

The London School of Economics and Political Science

*Apna Britain: Negotiating identity through television consumption among
British Pakistani Muslim women in Bradford*

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Declaration

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Abstract

British Pakistani Muslim women of Bradford inhabit a highly mediated space where contested discourses of gender, ethnicity, culture and nationality take shape. This ethnographic study looks into the ways British Pakistani women in Bradford use television to negotiate and manage identities and identifications (Hall, 1996) in the context of everyday life. Electronic media, especially television, become central to the manifestation of conflicting discourses of belonging to national and transnational communities. The tensions associated with national and transnational identities are negotiated and renewed in the context of everyday life and as women move between the domestic, the ‘community’ and the national sphere.

Through an ethnographic lens and an empirical study that took place in a community centre and four households, the discussion unravels these women’s attempts to exercise agency within the intensively restrictive socio-cultural framework where their lives unfold. Most relevant to this thesis is the use of electronic media, especially television. This thesis explores the role of television in three parallel realms: the home, the ‘community’ and the nation. Participants were found to engage with television narratives in their homes, not as passive viewers but as active audiences creating new meanings. Communal spaces were re-imagined through women’s participation in social events and by employing ‘women-oriented’ religious media. Subsequently the women approached their belonging in the national context by contesting their portrayals in mainstream media and by reinterpreting the cultural norms of their parents through the narratives of television.

By underlining the importance of Bradford’s locally specific culture and the ways this culture has been influenced by the systemic alienation of working-class ethnic minority families, I argue that women and their narratives of identity and belonging have been radically curtailed. However, active agency and persistent structural negotiations have led many participants to reinvent ‘ethnicity’, thus creating ‘new [*rooted, local and yet supra-national*] ethnicities’ (Hall, 1996, emphasis mine). The space around television – in its consumption and media talk – provides a platform for engaging with hegemonic discourses of ethnicity, religion, gender and nationality and for reflecting on the limits of these discourses, as well as on the limits of their identities. A strong shared sense of belonging to a community provides the framework to manage these contradictory realities of the socially situated gendered identities. I argue that the role of television is cyclical, in that the meanings created at home ripple into the nation and back via the ‘community’. Media are central to diasporic life and the crises that explicate migrant life are reflected in their media consumption. Within unsettling narratives of being a migrant, the participants seek belonging among the familiar within the mediated world that surrounds the diasporic life. In this space, identities and identifications are seemingly new, but are born out of the ashes of the old and familiar.

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**Chapter 1: Negotiating mediated gender and identity in Bradford – A case study of
Pakistani Muslim women and mediated identity**

The inception of this thesis lies in my personal journey in the UK. The instances of prejudice that are etched in my experiences of being in Britain reconstituted my thinking of marginalisation, ethnicity, ‘race’ and deprivation. Having been born into an immigrant Indian family in the Middle East, institutionalised and everyday discrimination towards Indians had been routine. I was told by my parents, who moved to the commercial hub of the Middle East due to their financial desperation in India, that discussing discrimination or criticising the monarchy (even in private) would incur nothing short of a jail sentence and/or deportation for migrants. Hence, the adults and the children of Asian ethnicities bore the brunt of a discriminatory government and society. When I arrived in the UK for my postgraduate studies at the University of Leeds, I assumed that the conditions would be different. I assumed that within an academic environment and among the general British public there would be an attitude of acceptance and tolerance. However I found a divided university campus, students socialised with other students who looked most like them. Once in a lecture a senior male professor exclaimed to a Japanese student and remarked how ‘small Island countries like Japan and Britain went and colonised the world’, said with so much pride, it silenced the entire class, and the Japanese student. The watershed moment for me was during an outing to the local shopping centre with my mother who was visiting at the time. As we were shopping, a white boy, approximately 10 to 11 years old, walked past me calling me a ‘Paki’. This interpellation was critical to my thinking of how racism and prejudice constantly displaces and robs a migrant of their self-esteem and creates a moment of crisis in identification. Although there are critiques on how Althusserian ideologies (Skeggs, 1994) remove agency from the subject, I argue that in the case of racism, the agency of the subject

or more appropriately the creation of the subject has happened in a discourse far removed from the context of the subject. In this scenario the subject is a subaltern.

While the boy moved away casually after abusing me, I could not go on as if nothing had happened. It felt like a kick to my stomach, like a punch in my face. The moment when the racist word was perceived, I felt as though I had been physically abused: it felt unreal. This displacement from my own context, and interpellation into an identification far removed from my own, was where I began to deeply think about notions of ethnicity and race. The marginalisation of minorities, 'Other' women and the gendering of the diaspora became familiar and burning issues linking agency and scholarship to my understanding. Through my own experiences and in my studies I realised that there is an imminent need to address the location of the theoretical and empirical narrative of ethnic gendered identity which challenge the discourse of 'race' and the given racial and gendered order. 'New ethnicities' (Hall, 1996b) and 'identifications' (Hall, 1996a) would provide me with a framework that tackles the politics of 'race', as well as the changes in experience and identification among diasporic subjects, especially women.

I began asking myself questions on how marginalised ethnic groups sustain their sense of community in Britain while managing the fragile balance of ethnic particularity and participation in the society. During my Master's thesis I was involved in outreach work with a community centre in Bradford. There I was to witness restrained yet indomitable ways in which women who were seen as 'marginalised' debate and negotiate agency within their 'communities' and beyond the centre. The periphery of the social boundaries that are marked for them were being negotiated subversively by the women. Earlier studies on diasporic groups and media consumption (Georgiou, 2006, Gillespie, 1995) offered me an entry point on how shared identities contribute to the imagining of the diaspora. Gillespie (1995) and Georgiou (2006) offered rich empirical insights on how media and specifically television play

a key role in the organisation of everyday diasporic life. I found this observation to hold true among the Pakistani women with whom I worked at the community centre. The setting of the centre, in an intensely ethnicised and gendered neighbourhood, was elevated to a unique location of identity negotiations and subjectification.¹ Media proved to have some influence in the process of subjectification across the multiple sites where diasporic life unfolds, including the community centre and the home.

The use of the media in the family, communal spaces, and other non-ethnically specific spaces for creating and enacting the ethnicised, gendered roles of women is the crux of this research study. Despite the proliferation of new media in the everyday lives of the diaspora, television sets have influence over the diasporic media horizon as an ever developing and important source of entertainment, news and information for the participants in my study (Karim, 2003; Matsaganis, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach, 2011). This influence, although important, is being continually undermined through the disavowal of media use by many Muslim women in the community. Women are also increasingly adopting and using new media to mediate diasporic life and their identity contestations. As Matsaganis et al. (2011) noted, the ethnic mediascape is dotted with a multitude of media, like newspapers, radio and now the internet. In this increasingly mediated world of the World Wide Web, television is only one influence in the everyday life of the diaspora.

As I noted in the anecdote above, it was a constant struggle to separate the personal from the academic in writing this thesis. With acknowledgement of this limitation, this thesis looks into the identity construction and negotiations of Pakistani women in Bradford as they inhabit a highly mediated socio-cultural scape. The role of television and ethnic media in the three main realms of daily life, the domestic life, the community and the national spaces of Pakistani women in Bradford, is of particular relevance to this study as television and ethnic

¹ I discuss the notion of subjectification, as Guattari (2000) pointed out, within the ecology of developmental, creative self-positioning.

media are used as a technology, a tool and a cultural frame (Silverstone, 1994) to negotiate different elements of ethnic gendered, local and national identities. The above three spaces are distinct and non-hierarchical as articulated by the women, and the triage are critical to the orchestration and contestation of identities. Although television and ethnic media are relevant, the social and political contexts relevant to any diasporic community are present among the group in this study and will account for, in many instances, greater influence than media in the process of identity formation. For instance Harindranath (2005) argued, that the gender and class politics intrinsic to any diasporic community is not taken into account, even at times glossed over in the attempt to demonstrate the role of the media in identity formation.

This thesis develops a triangular framework for the study of ethnic female identity. Firstly I explore the tensions between mediated discourse and gender within spaces where women live everyday life and interact with each other. I look at the complementarities and oppositional readings that are generated through the reading of media texts that support and give rise to overlapping mainstream and alternative spaces for constructing a sense of self. I do this by adopting a multi-spatial approach. While home remains an important site for the gendering of bodies (Gray, 1999, 1992), research on 'race' and home has pointed out that the primacy of this site also provides 'support' in the face of systemic processes of Othering in racist societies (Ali, 2003). Brah described home as a mythical place but more importantly as a 'lived experience of locality' (1996, p. 192) and I explore home in precisely this manner: I look at the ways in which the domestic, lived map of the home affects negotiations of identity within a locale, while being linked to distant people and localities through transnational and mediated connections. The community centre acts as a symbolic and physical space for women outside of their home. The centre, although spatially situated in the context of the 'community', remains ensconced from the daily rigours of the 'patriarchal' management.

This space is utilised by the women of the centre as an alternative to their domestic chores which allows them to spend time away from their families to get opportunities, for ‘self-development’ as they conveyed in their own words. Most importantly this is a space that separates women from men and their gaze, allowing them to enact elements of their identities in a safe female environment. This alternative space can be compared to the female spaces created by the Bedouin women of Ali Awlad in Abu-Lughod’s work (1989). As an outsider gender segregation might be perceived as a stigmatised practise, but Abu-Lughod (1989) noted that the Bedouin women derived pleasure from this segregation and in fact worked together to keep the men from coming into their female space.

Secondly, I explore how media are employed as tools by women, especially for managing ‘surveillance’ and ‘gaze’ within feminine spaces. The changing nature of ethnic media is important to mention in this context. Ethnic media plays a central role in providing and organising information and entertainment available in diasporic households. As ethnic media are increasingly reconstituting themselves around dominant religious discourses rather than cultural or ethnic identities, they reshuffle and redefine the mediated narratives of ethnicity and religion. Effectively women become constantly exposed to powerful religious discourses. The rhetoric of ethnic media contributes towards a considerable proportion of information and entertainment present in diasporic households. The study of media as domestic communications technologies (Gray, 1992; Morley, 1986; Silverstone & Hirsch, 1992) has acknowledged the gendered appropriations of the media and the ways in which women use media to negotiate patriarchal structures. This leads to creating alternative routes to deriving pleasure for women through the use of media. As Gray’s (1992) study has shown, women watched omnibus editions of soap operas on a Sunday morning by themselves or with other women friends while their family slept or were away. This space created solely for feminine pleasure and subjectivity, it can be observed mostly in the home and it is what I

term alternative space in a minutiae sense. In a broader sense the alternate space is also the community centre which figures as the feminine space and this is where I primarily locate the research since the centre is both public and private for the women participants. In the centre the discussion of television talk unravels the dialectical process of media discourse and local and communal processes that are at play in the lives of the participants.

Finally, I am interested in the cultural politics of reflexive identifications created in the context of mediated everyday life, especially in the ways identity, difference, and Otherness are discursively constructed through readings of media texts. As Hall (1996, p. 2) suggested, identification necessitates a theory of the discursive practices that contribute to the politics of exclusion: ‘the discursive approach sees identification as a construction, a process never completed, always in process’. In this sense identification is always becoming and never being: ‘identities can function as points of identification’ (Hall, 1996, p. 5). Appiah (2005, p. 66) discussed identification as the ‘*process* of the construction of one’s identity’ (emphasis mine). Appiah elaborated on the relation between identification and identity in a collective identity as a multi-part construction. Identity is attributed to the availability of the terms of identification in public discourse and the knowledge of these terms by the people who want to conform to this collective identity. All the faculties that one utilises as a means of thinking the self into the collective is identification according to Appiah (2005, pp. 66–8), thereby, the tools of imagining identity/ies can be termed as identification. Appiah (2005) and Thoits and Virshup (1997) discussed similar implications of identities and identifications in collectivity. Thoits and Virshup pointed out that ‘[G]roup- or category-based identities are collective-level self-conceptions; they are identifications of the self with a collectivity, claimed and enacted with or for other members (“who we are”)’ (1997, p. 115).

I also discuss the use of cultural and/or ethnic capital by women to negotiate and even subvert media texts to construct and/or reinterpret old and new identifications. Media

and communications studies have not adequately addressed the gendered television viewing experiences of ethnic audiences. Overwhelming focus has been on white families, while few audience studies have looked into ethnic households in Britain and their media consumption (Georgiou, 2001; Gillespie, 1995). With the racialisation of the term ‘Paki’ and subsequently of Muslims in Britain, it is imperative to acknowledge the media bias when discussing the ‘Other’ in the British context. This is also reflected in the reading of the texts by women who participated in the study. Their negotiations and contestations of the media text is a response to their increasing (mis)representations and racialisation of being the non-white ‘Other’ and their changing roles within the Pakistani community. The ontological status of the ‘Other’ and the subsequent negotiations that are required to perform gender and sustain self and group identity are at the core of the present study.

This thesis aims to contribute to understanding the ways in which gendered identities are constructed at the juxtaposition of restrictive patriarchal social contexts, national racialised ideological frameworks, and everyday life that unfolds in largely female-controlled spaces. This thesis attempts to address the gap in textual interpretation and the socio-cultural context of the audiences, which Harindranath (2000) argued is insufficiently theorised in the existing literature in the field of audience research.

In introducing my study I discuss how terms are employed across a wide range of issues in this thesis, and more importantly gender, media and identity. Central to this thesis is the way in which everyday life becomes the context where hegemonic relations are continued and legitimised but also where they are adapted and contested. I also explore the interesting relationship of media and gender from the vantage point of access to technology, and particularly the gendering of genres and communication technologies.² Gender and media have been researched vastly from the perspective of media representation of women;

² For example, the use of the remote control as discussed in Gray’s (1992) study.

however, a gendered study among a specifically racialised ethnic group has been limited. I locate the nature of this inquiry in the issues of ethnicised audiences and feminine identities. Thus women's identities are of paramount importance for this study, while media are constitutive tools for the negotiation of identities. The discussion of identities and media in the forthcoming sections of this inquiry is informed by the experiences of my fieldwork where identities prefigured the existence and use of media in ethnic gendered spaces.

The main research question is: In what ways do British Pakistani Muslim women of Bradford construct their identities in highly mediated spaces where their everyday life unfolds? This main research question is supported by these following sub-questions:

- How is feminine identity constructed and impacted through mediations of diaspora and the nation?
- What are the salient features of 'TV talk' in the daily life of women in the Pakistani Muslim diaspora?
- Do segregated feminine public spaces challenge or reaffirm patriarchy?
- What is the salience of the postfeminist 'ideal self' in the daily lives of Pakistani Muslim women in Bradford? How is diasporic life impacting the (re)construction of the self in the everyday life?

Before proceeding further there are terminology notes of caution that I would like to point out. First, the term 'British Pakistani' could be contentious, and this complexity of the term is discussed in detail in chapter 3: *Bradford to Bradistan*. Also, the term 'Pakistani community' may appear as a crude reductionism, but the intention is to use the term as the shortest way to refer to a large collective of common ethnicity with diverse clan and tribe affiliations. There are variations that emerge as divisive within the 'community' lending it internal heterogeneity. So there are intra-communal divisions like class, region of origin from Pakistan, and area of residence in Britain. There is also considerable difference in the

orientation and aspirations of Pakistanis who reside in the South and North of England. I have deliberately used the term ‘new ethnicities’ instead of ‘hybridity’ (Bhabha, 1994), due to its contextualising of mostly reactive identifications and inadequately theorising proactive identifications (Naficy, 1993). Naficy (1993) identified that diasporic identities are not reactionary, as Bhabha (1994) suggested, but they work in a proactive manner in the countries and communities they move into. Naficy (1993) pointed out that hybridity had gradually moved beyond the proactive contestation of dominant culture that it was originally meant to symbolise, into a ‘co-optation’ with the dominant culture. Hybridity then becomes a means for appropriation of dominant cultures rather than a means of contestation. In reifying terminology, Naficy (1993) raised concerns that hybridity in practise is distinct from its theoretical manifestation. Also and crucially, hybridity becomes a means to co-opt rather than challenge the dominant cultural paradigms. The theory of ‘hybridity’ (Bhabha, 1994) has consistently featured in postcolonial studies on migration; however, it has also been criticised (Hutnyk, 1997) as hybridity in itself is subject to the essentialist notions that in theory it is opposed to by valorising certain cultural aspects that ignore others. Hutnyk (2005) also argued that ‘hybridity’ as a term is politically void, due to the continuous usage of the ‘hybrid’ forms of diasporic culture in the culture industry as ‘liberal multiculturalism’. Rather than understanding communities beyond cultural explanations, ‘hybridity’ has been used, argued Hutnyk, to further politics using ‘Thatcher-with-a-*bindi*-spot mould’ (2000, p. 36) motifs. Then of course there is a new BrAsian (Kaur & Kalra, 1996) public culture emerging which is neither mainstream public sphere nor private sphere: it is a *mélange* of British and Asian elements, although the signs of this are not clear and the future uncertain (Dwyer, 2005).

In the forthcoming sections of this chapter, I discuss the main concerns that inform this thesis. My primary interest is the spatial everyday groundedness of ethnic female identity

and creation of the ideal self. Thus I emphasise both the situatedness of the research and most importantly the locational politics of the participants and of how within diasporic spaces ethnic capital influences the negotiations and contestations of creating and sustaining various identifications. Secondly, there is a dearth of discussion on the influence of ethnicity and gender and the appropriation of media and meaning. This thesis seeks to address some of the concerns in the areas of minority audiences and specifically women audiences, which are discussed with emphasis on locational and class politics. Finally I look into how the construction of the 'Other' within the framework of media rhetoric has contributed to reflexive constructions of the self and therefore to a more critical audience within gendered minority viewers of both mainstream British media and transnational and local ethnic media.

1.1 Media, gender and context

In this thesis I explore the tensions associated with media and gender within everyday spaces of interaction for Pakistani women in Bradford. I unravel the complementarities and oppositional readings that are generated through the reading of media texts by creating spaces of expression and repression in everyday life. These spaces work as the contexts in which meanings are embedded and where media texts are appropriated. Contextuality is paramount to understanding how meanings are made through media consumption. This relevance of contextuality is reflected in how Harindranath (2000) used the work of Gadamer (1975, 1976) to situate the concept of prejudice and how it influences 'understanding'. The emphasis on prejudice in Harindranath's (2000) work is because through a renewed understanding of the prejudice, the author provided two important points of reference in the process of meaning-making, namely, the impossibility of objective understanding or meaning-making because the process is context dependent, and the partial understanding of meaning because the reader

carries with herself her own expectations into the process. This can be traced in the media consumption behaviour and meaning-making process of the women of this study.

Gadamer (1976) appealed towards reading the term prejudice in a more positive paradigm to emphasise his theory of 'understanding'. Harindranath (2000) made the argument that this is a useful concept for media scholars researching in context-dependent settings, where 'true' or intended understanding of the texts is seldom or never achieved. Harindranath's (2000) discussion of understanding is effected by two central issues: first, the impossibility of objective understanding, where understanding is not to be thought of so much as an action of one's subjectivity, but as the placing of oneself within a tradition, which past and present are constantly fused. Secondly, understanding involves the anticipation of meaning of the whole text based on prior knowledge of the nature of its constituents, such as its generic features: 'the horizon of expectations' is the set of assumptions that we take to the text and we constantly revise our expectations of the meaning of the whole text on the basis of our understanding of parts of it (p. 156). The physical places of everyday diasporic life are rich in what Harindranath (2000) termed as 'prejudice' or 'prejudgement' which recognises the boundedness of understanding, which in turn is both dispersed and collected in the diverse locations of everyday life.

With reference to contexts, home is where gendering of technology takes place at a very early age of human development, as pointed out in Gray's (1995) research on the gendering of the remote control. The remote control rests with the father of the house or the oldest male member and seldom is this control vested in the women of the house (Gray, 1995). Similarly Van Zoonen's (2002) study in the Netherlands among couples and new technology use revealed that both men and women perceived home usage of the internet as an extension of the male territory. These studies have revealed and challenged prevalent notions of who uses technology, and how technology is used in everyday life by men and women.

Women of colour often do not identify with the gender politics located in Western feminist theories (hooks, 1984). Limited studies address minority women and their presence as audiences. The paucity of literature on women as audiences has been discussed by Ross and Byerly (2006) as being limited due to ‘cost factors’. The discussion of the use of soap opera in diverse cultural settings has been examined by Ross and Byerly, where they point out that viewers use ‘television narratives to comment upon and come to understand events in their lives, thereby providing themselves with a certain pleasure and perhaps relief...’ (2006, p. 61). I further this position and argue that the participants of this study use media, both mainstream and ethnic, to understand and contest the various positions they are interpellated to and use these narratives for both pleasure and relief by participating in the particularised struggles of their community.

Although this project aims towards being a study of how women construct and negotiate identities, I cannot claim to give voice to the ‘subaltern’. Instead I argue that the women participants of this research are empowered in their own subjective positions and are continually contributing to the cycle of renaissance in their community. Through this study I aim to situate the racialised and patronised experiences of a complex and powerful group of recorded women’s stories as there is a dearth in the experiences of the ‘Other’ located in Western centres of power. The timing of this thesis is also momentous. In the second week of September 2011 the first fines for wearing a *niqab* in France were handed out to *niqabi* women who decided to venture out in public. *The Guardian*³ article pointed out how French Muslim women protested against the French state’s decision to penalise these women:

The first real test will come on Thursday, when a local judge in Meaux, east of Paris, will decide whether to hand out to Ahmas and a friend the first ever fine. They were stopped outside Meaux town hall on 5 May wearing *niqabs* and carrying an almond cake to celebrate the birthday of the local mayor Jean-François Copé, who is also head of Nicolas Sarkozy’s rightwing UMP party and an architect of the ban. The cake was a joke, a play on the French word for fine, *amende*. They wanted to highlight the absurdity of a law that they say has increased a mood of anti-Muslim discrimination

³ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/sep/19/battle-for-the-burqa>

and driven a wedge through French society, yet seems not to have been taken seriously by the justice system.

As if using a play on the notion of *différance* propounded by the French philosopher Derrida, the women used almond cake to play with the meanings of their persecution. The actions of the women were drawn from their reflexive identifications with both an Islamic self and their nationality, which has been informed by the ideals of the country they were born into. Most importantly this anecdote radically subsumes the preponderance of orientalist constructions of the 'Other' and specifically the construction of Muslim women as a voiceless caricature. The women in the above incident were contesting the state policies and actively engaging as powerful agents of society through non-traditional ways of protest. Byerly and Ross (2006, p. 62) pointed out that '[O]n the matter of resistance, feminist (and other) political economists have found it difficult to connect audience agency to any real democratic participation by women from that audience in their own behalf, to either form or reform policies and practises.'

In this inquiry, I will argue that through continuous 'ghettoisation' and alienation from the British state and the nation, the Pakistani Muslim community in Bradford have through the adoption of personal and situated ethnic capital contested the limits attributed to their identities by the liberal multicultural state and social practices. Before relocating gender and difference within the area of television research, the serious gap in scholarship of ethnic audiences and the changes in how women audiences choose and view media need to be accounted for in research. This issue is the next concern I focus on in this thesis.

1.2 New meanings in audience research

Here I explore how the media are appropriated by women when creating meanings through the use of media and in making sense of surveillance and gaze within female spaces when

women try to manage racialised discourses on national media and when they try to use media to support relations and responsibilities at home. I look at women and media consumption in a different light from what has been the case in most research on women and television. This study has approached gendered viewing from a non-soap opera context to veer away from a fascination with ‘gossip’ and instead turn to media talk to situate media and femininity at the juxtaposition of political, cultural and social identities.

Media consumption studies on female practices have tended to remain within a bounded world of feminine media consumption in the private sphere of family life, romance and interpersonal intrigue. In addition, Husband (1994), Marthoz (2001, cited in (Mattelart, 2011)), Rigoni (2006) and Ross and Byerly (2004) have argued that there is a lack of research in social sciences on media in the diasporic space. Previous studies on South Asians have been restricted to sociological accounts of race, ethnicity and media (mostly on the Indian diaspora, for example Gillespie, 1995) in general but very rarely has there been an account of the trajectory of gendered identity constructs of diasporic women, especially through the use of both mainstream media and ethnic television, which is both transnational and national.

As Moores (1993) stated, ‘The box in the corner of the living room can be a site of convergence between routine day-to-day existence and much broader cultural transformations’ (p. 10).⁴ This still holds true for the women in this study whom I would term as a highly ethnicised diaspora. Through media women learn about their role in the nation, their rights, duties, responsibilities, opportunities and the protection the law of the land grants them, while also accessing connections to ‘homelands’ and diaspora across the world. I have consciously directed my focus at the usage of local ethnic television in the domestic space. It is also interesting to note that studies on women and media conducted in the past have centred mostly on the soft-deterministic (Hobson, 2003); or as Brunson termed it

⁴ Television and its influence in the everyday life has been emphasised in Silverstone, 1995 and Appadurai, 1991.

‘emotionally significant personal interaction’ (1981, p. 34). Although these studies have revealed the gendered nature of viewing and control of television, I argue that due to a change in the economic and educational avenues open to women, and the opportunity available (to some) to challenge patriarchal notions of femininity, patterns of media consumption have changed.

The increasing use and access to new technology can be seen as having revolutionised transnational communications and transnational media consumption. Mobile phones and the increasing reliance on the World Wide Web are contributing to the changing mediascape of diasporas. It is not just the media interface that is undergoing dramatic changes, but the content of diasporic media is also seen to be shifting to a more religiously ordained restructuring. Here cultural identity or ethnicity is recast into a universal understanding of the diaspora. In the context of my research, this can be seen as the rise of the *Ummah*, and the emergence of a European *Ummah* as seen on the Islam Channel. In this study I see the changing nature of both media and the audiences as the changing nature of identity which continues to be influenced by diversity, simultaneity and national character. So, in essence moving beyond the transmission model of media, where media are considered agents of social control, I explore the role of women in resisting and adopting media to construct alternative spaces and how these spaces mirror or resist patriarchal structures. The study of media as domestic communication technologies (Gray, 1992; Morley, 1986; Silverstone and Hirsch, 1992) has acknowledged that women and men give different meanings to the domestic spaces and how they use technology to resist, negotiate and contest the use of media and space around them. This leads to the creation of alternative routes to deriving pleasure for women through the use of media.

Home however is not always the place for pleasure and relaxation for many women. Some of the women in this study are caregivers who use the community centre as a space for

relaxation even though the community centre can be considered a public space. The community centre here symbolises an ecosystem of ideas for the women. While various social changes have had an effect on the media and vice versa, there has been no adequate theorising of how ethnic women audiences negotiate their gendered identities in highly politicised historical and symbolic contexts. Especially post 9/11, the increased of ethnic groups in the West has been achieved mostly through media (mis)representation, especially of Muslims (Abbas, 2011; Ali & Hopkins, 2012; Joppke, 2009). The processes that contribute to creating identifications and meanings in this historical and cultural context are discussed in the following section.

