms of the different expectations of men and women and how women's roles tended to be considered (by men) to be inferior to theirs. This I found to be a result of the private nature of women's roles (as this was situated within the home) and the public nature of men's roles (within their own community and their involvement in political activity in the wider community) that suggested that women's work as cultural transmitters was seen as less important (see chapter 4 for details).

In addition, the ways in which the marital system placed emphasis on women to maintain cultural traditions - skin shade, intra-caste marriages and the stigma attached to women who were divorced, presented me with another dimension to family life that I felt was important to document. Therefore the themes that emerged from initial interviews with women, about their roles within the family and community, formed the basis for chapter 4 and provided an understanding of the gendered nature of the marital system.

While I was interviewing elders on what they considered to be their key concerns in a contemporary context, it became necessary to view intergenerational relations, as this issue was emerging in the initial interviews I had undertaken with elders. I had set about initially, to test the 'myth of return' hypothesis (see Anwar, 1979), to establish whether elders were inclined to return to Pakistan after retirement, or whether they considered themselves permanent residents of Britain. While investigating this, I found that the issue of intergenerational relations was an important one to explore. As elders would refer to young kin as not having the same obligations to their elders, as they themselves had to their elders. It was becoming clear from initial interviews that processes of suburbanisation (see chapter 5 for details on this) and changing work patterns among women - the main carers of elders in this community - were impacting on the types of care being given to elders and the expectations elders had of their young kin in relation to this. I felt it was necessary to establish attitudes of elders and young people in relation to each other in order to assess how the Pakistani born and the British born generations related to each other. Therefore, I set about exploring intergenerational relations.

I feel that the emergent themes and the methodological approach I chose, which incorporated biography as a tool for analysing the lives of British-Pakistanis in Luton, provided a thorough understanding of community processes (see chapter 2).