1.3 The gendered reflexive ideal self

Finally, I am interested in the articulations and implications of the self-reflexive construction of the ‘ideal self’ created through media consumption, discussions of Otherness and difference. I discuss specifically the use of cultural capital by women to negotiate and even subvert media texts to construct and/or reinterpret old and new identifications. The thesis looks at the ways in which women resist and adopt media narratives that in part challenge and in part recreate patriarchal structures in the process of contesting and constructing surveillance and gaze. This resembles the postfeminist creation and monitoring of the ‘ideal self’. In the words of Gill:

[T]hat postfeminism is best understood not as an epistemological perspective nor as an historical shift, and not (simply) as a backlash, in which its meanings are pre-specified. Rather, postfeminism should be conceived of as a sensibility. From this perspective postfeminist media culture should be our critical object -- a phenomenon into which scholars of culture should inquire -- rather than an analytic perspective. This approach does not require a static notion of one single authentic feminism as a comparison point, but instead is informed by postmodernist and constructionist perspectives and seeks to examine what is distinctive about contemporary articulations of gender in the media. (2007, p. 4)

My use of postfeminist for the articulations of feminine identity has specific arguments that I develop in the following chapters, but I would like to point out Gill's (2007) acknowledgement of the dichotomous nature of postfeminism, pro-feminist and anti-feminist at the same time, which elaborates on the saliency of self-surveillance in the postfeminist discourse of femininity: 'firstly the dramatically increased self-surveillance...secondly, the extensiveness of surveillance over entirely new spheres of life and intimate conduct; and thirdly the focus upon the psychological—upon the requirement to transform oneself and remodel one's interior life' (p. 5). Among the women in this study, the emphasis on self-transformation has been paramount.

Another insufficiently theorised area is that of how 'new ethnicities' relate to the construction of femininities, as Ali (2003) noted, 'a great deal of work that relates to 'new ethnicities' is implicitly gendered to favour masculinities' (p. 10). I aim to address some of these concerns by locating the emerging 'new ethnicities' among the women of the Pakistani 'community'. The gendering of the Pakistani 'community' is central to the communal identity. Through the maintenance of gendered roles within the community, ethnic and cultural identity is sustained and perpetuated.

The Rushdie affair was a defining moment for the Pakistani communities in Britain (Meer & Modood, 2010) in uniting them into an organised communal entity (McLoughlin, 2005). Predominantly patriarchal in orientation, the older male members composed the hegemonic representation of the 'community' (Modood, 2007). The extent of influence of Pakistani women in the formation of the community remained strictly within the social constructions of gender and nationhood. As Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) theorised, women embody the nation as the 'biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities' (pp. 7–8). In the case of Muslim women in Britain, veiling is used to symbolise both difference and defiance (Williamson & Khiabany, 2008). In this role Muslim women are

actively seeking to recontextualise themselves in their own communities through the adoption of Islamic values (Mohammed, 2005) and differentiate elements of the cultural from the religious. The repositioning of self within a renewed framework of identification indicates among others a transformed cultural politics within the British Pakistani 'community'. This new cultural politics is revealed among many working-class British Pakistani Muslims as will be shown here. The northern cities of England, although called by Yasmin Ali (1992) within the term 'northern conservatism',⁵ have been at the helm of this movement beginning with the protests against the Honeyford affair and including the riots of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham. The new cultural politics is located at the cusp of 'new ethnicities' and negotiations of differences between culture and religion. This renaissance in identity politics has created new identifications for women and since the 1990s (Werbner, 1990) Pakistani women have been continually and progressively claiming a larger share in economic resources and cultural capital. However, it may seem that religious identities have provided a fascinating collusion of culture, ethnicity and gender, from where women have been challenging the old order of cultural patriarchy. It is presumptive and naive to be celebratory of such movements, as noted in the paper by Mojab (2001) where the author revisited the Iranian revolution and the rise of a religiously conscious feminist movement and its failure in Iranian politics. Mojab (2001) discussed the downward spiral of women's rights in Iran after the rise of the theocratic state under Ayatollah Khomeini. Mojab (2001) argued that the failure of Islamic feminism is limited in both theory and practice (p. 139), to be so cannot be called a critical feminist movement as self-proclaimed Islamic feminists have claimed. However, one cannot ignore

⁵ Ali defined 'northern conservatism' as: It is worth illustrating the operation of Northern conservatism. Its unattractive features - insularity, parochialism, and an apparent obsession with the social control of women and girls - can be contrasted with the more positive benefits of community cohesion in the face of racism and external hostility. This can help to explain the strong ties that bind women - of their own volition, in large part - to communities which in other ways frustrate their aspirations. It is also important in this context to contrast metropolitan media images of Northern communities with the more complex reality.

that these new identities are imperative to the Pakistani women and their embodied practice of gender.

In the discursive framework of contemporary mediated worlds, the nature of reflexive identities created by Bradfordian Pakistani Muslim women centres on both contestations of meanings and negotiating the texts that they encounter. Saba Mahmood (2005) discussed how women who have adopted the veil have appropriated the Islamic revival as a tool of negotiating their freedom, agency and authority which radically alters the classical feminist thinking of these concepts. The veil is now an integral aspect of the performative aspect of gender. The performativity of gender is inextricably linked to the reiterative and citational practice that produces the intended effect (Butler, 1993, cited in Ali, 2003). In this theorisation, both Ali (2003) and Butler (1990) agreed that ‘race’ can also be seen as performative; however, the extent to which ‘race’ is performed versus the degree of interpellation that particular groups of peoples are subjected to are not taken into account.

1.4 Overview of the thesis

This thesis examines the ways in which women manage identification through a highly mediated everyday life. In chapter 2, I examine the existing literature that has influenced my understanding of the field of media and gender and I introduce the theoretical framework of this thesis. The questions explored within the framework of the ideal self within a new ethnicity paradigm and ‘identifications’ (Hall, 1992b) recognises the ways in which identities or ‘social’ identifications are forged through both the discursive (media consumption) and the social (the multi-spatial locations of the everyday). I analyse the literature on identity, ethnicity and media. Drawing in particular on the works of Brah (1993), Georgiou (2006) and Mankekar (1999), I argue that identities must be examined within a dynamic articulation of

culture, structure and agency as mutual and interrelated phenomenon. These are discussed in its specificities within Sayyid, Kalra & Ali's (2006) work on British Asian identities, and are reflected on during various stages of this thesis. Drawing on the media ethnographies of Gillespie (1995), Georgiou (2001), Mankekar (1999), Skeggs, Thumim and Woods (2008) and Abu-Lughod (2008) I argue that while potent narratives of resistance and negotiations have been constructed from a classed, ethnic, gendered perspective, these ethnographies have not sufficiently looked at how these alternative spaces mimic the patriarchal structures that feminism and feminist endeavours have historically shunned.

Discussing in greater depth the context of Pakistani femininity and the Bradfordian Muslim identity, chapter 3 sets the scene of the thesis. I start with the historical trajectory to migration of Pakistanis to Britain, their settlement in British neighbourhoods and discuss the role of colonial segregation in the erstwhile colonies as having influenced both 'White flight' and the self-segregation of the migrants. Also pertinent in the discussion of this chapter is the gendering of migration and the subsequent gender segregation of spaces in Bradford in the domestic, communal and national realms, which have led to systemic subjugation of women in the diaspora. This type of analysis requires a methodology which enables the construction and contestation of identity to be analysed in a detailed critical ethnographic methods.

In chapter 4, I develop and discuss this methodology; its relevance to the inquiry, the methods used and how it was employed, and the selection of the participants is illustrated here. I also discuss the specific challenges presented during the fieldwork, which were specific to the 'field', the study and the methods. I argue that through the use of ethnography, it was possible to observe identities in a dynamic nature which contributes to the understanding of the process of identification.

In chapter 5, I discuss how television is embedded in the home: the process of constructing and negotiating the self and also if and when gender becomes relevant within

these familiar spaces. The influence of television viewing within a technologically saturated diasporic household and the manner in which women tailor their lives around media, including those women who reject television altogether as a political stance in their homes seem unique to the participants of this study. This could also be seen as a trend that more proactive women adopt in the future. I begin the discussion with a focus on the ways in which participant observation was employed in the households and I introduce the four households as representations of distinct ‘BrAsian’ characteristics. Central to the observations and interviews in the families is the development and nurturing of the notion that introspective surveillance and gaze is important to the construction of the ‘ideal self’, which the participants locate in their ‘politics of piety’ (Mahmood, 2005) and this study locates it in the postfeminist mediascape as advanced by Gill (2007). The discussion on home focuses on:

- domestic economy
- negotiations and tensions that relate to family life, with particular reference to gender roles and
- gendered uses of technology and media.

In chapter 6, I discuss the role of communal life and the relevance of television within a ‘private’ space which is at the same time ‘public’ – the community centre. The crux of this chapter centres on how community life influences the construction of group identities. Also central are the ways in which the outsider is constructed in discourses developed among the women who use the centre. I explore this community centre as an extension of the community, working as a mechanism that enables as well as restricts female movement and how television features in this context. I also look into the role of television as a tool of communal control, and how surveillance through gaze is effectively exercised by women themselves. The internalising of communal controls through a system of socialising made

possible through consumption of cultural products, especially television, is the main argument of this chapter. The themes explored in chapter 6 are:

- what constitutes the female community space?
- the mechanisms through which identities are shaped and contested in a bounded, gendered community space, and
- discussions on gaze, surveillance and the use of traditional and contemporary community tropes to enact surveillance and gaze.

Chapter 7 looks into the role of mainstream media and the discourse of the nation in the lives of the participants. By referring to research of early scholars on the nation and the feminine in constructing national identities, I look at how women construct their national identity, their sense of Britishness and how they use cultural and ethnic capital to fit into a seemingly foreign British identity. I look at how women negotiate their sense of being British through the narratives of mainstream media. By appropriating liberal democratic values that are compatible with Islamic values, the women view the state as emancipatory. Secondly, I discuss the representation of Muslim women in mainstream media and the responses to these representations among the participants. I argue that while women seek identification with the mainstream media, their representations are seen as particularly alienating and this leads to oppositional readings. Lastly I argue that linguistic differences in media consumption create disparate identifications for women through television. The main differentiation in media consumption is generational. 'New ethnicities' are created in the light of such generational experiences as the 'Other', especially in the context of women who have limited mobility outside the communal spaces, where dominant society is encountered through the media narratives.

In chapter 8, I summarise the findings of the research and reconsider the questions I posed in this introduction chapter about the primacy of television and media in identity negotiations. I discuss the new feminine identity among the participating women as a postfeminist notion rather than an Islamic feminist idea. The display of feminine identities and how it fits into the postfeminist paradigm on the ideal self is discussed at length. Also relevant is the role or lack of traditional mainstream television channels like BBC, ITV and Channel 4 in the lives of first- and second-generation migrant women. The creation of a new ethnic identity bound in the discourse of religion and articulated through new media is addressed in this chapter. I also explore the nascent trend of Muslim women's blogs and Muslim women contributing to various online Islamic message boards as a product of their media consumption and the need to create new discussions.

Chapter 2: An epistemological framework for *Apna* women audiences

In this chapter I discuss the epistemological agenda that informs this thesis. My inquiry was conducted and conceived specifically under the light of politicised gendered Islamic identifications that are constantly produced and reproduced in the media. It can be seen that the participants of this research have increasingly continued to challenge the mediated perceptions and the prevalent conceptions of race, identity and difference. In particular, the emergence of women's movements in contemporary Islam and the Arab spring in the Muslim world, Muslim women's movements throughout the Western world have shed new light on the shifting identities and the increasing use of agency. The widely understood notion of identity as fluid, mutable and dynamic is acknowledged in this thesis, but the most relevant aspect of identity that I seek to address is its gendered political form: how identity becomes a question of power and authority in national, racialised and patriarchal systems and trying to understand who controls and informs identity construction and negotiation, the extent of agency and the ideological leanings that inform identity constructions. This inquiry examines how women seek tacit belonging to a group or community, when they debate where the boundaries around a group should be constituted and how these boundaries should be enforced. As a study that attempts to locate identity negotiations within the highly mediated diasporic space of everyday life (Karim, 1998), I start with my understanding of the term 'audience/s' and explain how they are constituted in this thesis.

As Griswold et al. (2011) defined it, '[a]udience is a collectivity, a mass phenomenon whose attributes are not the sum of individual components' (p. 20). Not limited to a definition of the term 'audiences', Griswold et al. (2011) provided us with an apt framework for studying readers of media or audiences who are located in their specific social contexts in two parts:

[f]irst, upon the social, economic, and political context in which reading takes place; and second, upon the agency of readers as constructors of meaning, images of passivity having been superseded by those that emphasize interpretive agency. (p. 20)

These are two relevant aspects of how this enquiry is designed both theoretically and methodologically: the context of where the research and the researcher are located, and the agency of the audiences/participants of the research. Context here refers to both the physical location of the research and the socio-political, economic, cultural and ethnic context of the research location. Madianou and Miller (2011) argued that ‘it is impossible to research ethnically and culturally different audiences without theorising the concepts culture and identity’ (p. 445). Although Madianou and Miller (2011) used transnationalism and transnational relationships as valid concepts rather than identity, termed as a ‘bounded concept’ (p. 445), I argue that in the case of specific minority groups the overarching sentiments of transnationalism differ. For the Bradfordian Pakistani Muslim women of this study, the cultural or national ties to Pakistan can be seen as retreating and becoming increasingly replaced by religious sentiments which are strengthened through the *Ummah*. The essentialism trap that looms over research analysis when working with ethnically distinct groups is one that I have been conscious of. Hence I recognise and address the need to situate this research and the participants in a pre-migratory context. In chapter 4 I discuss the colonial era segregation and miscegenation laws that have contributed and exacerbated segregation of the ‘Other’ and which inform patterns of migration and social organisation in the diaspora. In this inquiry, identity is defined within Hall’s (1992) notion as:

Identity is actually formed through unconscious processes over time, rather than being innate in consciousness at birth. There is always something ‘imaginary’ or fantasised about its unity. It always remains incomplete, is always ‘in process’ always ‘being formed’ ... Thus rather than speaking of identity as a finished thing, we should speak of identification and see it as an ongoing process. (p. 287)

The main aim of this chapter is to point to the epistemological focus in this thesis with regard to the use of agency among Pakistani Muslim women in the various social structures through

the television rhetoric encountered and appropriated in their everyday lives. The discussion is divided into three sections: the historical trajectory of research on gender and television has detailed the differences of how men and women use television and specifically the use in relation to soap operas (Hobson, 1980, 1982; Lull, 1990; Morley, 1986). Some studies have shown how technology has been used by women to their benefit within the home, on how housewives seemingly reinforce gendered roles in accessing technology and subverting the share of domestic chores on their partners (Gray, 1992; Seiter, 1991). By analysing a series of ethnographic television research, I detail how these studies have informed and progressed the field and specifically how this thesis has benefitted from their specific contributions. Also I examine how media have contributed to the misrepresentations of minority women in popular imagination. I follow this discussion with literature, not only in media and communications, but also on race and gender, and the relevant theories that have influenced my understanding of the field. The 'new ethnicities' paradigm advocated by Hall (1992) and followed by specific scholarship on British Asians (Brah, 1996; Modood, 2005; Sayyid et al, 2007) illustrates the new theorisations of 'new ethnicities'. Influences of these discussions have contributed to how the epistemology of the present thesis has been constructed. I then go on to confer the epistemological context of surveillance and gaze, which I theorise to elaborate an intensely monitored community both internally and externally. Located within surveillance and gaze, the issue of monitoring of the feminine body through clothing has been discussed in the works of Duits and Van Zoonen (2006) and Gill (2007) within a European context. The structures that inform and frame the organisation of daily life inform the final part of the discussion. I propose a multi-spatial analysis and use the structuration theory put forth by Giddens (1984, 1986) to discuss how self-reflexive agency has influenced feminism to recontextualise it into the postfeminist paradigm.

The postfeminist paradigm that I refer to is the non-hyphenated term that denotes an alternative to the second wave feminist normative ideologies, as opposed to the post-feminist idea that tends to conjure the notion that feminism is dead and that women have achieved equality in their respective contexts. Brooks (1997) discussed postfeminism in a similar manner: how postfeminism is an intersection of feminism with postmodernism, poststructuralism and postcolonialism, where postfeminism emerges as a theoretical movement associated with deconstructive challenges to identity politics. I borrow the politics of the hyphen from the postcolonial works of McLeod (2002), who referred to the use of the hyphenation in postcolonialism:

The hyphenated term ‘post-colonial’ seems more appropriate to denote a particular *historical period* or *epoch*, like those suggested by phrases ‘after colonialism’, ‘after independence’ or ‘after the end of Empire’. However, for much of this book, we will be thinking about postcolonialism not just in terms of strict historical periodisation, but as referring to disparate forms of *representations*, *reading practices*, and *values*. These can circulate *across* the barrier between colonial rule and national independence. Postcolonialism is not contained by the tidy categories of historical periods or dates, although it remains firmly bound up with historical experiences. (p. 5)

In this manner, I discuss postfeminism not as a historical period, but as a distinct form of representing feminism. McRobbie (2009) discussed postfeminism as pro-capitalist femininity focussed repertoire, but through this thesis I would like to point to how postfeminist articulations of feminine identity are subversively creating an anti-capitalist alternative sphere of cultural activity.

Another important feature of postfeminism that relates to the women in this study is the manner in which patriarchy is reproduced and challenged in the three domains of home, community and nation. McRobbie (2009) and Gill (2007) pointed to media representations of the postfeminist women Ally McBeal and Bridget Jones being the poster ‘girls’ for this movement. However, subverting the agenda set by these popular characters are real life women who have set out to use strategies that can be seen as postfeminist but are conducive

to and perhaps have contributed to more strides than feminism has in their communities. McRobbie (2009) discussed how heterosexual patriarchy, often governmentalised, exerts renewed power and authority on women, which can be seen in how new migrant women consider a British passport as an important tool of emancipation not just in their social lives, but also in their personal lives. However, the postfeminist ideal is not without its discontent: as McRobbie (2009) pointed out, young women are locked into a hermetic world of feminine ambivalence and distress, where there are no serious critiques of masculinity, patriarchy or heterosexual norms (pg.111) but an increased activity through self-reflexivity and self-help. Located in the paradigm of self-reflexivity and self-help is the politics of piety (Mahmood, 2005), which is highly relevant to the participants of this study.

2.1 Media audience: Scholastic trajectory of audience research

Audience studies have extensively informed the theoretical framework of this study. Ross and Byerly (2004, 2006) provided a comprehensive historical review of literature on audience studies as well as representation of women in the media: the representation analysis reflects a 30-year period of multi-genre portrayals of women. Gill (2007) explored the role of gender in media, using media genres as texts. She explored the representations of gender on television, cinema and even magazine publishing using an extensive array of literature to trace the evolution of gendered representations in the media to the current postfeminist ‘girl power’ feminism of the contemporary media age. There is consensus among the above-mentioned media scholars of the gap in audience research among ethnic minority groups.⁶ From within the scholarship of ethnic audience research, the works of Gillespie (1995), Georgiou (2001, 2005), Robins and Aksoy (2000, 2005), Aksoy (2004), Madianou (2005a) and Mankekar

⁶ Including other scholars who have highlighted the scant research in diasporic communication and media consumption, for example Cottle (2000), Aksoy and Robins (2000, 2003) and Mai (2005).

(1999) have been the most influential for the conceptual and methodological frameworks of this study.

Gillespie's (1995) seminal work on South Asians in West London highlighted the diversity and similarities in television readings of audiences across an ethnic divide in a way that Liebes and Katz (1993) failed to account for. As Harindranath (2000) discussed, Liebes and Katz (1993) confound the distinction between 'race' and 'ethnicity' as conceptually different categories. Furthermore, Liebes and Katz (1993) interpreted cultures as immutable, essential and unchanging, and they also used 'race' as a defining category in their study, where race collapses into culture as synonymous concepts.⁷ Gillespie's (1995) work, however, approached the concept of culture and ethnicity in a fluid and mutable manner. There is a clear distinction drawn in the textual readings between different generations of television viewers within a given South Asian family.

Similar to Gillespie's (1995) fieldwork period,⁸ this study has been conducted during a significant time period in terms of media narratives: post 9/11 and 7/7, Islamophobic turn that media have pursued. Fear, interrogation of identity, newly re-emerged (re-)definitions of Britishness and difference in the public discourse have been peddled throughout the media and political institutions to construct opinions that have caused communities to react in profound ways. This can be understood through Gillespie's analysis, the use of 'juxtapositioning of cultures' in diasporic life and the acknowledgement that 'our vocabulary is ill-suited to describing the cultural change now in process' (1995, p. 4). Gillespie has helped us to understand the dynamic nature of transnational lives through the analysis of disparate viewing experiences of media, and how culture should be seen as mutable between generations of a single family unit. Most importantly, Gillespie has made culture an

⁷ Harindranath's (2000) approach has been discussed extensively in the introduction chapter. Also Gill (2007) offered an informative critique of Liebes and Katz (1993) as essentialist and valorising one culture over the other.

⁸ The 1988–1991 period was the time when profound events transformed both the West (the collapse of the USSR, the fall of the Berlin Wall) and the East (The Gulf War, the fatwa against Salman Rushdie).

inadequate explanation for analysing the lives of diasporic communities. My study and approach differs from Gillespie's in that it focuses on the gendered aspect of media consumption culture. Within most of the ethnic media audience research, gender and class remain under-researched. Gillespie only briefly highlighted the differences in media consumption between men and women, the expectations of women as compared to men within the household and the cultural constraints on women within the Punjabi community in Southall. The modes employed by the women to navigate these situations and make their own meanings within a highly engendered group have rarely been the primary focus of ethnic media research.

Gillespie has emphasised the juxtapositions of cultures associated with transnational lives and Georgiou (2006) located this analysis within a multi-spatial scheme of locating spaces of belonging: the home, the city, the nation and the transnational space. In a manner similar to Gillespie, Georgiou argued that gender, alongside generation and age, informs the politicised processes of self-identification and the construction of meanings of media consumption. Both Gillespie's and Georgiou's works have presented inspiring comparative references as they located the questions of identity construction within a multi-spatial framework, where gender is both articulated and articulates media meanings. The vibrant ethnographic description of North London neighbourhoods where the Cypriot Greek ethnicity unfolds in Georgiou's (2006) research as well as Gillespie's (1995) ethnographic study of Southall's South Asian diaspora's private and public life have demonstrated the complexity of diasporic everyday life, which is grounded in specific localities, but at the same time linked to networks of community and media consumption across boundaries. The gendered nature of television consumption is revealed to exist in novel ways where, as demonstrated by Georgiou (2006), men dominate the community spaces and women use television talk to bond, discussing narratives of both Greek and British television that allow them to engage

with complementary and sometimes conflicting systems of morality and representation. Georgiou (2006) stated that '[T]he playful shift between identities and between media is a constant ordinary condition for the diaspora' (p. 156). This emphasises the transformation of not just individual identities, or the culture of consumption, but also the dynamic and dialogical nature of ethnic community life, which is sustained both through the sharing of common symbols of community and identity – increasingly through the media – but also through its internal divides that support a specific order and hierarchy of identities.

Robins and Aksoy (2002) also pointed to the 'ordinariness' of media consumption for migrant audiences and they argued that choices that are considered paramount by media scholars are often quotidian for audiences. Probyn (1989) discussed the overdetermination of readers' experiences in cultural studies, which creates a space for reflexive critical analysis of the interpretations of audiences and media consumption. Mankekar's (1999) study offers very important points to cope with the overdetermination of readers' experiences and little analysis. In her study of television consumption in a middle-class neighbourhood of New Delhi, Mankekar encountered varied interpretative meanings to texts, which are shaped by the classed and gendered location of the audiences. Highlighting the significance of the contextuality of the audience and the boundedness of meaning-making, Mankekar (1999) discussed the Hindu nationalistic sentiments that are strengthened and reinforced among the viewers as a result of viewing Hindu epics within the gendered and classed sentiments of the audiences, thereby framing an informed analysis as well as audience ethnography.

Since the 1990s, research has located media consumption of transnational audiences in the context of their everyday lives. During this time researchers in the field of migration and media have established that there was no evidence of internal homogeneity within migrant communities and there is no evidence of singular viewership of ethnic media. As Madianou (2005a) and Gillespie (1995) highlighted, there are significant differences in

generational use of media, while Georgiou (2006) pointed out the gender differences in media use among Greek Cypriots in North London. Drawing from Robins and Aksoy (2001), Georgiou (2006) also noted internal cosmopolitanism in the consumption of media in migrant households expressed in varied and critical consumption of media, both ethnic and mainstream. This finding is significant in that it points to the multiplicity of belongings, which reflects a diaspora's movement between different media landscapes (Georgiou, 2006, p. 149). The multiple points of cultural reference were also pointed to in Gillespie's work among Punjabis in Southall. The multiple references were used by young Punjabis to rearticulate and 'accelerate processes of cultural change' (1995, p. 174), thus reinventing Punjabi cultural traditions. The young Punjabis, Gillespie (1995) noted, are viewers of both *Mahabharata*, an Indian Hindu epic, but also contest the 'devotional viewing' and its messages that are considered as traditional Indian values. These young people also consume British soap operas, which Gillespie (1995) pointed out as intensifying their awareness of their context in British society and triggered aspirations for change. Gillespie (1995) also showed how these soap operas are consumed differently by young men and women, and Indian films and programmes are consumed mostly by young women rather than men. This shows to some extent how young women are under stricter conditioning to make choices closer to their parents' cultural groups than men. However, the exceptions to such gendered choices in close-knit conservative families can be seen widely in this thesis. Gillespie (1995), in the same study, also highlighted how watching devotional programmes has been used to transmit cultural values to the younger generation by Punjabi parents in Southall, reaffirming the moral and cultural role of television.

Some scholars have pointed to media choices made by transnational audiences as indicative of their symbolic statement of citizenship⁹ (Couldry, Livingstone, & Markham, 2007); however, this can be refuted by Robins and Aksoy's (2001) work among Turkish-speaking groups in London, where the viewing of television tended to be ordinary and banal and less politicised and associated with a purposeful attempt to connect to 'community'. Madianou's (2005a) research among Turkish speakers in Greece has indicated that the group consumed mostly Hollywood movies dubbed into Turkish, and game show programmes such as *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?* and *Wheel of Fortune*. This indicates a shift in the research agenda pertaining to identity negotiations. Under this new agenda, theory engages with contexts which directly affect the experiences of the groups under study and the resources available to the group to constitute or reinstate them in the larger society.

2.2 Gendered ethnic audiences

As stated above, studies on ethnic minority audiences and media consumption have, at least to some extent, reflected on the engendering of audiences and the intersectionality between gender, class, local and generational identities (Georgiou, 2006; Skeggs, 2005; Skeggs, Thumim, Woods 2008; Wood, 2009). One of the most influential works on television consumption by women in their domesticity was by Dorothy Hobson (1982). Hobson demonstrated the significance of soap operas in the daily lives of women, for whom it had particular salience while performing their domestic chores. The women she studied used soap opera narratives as references to articulate and contest situations in their life (Hobson, 2003, pp. 183–4). More recent studies have found similar findings on how women locate an alternative to dominance-subordination narrative of films (Nochimson, 1992), and also find

⁹ When transnational audiences choose media from within their country of residence, this is often a statement about their citizenship and desire for participation in public life (Madianou 2005a).

pleasure in normative renditions of masculinity and femininity through their engagement with heroic male leads (Thomas, 1993).

There is very little research that locates female subjectivity in the core of research on the consumption of factual and political genres. This gap in the literature became more visible to me as I delved into my empirical study. While I did not overtly seek out political engagement among participants, I found that many women in this study were politically conscious, literate in media and acutely aware of their own position and appropriated their self-identity in an informed manner. They have exercised their political agency in multiple ways, as discussed in the analysis of Chapters 6 and 7. Political agency and engagement is understood in their broader terms, not just voting. The participants occupy locations as citizens of a liberal democracy and as consumers located within a neo-liberal capitalist economic system. As a result, expressed practices and opinions reflect, at least to some extent, choices that are made privately but which have an impact on their understanding of the broader systems of policies and politics that govern their lives.

Established research on female audiences provided a valuable starting point for understanding the ways the private sphere and domestic media consumption can inform identities that are located at home but also in social contexts. Byerly and Ross (2006) have also pointed out that ‘feminist researchers have yet to find real democratic participation by women from that audience in their own behalf to either form or reform policies or practises’ (p. 62). While these studies, among others focussing on soap opera viewing (for example, Geraghty, 1990; Livingstone, 1998), have made a significant contribution to understanding female media consumption in its complexity, they have remained primarily fixated with entertainment and the predominantly ‘female genres’.

Television studies have pointed to differential use of media by women as compared to men, in genres and technology (Brunsdon, 1981; Georgiou, 2006; Gray, 1992; Morley, 1986;

Press, 1991). As Nightingale (1996) noted, the above cited studies on audiences shook up the traditional notion of audiences as passive receivers of messages and through involved empirical work audiences have become understood as active agents. Recently, and especially with the increasingly media-savvy and technology-saturated households, media consumption within the same household has also become diversified and fragmented. In part this has meant a diversification of generational and gender spaces of consumption (Morley, 2007) with consequences for identity. Women's space for consumption often becomes separated from that of men and children, with consequences for the redefinition of the spaces of identity (Georgiou, 2011). In post-9/11 times, the increased racialisation of Islam and Muslims (Abbas 2005; Poole, 2002, 2006; Saeed, 2007) in the media has contributed to creating Muslim audiences who are sceptical and cautionary towards the media rhetoric. The highly politicised and racialised contexts that Muslim audiences live their everyday life in a highly mediated world is relevant to how the social group reorganises itself under the oppressive situations that have emerged with the strengthening of racialised discourses and their perceptions about their community, the nation and the global politics. Importantly, however, the technologically reorganised private space, especially with the increased access to local, national and transnational media, as juxtaposed with the politicised public discourse around Islam, can also advance reflexivity, adding to the symbolic development of the self (Thompson, 1995) as this study will show.

2.3 Mediating 'new ethnicities'

Alienating the newcomer from the old timer, the 'us' from 'them', thereby constructing and maintaining difference has emerged as significant in contemporary right-wing politics, where fear and scarcity of resources have been invoked to create a menacing profile of the 'Other'. As Hall (1996) argued, the representation of the Black subject is achieved through a series of

‘fetishization, objectification and negative figuration’ (p. 443). ‘New ethnicities’ become a form of a new politics of resistance against the representations, argued Hall (1992b, 1996). In effect new ethnicities challenge the politics of representation (Hall, 1996). Central in this theory is the displacement or centrality of race in the subjectification of Black. For Hall (1995), Black subjectivity is located within the struggles to recontextualise and redefine ethnicity. This contestation of the term ethnicity or redefining what constitutes ethnicity is central to this inquiry. The politics of representation that challenges mediated narratives of the ‘Other’ is reflective of the changing nature of the Black subject in Britain.

The representation of the ‘Other’ is also located in how this subject is racialised into specific cultural and political representations. As Sivanandan (2008) noted, ‘racism, in that sense, has always been rooted in economic compulsions of the capitalist system. But it manifests itself, first and foremost, as a cultural phenomenon, susceptible to cultural solutions such as multicultural education and the promotion of ethnic identities’ (p. 222). Often in contemporary research there is a conflation of race, ethnicity and culture. I see the work of Blackstone et al. (1998) as indicative of this association. While the book title reads as *Race Relations in Britain*, in the introduction it stated that the contributors to the book used terms such as race, ethnicity, racism and ethnic minorities in somewhat different ways. No attempt was made to make uniform definitions for such terms since the disparate usages are dependent on the context of the essay itself and most importantly, ‘the variety of usages is itself suggestive of the current state of thinking on the subject and deserves to be brought out’ (p. xii). If ‘race’ has become a formally unacceptable means of defining and constituting collective identities, then it can be said that ethnicity is currently a more common but valued form of group formation, especially in multicultural Western societies (Torres et al., 1999). However, ethnic groupings are not without drawbacks. Attribution of ethnicity to a group forms in itself a politicised discourse. Ethnic identifications of groups with a specific ethnicity

are also political. These groups can be oppressively inward looking, especially with regard to women and subgroups that get collectively clubbed with larger ethnic groups (Kymlicka, 1995, 2001).

‘Race’ and to some extent ethnicity has been used in popular, policy and media representations as attributes to difference and to minority status. The media’s role in shaping meanings of difference is complex and subtle, but nevertheless tangible, according to Stuart Hall:

How we ‘see’ ourselves and our social relations *matters*, because it enters into and informs our actions and practices. Ideologies are therefore a site of a distinct type of social struggle. This site does not exist on its own, separate from other relations, since ideas are not free-floating in people’s heads. The ideological construction of black people as a ‘problem population’ and the police practice of containment in the black communities mutually reinforce and support one another. Nevertheless ideology is a practice...It is generated, produced and reproduced in specific settings (sites)- especially in the apparatuses of ideological production which ‘produce’ social meanings and distribute them throughout society, like the media. (1995, pp. 19–20)

As Hall argued, the site of ideologies exists in relation to others as part of a social nexus, as do identifications. Such relational attributes are constantly denigrated through conscious misrepresentation in the media. Post-9/11 Islamic ideological demonisation in the media has been reinforced, especially in the West. The recent interest in the ‘Other’, the Muslim communities of Britain and specifically the Pakistani Muslims of Britain, by the media corresponds to Ross’ analysis: ‘There seems to be a definite and discernible trend in documentary programming, at least, whereby film-makers invade and exploit particular communities for the sake of “good television” rather than for the purposes of genuine understanding’ (1996 p. 131). While post-9/11 representations of Muslims have narrowed, this is not an altogether new phenomenon. Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (1998) discussed profoundly the reaction of the liberal-left, the moderates and the conservatives in Britain over the Rushdie book-burning incident. While everyone deplored the incident, they also voiced their concerns as to how supposedly ‘Western civilisation’ was being hijacked by the ‘primitive people of faith’. Alibhai-Brown (1998) cited Connor Cruise O’Brien’s writing in

The Times: ‘Muslim society looks profoundly repulsive, because it is repulsive from the point of view of Western post-Enlightenment values’ (p. 124). This construction of the ‘Other’ as the antithesis of the post-Enlightenment Western civilisation is rampant throughout the media as Alibhai-Brown (1998) highlighted through examination of print media, radio and television. Downing and Husband (2005) pointed out that the racialisation of events by media is ‘a reproduction of ‘race’ thinking’ (p. 5). Should ‘race’ then be a defining category? Or is it an interpellated position? The emic and etic accounts of the term ‘race’ give away the colonial context of ‘Othering’ which is replete in how the term is employed in the West. The palpable need to dismiss the pseudo-scientific usage of ‘race’ through active engagement with the term has been argued by Gilroy (2000). While ‘race’ remains etic, ‘racism’ is the reality that is experienced even within an emic position due to its institutionalised and systemic usage of processes of ‘Othering’. Cottle (2000) explained ‘race’ as a product of enlightenment in Europe where scientific calibrations were used to rank peoples in a hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. This served the interests of European masters in their continuing oppression of the ‘Other’ (Said, 1978). Using these parameters, scientists have continued to explain away cultural and economic disparities between social groups (see for example, *The Bell Curve*, Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). As Sivanandan (2008) noted, race is situated in the politics of colour and difference. Of difference Sivanandan (2008) wrote,

‘Black, he discovers, finds definition not in its own right but as the opposite of white. Hence in order to define himself, he must first define the white man. But to do so on the white man’s terms would lead him back to self-denigration’ (p. 7).

As the media representations of the ‘Other’ are mired in the racialised constructions of those excluded from the grand national narratives, it is imperative to discuss how this exclusionary rhetoric that is regurgitated in both mainstream media and ethnic media need to be contextualised in the erstwhile colonial practices.

The concept of ‘new ethnicities’ introduced by Hall (1989) decentres the concerns of mediated ‘race’ and racism (Cottle, 2000). Within the ‘new ethnicities’ paradigm, I find Sayyid, Kaur, Kalra (2007) work engaging and useful. Sayyid (2007) suggested that the term of choice for British South Asians should be ‘BrAsian’. Sayyid clarified that the term ‘is not just a stylistic device but importantly recognition of the need for a category that points one in a direction away from established accounts of national identities and ethnicised minorities’ (p. 5). However, the difficulties in recontextualising any ethnic ‘settler community’ would mean redefining another heavily contested term of British, according to Sayyid (2007). Attempts to define British away from ‘whiteness’ have been dismissed by xenophobic sections of the media and right-wing politicians. Sayyid elaborated on the four main features of the BrAsian category: first, BrAsian is not a fusion of the Asian and Western constituents. Instead, he argued, the term indicates a ‘confusion of the possibility of both terms’ (2007, p. 7). Secondly, the term is situated on the cusp of the West and Non-West, where the heritage does not determine their non-Western character nor does their physical location set them in the Western context. Thirdly, hyphenations remain superficial additions to the postcolonial, ethnically marked identities; Sayyid (2007) further argued that BrAsian demonstrates a disruption to the balance of power away from the national majority. BrAsian, emphasised Sayyid, needs to be conceptualised as an inadequate term, in the Derridean sense of being ‘under erasure’:

A concept can be said to be ‘under erasure’ when it has to be crossed out since it is clearly inadequate; however, the crossing has to remain visible, it cannot be snow-paked out, since there is not adequate replacement (Slater, 2004: 10). BrAsian is not the correct answer to the question of British Asian subjectivities, but nor is there a better answer we can turn to. The line that crosses out and puts the category of BrAsian under erasure can be described as the postcolonial line: crossing out and cancelling the colonial, without crossing being able to erase the concept. (Sayyid, 2007, p. 7)

Fourth, BrAsianness is defined by what can be described as a sense of ironic citizenship, namely, BrAsians experience persistent and deep-seated scepticism about the dominant

mythology of Britishness. The irony stems from institutionalised racism, the doubts about the inclusive claims in the British identity and the failed ‘cricket tests’ (p. 8). The relevance of new terminology like that of Sayyid’s (2007) is pertinent in addressing the paucity of adequate terms under the current social and discursive framework to specifically address the research agenda in the area of British Asian research. Reconfiguring the scholastic agenda figures strongly in the work of Kalra, Kaur and Hutnyk (2005) where they argued that instead of recontextualising the settler communities, it is the study of whiteness that we need to focus on in order to understand the changing nature of social identification.

Cottle (2000) followed Hall’s position stating that with a shift in terminology there has been a theoretical shift towards the perception of culture as ‘fluid, spatially transnational, and multi-layered discursive (and affective) reading positions and how these are sustained within the cultural boundaries of diasporic experience’ (Cottle, 2000, p. 26). Thus, in a bid to adequately situate the ‘Other’, the individual is placed in the discursive context of the everyday, where the individual is recognised as the social (Husband, 2000) and more importantly, the universal connection to the everyday life of communities.

The essentialising aspect of groups is one that confounded me during the initial days of research among a group that is internally and externally highly essentialised. To overcome this problem, Madianou (2011) offered a helpful theorisation of how self-identifications of peoples from minority or majority communities need to be understood. Firstly Madianou (2011) followed the social constructivist approach to identity as being relational and discursive; hence, they need to be understood not as pre-existing and stable but constituted during and within the research. Ethnicity, argued Madianou (2005a) drawing upon Barth (1969), is a form of social organisation that is produced as a result of the interaction between the group and their environment. Madianou’s (2005a) strategy is in line with Barth, and focussed on the mediated processes that create boundaries and thus difference is a useful

paradigm. The other strategy to be employed to understand essentialism is to focus on the ways people describe, redescribe and argue who they are, thus focussing on the discourses and practices about identity rather than on identity itself (Madianou, 2011, p. 451). This includes the performative, discursive as well as material practices of groups. My struggle with understanding the differences between ‘race’ and ethnicity found respite in the definition of the term ‘race’ in terms of power and hegemony, in Downing and Husband (2008):

Such concepts [as race] are essentially metaphors for institutionalized social relationships that combine processes of exploitation and domination, on the one hand, with the processes of subjection and representation, that is, with struggles over meaning and identity, on the other. (p. 5)

If I follow this line of reasoning with regard to discrimination, that it is a hegemonic, relational, exploitative process that seeks to quell the fundamental need to find meaning and identity, then the question of how the mediated ‘Other’ locates the self in media rhetoric that originates in a specific hegemonic context becomes a task that needs to be sustained instead of accomplished.

2.4 Gaze and surveillance

The use of the terms surveillance and gaze in research on Muslim women could suffer from the obvious pitfalls of feeding into the frenetic rants of the Right regarding control and subjugation of Muslim women. Consequently, I steer away from these connotative meanings of these terms. In fact, I argue through the use of these terms for turning them and their connotative values on their head. I discuss surveillance not just as a means of control and monitoring, but as a tool of symbolic introspection. Surveillance, I argue, is the project of self-surveying through the use of the patriarchal tools but by negotiating the negative meanings and allowing for at least some movement within self-imposed social morality.

Gaze has negative connotations in gendered identities’ research. While I acknowledge this patriarchal imposition on the lives of many women and men in this thesis,

the norm of gaze is not just a male appropriation. Women use it on each other in similar ways to control and monitor each other's bodies. My discussion is not limited to how women use gaze to control each other, but also how women control gaze. Michelle White's (2003) work among women webcam users engaged in a similar argument. White (2003) discussed the use of webcams by women and the achievement of agency through negotiating their visibility, thereby controlling the gaze established through the webcam. White's (2003) work recontextualised the spectator away from the traditional spectator-object gendering into a new position of seeing and being seen, which is important to this thesis. This reappropriation of traditionally patriarchal devices to control how and to what extent femininity is viewed and objectified is central to the 'new ethnicities' paradigm of this thesis. Before I move on to the discussions of the terminology, I must make a self-reflexive note of how this inquiry in itself is lodged in the power politics of gaze. This research being ethnographic in nature claims to observe the women and their practices to contribute to a body of knowledge that is disconnected from their everyday lives. My observation is from a context that is disparate from the women I 'observe'. I am located in a position of power and hence this complicates my observation of them. Also, the colonial practices of ethnographic observation of indigenous cultures complicates gaze. Thus the power lodged in research among the 'Other' is extremely problematic and full of pitfalls of essentialising or romanticising the researched through cultural explanations which valorise or denigrate the lives of the 'Other'.

Fatima Mernissi (1991) noted that the Qur'an urges women of faith to lower their gaze and be modest; the operation of gaze here is multi-layered while acknowledging that 'gaze' among women as well as men takes on a sexual, forbidden characteristic. Gaze should, irrespective of the gendered nature of it, be contextualised in power and how this power contributes to inequality. Lois McNay pointed out that:

The effects of these processes of gender restructuring upon the lives of men and women are ambiguous in that they do not straightforwardly reinforce old forms of

gender inequality; nor however, can their detraditionalizing impact be regarded as wholly emancipatory. New forms of autonomy and constraint can be seen to be emerging which can no longer be understood through dichotomies of male domination and female subordination. (2000, p. 1)

The concept of patriarchal domination is a remnant of first wave feminism, and there is an urgent need to see women's lives as far more complex than being dominated by men. While women resist structures of domination through agency, it is imperative to look at the alternative spaces that are created by women. The alternative spaces that are created to function as an emancipatory construct mimic but also appropriate patriarchal structures that they have deviated from by creating new norms and constituting gaze on other women and maintaining boundaries of membership into the group, thus perpetuating the cycle of oppression. Thus the liberationist model of feminist sisterhood often associated with audiences viewing similar genres needs to be explored through the lens of power and gaze. Mankekar (1999) noted similar practices among viewers of Indian serials in northern India, where the national integration message portrayed in the media texts was found to be viewed disparately by similar and differing audiences in a middle-class to lower-middle class neighbourhood in New Delhi. There were no imagined feminist notions being constructed by women who were viewing oppressive and stereotypical representations of women discusses Mankekar (1999) in her study. The higher-caste women sought no 'sisterhood'-induced camaraderie with the lower-caste women. Furthermore, the narrative only re-inscribed women into the already existing caste hierarchies and with the advent of capitalism in India, advertising for products on television introduced class segregation as well, which was apparent in the demarcation of housing for various government employees. The higher-ranking employees lived in close proximity to each other and saw no reason to mix with the lower-ranking employees who lived in another secluded cluster of homes (Mankekar, 1999). By illustrating Mankekar's (1999) work, my aim is not to deride the struggles of the social

underclass who are oppressed by specific economic and cultural practices, but to point out that even the alternative feminine spaces exist within hierarchies where individuals monitor the ‘Others’ within their groups.

Foucault’s *Birth of the Clinic* provides an influential analysis of gaze. Here Foucault described gaze in the context of the medical clinic but imminent in this analysis is the seemingly natural, authoritative characteristic of gaze: ‘Gaze that was not content to observe what was self-evident; it must make it possible to outline chances and risks; it was calculating’ (1989, p. 89). Through Foucault’s words I argue that gaze is not merely the observation of the physical reality of the world or an object; rather, gaze is located in the knowledge of power, gaze is used to assess and evaluate the individual subjected to gaze. After the publication of Foucault’s *Birth of the Clinic* in 1963, he (1979) relocated gaze within the panopticon, through which the role of surveillance in the execution of gaze is examined:

The idea of the panopticon is a modern idea in one sense, but we can also say that it is completely archaic, since the panopticon mechanism basically involves putting someone in the centre - an eye, a gaze, a principle of surveillance - who will be able to make its sovereignty function over all the individuals [placed] within this machine of power. (Foucault 2007, p. 66)

As McNay (2000) pointed out, it is essential to problematise all locations of power. With this in mind it is imperative to locate power among the women who contribute to oppressive practices through surveillance and gaze even in the alternative feminine spaces.

Mahmood (2005) discussed how the question of gaze has been dealt with by the young women involved in the mosque movement of piety in Egypt. Mahmood recounted a specific anecdote of scriptural interpretation of how women can interact with men in universities and at their work place by lowering their gaze, thus avoiding a potential sexual encounter. This interpretation was challenged by the young women who use the headscarves but find that such impositions are specific to ‘the Prophet’s wives’ and not to ordinary Muslim women (2005, pp. 99–102). Mahmood (2005) pointed to how an active member of

the Islamic classes, 'Maryam', unsettled the argument of gender segregation and gaze in modern institutions using Islamic *Hadiths* and *Sunnahs*. This has shown that while women tutors of Islam try to impose their conservative interpretations of Islam, young Muslim women use the knowledge they have gained through peer interaction and their own readings of Islam to counter such hegemonic positions. The unobserved, veiled woman disrupts the prevalent hierarchy of the gaze, thus the woman owns the right of scrutiny. Haleh Afshar (1994) pointed to the 'gaze reversal' that is implied in the practice of veiling. Through the practice of covering, a woman reinstates her position away from being the 'object of the gaze' and instead becomes the spectator with access to gaze upon others as she wishes, thus subverting the gaze to a subversive gaze.

The young women of the mosque movement in Mahmood's (2005) study covered their heads and dressed according to Islamic practices. However, they did this reflexively to control the gaze that was set upon them by a patriarchal male-dominated society. While this space of control and monitoring exists through the interpretative practices of some, it is often contested and challenged on its validity by those who are most oppressed by it. This is evident in the manner that state surveillance is exercised in Egypt, which is detailed in Mahmood's work, for example, where religious lessons are closely monitored: 'it is now customary to see a government employee with a tape recorder sitting at the back of the mosque recording the lessons, which are then examined for phrases and ideas considered objectionable from the state's point of view' (2005, pp. 75–6). Through individual and institutional practices of surveillance, control and power are continually constructed and reiterated. Through the adoption of the *Politics of Piety*, women in Mahmood's (2005) study have negotiated the system of the religious establishment and by maintaining their position in the larger state-sanctioned society of Egypt through education and employment, they have contested ideas of gaze and surveillance. Also, through the use of the hijab these young

women have controlled how their bodies are viewed and limited the objectification that arises of sexualisation of female bodies.

2.5 Constituting structure and agency

Identity negotiations in this thesis are understood as taking place within many structural allocations and constraints. The influences and limitations posed by these structures on both micro and macro levels are examined through a multi-spatial analysis. These spaces act as structures in their specific functionalities. In this thesis I examine three spaces of significance for social order and the structural allocations of identity: the home, the community and the nation. The home, as a domestic everyday location for women and men, imposes specific gender roles and specific socio-cultural and economic roles, which become ordinary and 'natural' as they inform daily life and domestic economy. Community works as a meso-level structure within which women and men work in different roles, occupying distinct positions in varied contexts. Among the ethnic minority community, structures are nuanced and ritualised, while gendered roles are implicit and sometimes explicit in their locating order and hierarchies within the social networks of the diaspora. The national space is understood here as a socio-cultural as well as a political macro-structure that frames limits of social relations and identity through hegemonic systems of ideological control, expressed in policies, representations and the politics of difference embedded in the national discourse and formal politics.

Gender relations are in themselves organised by gender structures. R. W. Connell argued (1987) for a framework that highlights the specific practices within this structure. Connell argued that structures are constraints on practice that operate, typically, through social institutions:

The crucial point is that practice...is always responding to a situation. Practice is the transformation of that situation to a particular direction. To describe structure is to describe what is in the situation that constrains the play of practice. (p. 97)

Connell (1987) referred to authority, coercion and control, which can be accomplished by various strategies, from brute force to the affirmation of hegemony. These gender structures function across the board in communities, from home to the street and within community spaces; Connell (1987) termed this as the gender regime. In terms of the 'flesh and bones' of home, community spaces and national institutions, their symbolic relevance are internalised through the norms of the structures that govern the members' everyday lives. While Connell's (1987) discussion of gender relations within norms and structures is useful, it is limited for the scope of this thesis as I believe that Connell's (1987) discussion of structure does not adequately theorise the human agent in the social relations that create the structure.

A more cohesive explanation of structure and agency is to be found in Giddens' (1984) structuration theory. As Giddens argued, structure and agency are not two disparate constructs, but two ways of understanding social action. Giddens (1984) stated that structures are nothing but social systems produced and reproduced through social interaction (pp. 25–6). Giddens' (1984) structuration theory noted that social life is more than random individual acts, and is not merely determined by social forces. This implies that human agency and social structure are affiliated, and it is the reiteration of the acts of individual agents which recreates the structure. Giddens (1984) pointed to a variable social structure through the actions of people. It also means that by electing not to perform, replace or reproduce the functions that perpetuate the structure it will alter its architecture. This indicates that everyday actions, then, reinforce and reproduce structures but also allows for agency to challenge social structures, thereby alluding social networks to change as well. Giddens' structuration theory has been influenced by three fundamental factors:

[t]he active reflexive character of human nature that interacts, contributes and recreates structures. Secondly, the fundamental role of language and cognitive faculties in the explanation of social life and how this leads to the manner in which

language is embedded in the day-to-day activities and is in sense partly constitutive of everyday activities. Finally, the decline of the influence wielded over social sciences by the empiricist principles of natural sciences, causing new schools of social theory to give more importance to language and the interpretation of meaning. (1984, p. xvi).

While writing the analysis chapters, I found this theorisation of structures helpful since the use of media and the methodology of the study is constituted in all three levels mentioned by Giddens. Media use is constituted in language and television talk that influences the interpretation of meaning was also particularly relevant to my study. The analysis reflects the human agency and the changes in the structures that are essentially creations of social interaction.

The identification with Islam for young Muslim women can therefore be seen as a move towards enforcing change in their cultural structures, which impose norms *de rigueur* to stifle and promote specific roles. The more recent nature of politicised ‘Islamic feminism’ can be seen as emancipatory (Mahmood, 2001, 2005, 2006) especially in the face of earlier conceptions of South Asian women as identified by Brah (1996, cited in Kalra, Kaur & Hutnyk, 2005) in three primary ways:

1. The ‘exotic oriental woman - sensuous, seductive, full of Eastern promise’ typically portrayed by airline advertisements showcasing compliant hostesses;
2. the ‘dirty, ugly, oily-haired’ South Asian woman, and
3. the ‘sexually licentious’ South Asian woman-on-the-rampage.

In this depiction women are either reviled or pitied and young women are shown to be ‘twice victim’ (Puar, 1995). Located in the stories by Muslim women through Islam, of resisting the patriarchy of culture and the modernising, Western state is a historical narrative of agency which remains alternative to the feminism of the West. Hence ‘Islamic feminism’ seems to some scholars contradictory in nature (Shahidian, 1998, p. 58), who have critiqued it as being

fundamentally patriarchal in nature (Kandiyoti, 1998; Moghadam, 2002). The trajectory of the recognition of gender inequality and its evolution into the present-day 'Islamic feminism' was traced in a paper by Mojab (2001). However, in the same paper the author noted that in the early days the efforts amounted to constituting a feminine sphere rather than a Western - style feminist sphere. Scholars such as Ahmed (1992), Hassan (1996) and Mernissi (1991) contributed significant works in resolving feminism with Islam. Mojab (2001) pointed to the similarities of 'Islamic feminism' in Muslim countries to the liberation theology used by women in the West to further feminist actions, but Mojab (2001) highlighted the failure of Islamic feminism in Iran and likened this to the inherent irony of the ideology.

The appropriation of Islamic identities can be discussed in the light of the 'ideal self' through agency. Reflexive engagement in terms of agency is not merely an act of self-consciousness but a monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life. The failure of Giddens' theorisation of agency and structure is that there is an overdetermined reliance on the modernising aspects of Western cultures. As Gauntlett and Hill (1999) pointed out in his criticism of Giddens' work (for example, 1999, 2000) for being pessimistic, Giddens' use of the term modernity is in light of the retreat of tradition in contemporary society. Gauntlett (1999) argued this is proof that an emotional response like 'nationalism' is a remnant of the continually eroding traditional values of a modern society. Gauntlett's (2002) reading of Giddens (1999) in the light of Mestrovic's (1998, cited in Gauntlett & Hill 2002) criticisms seems lop-sided in the light of current world events where even in 'late modernity', as Giddens (1991) suggested, the politics and social trends in Western democracies point to a turn to the traditional more conservative social thinking. As Mestrovic (1998) suggested, this repositions Giddens' sociology as 'appealing to comfortable, middle-class Western sociologists, but which is weak when faced with the plight of the poor and the dispossessed' (Gauntlett 2002, p. 112). This observation also holds true in the case of diasporic

communities where ethnic absolutism and Otherness is the basis of creation of group and individual identities, and individual agency is overlooked in lieu of group interests. Hence structures take precedence through the restraining of agency of the dispossessed. As it has continually been shown in the unravelling of world events, increasing poverty, support extended to plutocrats by Western democratic governments and the rise in xenophobia, Giddens' (1984) original, rational, modernist human agent is yet to be found. Gillespie (2000) pointed out how the crises of modernity throw open new challenges and new ways to cope with them. The duality of structure is thus reinforced through this, by stating how new social relations produce specific actions and create or renew structures:

Young people employ various strategies to reconstruct their identities in the post-migrant situation. One of these is to find comfort and solace in a cosmic and religious view of the world which transcends and redefines the problems of everyday life in the real world - problems such as vulnerability of women, communal tensions, class inequalities, ill health, and poverty, alienation at work, consumerist materialism and environmental destruction... (p. 177)

2.6 Conceptual framework

By theorising the appropriations and contestations of identities I seek to problematise the 'universalism-particularism continuum' and to incorporate a more actively engaging version of gendered diasporic identifications in the case of Pakistani women in Bradford. I revisit the adaptation of Robertson's (1992) analysis of the 'universalism-particularism continuum' by Georgiou (2005), which I consider useful in conceptualising the diasporic mediascapes as reflecting the values of both the universal and the particular. I seek to extend this into the realm of interpretation of media texts. For this thesis, I borrow the idea of the 'universalism-particularism continuum' as an interpretative framework for understanding Pakistani women's mediated everyday life. Georgiou (2005) argued that diasporic media space are both universalistic and particularistic in their orientation and inform our 'understanding of diasporic media cultures beyond binaries and oppositions (e.g. ethnic segregation vis-à-vis

integration; national vis-à-vis transnational, minority vis-à-vis majority)' (p. 2). Georgiou's (2005) work engaged in problematising the simplistic interpretative binaries that are self-perpetuating and make no contribution to understanding complex and diverse social groups, and the process of identity construction in spaces where symbolic contestations are constantly taking place.

Georgiou (2005) presented the findings that support the thesis that values of both universalism and particularism are to be found in diasporic media however specific the case may be, hence the argument that:

[p]rojects such as diasporic media, which are global in their reach but particular in their cultural role. In their vast majority, such projects celebrate particularism within universalism and rely on the assumption that they can function as particular, different and unique projects, because the present condition (of universalism) allows space for all different and unique projects to emerge and develop. (p. 7)

To extend this theorisation into a scheme that locates a gendered diasporic audience in its core would require a theoretical acknowledgement of its contextual specificity, hence the role of the 'universal' needs to be conceptualised when looking into how interpretations are made and remade. Without imposing universalistic values that seek to create uniformity (Laclau, 1995), I propose a conception of the group I studied as located within multiple particularities. For this I have to first discuss my specific problem with the idea of the universal in mind. In a way, universalism reflects the zealotry which is so often reflected in the Christian missionary to the Third World or the colonial anthropologist who does not problematise their own position and seek to understand every culture from their own privileged and presumed position of universal humanistic values. Again, how can we remove the binarisms of Western social theory through the use of another dyadic conception? Universalism and particularism postulate that there are two values, and there is the implicit assumption that one is more valuable than the other. Benhabib (1994) defined universalism as 'the principle that all human beings, by virtue of their humanity, are entitled to moral respect from others, and that such universal moral respect minimally entails the entitlement of individuals to basic human,

civil, and political rights' (p. 173). As Young (1989) pointed out, universal is defined as the opposite of the particular in Western political thought, and the dichotomy is problematic not just conceptually but also politically. Lodged in the universalism paradigm that is imposed on transnational lives are theorisations of cosmopolitanism (Hall, 2006). Hall (2006) distinguished cosmopolitanism brought on by universalising globalisation as a classed phenomenon. Here the upper-class highly mobile global traveller adopts a selective cosmopolitanism, while migrant labour affected by the perils of globalisation is forced into a demotic cosmopolitanism, which Hall (2006) believed is more disabling than the former. Here the migrant labour is often perceived to be located in an essentialised, closed culture, as opposed to the more mobile cosmopolitanism of the global traveller. Hall (2006) also cautioned against celebratory attitudes towards theorisations of cosmopolitanism. Similarly Beck (2006) emphasised the need to overcome the naive conceptualisations of Western universalisms and the need to recognise 'many universalisms' (p. 13), through the practice of methodological cosmopolitanism. Beck (2006) defined methodological cosmopolitanism as encompassing other (native) sociologies, thus destabilising and replacing the dualisms with 'entangled modernities' (p. 14). These entangled modernities can be traced in the articulations of femininities among the group of women I studied.

In Western societies where difference is looked on as a threat and with suspicion, the multicultural discourse looks at the particular, and that which wants to remain so is looked at as insular. Why are particularities seen as confined spaces of social relations? Approaches that interpret the existence of ethnic areas of London as ghettos belong to this paradigm. Particularities of the local are nurturing and sustain the ethnic economic and social infrastructure for ethnic minorities. For many who locate themselves in these particularities, these spaces are seen as secure frameworks where they experience palpable relief from the distantiation of the universal. Many Bradfordian Muslim women who watch the Islam

Channel from their specific socio-economic and political context in Britain would possibly relate to the struggles of a French Algerian Muslim woman. In the larger construct of the universal there are still particularities: the imagined construct of the *Ummah* within Islam could be seen as a universalistic construct, but the *Ummah* is experienced differently by different sects within Islam. The Sunnis, Shias, Ahmadis, Sufis and other sects of Islam, for example, make critical distinctions in how Islam is practised and how they imagine the *Ummah* and their belonging to the community are also particular to their context. What the persistence of the *Ummah* as an imagined transnational community with and across difference demonstrates, is that universalism entails different versions of universalisms (and not always centred in Western value systems) and it is always understood from within particular positions.

I seek to theorise the role of the universal and in effect diminish its self-standing relevance vis-à-vis the persuasion of particularities. If as audiences our linguistic, cognitive, and meaning-making faculties are contextual then can it not be argued that the particularities of the discursive frameworks of everyday is what influences the shaping and contesting of the mediascapes, rather than the contextually distant and overdetermined values of an abstract ideology of universal values?

Young pointed to the definition of the universal as the opposite of the particular, the moral, civilised republican life in opposition to the backward-looking, uncultivated desire that is generally assigned to non-whites:

As long as that dichotomy is in place, the inclusion of the formerly excluded in the definition of citizenship - women, workers, Jews, Blacks, Asians, Indians, Mexicans - imposes a homogeneity that suppresses group differences in the public and in practice forces the formerly excluded groups to be measured according to the norms derived from and defines by privileged groups. (1989, p. 255)

Young's (1989) writing helps problematise the dichotomies imposed on universal citizenship, but what I seek is to extend this notion of the problematised dichotomy into the universalism-particularism continuum that cuts across citizenship and identity (in a way that these two

concepts can only be understood within a continuum). Particularism and its persistence over universalism provide a consistent challenge to grand theories and require particular attention to agency and contextuality. My understanding of particularism and the persistent dominance of particularistic social groups is inspired from a ‘pointillist’¹⁰ perspective. Here several small, distinct dots of pure colour are used in patterns to form a complete image. Can the mediascape be understood in terms of a composition of distinct particularities, complete within its context and integral within the larger portrait?

The shortcomings of universalistic values in the lives of the least upwardly mobile population also thwarts the paradigm of the ‘fluidity of identities’, perhaps challenging theorisations about multiple free-standing particularities. Gauntlett’s work assumed a rising ‘fluidity of identities and the decline of tradition’ (2002, p. 247); however, the decade after his work was published has emerged as critical in the shaping of world events. Beginning with the events of 9/11, 7/7, the wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan, and the financial crisis and subsequent rise in unemployment and deprivation has pushed much of the Western world into conservative inward-looking nationalistic communities. The rise of neo-conservative Christian sympathies in much of Europe and the United States points to a rise in traditional, non-fluid identities that are in a flux thus challenging the course of the postmodern turn in contemporary Western societies.

Conclusions

This chapter aimed to introduce the key theories and concepts that inform this thesis and the empirical study’s conceptual framework. In unpacking some of the conceptual problems regarding the realities and politics of ‘race’, I stressed the historical foundation of the concept and its current understanding in dialogue to ethnicity. Media and gender and the continuing

¹⁰ The theory or practice in the art of applying small strokes or dots of colour to a surface so that from a distance they blend together.

tensions that arise between the text, the reader and the context were explored through the limited but exhaustive literature on women and media. Literature on ethnic minorities and media consumption remain severely limited, more so in the case of gender-specific studies of ethnic audiences. Within the framework of existing studies, I used a context-based, qualitative analysis that privileges agency and context. I also discussed the representation of the 'Other' through discourses of 'race' and ethnicity. The increasing racialisation of Muslims and the racialisation of the 'Paki' through sustained attacks in the media and by various social groups on a specific community have contributed to increased alienation. Following Hall's (1991) 'new ethnicities' paradigm, I discussed Sayyid's (2007) neologistic usage of the term 'BrAsian' and how the permanence of such terms being 'under-erasure' is a salient reminder of how social relations have historically evolved and communities continue to reinvent.

The discussion of surveillance and gaze was introduced in some detail as it has become a core element of my understanding of gender within the context of this study. Within these concepts, I also became aware of my own gaze while acknowledging the gaze of others on the participants and their gaze on me. I pointed to how Mahmood (2004) and Afshar (1994) use the concept of gaze and surveillance in engaging terms that challenge patriarchy. Women exercise their agency, argued Afshar (1994), thereby subverting and controlling their spectator-object relationship, as I highlighted in the discussion of Michelle White's (2003) study set among female webcam users. This set the tone of discussion of gaze and surveillance in my own analysis.

As will be shown, young women who come to the community centre in a hijab then proceed to take instruction in a *Jujitsu* class, displaying their self-reflexive understanding of their gendered position in the community and the national society by taking control of their

body, at least temporarily, through systems of a controlled mobility that they escape when they challenge the emasculation hypothesis by taking up a male self-defence sport.

In this chapter I also emphasised the core role of structures in understanding identity and identification, drawing primarily from Giddens' (1984) structuration theory and the interplay between structure and agency. Human agency, language and its role in creating and maintaining structures and the interpretation of meaning are central to how this thesis studies the mediated everyday life of Bradford Pakistani women. From viewing television to talking television, the role of language, context and agency is reflected in how the analysis unravels in the multiple spaces which in turn work as micro and macro structures of social interaction.

Finally I introduced my conceptual framework. The main emphasis was on the role and salience of particularities not just in how diasporic lives are constructed, but how both diasporic and mainstream media are ordered and made sense of within a framework of continuities between particularistic and universalistic discourses of identity. This is indicative not of a disharmonious space but of distinct dots that when put together within a specific framework create a coherent narrative.

In the chapter that follows, I discuss the relevance of context in this study and how Bradford and its emergence as the centre of Islamic ideology in Britain has contributed to the strong identities that have emerged. Is it possible for the Pakistani women who are actively appropriating an emancipatory version of Islam to challenge the cultural markers that were so identifiable with a specific ethnic group and to impose these over the community to effect a change in how they construct and maintain their boundaries?

Chapter 3: Bradford to ‘Bradistan’¹¹ and beyond – Gendered locational politics

As a physical place and as a symbolic space, Bradford has oscillated much in a short span of time and still continues to shift from points of identifications. From being the erstwhile, industrial centre to the ‘citadel of Islamisation of Britain’ (Akhtar, 1989), it signifies many meanings depending on the position/contextuality of the viewer. It has been discussed in the discourse of identity whereby in the face of a crisis identity is reaffirmed (Woodward, 1997), and I argue that ‘Bradistan’ is one such formulation, rising from a torrent of crises, riots and notoriety, which is discussed in detail in the coming section. In this thesis Bradford figures as an empirical entity; much of the academic and policy literature on Bradfordian British Pakistanis are informed by the history and decline of the economic conditions, which further degraded the social and political situation in Bradford. In this chapter I discuss the Pakistani Muslim migrant history and demographics in Britain, the urban segregation of Bradford, situate it historically in the colonial context and then move to the contemporary layout in the streets of Bradford and the gendered mediated spaces created in the city where ethnic identity sustains itself through communal practices that gender and segregate the bodies of Pakistani Muslim women.

The riots of 2001 form the ‘Other’ key issue of concern in the razing of Bradford as a city in official reports that followed and how *Bradistan* was constructed as a ‘liminal’ (Bhabha, 1994) space for Bradford’s Pakistanis. However, the identity of *Bradistan* is also reaffirmed in community celebrations like the Bradford Mela,¹² which was started as a small event in 1988. Due to its resounding success the event has been held ever since as a celebration of a distinct British Asian culture. The Mela hosts many events that are not

¹¹ Local slang for Bradford, the term sheds light on the concentration of the Pakistani Muslim population in Bradford.

¹² Mela is a word derived from Sanskrit, meaning to meet. It is used in Hindi to mean celebration. The connotative meaning of the word is shared across the sub-continent to mean to come together.

limited to the subcontinental culture: music bands play diverse genres, like techno, funk, heavy metal and Sufi music to name just a few. The event attracts people from all ethnic backgrounds and also features many family activities. It is an interesting mosaic of peoples that represents the symbolic journey from Bradford to *Bradistan*. Bradford is now a former industrial town surviving as the ghost of its imperial legacy. The colonial heritage briefly glimpses through the architecture. However, the city's urban regeneration plan has left it with an undone void in the middle of the city centre. As a part of the city's regeneration plan, Bradford council had planned to build a new commercial centre in the heart of the city, which now survives as a large gaping pothole in the middle of the city due to various fund shortages that have affected the council. Resembling the future direction of the city itself, this 'void' symbolises the empty spaces that exist between the talk of 'multiculturalism', 'integration' and its reception in the communities residing in Bradford. This critique is not to say that the city has not achieved much in the direction of integration and cooperation. While multicultural events and talks are being pursued in the higher echelons of Bradfordian society, many streets languish in deprived housing conditions, and problems persist with the drug trade in residential areas and disruptive gang violence among young Pakistani men (Samad, 1998).

Post 9/11 and 7/7, the community centres and other local organisations have intensified their efforts to increase participation of South Asians in Bradford. However, the real deprivation that affects the city is the severe unemployment among various sections of society. The impact of the current recession and the funding cuts will further push deprivation southwards in Bradford. Many community centres in Bradford engage the young women, men and children in the area in life-building activities but this could be severely affected by the austerity measures proposed by the government.

3.1 Bradford: Immigration and composition

The city's ethnic make-up is 19.9% Asian British as of June 2009. From the total of 512,600 persons in Bradford, the national census¹³ estimates indicate that 67,700 are of Pakistani ethnicity. In percentage terms this indicates that 13.4% of the total population of Bradford is of Pakistani ethnicity; the national census also indicates that 75,188 persons in Bradford are Muslim, which translates into 16% of the total population of Bradford. A clear estimate of British Pakistani Muslims cannot be arrived at because British Pakistanis could also be non-Muslims, hence all of the 13% are unlikely to be Muslim and the 16% of Muslims may belong to other ethnic and national groups that live in Bradford. There has also been a South to North migration of Muslims to Bradford within Britain, which makes it an overwhelming site of ethnic activity.

The Bradford Metropolitan District Council (2000, pp. 1–2) gave projections for 2011 stating that the numbers of people of British Pakistani heritage are bound to reach 102,350 and Bradford schools are bound to have 40 per cent of pupils of Pakistani heritage. McLoughlin (2005) iterates that the political power exerted by Pakistanis in Bradford is a result of socio-economic status enjoyed by Pakistani immigrants over the years in Bradford. This ethnic strength exerted by one group in Bradford also gives the area much of its notoriety, as Akhtar noted: 'Bradford has become, partly as an accident of timing, the newly discovered citadel of Muslim radicalism' (1989, p. 43). The 'Islamisation' of public places in Bradford has been perceived with scepticism by many non-Muslims. The mosques of Bradford have provided for a highly developed ethnic clustering but McLoughlin (2005, p. 1045) argued that these mosques in Bradford 'have been able to engage Muslims in cooperative relationships with the public space'. Although Trevor Phillips (2005, cited in

¹³ Available on this link:

<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/LeadKeyFigures.do?a=7&b=276807&c=Bradford&d=13&e=13&g=379237&i=1001x1003x1004&m=0&r=1&s=1319466897790&enc=1>

Ceri Peach 2007, p. 14) stirred the academic and social circles by arguing that Britain was walking into American style ‘ghettoisation’: ‘The number of people of Pakistani heritage in what are technically called ‘ghetto’ communities trebled during 1991–2001; 13% in Leicester live in such communities (the figure was 10.8% in 1991); 13.3% in Bradford (it was 4.3% in 1991)’.

Before exploring the socio-economic challenges faced by contemporary Bradford, it is important to look through the past of the city, when and how the first mass Pakistani settlers arrived and made the city their home. The Asian settlements in Britain are intimately connected to the empire and the industrial revolution that absorbed these immigrants. The earliest South Asian migrants came to Britain as early as the mid-17th century with the European sailors as *lascars*¹⁴ and *ayahs*¹⁵ (Ballard, 1994; Visram, 2002). However, the significant immigration from South Asia was just after the Second World War when Britain faced a severe shortage of labourers to rebuild the country and to work in the cloth mills and other factories during the early and mid-1950s. The labour shortage in Britain had previously been filled with recruits from the countryside, Ireland and Eastern Europe; however, the industrial boom still needed labourers to fill in factories and the seamen and the commonwealth immigrants were now considered for work that no one else was willing to take up (Ballard, 1994). Furthermore, the construction of Mangla Dam in Azad Kashmir¹⁶ displaced many and stimulated migration to Britain. The factors that influenced the outward migration from Pakistan were discussed by Anwar (1979) where he talked of four main ‘push’ factors: chain migration facilitated by early settlers; the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 which was set in motion by the British prior to the independence of both India and

¹⁴ Helpers on the ship.

¹⁵ Housekeepers or nannies.

¹⁶ The Pakistan-controlled area of Kashmir; it is a constitutionally independent state although controlled by Pakistan.

Pakistan; the ongoing conflict in Kashmir; and the construction of Mangla Dam which displaced a large population.

The early migrants to Britain survived their time in Bradford under adverse situations. The work hours were excruciatingly long and pay was poor compared to the white workers. Talking to the British Pakistani men and women who moved to Britain in the 1940s shed light on their earlier days in the city. Many of the Pakistani men moved from the villages of Mirpur in Pakistan as young single men (Lewis, 2002; Shaw, 1988) and lived together with their countrymen in houses in Bradford. Their work was in the factories of Bradford; as immigrants who had the opportunity to turn around their family's fortunes, many of them worked hard and hoped to return to Pakistan after they had saved up enough money to own homes and means of living in their villages. Some did return although the majority stayed in Bradford. The men who lived together did this not just to keep their living costs low, but also for a sense of security (Saifullah-Khan, 1975). An older Pakistani male resident narrated his initial days in Bradford while I was on a house visit: after a week's work in the factory the Pakistani men would go to the local mosque; the oldest mosque in Bradford is in a terraced house which survives to this day. Since the majority of the men did not know how to write or read, one Pakistani male acquaintance of the group who knew how to read and write would come to their home, write letters on their behalf to their homes in Pakistan and even read the letters to those who could not. In return he was offered feasts cooked by his friends. These groups of men had encountered widespread instances of racism where they would be attacked by groups of drunken white men late in the evening, so foraying outside the home after dark had to be in groups. Despite the many prejudices, life in Bradford provided opportunities that would otherwise have been few and far between in Mirpur. It was not just the economic opportunities that were within reach now, but also the health-care and educational opportunities that seemed distant were now a reality. The movement of the families from

Mirpur to Bradford did not mean a disconnection from the 'home country': they maintained property and strong familial bonds in Mirpur (Lewis, 2002). As per the cultural norms of their *biraderi*/social group, they married from close and extended family to maintain and extend economic prosperity to other family members. The *biraderi* traditions that went on in Mirpur were to continue in Bradford through the strict regulations placed on marriage and maintaining caste lines (Saifullah-Khan, 1974).

The multiplication of Pakistani peoples in Bradford further resulted in the sectionalising of largely homogenised Muslim diasporic spaces, like the mosque in Bradford. The Mirpuris, Pathans, Potohari, Punjabi, Henko and Chaachis are all distinct subnational identities, reproduced in Bradford on cultural and linguistic fronts for which the nearest approximation is 'Pakistani'. These variations are only evident when one develops a day-to-day understanding of the life in the seemingly homogenous Pakistani community. The construction of a distinct ethnic identity works on many levels, controlling cultural markers, examples being language, myths, symbols and costumes, and also most importantly by exercising control on the young women and men in the community (Saifullah-Khan, 1975, 1976). Marriage within the community and to which families are strictly regulated, as is the case with South Asian and East Asian cultures, is done mainly to preserve the wealth within the familial strata. This custom is in decline due to the strides in education that women in the Pakistani community are making. The age of marriage is steadily increasing and so are the demands for an educated partner (Mohammed, 2005). However, the issue still plagues many young women within distinct castes where the *izzat*/honour of the family rests on the women and their bodies. This tradition of arranging a woman's life is prevalent among many South Asian communities and their diaspora. This moral and social organisation system that sustains ethnic life also provides continuity to traditions such as arranging marriages within

the group. In this sense, geographical belonging in both Pakistan and Britain are important to British Pakistanis, albeit this is different for people of different generations.

During the initial days of my fieldwork, I would often get asked about geographical belonging and this question would come from all age groups. When I met Sabida,¹⁷ a 63-year-old living with her daughter Yaseen and her family, Sabida could immediately assess my immigrant status in Britain and wanted to know about where I came from. When I answered with ‘Leeds’, she quipped again as to where I ‘originally’ immigrated from. Such questions came from older generation women as a means of connecting their own experiences of the subcontinent and their own immigrant trajectories with mine. When I asked her where she would situate herself, she answered ‘that her heart still belongs in her village where she grew up, but it also rests where her children are now’. This often led to a conversation of their village life in contrast to their experiences in Bradford, the diet, religious and family celebrations, raising children, etc. In contrast, during my interview with Heena, a 22-year-old second-generation Bradfordian, the same question was answered with a statement that she is from ‘around the corner’. This contextualising of self is relevant to questions of belonging and identification. This positioning quite literally signifies a shift in belonging in the minds of many young British Pakistanis. Questions of origin and belonging however are not just raised by immigrants in Britain: I have been at many junctures in my life in Britain and have been asked of my ‘true’ place of origin by white Britons; my skin colour always displaces me from the immediate geography of Britain.

Bradford is as one chooses to see it: the city’s grey and undone industrial façade does little in revealing its religious diversity, with Orthodox Christian churches, Sikh Gurdwaras, Hindu temples and Shia/Sunni/Ahmedi mosques lining many streets in the city. However, social cohesion issues are far removed from the architectural layout of the city; the Ouseley

¹⁷ Name of the participant has been changed to protect her identity.

Report (2005) ‘painted a bleak picture of the community cohesion situation, which received much local and national attention’ (Alam & Husband, 2006). The disconnect and alienation of British youths have been discussed in many official reports and academic articles (Abbas 2007; Dwyer & Bressey, 2008; Lewis 2002, 2007; Phillips, 2006; Werbner, 2002, 2005) and the issues that underpin alienation is rife among the youth of the Pakistani Muslim community. The Pakistani community was once a cohesive part of the British workforce in the heavy industries and contributed to the rebuilding of Britain; however, the rates of unemployment and low rates of education, together with the current economy in Britain, has had a cataclysmic effect on the alienation of ethnic minorities. As Lewis (2002) discussed, the problem of traditional political and religious leadership in Bradford is the failure to connect with the British Muslim youth, where there is a reproduction of clan- and caste-based political hierarchies and rivalries imported from Azad Kashmir into the wards of Bradford, which was also stated in the official reports on the Manningham riots which occurred in 1995. A string of political and cultural issues which were sensationalised by the media has drastically affected the way the Pakistani Muslims of Bradford are perceived today: the Honeyford affair, the Rushdie affair and the Gulf wars are some of them. The Muslims of Bradford were constantly faced with the question of, ‘which side are you on?’ mostly harped upon and posed by the media. The direction these events took on in official discourse was that ‘Britain is sleep walking into segregation’ (Peach, 1996a; Phillips, 2005; Poulsen & Johnston, 2006); this ‘ghetto’ as many called it had to be fixed. The following section discusses this narrative of ‘ethnic clustering’.

3.2 Segregation and Bradford

Segregation and more so self-segregation is a much talked about issue in the context of Bradford (Cantle, 2001; Ouseley Report, 2001; Phillips, 2005). However, when

contextualising the segregation of today one needs to look at how it was employed historically by the colonialists in the subcontinent to maintain racial superiority and avoid miscegenation. During the British Raj, there was segregation of the whites and Indians and any racial mixing or miscegenation was strictly prohibited by the East India Company and it was pursued doggedly by the company as part of their ‘race’(ist) campaign in the subcontinent. This campaign was so extreme that the children of such racial mixing, called ‘Anglo-Indians’, were not recognised by the British or by the Indians¹⁸ (Dalrymple, 2002). There were orphanages that took in these children, who were cared for by the missionaries. Such segregation was also part of segregating the workforce in the early days of labour migration to Britain. Miscegenation fears after World War I were widely prevalent in Britain; the discourse implicated that racial intermixing would lead to violence between white and black men. These relationships involved sexual promiscuity and that this mixing would result in a eugenics disaster. This resulted in a move to protect the racial purity by protecting the white woman from the onslaught of the ‘uncivilised black man’ (Bland, 2005). These attitudes have followed Britain into its ‘urban ghettos’ where even today racial intermixing is looked down upon by many South Asians, particularly by communities governed by the cultural code of the *biraderi* system. In Bradford, the ethnic clustering has much to do with this system but also it instils a feeling of community, kinship, security and local economy among migrant communities. The segregation was also institutionalised, as Kundnani (2001) argued:

Those that could not afford to buy themselves out took advantage of discriminatory council housing policies which allocated whites to new housing estates cut off from Asian areas. Out of Bradford’s large stock of council housing, just 2 per cent has been allocated to Asians. And, in Oldham, the local authority was found guilty of operating

¹⁸ William Dalrymple’s work, *White Mughals*, is a popular historical work on the relationships of white men and Indian women and their children, known as ‘Anglo-Indians’, too dark to be Europeans and too white to be Indians! ‘In 1786, Lord Cornwallis arrived in India after being defeated by George Washington in America, he was determined not to let another defeat affect him in India, he immediately passed an order, prohibiting any Anglo-Indian child from being educated in England or owning land, having an Indian parent also disqualified any candidate from working for the company in any capacity.’ (p. 40)

a segregationist housing policy following a Commission for Racial Equality investigation in the early 1990s. Those Asians that did get council accommodation on predominantly white estates soon found their homes targeted, bricks thrown through windows, sometimes petrol and a lighted match through the door. The fear of racial harassment meant that most Asians sought the safety of their own areas, in spite of the overcrowding, the damp and dingy houses, the claustrophobia of a community penned in. And with whites in a rush to flee the ghettos, property prices were kept low, giving further encouragement to Asians to seek to buy their own cheap homes in these areas. It was 'white light' backed by the local state. The geography of the balkanized northern towns became a chessboard of mutually exclusive areas.¹⁹

More recently and famously, the Ouseley Report (2001)²⁰ discussed the issue of self-segregation among the majority of Pakistanis in Bradford, a complex phenomenon which has been explored in detail in the works of Peach (1996a, 1996b, 2007,²¹ 2003). Even though an ethnicised neighbourhood may seem largely monocultural to a complete outsider, many South Asian neighbourhoods sustain many cultures in their fold: Pakistani, Indian, Bangladeshi, Sri Lankan and other Asian cultures. One must always remember that even though all the above-mentioned groups originate from the subcontinent, they are diverse in every aspect, be it religious, linguistic or cultural. Every religious, cultural and even dietary group is represented in the ethnic spaces of Bradford. The *biraderi* system among the Pakistani community is also to be factored in when considering ethnic clustering in Bradford, as cited in Peach (2007). The *biraderi* system was stated as 'predominantly voluntary' in Dahya (1973, cited in Peach, 2007). Although the largest ethnic group in Bradford remains Pakistani, as a testament to the diversity among Asians in Bradford in 1978 the Asian Youth Movement was started with the aim to transcend the religious and nationalistic barriers and reach out to all South Asians in Britain. However, this movement was thwarted by ancestral tensions between religious groups. Another turning point of an already sour relationship was

¹⁹ <http://www.irr.org.uk/2001/october/ak000003.html>.

²⁰ The full report can be accessed at <http://www.pixunlimited.co.uk/pdf/news/bradford.pdf>.

²¹ The full discussion was organised by Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung GmbH on ethnic segregation in the participating countries; it was attended by Ceri Peach (UK), S. Musterd/W. Ostendorf (Netherlands), and R. Andersson (Sweden). The report can be accessed at http://www.wzb.eu/alt/aki/files/aki_segregation_three_countries.pdf.pdf#page=9.

the 'Rushdie affair', where the Hindu and Sikh groups distanced themselves from the Muslims (Lewis, 1994).

During one of the house visits to Shaheena's house, I asked her if her family lived nearby. She said, 'not in the immediate vicinity, as most Pakistani's do'. I queried why her situation was different and she replied, 'the area was suited for her children as one of them was a special needs child; she had also found a school for him there, the schools were better than in most other areas.' Shaheena also said that there were initially many white families in her neighbourhood but many of them had moved out after the Asians started moving in. This phenomenon, often referred to in popular discourse as 'White flight', has been cited in academic and policy literature as one of the reasons for segregation. As many reports have noted, despite the negative aspects of segregation, this ethnic clustering has had many positive effects on the sustenance of diasporic community life in Britain. For example, for many Asians being isolated in a 'white ghetto' was not a desirable option because the new immigrants longed for the safety net of similar cultural bonds to help them sustain their new life in Britain.

South Asian migrants usually develop intense transnational and local ethnic linkages through which they devise strategies to cope with migrant life. These manifest as migrant associations, which organise cultural shows and parties where their language, music and religion is put on display for the older generation to reminisce and the younger generation to adopt. South Asian migrants also live in ethnic enclaves to sustain an ethnic infrastructure based on their ethnic habits. What Bradford as a city provides is this ethnic infrastructure essential to the creation and maintenance of an ethnic identity, which continues to attract Pakistanis from within and outside Britain towards Bradford. This ethnic identity is renewed not just because it is distinct from their parents' sense of being a Pakistani, but also because it draws its sense of belonging to the 'British' narrative from their 'Bradfordian' upbringing. As

Gilroy stated, tradition is 'in ceaseless motion, a changing same that strives continually towards a state of self-realisation that continually retreats beyond its grasp' (1995, p. 122). This 'tradition' is waxing and waning in many streets of Bradford; however, tradition is now moving beyond the realms of culture and into the religion of Islam, which spans a larger and more inclusive group for the Muslims of Bradford who have merged into the Muslims of Europe; a pan-European Islamic *Ummah* can be clearly located in the ethnic media narratives. The infrastructure that arises out of such enclaves constitutes the physical manifestation of the structural foundation of minority community life and the distinct ways in which their daily lives are led. This geographical setting becomes a canvas for their cultural and religious messages, which are not always meant for those outside the specific ethnic group but for those within it: most often it is the older generation who are seen as the audiences. However, with the proliferation of religious ethnic media in Europe, younger ethnic audiences in the UK and other European countries are increasingly being seen as part of the audience group. This brings about a main drawback of the ethnic infrastructure that exists to sustain and flourish ethnic life, that of succumbing to an essentialist layout and subsequently thwarting those who move beyond its limits. The young women and men of the second and third generations have cited their ethnic neighbourhoods as smothering their freedom; a street is usually dotted with homes of people belonging to one large extended family. This creates a zone conducive to observing and limiting the movement of young people and most importantly of women.

As in the case of tradition, culture and religion there are many causative factors that keep young people conditioned to choose the options from the immediate vicinity of life. The initial logic of settlement is being challenged by the generation of young people by establishing nuclear family households. The second generation of young women and men are also creatively generating 'gendered spaces' which are expressed in the language and coded

practices of being Bradfordian Muslims, dress being an important aspect of this. Mohammed (2005) noted in her study among British Pakistani Muslim women that the negotiation of community border and even its resistance through dress was a critical matter in order to create 'community' spaces.

As I discussed earlier, during the days of early immigration there were attacks on men and as a result many preferred to live together and move together in the streets of Bradford; furthermore, this clustering continued to ensure the safety after their families joined them. This is when a sense of 'community' started to emerge among the Pakistani settlers (Hiro, 1971). This was also the beginning of the severe control of the visibility of the bodies of women with practices of veiling much more rigorous than those in Pakistan (Saifullah-Khan, 1976). As in the case of Rameela, a Pathan woman who struggled against her parents' and brothers' wishes and worked as a community worker, recounted her days as the 'dark ages'; Rameela is a friend who I met during my internship days, and she agreed to host me during my fieldwork in Bradford. Her only daughter, and the first one in her immediate and extended family to go to college, made it to a dentistry course in a reputed university in Britain which for Rameela was a matter of personal achievement. Rameela's daughter dropped out of university when she met her husband and is now settled in her domestic life. The last time I visited Rameela, she was preparing for the arrival of her second grandchild. I asked her how this new role made her feel, and although she seemed happy to see her grandchildren, she said:

[F]or a Pathan woman domesticity was the only given and I thought by fighting with my Dad and Mom I made a difference....all I can.... want for is that my grandchildren will go a step further and be educated and employed.

Rameela was born and raised in Britain and having married at a very young age she divorced at a young age too. Rameela went on to educate herself through a trade school and practises

privately from home and through the community centre. Rameela has been criticised by her family for her decision to separate from her husband; she says she has been told that the family's '*izzat*' has been damaged by her decision. Although many British Pakistani Muslim women work in shops, offices and community centres, the traditional Pakistani dress or the *hijab* is a visual marker of difference and identification (Mohammed, 2005) outside the community and within the community. Bradford's ethnic economy is now changing from just curry houses to beauty salons, ethnic media stores and ready-made clothing stores, and everywhere there is an increasing visibility of Pakistani women, more so '*hijabi*' women. As Mohammed (2005, p. 380) noted, the performative space of gender in Bradford is regulated so as to control the 'community' identity. Mohammed (2005, citing Kandiyoti, 1993) suggested that the rise in the severity of control on women's bodies has been due to the 'rise of antagonism towards Islam from the West', structuring Islamic practices as 'primitive' and 'backward', and the crisis in modernity itself (Choueiri, 1993). Participatory citizenship as a goal of British society requires individuals living in their communities to negotiate their identities and create viable communities; from this outlook, ethnic clustering is a foundational basis for a viable infrastructure that is capable of sustaining a current lived in ethnicity rather than a nostalgic and romanticised fixed past.

Social class is another key issue with 80 per cent of Muslims living in areas classified as 'struggling' (Phillips, 2004, p. 41). However, the anthropological accounts of the 1970s of Dahya (1973) and Saifullah-Khan (1974), both situated in Bradford, suggested that the community prioritise its need to live within ethnic clusters to feel 'safe' and relatively free of racial harassment. Phillips (2003) specified these reasons as to why three decades after 'institutionally complete' Pakistani communities emerged so many Muslims have remained living within inner-city Bradford.

3.3 Gendering spaces of Bradford

The struggles of British Pakistani women are either attenuated to a resistance to patriarchy or seen as quibbles to embrace Western norms of femininity. The ordering of the female body into confined spaces dictated by dominant Western, as well as South Asian, and Muslim cultural and community norms are being resisted by Muslim women who claim their rights by asserting inheritance through an erudite self-enlightenment of their own faith. While exploring the engendered spaces of British Pakistani Muslims, this section delves into the socio-economic, cultural and religious trajectory of the practice of femininity in the Pakistani Muslim diaspora through the epistemological accounts of past studies. The interstices of public and private space of diasporic women in the context of everyday life have rarely been discussed. As Spivak (2006) argued:

Why do I bring up our obligation to study the intermingling of the public and the private when our topic is gender in Europe? It is because, in what we loosely call 'Europe' today, one strong and particular feature is the use of gender upon the conflictual terrain of citizenship claims in a strange land, because the claimant wants to share in the pride of the abstract public noun 'Europe', with a mysterious and shining history. And yet that pride is also a private affect, a kind of dirty secret, a pride clashing (or not) with the place left behind, changing in either direction as the generations pass. Yet again, because we cannot acknowledge it, mere racism (combined with ethnic sexism) can bring us down, even as, it's literary, mediatic and/or theoretical stagings can bring acclaim and reward. (p. 3)

As Spivak (2006) suggested, the gender identity of the migrant woman and the performance of such an identity is under severe scrutiny. A complete discussion of this is beyond the purview of this section; however, a case study of the British Pakistani women in Bradford is imminent in this thesis. The presence of Pakistani women in Britain has only been a consequence of the immigration of Pakistani men to Britain and unlike women belonging to other migrant groups or even other South Asian groups, Pakistani women did not migrate primarily for employment in Britain (Anwar, 1976; Saifullah-Khan, 1975). Pakistani women started to arrive in Britain during the late 1960s and early 1970s (Saifullah-Khan, 1979;

Shaw, 1988). This separation ensured more money was saved and sent back to families in Pakistan (Hiro, 1991). As Mohammad (2005) stated, the earliest Pakistani women in employment mostly undertook sewing work from home, refraining from socialising outside of their domestic boundaries and maintaining the *izzat* of their household (Ansari, 2004; Dahya, 1965).

Some of the earliest discussions on separation of space in the domestic arena of Pakistani Muslim women in Britain have been presented in Zaynab Dahya (1965) and Saifullah-Khan (1974). Saifullah-Khan constructed an ‘ethnicity’ more nuanced than that of Dahya (McLoughlin, 2009), which described the lack of social organisations when the earliest Pakistani immigrants came to Bradford. In the subsequent time period there was a growth of Pakistani-owned businesses catering to the community’s needs (Dahya, 1974, p. 91). Concepts widely used in research conducted in Pakistani Muslim communities, like ‘*izzat*’/honour, ‘*biraderi*’/clan and ‘*khandaan*’/family, are all situated in the context and space of the family and rooted in controlling gender relations and specifically the area around a woman.

Dahya’s (1965) work titled ‘Pakistani Wives in Britain’ clearly described the role of the Pakistani woman in the early diasporic household. The Pakistani household was more dominated by the cultural norms of South Asia rather than the religious norms of Islam. Several South Asian cultural practices and Islamic ones have many overlapping areas. Dahya (1965) detailed the differences revolving around the practice of femininity in Pakistan; the paper contrasted the feminine space in a Punjabi household in Pakistan and a Pathan household in the frontier province in Pakistan. It is not unusual for a Pathan woman to spend her whole life in two houses: as a daughter she is confined within the walls of her father’s compound house, which she leaves on marriage; and as a wife she is confined to her

husband's compound and has no occasion to leave it except to join her relatives on occasions such as birth, marriage, death and religious festivities (Dahya, 1965, p. 316).

The above passage elucidates many aspects of the diasporic reproductions among the *Pathan* community of Bradford. Rose (1969), Anwar (1979), Dahya (1965), Khan (1979) and Siddique (1993) engaged the nature of this cultural reproduction in their works and especially the norms set on women and the space around them in Britain. Mohammed (2005) discussed the limitations imposed on younger women in the Pakistani community arguing that they are placed lower in the social hierarchy of the Pakistani 'community'; lower than the men and the older women, the young women are believed to be of increased risk to the performance of the 'community' and hence need to be controlled. Jeffrey (1976), writing on Muslim women in Pakistan, said that 'while *purdah* literally means the division of the home into separate areas, often by use of a curtain, though sometimes with a wall [*zenana* for women and *merdana* for men], *Purdah* also signifies the subtleties in which a woman creates and maintains social distance between herself and men through use of her *dupatta*, *chaddar* or *burqa*' (p. 28).

Ansari (2004) detailed the separation of space for men and women in different sects of Islam i.e. Shia, Sunni and Ismaili congregations in the Muslim community in Britain. Ansari illustrated that while Shia women enjoyed more freedom than the Sunnis in sharing worship space, although gender divisive in the mosques, it is the Ismailis who went further by institutionally recognising and participating women in not just mixed prayer halls and assembly halls but also by electing them as representatives of Ismaili women (pp. 374–375). Ansari continued on to discuss the growing resentment among the Muslim women born and raised in Britain throughout the 1980s and 1990s who organised themselves into 'sisters' groups. The construction of the performative space is critical to maintaining the boundaries of collective identity and the sexual purity of the women in the working-class Pakistani communities in Britain. Many British Pakistani Muslim women are increasingly renegotiating

and reinterpreting their roles in the ‘community’. (Re-)Imagining is a potent device in diasporic lives, especially for women whose day-to-day chores are punctuated with contradictions of where they have historically been, both physically and ideologically, and where they are going.

The site of home has been regarded by second wave feminists such as Betty Friedan as politically and economically disenfranchising for women (Friedan, 1963). For many Pakistani women in Britain, home is also physically isolating, emotionally and mentally suppressive (Fazil & Cochrane, 2003; Gask et al., 2010). In their study, Raleigh and Balarajan (1992) pointed out socio-cultural factors in the South Asian household; various other behavioural studies among South Asians (Ineichen, 1998; Thompson & Bugra, 2000) have indicated similar stressors at work in a South Asian household. Cultural practices such as arranged marriages, in-law difficulties, submission and deference by women to men and elders are all underlying features of a South Asian household be it Pakistani, Indian or Bangladeshi. Furthermore, Creed et al. (1999) found suicidal ideas to be more common among Muslim women (18.4%), than Hindu (12.0%) and Sikh (4.9%) women; women aged over 45 were found to be of lowest risk. Often the onus of maintaining and transmitting traditions lies within the family unit and specifically with the younger women (Dwyer, 2000; Shaw, 2000).

Women in the Islamic diaspora are guarded as bearers of the collective identity and are responsible for the reproduction of the collectivity in more than just biological terms: the transmission of culture to future generations or the ideological baton is also seen to be transmitted through the mother (Afshar, 1994). Thus many spaces within the household and outside are regulated to avoid pollution of the female body, *purdah* being one of them (Ahmed, 1992). Such spaces are also seen as masculine spaces. While secular and religious patriarchal discourses consider male sexuality as naturally rampant and thus justified to its actions, however, as Mernissi (1987) noted, ‘the very word *fitna*, implying turmoil within the

Islamic community comes from the same root as the word for a beautiful women (*fatina*), with the connotation of a *femme fatale* who makes men lose their self-control' (p. 31).

Spatial segregation of men and women has been practised in the diaspora through the system of *pardah*. By veiling women in these Islamic societies, women have created a gendered private sphere where many practices of their male counterparts are innovatively practised in the enclosed spaces. Makhlouf's (1979) ethnographic work among the women in North Yemen noted that this alternative sphere is often a source of support and even of power:

These women are actively exchanging information in their daily visiting and do have a role in informal political decision-making. Between the *asr* (afternoon) prayer and the *isha* (evening) prayer women are out of their homes dressed up for the occasion; they enjoy each other's company, listen to music, tell stories, smoke the hookah, chew *qat* (*Catha edulis*) and exchange valuable information. (Makhlouf, 1979, pp. 21–30 cited in El Guindi, 1999, p. 32)

While Robina Mohammed (2005) noted that in Pakistan a 'limited' public sphere exists for women, in Britain there is a clear lack of such a space within the Pakistani community. At the same time, the liberal, Western public sphere is strictly monitored for many Pakistani women, including many of Mohammed's (2005) participants. While discussing the 'micro-geography' created by the practice of veiling in the West by Muslim women, Mohammed (2005, p. 392) viewed this as a radically modern phenomenon for the women as it is a response to Western imperialistic practices and a symbolic gesture of being participatory in the collective identity of the (re)imagined *Ummah*. Also noteworthy in Mohammad's (2005) discussion of the veiling practices in the diasporic community is that of the 'catholicity' of the 'virgin/whore' dualism that is drawn into the veiled construction of the 'pure' Muslim woman and the un-veiled Muslim woman. Bhattacharya (1998, p. 278) and Mohanty (1988) also discussed this representation of the Third World woman in feminist discourse as the 'dutiful wife and daughter, the hard (but happy and grateful!) worker, the sexually available exotic other, the controlling asexual mother, or simply homogenised as the "third world" woman' (Mohanty, 1988 cited in Mirza, 1997, p. 6).

The *purdah* or the veiled space has been discussed in Zaynab Dahya (1965) as a bucolic space reproduced in the same vein in the diaspora. This representation of the veiled woman as pastoral is changing due to the appropriation of the veil and headscarf by urban Muslim women living and working in the West. Brah (1996) and Ansari (2004) maintained varied positions on the influence and participation of Pakistani Muslim women in the social and economic spheres of activity. Discussing the participation of Pakistani Muslim women in labour market, Brah (1996, p. 70) stated that ‘culturalist’ explanations for the official unemployment figures have largely ignored the informal employment sector, where many Asian women, including Pakistani women, are working from home. While Ansari (2004) argued that the status of a migrant woman in the home did not change in her household, it did guarantee more equal gender relations in the family. Ansari (2004, p. 272) also noted the changes that have emerged since the 1990s of male control waning over women and their earnings. Mohammed (2005) also highlighted in her study on the labour market and Pakistani Muslim women that the employment trend among British Pakistani Muslim women in Britain has been rising. Although trends allude to positive developments, within the micro-geography of the ‘community,’ the struggle to usher in changes has been uneven.

Within the private-public of the ‘community’, Mohammad (1999, p. 228) pointed out that the ‘community gaze’ operates even today as a constraining force for men and women. When discussing ‘community’ space, it is important to highlight the relevance of a mosque in the life of a British Muslim. However, in the life of *Sunni* women, the sect to which the majority of the British Pakistanis belong, are not religiously sanctioned to attend the mosques (Ansari, 2004, p. 374; Brown, 2008, p. 475). Ansari (2004, p. 375) described the resultant site as a void in asserting the agency of women, not just in the bureaucratic processes of the mosque but also in the congregational proceedings. Brown (2008) however highlighted more recent developments on this front: ‘the Muslim Public Affairs Committee UK (MPACUK)’

argued Brown, have become key sites for Muslim women to assert their identity as Muslims and they also draw upon ‘political engagement in civil society, reaffirming how mosques work as sites of political negotiation and representation beyond their devotional function’ (p. 473). Since the 1980s, the Young Muslims UK or YMUK sister section, as Ansari pointed out, has been another organisation critical to initiating dialogue within an Islamic framework for women in the UK. However, as discussed in the Channel 4 News (2006) report ‘*Women only jihad*’ (cited in Brown, 2008), the televised protests did not amount to a change in the attitude of the men who prevented women from entering the mosque and did not support the ‘British way of life’. This was brandished as ‘Asian’ rather than ‘Muslim’ on Muslim chat rooms (p. 476).

Other imperative spaces for young women in the Pakistani ‘community’ are the schools. Ansari (2004) described the rise of multicultural policy in education: ‘the mid-1970s and 1980s heralded the idea of multiculturalism and succumbing to the pressure of the local Muslims in Bradford, the (Local Education Authority) LEA agreed upon (religious education) in schools’. However, Ansari (2004) also noted that the secular and relativistic approach was seen as subversive to Islamic traditions. Another challenge perceived by many parents, Ansari (2004) suggested, was the mixing of sexes in schools:

The controversy came to a head in 1973 when Abdullah Patel decided to withdraw his daughter from a coeducational school, demanding a place in an all-girls school on religious grounds. Later that same year Riaz Shahid in Bradford withdrew his daughter and returned her to Pakistan rather than sending her to school, as required by law, when she was refused a place in a single-sex school. Both these parents came under pressure from their local authorities to conform, the justification being that comprehensive schooling was educationally sound and their decision denied their daughters equal treatment with white girls and so put them at a disadvantage. (p. 315)

Ansari (2004), Mohammad (1999), Werbner (2002), Brah (1996) and Mirza (1997) discussed the awareness among school-going girls in the South Asian community of the concept of ‘*izzat*’, ‘*sharam*’ and ‘*haya*’ – all these concepts emphasise the idea of esteem and shame and the location of it being the bodies and actions of the women. Mohammad’s (1999) study

among young women in the South of England examined the production of ‘Other’s Other’ – women in the context of marginalisation and Islamism. The discussions with Mohammad’s (1999) respondents revealed the understanding among young women of their cognisance of how their body is perceived by the ‘community’ in a ritualistic fashion and the women recognise it as necessary to sustain the affirmation of group identity. This can be likened to what Leonard and Speakman (1986, cited in Basit, 1997) found in their work that ‘certain groups, including South Asians and Cypriots stress family relationships and obligations to kind, beyond the nuclear family, more than others’ (p. 425). Women in these groups are expected to perform their role with a responsibility to the community in mind rather than fulfilling their own desires. This ideological and moralistic regulation of the feminine space in the diaspora is seen as a recurring theme within many diasporic groups and any hesitations to abide with the norms are met with great hostility and resentment from within the ‘community’, especially in areas such as Bradford.

Conclusions

Young British Pakistanis have become, in Alexander’s words (2002), ‘the newest occupants of the “problem/victim” analytical space’ (p. 564). Thus spaces of Muslim communities like mosques and Islamic institutions are read by some as symbols of inward-looking locations of rebellion. They are then seen as outsiders that upset and resist a national sense of belonging rooted in whiteness and Christianity. Minarets of mosques are now a prominent feature of the Bradford architectural space, the turquoise blues and green domes providing a cultural and religious space for the Pakistanis in the area to congregate which not only enables them to engage in worship but also provides them with a place rooted in their ethnicity. The earliest mosque in Bradford was among the terraced houses, discreet as any other home in the area. It also serves as a community centre where men have the opportunity to share news from

Pakistan, exchange information on sports and entertainment and most importantly provide each other with the support much needed when living alone and far away from home. With the arrival of women the need for religious and cultural spaces for children and young people increased, which led to the construction of mosque complexes in Bradford and community centres that cater to specific subdivisions of the Pakistani community.

First-generation British Pakistani women were inconspicuous in their assertion of opinions and choices in the community, but now as the social and political landscape in Bradford is shifting, so are the roles of women. Critical in this shift is the emergence of gendered spaces, as Werbner (2005) stated:

As performative spaces, each cultural domain also represents a source of personal gendered and generational identity empowerment: Islam – primarily of male elders and increasing of young veiled women; wedding popular culture of women and youth; and cricket – of men, especially young men. (p. 757)

From the earlier role of women organising home readings of the Qur'an and praying 'as men worked, women networked' (Werbner, 2005, p. 750), women have been emerging as potent forces of social change. In August 2010, *Bradford Women for Peace* was established under the aegis of the Christian Muslim Forum. The forum has active members from both religions and a range of ethnic backgrounds who are actively working towards educating their respective communities about each other and fostering a multicultural society. While Okin (1999) and Sahgal and Yuval-Davis (1992) stated that multiculturalism grants power and voice to patriarchal forces to continue their domination over women and their bodies, their movement and economic and political power, in the case of 'Bradistan' women are shifting, and their appropriation of a conservative, religious identity cannot be dismissed as a patriarchal imposition or indoctrination.

In the following chapter I discuss this changing nature of a feminine British Pakistani identity. In 'Bradistan', the challenges to forced marriages and early school drop outs among

British Pakistani Muslim women are arising from the *hijabi* women of the British Pakistani community. They are confronting several notions of cultural patriarchy and with increased religious education are critically challenging interpretations of Islamic teaching. Bradford and its future are tied intimately with that of the 'imagined community' of 'Bradistan'. As the Runnymede Trust (2000) suggested, a reimagining of a national identity is imperative to the future of Britain as well as a possible redefinition of multiculturalism as not just meaning 'a movement of peoples' as Modood (2007) defined, but a political shift in the construction of nationhood in the minds of the peoples.

Chapter 4: A methodological framework for feminist audience research

The ubiquity of media in our lives has transformed the nature of entertainment consumption and the nature of audiences. Media has moved beyond the 'box in the living room' into multiple media portals used simultaneously by various members of a household to access varied content, also radically altering the moment of reception, which is an imperative part of the 'encoding-decoding' model (Hall, 1974). As Silverstone (1994) noted, television viewing has become 'a set of daily practices and discourses...through which the act itself is constituted' (p. 133). Observing, recording and analysing these practices and discourses of media consumption in this study has been informed by the feminist ethnographic work of McRobbie (1978a, b, 1991), Skeggs (1994, 2001), Bobo (1995), Visweswaran (1994), Abu-Lughod (1993) and Ali (2003). Looking back at how the field of audience research has conceptually and empirically developed facilitates a better understanding of the trajectory of my inquiry. Alasuutari (1999) detailed the history of audience research in media studies, chronologically beginning with Hall's (1974) text that detailed 'the encoding-decoding model', where Hall discussed both the continuities and discontinuities between the encoded message (by its producers) and the decoded meanings (produced by its consumers). Hall's (1974) model became seminal due to its elegant simplicity (p. 2), wrote Alasuutari. On the shoulders of the 'encoding-decoding model', a range of studies on television consumption has developed. Some of the most well-known studies in this field have focussed on the genre of soap operas (Ang, 1990; Hobson, 1982; Katz & Leibes, 1993). The period between the 1980s and the turn of the century encapsulated the 'golden era' of audience research with numerous empirical studies looking at cultural meanings and identity construction processes emerging around television consumption. During this period, media ethnography established itself as a prominent methodology for studying audiences and the production of cultural

meanings around media consumption. Media ethnography emerged as a negotiation between traditional ethnography's objectification and exploitation and the pressing need to consider the effects of human agency and local cultures within the larger webs of subnational and transnational networks. Murphy (2011) pointed out that the diverse methods used in contemporary media ethnographies make it difficult to discuss 'media ethnography' in the singular; he suggested that the usage of 'media ethnographies' might adequately address the present methodological trajectory. Murphy (2011) went further in addressing the question of 'what is media ethnography?' as the 'unfinished quilt rather than a tightly woven tapestry of ideas' (p. 384). Alasuutari (1999) moved on to examining the second turn in audience research as that which is located in the interpretive communities and the third turn in the discipline, which locates the audiences as constructed reflexively through negotiating and contesting their positions within the media framework (pp. 5–7). Within the framework of the third turn in audience research, is the primacy of the interpretive communities over the text itself. This epistemological turn can be understood better in the works of Hermes (1993, 1995), where she wrote that, 'all of us (some perhaps more often than others), engage in virtually meaningless media use' (1993, p. 493). Hermes' works are reflective of the primacy of everyday contexts where the audiences are located rather than focussing on the meanings that media texts carry within the reflexive interpretive communities of the everyday emerged feminist media ethnographies. Gray (1999) wrote about the critiques of the feminist method by other scholars as 'lacking political and critical edge' (p. 23) and how feminist ethnographies have been constituted under 'new ethnographies', which Gray argued as relegating the relevance of the politics and histories that feminist ethnographies constitute.

I locate my study within the discursive framework of feminist ethnographies through explorations of the political and historical positionalities of the participants of this study, especially in the way they negotiate their own identities juxtaposing it within the media

discourses that are so abundant in their daily lives. Since quantitative data would scantily answer the questions I sought responses to, the research was an ethnographic case study with thick description and analysis rooted in grounded theory. Ross (2004) noted that studies on women media audiences remain under-researched, mostly due to research priorities and priorities in terms of the valuable resources of time and money (p. 70). As Bird (2003) stated, the main challenge for contemporary audience research is that ‘audiences are everywhere but nowhere’ (p. 7). The diversification of engagement with media and communication technologies makes it increasingly difficult to locate the act of audiencehood within bounded time and space. People interact with media in multiple and increasingly complex manners due to the ubiquitous nature of both media and their texts.

This chapter begins with a discussion of the methodology through a critical engagement with feminist ethnography. I discuss the ways in which feminist ethnography fits and responds to a research context, and how this methodology explores questions from a bottom-up perspective through critical engagement with the voices of the participants. Thereafter I describe the participants and briefly locate their everyday life at home and the community centre where the ethnographic study took place and the pervasiveness of media in these spaces. In this context I also examine the construct of the ‘field’ (Berger, 1993) in which the research was conducted. I discuss the methods that were used to collect data in the ‘field’ and the consequence of my methodological choices and practice for the data collected and its analysis. I also discuss the advantages and hindrances posed by the methods due to the highly ethnicised and gender-segregated nature of the research setting. This chapter also engages with the limitations of blanket ethnic policies and its politics in the field, which Schrag (2010) termed as ‘ethical imperialism’.

The influence of global events on the local ‘field’ has had a considerable impact on my fieldwork, as Bolognani (2007) stated in her work on the Pakistani Muslim community in

Bradford. As she wrote, the community was suspicious and initially inscrutable to outsiders specifically post 9/11 and 7/7 and understandably so as there has been increased government surveillance among the Pakistani community in Bradford. Conducting research at the specific time and space loaded with politicised understandings of research, it is imperative to situate the concept of ‘research weariness’ and the need for ‘sustainable ethnographies’ rather than ‘sustenance ethnographies’. The concluding discussion in this chapter reflects on my role in the field as an Indian woman among Pakistani Muslim women and how it has affected the fieldwork and the outcome of data.

4.1 Feminist ethnography: A critical engagement

Since the early 1970s, feminist ethnographies have challenged the unproblematic manner in which academic scholarship understood ‘rationality, objectivity and neutrality’ in research (Ali, 2006, 472). This approach to the questions of power and politics are especially important to gender and how it is constituted, and is central to the methodology devised for this inquiry. Also the continued systemic ‘Othering’ of ethnic minorities within mainstream media narratives have set the agenda for this study to undertake a critical position that urgently needs to undermine the supremacy of orientalist constructions of the feminine ‘Other’. As Ali (2006) stated, the nexus of power and knowledge is central to a feminist ethnographic enquiry:

A key feature of feminist politics is a commitment to collective knowledge production. As feminist epistemic communities have grown to take a more diverse and pluralistic approach to their membership, the politics of location took centre stage in debates about power and working within and across difference. (p. 472)

The central question of feminist writing and method has been how to correct misrepresentations of differences (Othering) (Harding, 2004). Also relevant to my thesis is how to link the micro social, economic and cultural processes to larger macro national

processes, thus creating a link between everyday interaction to wider cultural formations and examining how grand narratives or dominant ideologies are interpreted and resisted in the everyday (Skeggs, 1994). Eurocentrism in writing in the humanities is part of dominant ideologies (Ali, 2006) that constitute the nexus of power and knowledge. Being an Indian woman in the British higher education system has meant that writing and learning has been a continuing part of challenging and critiquing Eurocentric and Western-centric 'situated knowledge' (Harraway, 1991). While doing that, I have also been a participant in the same scientific and ideological systems, where I have needed to actively examine and contest. Sociological research among ethnic minority communities and especially women are rich with concerns of orientalist writing and misrepresentations that follow (Bourne, 1983; Carby, 1982; Parameswaran, 2002). The issues of representations and misrepresentations of a context or culture are not entirely located in the texts, Said (1978) argued; they also exist in the researcher's common history, tradition and universe of discourse:

[T]he real issue is whether indeed there can be true representation of anything, or whether any and all representations, because they *are* representations, are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambience of the representer. If the latter alternative is the correct one (and I believe it is), then we must be prepared to accept the fact that a representation is *eo ipso* implicated, embedded, interwoven with a great many other things besides the 'truth', which is itself a representation. (1978, p. 272, emphasis in original)

But is the representation of the 'entire truth' possible? In many urban ethnic communities multiple truths exist, so how does one represent one, single truth? Duranti (1993) wrote of the 'absence of the inferential and philosophical material in the anthropological texts to assess exactly how truth was defined, agency represented, intentions taken into consideration, or responsibilities assessed' (p. 214). While Duranti (1993) called for a 'careful analysis of discourse patterns as produced by social actors in the course of everyday interaction', Harding (2004) stated that the researcher needs to acknowledge their own orientations in the text in a self-reflexive tone to set straight misrepresentations. Further, the issues of ignoring

the influence of class and gender in ethnic minority research prevents understanding issues in their entirety. As Viswevaran (1994) argued, women ethnographers compellingly used reflexivity and questioned the play of gender on power relations long before feminism or experimentation became the norm (e.g., Bowen, 1964; Briggs, 1970; Powdermaker, 1966; Viswevaran, 1994). Abu-Lughod (1990) argued that most feminist anthropologists, in order to avoid being pigeonholed as “feminist ethnographers” or “experimental” writers they would write in conventional ethnographic styles. Feminist ethnography has moved from the ‘strained position of servitude’ (Enslin, 1994, p. 8) to challenging conventional methods of social research in relation to issues of gender, class and race and this has informed my thesis.

Moving away from the traditional roots of ethnography which lie in the dual legacy of objectification and exploitation, Clifford and Marcus (1986) pointed to a new ethnography that is rooted in the confessional, reflexive and experimental styles of writing. However, Denzin (1996) raised concerns that this new ethnographic turn has led to a crisis in representation and legitimation. These concerns have forced ethnographers to rethink the context of knowledge production and the stakeholders: who researches the field and for whom? (Skeggs, 2004) Traditional ethnographic practice requires the researcher to remove the element of humanity that arises in organic human interaction and instead create a simulated environment of detachment; this sense of objective detachment is unattainable in a feminist ethnography. As Oakley (1981) argued, ‘a woman to woman interview is of a very different nature and that the motif of a successful interview is to be friendly but not too friendly’ (p. 33), indicating a need to break down hierarchical objectivity that is imposed on the interview process. This breakdown of power as being essential is also highlighted in Stacey’s (1991) and Patai’s (1991) research. Feminist ethnography then, as Viswevaran (1994) stated, ‘constitutes a re-reading of older writings with more polyphonic and novelistic devices and also an intervention in the processes of research and writing to include non-

exploitative strategies of address between author, subject and audience - in other words, writing by women, for women, about women' (p. 261). Visweswaran (1994), further defined ethnographic writing as:

[I]nspired by literary criticism and postmodern theory...ethnography is now better understood as a series of (often overlapping) genres: expository essay, diary, novel, memoir, short story, life history, testimonio, self-reflexive narrative, biography and autobiography. (p. 260)

Feminist ethnography then is a renegotiation of not just the methods, but also of the writing and reading of texts. Does this negotiation require a distinct feminist outlook and perspective? In the chapter titled, 'Is there a feminist method?' Harding (1987) suggested that a preoccupation with methods should not shift the focus of the research from the epistemological negotiations that need to be made. Harding (1987) also cautioned against feminist relativism and that men can make equal contributions from their own positions of power to the field. Janet Finch (1984, p. 76) made an important point about women researching women, which have resonance in my fieldwork: 'because both parties share a subordinate structural position by virtue of their gender, sharing and divulging information becomes much more easier'. As Visweswaran (1994, p. 19) stated, from just performing 'compensatory scholarship', feminist ethnographers have matured into the chroniclers of women's life history. Celebrating 'difference' is not the end of a feminist account; it is in sharing voices, recognising similarities and listening to the silences of 'Other' women that a feminist account takes life.

In my own case the lines between home and away became blurred to an extent. My concern when initially I engaged in this study and throughout the empirical research was the marginalisation of women, their status as Third World subjects and the negotiations that take place within symbolic and physical boundaries, especially those associated with migration and gender identities. However, the 'enactment' of the methods is riddled with my own South

Asian coalitional identities and the data reflects these conciliations. As Clifford and Marcus (1986) argued in regards to what they call the crisis of ethnography, researchers need to acknowledge that the 'reality and culture' that they claim to discuss is only partial truths, recognising that their account is just one of many. Also my position as a feminist researcher was only a positioning that was acknowledged within the limited interactions I had previously had with academia. For the women I had been working with in the context of the research, my political position as a feminist was irrelevant. However, my position towards Islamophobia was critical. The women responded from their ethnic and religious positions as these were highly politicised and racialised within the mainstream media discourse. The overdetermination of class was undermined during the research process as participants rarely acknowledged this aspect of their located identities. In our encounters they would appear predominantly concerned with their religious and ethnic affiliations as these shape their positionalities within and against the nation. Class disparities among South Asians remain under-studied, mainly due to the persistence of ethnic boundaries dividing different sections of the British society, especially between Asian and white ethnic groups, as well as the hegemonic predominance of racial essentialism in the society and consequently research agenda. Thus, class and associated differences and inequalities retain very little interest even within the communities in question and for researchers.

4.2 Locating the field

This ethnographic study took place over a period of one year within community centres, homes and public spaces in Bradford. Retaining the ethnographic character of the research, participant observation was undertaken with the women during many hours spent together outside the community centre and homes. Crucial periods of interaction were endeavoured during walks to the park and the annual community centre women-only trip to a theme park.

This fostered a great deal of enthusiasm among the women and I was able to garner candid observations of participants for my research. As much as the community centre had become central to how my presence in the community unravelled, the access to the participants' homes has proven invaluable in terms of how domesticity, the chores and rituals of everyday gendered technology use are affected. Public spaces, like the city centre, streets and parks informed me of how femininity is enacted in specific ways and I was able to contrast the various ways in which women are required by self and others to perform roles.

The space of the home was severely restricted to me as a researcher but was accessible to me as a friend. Consequently, initial access was very limited; however, through persistent participation in community events and the citizenship classes, I was able to establish a more trustworthy presence among the participants. The homes of the women were varied in their prosaic details, but the manner in which each house was organised reflected the histories of the inhabitants. Women who were second or third generation had used largely religious paraphernalia to underscore the relevance of faith in their daily life. The presence of media in its multiple forms, such as television, radio, computer, print and mobile technology, was based on informed, deliberate decisions as opposed to the first-generation women who inhabit media-saturated domestic spaces, predominantly to communicate with, and be informed about their *'homeland'*. In the first-generation household, the decision to appropriate specific media and its usage is informed by the cost factor and its functionality in transnational communications. All the above-mentioned aspects are conferred in the shaping of the analysis presented.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation into the modes of consumption of television in Britain and its implications in constituting a British identity. A snowball sampling method was used to recruit participants in the study. Media audience research with diasporic and ethnic populations (cf. Georgiou, 2001;

Gillespie, 1995) using qualitative methods has produced rich accounts of ethnic media consumption. This study adopts an ethnographic approach, which takes into account participants' narratives and everyday practices as these are located within everyday life. Television consumption is located within the domestic sphere, and extended in its meanings through the interpretations that link the domestic sphere with the local culture of Bradford and the national structures that regulate gender and agency. In this way, the thesis aims to provide a reflexive, 'natural' (Denzin, 1996; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995) narrative of the participants located within the domestic and public space they regularly occupy.

The 'field' is a complex setting in the context of my research. Due to the issues of access and the long-term qualitative nature of the study, a number of participants had many concerns regarding my presence, which I detail under a separate section on reflexivity later in this chapter. My study took place within an area of Bradford that is home to a large group of British Pakistanis located very close to Bradford city centre. Due to initial limited access into the 'community', I sought the help of a community centre in the area to facilitate access. The community centre is called the Apni Community Centre. To protect the identities of the participants and the gatekeeper, pseudonyms are used throughout the thesis to refer to participants.

The research was conducted over a period of ten months in Bradford, including research at the community centre, in homes of the participants, and their neighbourhoods. Although I would visit multiple locations to conduct research, my primary site of research was the Apni Community Centre. The centre derived its name from the North-West Frontier Province of northern Pakistan, and the majority of the members at the centre have ancestral origins in this region.²² The centre was housed in a row of houses on a residential street; it was hard to tell from the road whether the building was public or residential. This ambiguity

²² Divulging the name of the region could be construed as a violation of the ethics code, as the name of the centre and the name of the place in the NWFP region are the same.

associated with the architecture of the centre and its geographical location gives the centre a very secure and home-like feel. The street was quiet and cobbled and there was not much vehicle or foot traffic. The windows of the community centre office were usually open to allow visual recognition of the people coming into the centre, which added to the secure feeling of the members. There was also a security video monitoring the traffic into the centre. The centre itself was not very large, but it meets the needs of the users.

The centre had a large living room converted into a hall and a conference room, a kitchen, washroom, office space and an unused children's play room on the ground floor. Due to the shortage of funds and the additional regulatory procedures involved in converting the room into a day-care centre meant that the centre had no choice but to close the children's play room. The upper floor houses three rooms: one was used as a room for sewing class, which was very popular among the women. Sewing machines were also kept in the room. There was an interview room; so that women who wanted to have private conversations with members of the centre could do so. There was a spare conference room on this floor which was often used for citizenship and English classes.

The first visit I made to the centre was to discuss the feasibility of my Master's research work to be conducted within their premises. The manager at the time was a woman, who is also a participant of this research. The centre and the manager actively welcomed my Master's dissertation project; hence I did not hesitate to return to the centre seeking help with my doctoral research. The centre is funded by the British lottery, and several other EU funds have been made available to various projects at the centre. The main classes at the centre are English language lessons, citizenship classes, sewing lessons, computers for beginners, healthy eating, Jujitsu and aerobics. Although the centre caters to women, periodically there are courses for men organised within the premises of the centre. These are often late in the evenings, after classes for women have concluded. While the users of the centre are all

Pakistani and Muslim, there is internal heterogeneity within the group in terms of ethnic affiliations, migrant histories and generational acculturation. The centre hails from few predominant ethnic groups: Pathans, Mirpuris, Chachhis and Punjabis. There are also linguistic differences between these groups, ranging from dialects to completely distinct languages. Pathans speak Pashto and Hindko; the Mirpuris speak Potohari or Pahari; Chachhis speak Punjabi and/or Hindko; and Punjabis speak Punjabi and Urdu. Almost all of the members of the centre speak English and Urdu. The first-generation women did not exhibit fluency in English, while the second- and third-generation women spoke and understood their ethnic languages with limited or no fluency. In the community centre I did not see any intermingling of first-generation women with second- or third-generation women: these were the two dominant groups and a palpable sense of division could be seen among the women at the centre. The limited English use restricted the extent to which first-generation women interacted with second- and third-generation women. Most of the second- and third-generation women were also confounded by the first generation women's limited linguistic skills. During my sustained interactions with the two groups of women, I also noticed that the British-born women had developed a sense of superiority over the non-British-born, non-English-speaking women through their understanding of scriptural Islam, while the non-English-speaking Pakistan-born women located themselves in a cultural Islam rooted in the ethnic and national Pakistani identity. I locate this relationship as an internal 'Othering' within the community of women. While the primary classification that concerns this thesis is that of first-generation and second- and third-generation women, the construction of 'new Others' within the context of 'new ethnicities' is also central to this thesis. Media associations and meanings have been developed and contested within the overarching diasporic contexts.

The ethnic groups that the British Pakistani women who participated in this study belong to are Pathans, Mirpuris and Chachhis; some of them are recent arrivals to Britain, others are second- and third-generation British citizens. Data has been collected through semi-structured interviews and participant observation into the modes of consumption of television in Britain and its implications in constituting a British identity. This study proposes to narrate the everyday interaction of the women with television lucidly and meaningfully by locating television experiences in the local culture of Bradford and integrating it within the communal and national structures that regulate gender and agency located within the ethnographic tradition.

As the research began I noticed that many women were unwilling to participate. It was difficult for them to commit time out of their daily schedule for the study and they were also slightly suspicious of my intentions. At that point, I had to acknowledge that I had not given anything in return to the participants as I was making a career out of their participation. As a result, I approached the English language tutor in the centre, an older white English woman. She agreed to have me as an assistant with the permission of the manager of the centre, which was duly procured. In the class I helped women learn to read, write and speak basic conversational English. I was also aware that my role as their tutor had created a position of power where my request for an interview could not be met with an easy refusal. Although some did refuse, most accepted the request to be interviewed. However, using the responses from women in the English class would skew the data, since most of them except two women were new migrants. This would have affected their choices in media and their responses towards socialisation in Britain. Instead, I had to immerse myself in a more active role in the community centre so I got involved in organising events with the second- and third-generation women at the centre. Looking after children for some of them and caring for the elderly women during day trips to parks reinforced my commitment towards the

community of women; rapport and trust grew in time and increasingly women felt willing to participate in the study.

The centre frequently organised fairs for women and children with food and games stalls. Once I had received permission, I visited the centre three times a week to meet and familiarise myself with the schedule of classes and the women who accessed the centre. Also during this process I spoke to many women informally: they queried me about my whereabouts, my presence at the centre, my student status, my nationality, etc. These questions in a Western context might seem to be prying but in an Asian context one is frequently barraged with questions, even from strangers (also in Bolognani, 2005; Gillespie, 1995). Moreover, in an ethnographic setting ‘reciprocal exposure’ is a recognised element: when the researcher expects the researched to talk, why not expect the same of the researcher herself?

I chose Bradford as my research field for a number of reasons discussed extensively in chapter 4. Although the largest concentrations of Muslims in Britain are in London, Bradford’s Pakistani Muslims represent a powerful and spirited group as past events, especially the race riots of 1995 and 2001, the Gulf War protests and Rushdie’s *Satanic Verses* book burnings have shown. Bradford’s reputation within the national imaginary has extended further due to the rise in extremist sympathies in this region among some Muslims, on the one hand, and the British right-wing racist forces on the other. Due to the unrelenting media coverage and many misleading official reports, the misconceptions about Muslims in general and Pakistani Muslims of Britain are many. Women are derided even further through caricatures of them as voiceless victims of patriarchy. It was in the shadow of the 7/7 bombings that I conducted my Master’s dissertation research among British Pakistani Muslim women of Bradford, where I found contestations to ethnic patriarchal norms by British Pakistani Muslim women as well as to Western feminist notions of emancipation. Many

women whom I encountered during my dissertation research had been working or studying and as Mohammed (2005) noted in her work and backed up by the 1991 census, British Pakistani Muslim women had a higher-than-expected rate of entry into the professions, standing at 11 per cent, higher than British white women although lagging in comparison with other white groups (21 per cent), Indians (16 per cent) and Chinese (15 per cent). On the other hand, at 9 per cent Pakistani men's entry into professional occupations is lower than Pakistani women's and is the lowest of the ethnic groups. Mohammad's (2005) research has shown a changing pattern in the economic status of women in the community.

4.3 Ethnographic interview

Although an interview evokes severe formality in its execution, Nightingale (2003) noted that ethnographic researchers have appropriated interviews in 'less strictly formal ways' (p. 371). The interviews were conducted as open-ended interviews with broad themes to cover during the proceedings as most ethnographic interviews often turn into unstructured, open-ended interviews or into conversational encounters (Davies, 1999; Gillespie, 1995; Skeggs, 1994). The broad themes that I covered were modified as a result of observing, seeking and sharing questions and answers with the participants in the context of an ethnographic outlook which engaged dialogically with their understanding of their lived experiences. In this research, interviews were conducted with 44 women, of age groups ranging from 19 to 70 and of diverse immigration trajectories. Each interview lasted an hour to an hour-and-a-half. Most interviews were conducted in the community centre, in a designated room with only the participant and the interviewer present. A smaller number of interviews were also conducted in areas that suited the schedule of respondents, like their homes and the university. The participants took part in the interviews voluntarily, and were informed of the ethics policy to obtain informed consent. The first two interviews I conducted were taken down as notes

without the use of a voice recorder. During the interviews, the participants were distracted by my constant note taking, and my memory did not fully serve the purpose of writing up the notes later as details were often lost in the process of transcribing from the notes made between interviews. For subsequent interviews I took a digital voice recorder and a notebook in case the participant was uncomfortable with the presence of the device. After briefing the participant about informed consent I sought their permission to use the voice recorder; in many of the interviews women seemed comfortable with the presence of a voice recorder on the guarantee that the interview would not be heard by anyone else. There were a few women who were uncomfortable about being recorded for various reasons. On the assurance that I would not use the voice recorder, they gave me verbal consent to use the notes that I gathered from their interviews towards my research. A few interview sessions turned out to be very intimate, where participants revealed details about their partners and marital discord, household stresses and bouts of depression; I would turn off the voice recorder during these times and offered to reschedule the interview at another convenient time. The interviews have provided an intimate and detailed portrait of the women being studied, which has been a salient feature of the ethnographic interviews conducted in this study: the positionality of the interviewer and interviewee was blurred. The interviewee would elicit my response to their questions, drawing my participation into the interview process by seeking answers to their issues. To negotiate back into the interview agenda, and reclaim my role as the interviewer was a challenge on some occasions. Gillespie (1995) noted that during the interview the ethnographer must elicit information while identifying the difficulties that arise between all those involved in the research process. However, as ethnographic interviews are dealt with as a collaborative process, as suggested within feminist ethnography, such challenges were addressed in the conversation itself. On those occasions, both parties were given the opportunity to share information, collaborating and creating knowledge.

Some interviews were similar to counselling sessions or had the form of a conversation. Often, there would be an outpouring of grief over children, husbands, mothers-in-law and divorces. During such times, the women never asked for advice; they just wanted me to listen. As an outsider my presence benefitted this purpose. Also during interviews women said that they were surprised that someone wanted to hear their accounts. This kind of reaction, which was far from uncommon, demonstrated that many of the women were far from just being subject to a voyeuristic academic gaze, but rather they derived some gratification from taking part in research. In the same breath I should also note that, some women were wary of research and a few said that they had already been part of research projects but never heard the eventual outcome of their contributions. While this shows the lethargic engagement of researchers with their participants (I discuss this in detail in the next section), it also reveals that women are interested in what is made of their responses and are keen to participate in and reflect on the process of knowledge production. They are alienated from the final product and subsequently subjugated in the whirlpool of power and knowledge (Ali, 2006). Yet another case was that of women who just wanted to talk; the specificity of the topic was irrelevant to them. These moments were both exasperating and riddled with ambiguity for me; as I would try to console them, I was also reminded that I may not get the chance to ever interview this person again and that my valuable time was slipping away. However, most women whom I had listened to came back to be interviewed again, which enabled me to engage empathetically with the participants as I knew that a bond had been forged between us: one of trust and confidence.

Through the course of the interviews, I had noticed a pattern emerging of distinct kinds of interviewees. The first type was the ‘answer-to-the-point’ interviewees, where they would field the question in a direct manner in limited words. The next type was the keen participants, i.e. the women who were acutely interested in the topic itself; they made

interesting interviewees but could easily take over the agenda of the interview. In specific cases, the interviewees would talk mostly about the representation of Muslim women on television, and I would have to draw them back into the agenda and seek specific answers to how they use television and engage with its mediated rhetoric. The last type was women who needed someone to talk to; they needed an avenue to discuss their specific concerns associated with life at home, marriage, family relationships, etc. These interviews were extremely emotional and demanded my full engagement. During a few of these interviews, I had to reposition myself from a researcher into a confidante due to the emotional nature of these encounters. In these cases, I had to make a moral choice and to make myself available as a human being primarily and put the research on pause for a short while. This transformed role of a researcher into a listener of the lives of women, has been discussed by many early women anthropologists (Finch, 1984; Hobson, 1982; Oakley, 1981; Stacey, 1981). I have observed that participants find discussing their personal details with a stranger whom they may never have to see again quite liberating. My status as an outsider from the perspective of the women could be seen as advantageous in this case. Also, the performance of strict gender roles within the domestic sphere could create a stifling atmosphere for women who want to talk about their marital discords but are not permitted to, due to the honour/*izzat* and shame/*sharam* moral codes that are characteristic of South Asian domestic life and associated gender roles. Talking with an outsider like me was associated with the creation of a necessary, and in some cases, much needed space to vent these feelings of severe restrictions. These interviews were extremely useful when trying to understand the domestic contexts of the women's lives; however, they were counterproductive to the agenda of the interview itself because after an emotional conversation, I could see that the women were too tired to continue in the interview process.

All 44 interviews have been used in various capacities towards the data and analysis. Within the analysis, I have used pseudonyms for the names of participants and neighbourhoods to preserve the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants' identity. Ethnographic interviews form the framework for the findings chapters though intensive participant observation and focus groups also played a key role in developing the analytical themes for this study. Since the interviews had an open-ended conversational style, the questions included in my topic guide were adapted to the conversations. Frequently the participants' responses triggered additional questions which fitted their specific lifestyle choices.

4.4 Ethnographic observation

Ethnographic observation has had a considerable impact since the poststructuralists' (Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1979 and postcolonialists' (cf. Bhabha, 1994; Natarajan & Parameswaran, 1997, Parameswaran, 2001; Spivak, 1988) writings. It has radically influenced the theorisation of the location of gaze, power and how knowledge is constituted. As McRobbie (2009) pointed out, 'the particular authority of the empirical mode can be occupied now with greater complexity. It can be both used where appropriate and deconstructed elsewhere for its narratives of truth, its representation of results' (p. 88). Borrowed from anthropology into the field of media studies, ethnographic observation has been consistently used by scholars to understand media consumption (cf. Georgiou, 2006; Gillespie, 1995; Ross, 2001; Silverstone, 1994). In this inquiry, the locational gendered politics of deprivation and alienation is central and is engaged with in various stages of the research including interviews, participant observation, field notes and during analysis. Thus the structures that surround identity politics is critically examined through the study of television consumption in various contexts and gendered activities.

The main spaces of community life for the women studied are included in the ethnographic observations. These primarily constitute the community centre, and social relations and public mobility outside the home and the community centre, especially in the form of shopping and activities associated with parenting. The specific location of the homes of four participants has contributed significantly to the discursive analysis as it involved media consumption practices, television talk among the participants and interpersonal dynamics within families. Four families were recruited through snowball sampling after establishing rapport through community work and ethnographic interviews. Multiple visits were made to each house, where I ensured that different settings of media interactions were recorded. Long and sustained observations proved a challenge due to the intrusive nature of the method. During my participant observation work, a community worker at the centre, Reena acted as the 'gatekeeper' helping me through the process of finding welcoming homes and securing access to these spaces. The presence of the gatekeeper was unavoidable in certain situations where my status as an outsider posed serious challenges to how the families acted around me in their homes. In such situations Reena would stay for the entire duration of the first visit and create a space for me to secure a second visit to the homes for a more 'real' encounter, centred on television viewing and regular activities taking place within the familial sphere.

During the first visit I was often treated as a house guest, and during the initial hours did not receive much access to the 'real' family television viewing time. However, during subsequent visits I could freely sit while participants watched television. Programmes ranged from South Asian soaps to *Eastenders* and *Coronation Street*, documentaries and news viewing, to the American animated series *The Simpsons*. One home included in the study did not have a television set, which is a rising trend in strict Islamic households. Before the visit was made, I would discuss the nature of the study, divulge the questions and inform the

participating women that they were free to ask me to leave any time they wanted or to stop the observation, and/or the session and not be included in the study. Upon receiving this consent in the presence of a witness, the gatekeeper Reena, house visits were undertaken.

The families were all diverse in their orientation: although all families identified as practising Muslims, Yaseen, Humaira and Shaheena's families have been long-term residents and British citizens, while Alisa has recently immigrated to Britain. Yaseen lives with her ailing mother, husband and three children. She is a housewife and frequents the community centre for computer classes, cooking classes and various Islamic activities. Humaira lives with her husband and husband's brother and his family in a four-bedroom terraced house in the vicinity of the community centre. Humaira's three young daughters live with her and the eldest of them, Shania 19, was preparing for her wedding to a British-born Pakistani Muslim man. Alisa's young family had recently arrived from Pakistan. She joined her student husband and had a child in Britain and is now looking to settle in the country living in a one-bedroom basement apartment. Alisa works as a social worker and her husband is a university student and part-time security worker. Shaheena is a second-generation Pakistani Muslim who lives with her husband and three children in a three-bedroom house, where one of the children has a developmental disability. Shaheena is a practising Muslim who watches television when she gets time. Her husband Ahmed is a second-generation British Pakistani Muslim who watches mostly British and American programmes. The main programmes viewed in their household are *CSI: NY*, *Law and Order*, *The Simpsons*, *Channel 4 News*, *The Office* (British version); they also watch various genres of American movies. While a valid insider's account is to be written, participant observation also calls the researcher to maintain an intellectual distance and reflexively critique the activity that she is taking part in.

Moores (1993) argued that in the case of television, entry into the domestic realm of family viewing is needed if we are to see how context shapes interpretation and choice.

Viewing TV with interviewees should also be seen as part of media ethnography. This combines the ethnographer actively discussing video images with informants while also attempting to understand how informants situate themselves as viewers of the footage (Gillespie, 1995; Pink, 2007). Participant observation is an ethnographic tool that rejects schemes or models which over-simplify the complexity of everyday life for detailed study of culture by immersing oneself in the everyday life of the informant. By observing the participants, the researcher participates in the culture or the subculture of the group while maintaining the intellectual distance to discern and critique the proceedings. Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) argued in favour of naturalism over positivism in the case of ethnographic observation, they demonstrated that naturalism as opposed to positivist ‘artificial setting’; they also advocated ‘fidelity to the phenomena’ under study and not to any particular set of methodological principles, however strongly supported by [theoretical] arguments (pp. 6–7). In the absence of an ethnographic study among audiences, Morley (1991) argued that the researcher is only left with a few stories from the respondent. By supplementing ethnographic fieldwork in media studies, Ang (1991) suggested that the pitfalls of abstract empiricism that arise out of quantitative work can be reduced. However, Ang (1991) also noted that the ultimate political responsibility of the researcher is in acknowledging their own position so that analysis may be understood by the reader in its entirety. Fidelity to the phenomena includes reflexivity which remains critical to the involvement of the researcher with the researched; in fact Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) emphasised that reflexivity ‘is an existential fact’ (p. 15). Within participant observation, ‘TV talk’ is a critical element to audience ethnography, as Gillespie noted (1995): ‘Television represents varieties of socially situated speech, and so, like speech itself, it forms a nexus between language and the social world. It represents models of speech, portrays patterns of sociable interaction and provides

shared resources for speaking' (p. 56). Television talk could unravel the politics of everyday life which play out in the context that media scholars actively seek (Silverstone, 1994).

In the following section of this chapter the discussion focuses on the limitations that I faced while conducting the ethnographic research. The discussion focuses on the effects of conducting research among an over-researched, 'research-weary' field and the concept of 'sustainable' ethnographies, where participants are accorded access and participation in the research in a more dynamic way, as well as looking at the limitations of academic ethics policies and the resonance of global events on the urban field.

4.5 Sustainable ethnographies in a research-weary field

Bradford is a symbolic third space, where the practice of diasporic life has ritualistic connotations. The everyday practices of shopping for groceries, greeting the neighbours or celebrating festivals are all conducted through a routine that has set in through years of co-existing within the ethnic infrastructure. The streets are lined with South Asian wares, halal grocers and mosques in terraced houses with towering minarets around the residential and urban centres. However, some of these spaces are limited to the community insiders. Some members of the Pakistani community, although not insular, were understandably suspicious of my presence trying to access community resources for 'research'. The suspicious nature of the community emanates from being both over-researched and misrepresented (Cantle, 2001; Carling, 2008, also cited in Simpson & Finney, 2009; Ouseley Report, 2001) by various academic and governmental agencies. As cited in Simpson et al. (2009), the case of Bradford has been misrepresented as problematic and driven by an inexorable separatism, thus the 'strangers within' (Bauman, 1990) are understandably distrustful about the 'intruder'.

It is in this context that I entered the field with questions on media use and identity. Irrespective of the topic being researched, I was declined the opportunity to interview some

women because they had earlier participated in research projects, which they say yielded no 'effect' while others said they had not heard from the researchers regarding the outcome of the project and how their input had been used. The notion of the researcher as a 'predator or the sojourner' in research among minority communities was discussed in Lee (1993, pp. 143-150). Data was elusive for the first few months of research, until I approached a 'gatekeeper'. Very often in the academia it is understood that data can be obtained in exchange for money, or to 'buy' research, and some researchers take this measure to access interviews otherwise not available (Sanghera & Thapar-Bjorkert, 2007).

Initial access did seem restricted and interviewees were not very forthcoming with data: the nature of 'living in' cultures and 'reciprocity' was seen to yield trust and familiarity. This compounded with access to a gatekeeper whose interest in my own work could be seen as detrimental to the outcome of this research project. Sustainability in ethnographic research needs to be examined in the light of these relationships of trust and interdependence as opposed to the 'sustenance' ethnographic practices many academic and governmental studies pursue. In the context of ethnographic research, sustainability needs to be imbued in research projects as an ethical topic; 'giving back' may be a more ethical and sustainable practice than 'buying research'. Among the many Pakistani women who participated in the fieldwork, it would have been considered demeaning to them if I paid them five or ten pounds in exchange for their cooperation and goodwill extended to my study. Many women who were my students in the English class voluntarily participated in interviews and focus groups, and even invited me to their homes for *Iftar* and *Eid* celebrations. These are courtesies extended to families and friends. The concerns addressing similar issues of 'giving back' were also discussed in Skeggs (1994). Georgiou's (2001) research among Greek Cypriots in London has also illustrated the researcher's participation in the life of the community through actively contributing to the people who are under study. I locate sustainable ethnographies through a

responsive reactive role within the field the researcher works in by developing an awareness of the needs of the participants with respect to the participants and performing within those roles to secure access and data. I have found that sharing research notes, taking the time to explain to women who ask me questions about the research process and especially sharing the research experiences with university students who participated in this study contributed significantly to how I was perceived by the women and their openness in sharing their experiences with me. These forms of interaction and involvement made the shifting of power possible.

Engagement of academia with diverse cultural communities to create knowledge is common practice within the social sciences. To create an environment of interdependence in the process of knowledge production it is detrimental to foster sustainable research strategies. Many women who participated in my research were interested in the final thesis that would be written and in my own progress as a student and many full-time and part-time university students who invested their time in my research were eager to understand the methods and the methodology employed in my study. Sharing notes was not a simple project as I shared my work with Reena, the gatekeeper, who expressed great frustration in deciphering the connotative meanings of many terms. She would often raise the issue of salience of writing and the preponderance of thought over practice in the academia, which would render futile the efforts of a study rooted in communities that are now increasingly set in urban social settings.

However, it is imperative to acknowledge that while some women will be accorded greater engagement with the text due to their educational and social access, others will continue to be excluded from the production of knowledge. As this thesis has been written for a specific kind of reader, located within the structures of higher education, I needed to

relocate the production of the participants' narrative into an exclusionary, hierarchical structure of scholarship and ask the question: for whom is this knowledge produced?

4.6 Ethics and the field

During the fieldwork period I was attached to the Institute of Communication Studies at the University of Leeds. As per the standards of the University Ethics Committee, informed consent forms and an information sheet describing the study, the use of data, data protection and identity protection needed to be used in all my initial encounters with participants. To facilitate preserving such large amounts of data, I used a digital voice recorder. Once the device was turned on I would repeat the ethics commitment to the participant and explain that their name and the location of the interview/discussion or focus group would remain protected and obtained informed consent. However, a few women declined to be recorded: one of them did not want her voice to be on any electronic device, another believed data protection was a problem in itself and another participant explicitly stated that her identity should remain protected and this was the only way to ensure it. Overall, in the 44 interviews conducted and the four households that I visited, only 12 women signed the informed consent form and one family agreed to sign the same, although it should be noted that informed consent was obtained in all of the interviews and house visits in the digital voice format and/or signed consent forms. It seemed contradictory to many of the women that I initially stated that their identity would be protected and then I asked them to put their name in a written document.

Working with a group that is already wary of outsiders makes the standardised process of 'ethics' in research an 'ethical dilemma' in itself. While I do not dispute the need for ethical research conduct it is the rigour with which the misplaced and stringent ethical policies of medical sciences are now imposed on the social sciences that needs to be

questioned. Hammersley (2009) compellingly argued that the authority with which ethics is enforced in the UK by the Economics and Social Research Council is overcautious and under-informed of the real status of the field. He argued that an auditing process associated with the authority of the ethics committee is imposed over the contextual knowledge relevant to a particular study. Standardised methods are diminished in significance when it comes to comparison to the knowledge gained during the fieldwork.

University ethics policies have taken their codes from medicine and biological sciences research (Hammersley, 2009; Schrag, 2010), and the 'UK is following this same practice established in the US many years ago' (Hammersley, 2009, p. 211). Despite the awareness within academia of the diversity in sociological and humanities studies and the diversity of the field where each study is undertaken, the use of blanket ethics policies is not conducive in either engaging the participants or yielding rich data. In my study the language and the nature of consent needed to be reconsidered since it endangered the trust the participants had placed in me. Many participants included women who did not speak, read or write English and have never participated in any research studies before and may not fully have understood the implications of participating in research. I maintained the presence of the gatekeeper during these interviews to obtain verbal consent. The gatekeeper also negotiated the tedious linguistic and cultural issues and stood as witness to the proceedings. Schrag (2010) discussed the concept of 'ethical imperialism' while discussing the complex nature of applying a Western ethical policy in a non-Western context and its implicit assumptions. Hammersley (2009), while cautioning against exploitative practices that may be perpetrated under the guise of cultural relativism in ethics, stated that 'the legitimacy' of ethical review boards needs to be questioned on ethical grounds and that increased regulation will not bring about an increased 'ethical standard' in social science research and instead can have adverse effects overall. The final authority for an interview in some cases may not rest with the

interviewees themselves, for example, in cases where one deals with children or even in a specific case when I was asked by the woman to obtain the permission of her husband for her participation in a focus group.

As a critical feminist ethnographer I adopted an inductive approach to obtaining data, being led by my actual observations and people's words rather than from an overarching and pre-existing hypothesis. The 'ethical responsibility' in the case of my research was to address the inequities in hegemonic representation and 'Othering' of Muslim women who are subject to constant stereotyping either as 'voiceless' or a mythical 'subaltern'. The challenge I faced as a research student conducting ethnography was to remain within the prescribed borders set by the institution while exercising autonomy in the field as the situation arose. The challenges associated with the increased standardisation of expected practice is a real challenge for the social sciences and the humanities and an issue to be addressed in its substance and not only within the existing systems of procedures. My primary guiding light with regard to the question of ethics in this research was iterating to myself the question posed by Bhavnani (1994): is this account of the women re-inscribing them into powerlessness, pathologised without agency? This challenge associated with research practice has informed the entire process of the research and write-up of this thesis.

4.7 Influence of global politics on the local 'field'

The domestic space of the diasporic household has always been a site of intense negotiations and contestations (Georgiou, 2004). The life of the diaspora is a prolific 'mediascape' (Appadurai, 1996), where the presence of various media and their narratives are churned through the myriad processes of everyday life to realise meanings that are relevant to specific contexts. While diasporic life is initiated by migrations, the diasporic identifications that

subsequently emerge are sustained through the numerous cultural, religious and linguistic traditions. As Gillespie (1995), in her study of video recorder use among Punjabis in Southall, London, found, television was one of the ways of transferring cultural identity to the younger generation. However, media do more than that: they inform, educate, entertain and even *integrate* as Elihu Katz stated in his lecture, *The End of Television?* (Katz,²³ 2008).

Bradford has been in the eye of the media storm for many years, much before 9/11 and the 7/7 bombings. Bradford captured headlines in British media as the problematic ‘Other’ due to the notoriety of the fundamentalism and ethnic essentialism captured and symbolised by the term ‘Bradistan’. Bradford and its Pakistani Muslims have repeatedly been considered the ‘Other’ in British news stories, much the same as the Islamic ‘Other’ in American media discourse. Karim (2003) discussed this framing as ‘(non-Muslim) American Self versus the (non-American) Muslim Other’ (p. ix). The rise of the conservative and radical Right in Britain and around the world and the anti-immigration policies, including the widespread introduction of citizenship testing, all frame the stories of the self, of the city, the nation and the diaspora that most participants of my study discussed when locating themselves in local and global contexts. The participants of my research were also highly media literate. The majority of them, irrespective of their educational backgrounds, spoke of their distrust towards mainstream media and their biases as reasons to increasingly trust ethnic news channels. The ‘Muslims in Britain research network’ organised at Leeds University in April 2005 cited this inaccessibility to the community due to the aftermath of global events (cited in Bolognani, 2007, p. 3).

When the ethnographic locale echoes specific issues that are also global in nature, the research agenda, although not directly related to the sentiments of the community, could be drowned in the resonance of global politics. Islam is structured as the ‘veiled’ threat and the

²³ Elihu Katz, in the annual Jay Blumler lecture organised at the University of Leeds by the Institute of Communication Studies, delivered the lecture titled, ‘The End of Television’.

juxtaposition of this linguistic usage with the imagery of the Muslim woman who is constructed as faceless and formless, is a staple on mainstream media. Muslim women took the interviews as an opportunity to give themselves a voice. The data reflects the current trends as influenced by global politics on media misrepresentations, the increasing use of religious channels (Peace TV and Islam Channel in Britain), a rejection of entertainment and television altogether and a general suspicion of mainstream media. The women also spoke extensively about their choice of turning to a religious identity over a cultural one, their decision to adopt the *hijab*, *niqab* or headscarf and taking on the responsibility of representing and justifying Islam. Bolognani (2007) described similar responses to her interviews in her paper on fieldwork in Bradford in 2005 among Pakistani Muslims on cultural agency in relation to crime.

Conclusions

‘Oh, so you are going to save the Pakistani women?’ to ‘You cannot understand the lives of South Asians in Britain!’, are just a few of the many comments I received from fellow impassioned colleagues in academia, who were commenting from their position of having lived their lives as a Pakistani woman and a British Indian respectively. These questions were often directed to me during many interviews and discussions and it was a difficult one to come around. Sometimes I have questioned the South Asian attitude of reverence to the ‘Western gaze’; however, curiosity from that which is the ‘Other’ which was always located in the ‘self’ is considered odious. Should Third World researchers always choose their ‘own’ cultures to study while white researchers have the benefit of exoticising and even emancipating the ‘Other’ culture? Abu-Lughod (1991 cited in Enslin, 1994) illustrated the pressures of accountability of those caught between boundaries because of mixed parentage, migration or marriage. As an immigrant South Asian, my own identity and its boundaries are

blurred so the justification of my hybridity and proximities cannot be made the focus of the project. This space of multiple belongings is wrought with ambiguity and is considered challenging for the participants as the researcher takes two positions where the need is to 'belong' yet the requirement to maintain the reflective eye persists; the personal and emotional costs for such a position are high.

Many moons into my research, it seemed that the women I was studying had a personal interest in my education even though during the initial phase of the fieldwork no one was forthcoming to sit down for an hour with a research student to talk about their media habits. Ethnography is a time-consuming methodology and only one party seemingly has it. I returned to the accounts of recent ethnographies in Britain and found Gillespie's (1995) work in Southall among the South Asians and their use of television and video to create an ethnic identity resplendent with South Asian cultural traditions. In the same study Gillespie used her role as a teacher in the field to garner trust and access into the lives of the people she studied. I adopted a similar role in the community centre as an English language teaching assistant; together with the collaboration of a gatekeeper, I was able to conduct my fieldwork efficiently and hopefully in a way that does justice to my participants and their lives and desires.

South Asian women are often private, and contrary to Western cultural norms it is considered unbecoming of a woman to reveal her intimate personal details to a third party,²⁴ often talking openly between family members is a strained issue. The women across the subcontinent are governed by certain common cultural markers, in Urdu it is called '*izzat*'/pride or '*sharam*'/shame and women are often held responsible to represent a family's pride and honour and preserve her own dignity by guarding her shame. These concepts transcend national, religious and caste divisions in the subcontinent and the diaspora holds on

²⁴ Also cited in Abu-Lughod's (2008) work.

to these values even more dearly. During interviews and casual conversations with women in the centre, the conversation would get drawn in to my work and role in the lives of the women I was studying. Some questioned the role and relevance of writing and academic research in the lives of those studied. The community does not see the ethnographer as an objective observer; they see the researcher in a position of power and the authority to make a difference is seen as resting with the researcher. This chasm in the authority and responsibility of the ethnographer rests on the praxis of the methodology in academia, governmental agencies and international bureaucracies. This critique of the limitations of writing has also been posed by postmodern ethnographers. Enslin (1994) wrote of the 'reified' status of writing, its pseudo-status as a democratic tool of knowledge and establishing dialogic relationships when we live in a world where the majority of the people cannot read English or if they can they cannot understand the jargons of feminism, Marxism or postmodernism. Enslin (1994) reflexively wrote about the limitations of feminism in an unethical and non-feminist world. Ethnographic writing privileges a language associated with the academia and this language alienates the people being studied. While writing difference is complex, so was negotiating the politics of the field; the 'field', although no longer geographically remote, has become inscrutable. Berger (1993) described fieldwork as 'the panoptic gaze', where fieldwork becomes the Foucauldian disciplinary regime of examination in virtually every part of the globe, and thus suggests an often well-intentioned but ultimately insidious form of disciplinary control (p. 174). 'Field', as I perceive it, is a conceptual entity, developed in the writings of the ethnographer, although never fully captured in its entirety; it keeps shifting and will constantly be reshaped in the narratives of those who remain within its imaginary boundaries.

Chapter 5: Home and the mediated habitat – New challenges

Home is a space that contributes greatly to ameliorate the ‘spatial and temporal dislocation’ of immigrant life (Ahmed, 1999) thereby creating a great impact on the diasporic lives of women and men. Here home is not the static place of domestic confinement as Werbner (1990), and Westwood and Bhachu (1988) discussed in their studies among various diasporic communities. This is an active, secure space for migrants who create their belonging in the face of uprootedness in the physical place of the home. In much of the literature on diaspora, home is discussed as a process. Ahmed (1999) pointed to how home is an ongoing process, and as Brah (1996) located it, home is ‘double, triple or multi-placed idea which does imply that the groups who are diasporic do not feel anchored in their place of settlement’ (p. 191). The physical place of the home of the participants held such accounts of subjective *multi-placedness* and rootedness, creating motifs of their diverse subjectivities in the home through artefacts, gifts that function as reminders of their multiple belonging and longings. Home is also experienced differently by different generations of the diaspora (Brah 1996, p. 190) as the women of the first generation in this study identified home as always a longing that would be located away from the foreignness of where they lived. For second- and third-generation women, however, home meant ‘around the corner’, as many responses in this study indicate. This chapter unravels the postmodern project of the self and its impact through television. The discussion of the ‘ideal self’ through self-surveillance (Gill, 2007) and family as a critical site where this objective is achieved is discussed in this chapter. I also discuss how television is embedded in the conversations of home, belonging and family in the everyday activities of the participants.

This chapter is divided into four sections: the four case studies and their distinct articulations of how family and home contribute to identity negotiations in the lives of

women. Through the first case study I illustrate how a home is a complex fabric of intersecting ethnicities in the case of Yaseen. I postulate that Yaseen's piety is informed by the various contexts that exist within the location of her home and informs her identifications and how she structures her home. Yaseen is the most visible member of her home in that during the daytimes, Yaseen's children are at school and her husband at university (he is a student), the old mother who has limited mobility rests in her room on her bed. Yaseen's movements across the rooms of her home in effect bind together the various members of the family and their activities into a cohesive whole. In the evenings her husband would watch Arabic television in one room, while her children who do not understand Arabic are in another room doing their homework, and Yaseen's old mother listens to the *BBC Urdu* service on the radio in her room. The interlocutor in these various spaces is Yaseen, and with her position in the home I aim to create an intricate portrait of Yaseen's home, mediated life and Yaseen's own presence as a mediator in a home that moulds various identities:- British, Pakistani, Arab and Muslim.

The second aspect I discuss is how new contestations of identity are emergent in the lives of British-born women, and in this specific case the home of Shaheena. I examine new contestations of identity in the domestic space, specifically how these contestations unravel through gender relationships in the household. Shaheena's house is a nuclear family, which creates the opportunity to see how the gendered relationship with technology had changed or remained static without the presence of other adults in the household. Despite being British Pakistani Muslims, Shaheena and her husband have a dichotomous identification to all the positions that are attributed to them. Shaheena's identification with scriptural Islam is problematised by Ahmed's opposition due to the popular perception of the *hijab* as an instrument of patriarchal oppression. They both articulate an amalgamation of their distinct identifications through the different pleasures they seek in the media texts they often

consume together. By examining Shaheena's case, I point out how new contestations are relevant in the lives of highly ethnicised and gendered second- and third-generation Bradfordian Pakistani women. Also important in Shaheena's case study is how the emergence of new Islamic media in Europe has helped her sustain her identity as a British Muslim.

In the next case I address how liminal belonging is a key concept for recent first-generation immigrants like Alisa. The home that Alisa occupies is an intensely mediated one, where the presence of media technology transforms the physical location of the home into a spatial construct that inhabits a threshold located between Alisa's parents' home in Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan and Bradford. The home provides Alisa with the belonging that she seeks while being separated from her parents. I discuss liminal belonging in Alisa's case as an in-between-ness of not just space, but also of identifications. Alisa uses an array of media in her daily life such as mainstream British media, ethnic media and new media. In an effort to ameliorate the loss of physical relationships, Alisa continues the real relationship of family through the virtual communication platforms readily available to her.

Finally I discuss 'new ethnicities' in the context of Humaira's home. Humaira is a first-generation migrant whose family comprises of both first-generation and second-generation migrants who articulate their 'identities' and negotiate 'identifications' in distinct ways. Humaira and her husband do not watch television, but her daughters do and discuss it among themselves. Also the girls have access to new media, where they use Facebook to network with their friends at school. Humaira's husband is the Imam of the local mosque and they adhere to a life of piety. Located within this piety is the project of the self; as Gill (2007) located, I would place this project of self in the postfeminist discourse of self-surveillance. Humaira, like many other women in this study, located her femininity in the surveillance of the self through piety. Media is a key factor in self-surveillance as it poses a range of

problems from temptations to propaganda, all of which are deemed unsuitable, hence avoided. Humaira's attempt to create the 'new ethical self' (Wood and Skeggs, 2004) can be seen within the paradigm of new ethnicities and this I unravel through the use or absence of media in the domestic space.

Multiple visits were made to four families over the course of eight months to observe the numerous positions of television viewing and subsequent conversations that construct and contest their various positions as British women. I engaged with the participants by conducting interviews, conversations and focus groups. The four homes where this ethnographic study took place are the primary focus of analysis. I discuss the family as the microcosm of the diaspora, where ties to family and religion are maintained and monitored. From the earlier patterns of women viewing television (Morley & Brunsdon, 1999; Hobson, 2003; Morley, 1993) this study presents a new model of how women audiences watch television, the genres they engage with and the pleasures they derive from it.

5.1 Yaseen: Intersection of various 'ethnicities'

Yaseen is a 35-year-old married woman, who lives with her husband, four children and a limitedly mobile mother, in their home close to the community centre. Yaseen is a British-born woman, with secondary education. She was attending the centre to learn to use computers at the time of our meeting. I first met her in the community centre, during a Jujitsu class. While she did not participate in the class herself, she stood outside the clearly marked performance area and cheered on the girls who were participating in the class. I eagerly approached her with my request to interview her for this study which was accepted and the interview was duly conducted. After the interview I explained the participant observation stage of my fieldwork and asked if she would be willing to let me access her home multiple times and watch television with them. Yaseen consented and I explained to her like to every

other participant that without being too intrusive or obvious I was meaning to observe the television viewing and discussion patterns. Yaseen's four children range from the ages of four to twelve and her husband is a student at the local university. Yaseen runs the household in a very gentle yet austere manner; her piety is at the centre of the home and the daily activities of herself and all members of the household. Yaseen lives in a lower-middle-class family, with her husband engaged in part-time work as a taxi driver. A household of seven rely on this income. This is reflected in the manner in which Yaseen purchases her groceries and her children's clothes and books for school. She relies heavily on hand-me-downs from family friends and her local mosque for the children's supply. This keeps her in constant contact with the mosque, where her children go in the evenings for after-school religious education.

The first day I visited Yaseen's home was during an afternoon, as it was convenient for her to talk to me and it was the time she caught up with some of her favourite television programmes. The home itself is a charming northern English terraced house that suits the tight-knit nature of this family. Yaseen had gone to great lengths to keep the house very clean and neat. I also noticed that throughout my first and subsequent visits to Yaseen's home, she had been obsessively concerned with the neatness of her home, which she took immense pride in. I walked into what would have been the living room of the house but which was now converted into a bedroom for Yaseen's mother. As Yaseen went into the kitchen, I sat down on the couch next to Yaseen's mother, Sabida. As a non-English speaker, Sabida and I spoke in Urdu. I spoke with her about the purpose of my visit and explained the research topic. Sabida immediately said that she was surprised that anyone was interested in their lives. She was curious to know how it would benefit, as she said, 'as a young woman, your efforts should bring your family honour...your glory is God's glory'. Sabida spoke at length to me about educating and making women aware and also spoke of her early days in Britain:

As a young married woman in a foreign country you can't be of much use. But my husband would never let me work, and I did not know the language. Come to think of it, I was really scared to go out alone anywhere. I did not know the bus routes, I could not even read the numbers on buses, and well I could not read or write Urdu so how I could know any English [laughs]. When I landed here, I still remember it was winter and the streets were dark, all I could see were the chimneys on top of the houses, bellowing smoke like beasts in the stories we would tell back home. I was very scared; I just wanted to go back to my village.

Sabida immigrated to Britain in the early 1940s after her husband had moved to the UK. His move, Sabida told me, was meant to be a temporary one, so that he could make enough money to return to their village in the Punjab region of Pakistan. However, he decided to stay on and sent for Sabida. She joined him very young and as she narrates, she was not expected to work outside the confines of her home. A similar narrative is shared by the majority of the early women immigrants from Pakistan to Britain. Each house would usually have multiple families living within them; some of the families were not related to each other but would live together as a convenient economic arrangement. This was also conducive to the joint family system widely prevalent during the 1940s in the subcontinent. In Britain such joint family units helped create a sense of camaraderie among women who would be at home while their husbands worked. This can be seen as the earliest manifestation of 'community' making for women. As noted earlier, mosques did not provide social spaces for women. These informal private spaces became the alternative to meet with other women in the vicinity, although occasions like *Eid* and *Ramadan Iftar* provided similar opportunities. Sabida's social isolation can be situated in the cultural norms set out from the 'homeland', where she lived in a large joint family. This sense of togetherness is what Sabida wistfully yearned for in Britain during her initial years, she says. Building kinship ties was central to the early Pakistani families in Britain (Saifullah-Khan, 1976) and attempts to preserve the sense of 'ethnic' community in Britain manifested among others, the establishment of mosque associations in the 1950s (McLoughlin, 2005).

The shared sense of community in its cultural form is not perceived to be true in the case of Yaseen and her generation. As young British Pakistanis, Yaseen tells me little had changed for her living in Bradford:

When I used to go to school as a young girl, sometimes we would get called 'Paki'. I used to feel terrible; I never spoke about how I felt really. It isn't right for children to be calling their friends such racist names right. I mean, donkey, monkey...you know stuff like that is fine. But something so racist has to be learnt from somewhere that is what my brothers used to say. So when I grew up, about 13 or so, my father stopped my schooling. This was fine with me, now no more pretences in school. I could just do some house chores and hang about at home.

Yaseen's experience is widespread among the participants of this study. The sense of shame in being the 'Other' has been indoctrinated into Yaseen's experience of being British at a very early age. The immediate need for Yaseen was to relocate her 'self' away from the rhetoric of culture and place the self into seemingly more stable religious discourse, which is familiar, and would alleviate Yaseen from her natural belonging of 'ethnicity' and into a more reflexive making of 'self'. Yaseen says this about her decision to curtail television viewing:

Yaseen: Oh yah, I used to watch the telly when I was younger, taking care of my brother's children. I would watch *Neighbours* sometimes or *Corrie*...and then you know as I grew older I felt very far away from it.

Q: Did you not like the programmes?

Yaseen: Like I didn't think those programmes are what I needed to watch. So I turned my attention away from them. Also there are so many anti-Muslim messages on the telly. I started feeling that even when I stepped outside on the streets to get the grocery or something. Then I realised that it must be all the messages from telly making me think that people outside think badly of all of us Muslims...

Alienation is a theme that cuts across Yaseen's life, both from the context of being British and being a 'real' 'ethnic' woman. Yaseen explains that her marriage to a non-Pakistani Muslim had earned her the ire of her brothers and father. Although her mother spoke with her during her times of separation from the family, after her marriage, her mother was only an intermediary between her and the rest of her family. Yaseen was chastised for choosing to be outside the borders of the community and bringing shame on the family. Since she has maintained a reserved relationship with her family, this has only exacerbated her sense of

alienation. She tells me that she immerses herself in housework every day so as not to think of her issues. Yaseen has stopped watching the Indian soaps that she used to watch before her wedding because she could not place herself in the rhetoric of the 'family' that the soaps often focus on; Yaseen's identification has undergone change through the contextual nature of identities. Severe pressures are imposed on women to be sacrificing and doting pillars of not just the family unit but of the entire extended family. Yaseen is the centrifugal force that holds the various members of her family unit together, being a mediator between people and relationships in the family. While Yaseen does cite alienation as one of the themes for her distantiation from the narratives of the media, many women have indicated their lack of time and piety as important factors that have influenced their decisions regarding viewing media or the lack of it in their lives.

The home is strewn with religious paraphernalia: there are prayer mats folded and placed in the corner of the second reception room and the kitchen; Qur'anic inscriptions written in elegant Arabic calligraphy are displayed on the wall; a calendar hangs with the image of Mecca on the wall in the direction of Mecca. Yaseen's husband being a non-Pakistani would watch television programmes in his native language of Arabic, which neither Yaseen nor the children understand or speak. I asked Yaseen if she has ever been to her husband's native country in Saudi Arabia. She said that they went once for a holiday for a month, but despite being a Muslim country she would never live there permanently as that country treats non-natives, specifically South Asians, in a discriminatory manner. Yaseen's identity reflects a postmodern turn, in that she situates herself in multiple contexts of identity and belonging, negotiating these narratives daily, not just with outsiders but also with family members. When making choices of food and cooking, Yaseen cooks Pakistani food for her mother and Arabic food for her husband thus incorporating multiple ethnic contexts in the home. Yaseen's husband watches television and subscribes to magazines in his native

language of Arabic which are displayed in the second reception room. Yaseen participates in her husband's Arab ethnicity by partaking of the food and by consuming the media when she can with him. Significant during this interaction with Yaseen has been her reluctance in moving to Saudi Arabia as desired by her husband. She reasons that the freedoms accorded to women in that country will interfere with her practising her faith. At the same time Yaseen distances herself from the 'cultural ethnicity' of her parents and embraces the ideals of a religion that she believes allows her more freedoms as a woman. The category of Pakistani is seen as imposed on Yaseen by her through her parents while growing up and through institutional 'Othering'; her experiences at school were an indicator of this. Yaseen contests the boundaries set for her by her family and challenges her husband's desire to want to move to his native country despite Saudi Arabia being an Islamic country. Most importantly Yaseen rearticulates the imagining of Britain as a 'white', 'Christian' country; she updates the discourse of being British by challenging those who call her names like 'ninja' and 'terrorist' on the streets of Bradford. She also contested the ethnic boundaries set for her by her family by her marriage to a non-Pakistani, to her family's consternation.

Embedded in Yaseen's narrative are various intersections, namely that of religion, culture, feminism and race/ism. Piety permeates Yaseen's everyday life and her outlook and her media consumption is also governed by her faith. She chooses and rejects messages that conform (or not) to her beliefs as a Muslim woman. Yaseen is not the docile, conformist *hijabi* ubiquitously reproduced in the media. Her active participation in the community centre, eagerness to learn computers at the centre, and her interest in this study and its outcome points towards positions of negotiations that she has had to occupy due to impositions from structures around her. The multiple 'ethnicities' of culture, nation and religion that are placed in Yaseen's home all culminate in the everyday act of consumption. While Yaseen refutes her own media consumption, a plethora of media were being presented

around her at various times. The variety of media products that saturate the home in the form of religious programming on the radio for Yaseen's mother Sabida, similar programming on transnational and British television for Yaseen, Arabic programming that is consumed by Yaseen's husband, and the internet that is used by Yaseen's husband and limitedly by Yaseen. Internet is seen as a better resource than television by Yaseen. Even as a limited user Yaseen speaks of the internet in this manner:

Y: Because I don't watch so much telly it does not mean I want to be isolated. I try to get information and news that is relevant to my interests, not much as I want to hear people debating over and over about 'Islamic' terrorism.

I: What interests you in news or factual programmes?

Y: I like to know about the politics in Britain, I want to know about job creation, education, etc. Sometimes I think that the media don't discuss this because they don't want people like us to question, instead think of Muslims as terrorist. I just look at the internet for this; I only read stories that I want to instead of all the other rubbish.

The orientalist images of the Muslim woman are being contested through Yaseen's continuous crossing of boundaries; in effect she becomes a cosmopolitan consumer of media. Yaseen's choices are indicative of the specular nature of her subjectivities: choosing not just genres but also technology, thereby creating and controlling the information that occupies the domestic space. In the home there is only one desktop computer and Yaseen tells me this is the only computer in the home, which everyone uses and it is placed in the second reception room. Yaseen shows me some websites she frequents for news and information: BBC, Channel 4, Islam Channel. She also frequents some blogs for cooking recipes and searches for information to help her children with school work. Although the presence of new media has not significantly altered the way conventional media is consumed in Yaseen's home. In this manner Yaseen locates herself in an interconnected web of mediations that cannot be compartmentalised into ethnic, diasporic, cultural or any such strict categories that limit the process of self-making through consumption of media. Yaseen is creating new avenues and exercising her agency actively in pursuing information and tailoring it to meet her needs. Yaseen's home is not a space of singular ethnicity, or even ethnicity in the conventional sense

where it is conflated with common 'race', culture or linguistic origins. The term ethnicity itself is under-erasure in Yaseen's home as she constructs and rejects old ethnicities and adopts 'new ethnicities' (Hall, 1992b). This is indicative of how multiple ethnicities and their subjectivities are internalised and how reflexively Yaseen engages in the complex setting of the home, where these multiplicities are an everyday lived reality.

5.2 Shaheena: New contestations

Shaheena is a 32-year-old woman, a community worker and lives with her husband, Ahmed, and their three children. I conducted two visits to Shaheena's house: the first visit lasted three hours, where we watched their routine programmes at four in the afternoon. Shaheena's home is a semi-detached house set among other similar looking houses. Shaheena and her husband were both born in Britain and have spent all their lives in Bradford. They live in a middle-class residential area of Bradford, away from the community centre. Since my first visit was with Shaheena, she drove me after work in her car. During our drive up the road leading to her home, I asked about the neighbourhood and their history there. Shaheena remarked that the house was purchased by her husband Ahmed's parents when they moved in to the neighbourhood. There were many white families around during that time and it was this diversity his parents thought would bring better socialising for Ahmed and his siblings. However, soon after the Asians moved into the neighbourhood, the white families started leaving, and now Shaheena tells me that their property has lost its value and the school in the neighbourhood has a similar fate too. She spoke of her worries associated with segregation around her.

When we walked in, Shaheena's husband Ahmed was laying the table with tea and snacks. As we sat down, Shaheena introduced me and my research and purpose of my visit. I explained that although I am an anomaly from their usual, I would like to remain

inconspicuous while they go about viewing their regular television programmes and any conversations that might ensue. Our viewing began with *The Simpsons*, *Channel 4 News* and then we watched some pre-recorded Quran readings, during which her husband Ahmed was present and the kids were at her sister's home close by. As we sat down with the tea, Ahmed turned on Channel 4 to watch *The Simpsons*; he said that the programme may not be very 'academic' and that after *The Simpsons* they would be watching *Channel 4 News*, which should compensate the 'intellectual' tone of my visit. I said that the intention of my visit was to see how various types of programmes affect the viewers and it had nothing to do with the kind of programmes we watched. Ahmed told me that being a shift worker he only gets a few days a week to watch his 'favourite' television show, *The Simpsons*. In the meantime Shaheena returned to join us in the 'TV room' as they called it. Ahmed continued saying that Shaheena says the character Homer Simpson on the show was exactly like Ahmed, to which Shaheena said:

I completely agree with him there, but minus the alcohol, Homer is shown as drinking too much. I mean that is exactly what we are dealing with in this country. This binge drinking is so harmful to health and it destroys families. They should show and especially fathers who are role models for young men in a better light. So yes, other than the drinking my husband is a Homer [laughs]...

Despite being regular viewers of *The Simpsons* show and taking part in the narrative of the show, Shaheena reflexively contests some of the portrayals and positions. She contextualises the issue of binge drinking in the local context of her everyday life. Shaheena is a conscientious consumer of media: she uses the narrative, chooses, rejects and rationalises as it fits her specific needs. She is also able to situate her husband in the narrative of *The Simpsons*, an American animated sitcom where the characters are portrayed as working-class, white, Christians. The satirical portrayal of the human condition is what draws the wife and husband to the show. Shaheena tells me:

I love the way they make fun of everything, so irreverent and how they always turn inwards and seek answers. And it is all done in a less dramatic way, which is so far away from our Asian dramas right [laughs]...I don't understand the need for such drama either. And I don't

like the way women are shown in the dramas, Marge [Homer Simpson's wife] is so strong, I mean she can give Homer a tough time if she wants to...

The conventional idea of 'us' and 'them' are contested through the consumption of media narratives here. Shaheena, being a British-born woman, cannot identify with the highly dramatised narratives of Asian dramas; however, she seeks identification with and looks up to Marge from the American sitcom. Shaheena rejects the depiction of Asian women in Asian dramas; for her the women in the dramas are far removed from her reality. The news began while we were conversing, and Ahmed paid attention to the goings on and alerted us that we could watch the news with him. We turned to the news and during the discussion on the war in Afghanistan, Shaheena shook her head in disbelief and said, 'why do they want to kill so many innocents in these villages?' Ahmed turned around as if to tell her to keep her voice down and turned towards the television. During an advert interruption, Ahmed turned around and explained the news to Shaheena and me. Similar findings were reported in Rizvi's study (2007), where the husbands, brothers or fathers interpreted or mediated the news among British Pakistani women in Oxford. However, instead of being an interpreter Ahmed's role was that of diffusing Shaheena's distress: he explained the covert oil agenda and the rebuilding efforts of the NATO forces. As the head of the household and the 'father', Ahmed may also be providing and filtering information for his family in this manner. It is then not just the control of the remote that is with the husband or the male member of the family, but in cases like this the reception of the message is also influenced by the patriarchal figure in the household.

I asked Shaheena while we were in the kitchen if she always listened to the news when Ahmed was around; she tells me that it is when Ahmed is around that the news is mostly watched. Otherwise she watches some sitcom reruns on television. She says that news is 'not' her 'cup of tea', and that Ahmed was always very politically aware, so he usually tells

her what goes on in the news. Shaheena puts the dinner in the oven; she had made a meat pie and it was now baking so we moved back into the television room. Ahmed leaves to get ready for his night shift work, and we are alone so I ask Shaheena how she and Ahmed met, and if they had an arranged marriage to her distant cousin. She replied:

No, Ahmed is not my cousin. In fact we are not related at all. Some couples I know are distant relations, but not us. My sister and Ahmed's sister were in college together, that is how we know their family. And when Ahmed's mother was looking for a girl for him, my name came up and now we're here. Also my mother-in-law and sisters-in-law are not at all traditional, um...I would say they are more, you know, culturally Asian, than me, I am a Muslim and that is the only identity for me really. My hijab means that to me, my identity. So when I started wearing hijab, everyone in his house was against it, including Ahmed. Ya Allah! He said if I wear this [hijab] and go outside people would think he is a wife beater. I had to do a lot of convincing to get him to be happy with my decision.

The variations of identifications are diverse, not just within a 'community' but also within smaller units like families and Shaheena's is an example of that. While Shaheena's singular identification is with Islam, Ahmed does not have a beard and does not wear Islamic clothes. Clothes are a significant part of identity; creating and maintaining cultural, religious and national codes have always relied on clothes especially in the form of uniforms, national dress, fabrics, and colours, etc. Shaheena's choice of Islamic clothes communicates her persuasions in life to the other. In the meanwhile, her in-laws choose to dress in '*salwar kameez*', traditionally worn in the northern parts of the subcontinent. This choice reveals their cultural leanings, the choice to be more 'culturally Muslim' than identify as religiously fervent. Ahmed on the other hand is concerned about how he will be perceived as a husband, since the onus of a *hijabi* woman is always on the man. Shaheena contests the idea that *hijab* is imposed by the patriarchy, while Ahmed's mother and sisters exercise their agency in choosing the identification that befits their needs. Despite the similar 'ethnic' and 'racial' backgrounds of Shaheena and Ahmed, they continue to contest how each of them belongs to these categories: not just cultural notions and belongings are challenged, but also they rearticulate religious identities. The who and how of one identifies and continues their life in

Islam is diversely practised by the wife and husband in the same home. The 'ethnic' space then becomes an area of intense liminality where identities are always shifting and are contested using new ways and ideologies.

Media creates a unique space for Shaheena and Ahmed whose subjectivities meet and play in an agreeable format. Their viewing of programmes that interest the other makes the programme an interlocutor of sorts. Also, the presumable similarities between Ahmed and Shaheena are played out in their distinct choices of media: Shaheena engages in the political and factual nature of media, whereas Ahmed seeks out the entertainment aspect of media. This also challenges several findings of other reception studies where women are shown to consume fictional and soap opera programmes, while men consume factual and news-based programmes.

5.3 Alisa: Liminal belonging

Alisa is a 28-year-old married mother of one, who lives in a basement apartment with her husband and child. She is a recent immigrant to Britain; her husband works part-time and studies in the local university. I met Alisa through the gatekeeper Reena at the community centre. Alisa was proficient in English, and since she had to take the citizenship test, she attended the English classes at the centre. She would come to the centre and often during the class her infant son would be with her. While the child quietly slept in a corner of the centre's large study room, in the other corner the class continued. Alisa's husband is a university student, and work as a security guard in the night which meant that Alisa lived on a very tight budget. This did not allow her much money to pay for babysitting, and she had no extended family to look after the child for her. Often after the class Alisa would stay back and talk with me and Reena about various issues. She was always curious about my research, about my life

in Leeds and my family in India. When she was growing up in Pakistan, Alisa tells me, she would often watch Indian movies; she loves the songs in them and the clothes and jewellery seemed attractive to her. One afternoon after class when we both were talking about this, Alisa showed me that her mobile phone has the latest Bollywood film song as the ring tone; she let it play and looked very pleased listening to it. Alisa is a non-*hijabi*: she wears *salwar kameez* and drapes the *dupatta*²⁵ over her head.

While I visited Alisa's home on various occasions, here I present data from one relevant visit where we watched television together. One day in March 2008, Alisa invited me for her birthday lunch and I accepted. I went to her home; as this was not the first time I had been there, I walked to the house straight from the bus stop avoiding the usual route to the centre. Alisa's home was located in the basement of a terraced house where she lives with her husband and an infant son in a one-bedroom apartment. Alisa had told me earlier that in order to afford her husband's education they had no choice but to live there, since the rent was very cheap. This time Alisa was alone at home because her husband had gone to meet with a friend who resided outside of Bradford. Although the home was small, it was saturated with technology. There was a large flat-screen television, two laptops and Alisa's two mobile phones. One laptop was connected to the flat-screen television on which there was a projection of a *Skype* video call. I noticed that the video was on and on the television we were watching Alisa's mother and sister, watching us. They were participating in their daughter's birthday celebrations from Pakistan and talking to Alisa's son who was sitting on the floor staring at the screen. This non-broadcast use television is an interesting development in Alisa's household. By connecting the internet to the television, technology is being altered to reflect the multiple locations that migrant lives occupy.

²⁵ Long scarf worn with the *Salwar Kameez*.

Once I entered the home, we exchanged pleasantries while Alisa emerged from her kitchen with a cake, which was ceremoniously cut to the tune of Happy Birthday sung all the way from Pakistan live by Alisa's sister. Alisa was teary at the end of it all; she said her goodbyes and ended the call. Soon after lunch Alisa insisted that we watch the new Hindi film that her husband had downloaded from the internet, and I agreed. The story of the movie was how a Muslim terrorist falls in love with a blind girl in the state of Kashmir in India. The film starts and there is a song soon after; Alisa feeds her baby in the middle of the film so she is hardly paying attention. I tell her that I could pause it because she wanted to watch the movie. Alisa tells me:

That is okay, this is how it is here all the time. Whenever we watch something, I'm always running around getting things for my husband, or I am cooking, cleaning, you know...I cannot sit and watch. If I sit and watch, then I feel there is something to do, which I should be getting to. Even if I am with my baby and alone in this house, I am cleaning or cooking with the television on.

Due to the domestic environment around her, Alisa kept herself available to her family who were often present with her at home. Alisa like many other women interviewed in the community centre responded in a similar manner. When the women got the time away from work and family to view television there is a feeling of 'guilt' and even 'shame' associated with spending time on self, and even specific genres induce shame in the women similar to the 'weepies' that Radway (1992) studied. Alisa only watched ethnic television programmes, she also used these media to maintain a sense of familial bonding through DVD films or Hindi films downloaded on her computer. Alisa also maintained a Facebook account through which she kept in touch with her family who were around the world, and also her friends in the UK. She informed me that Facebook had become both a source of happiness and disappointment for her, she said:

When I go on Facebook sometimes I feel really happy looking at everyone's pictures and messages, but then I feel very very sad. I pray to get out of this situation you know. Have a better house, get better education for my child, and give better things to my parents. *Inshallah*, one day we well. I also like that we can put videos on Facebook, because I can see

many television programme videos on Facebook. I also have some friends post news on Facebook, I learn a lot from these sites.

Alisa was a college graduate from Pakistan; her education was completed in her native language of Urdu. Her proficiency in English enabled her to approach the world outside her home with more confidence than other women in her social network of the community centre in Bradford. Alisa used email and Facebook to keep in touch with her friends and family around the world and she used Facebook intermittently to post news items, photos and personal messages. While she derived pleasure from keeping in touch with her family and friends, Alisa was constantly reminded of how far away her home really was as none of the technology can truly compensate for their absence in her life. The same feeling of loss was experienced when Alisa watches ethnic films in her home in Bradford:

I watch mostly films you know, I don't have time to watch Asian dramas because they are so long and I don't have the patience to sit through it. Now I'm applying for a part-time job at our centre, so *Inshallah*. When my husband is here he watches something or the other. Some movies make me very sad, I miss my mother a lot and when no one is at home and my baby is sleeping I cry. It just helps me and then I can get on with my day. It is not easy, this life and sometimes I laugh and enjoy the songs and dance in the movies, and sometimes I am not very happy. I wish at that time my life was different and I never left Pakistan.

Alisa's belonging was still rooted where her family was; more than the cultural or ethnic belonging Alisa looks at Pakistan as her home, where her family is. As Stuart Hall (1992a) drawing from Foucault noted, identity needs to be conceptualised as a relationship between subjects and broader discursive practices; here Alisa's identity was rooted in the process of estrangement that labour migration has induced. It could be said that Alisa was in the process of acculturation and occupied a 'space' in Britain as an immigrant, but belongs to the 'place' that was her home in Pakistan. This disconnection was negotiated everyday by Alisa in very subtle manners, by reinforcing her Pakistani ethnicity in celebrations and her dressing in a *salwar kameez* instead of a *hijab*. She speaks in Urdu at home with her husband and to her child, as well as in the community centre to other women and me. She creates a circle of people who belong in her identity discourse through language, food, films, music and Asian

dramas, while also integrating signs like Facebook and Skype to belong to both the worlds Alisa inhabits.

5.4 Humaira: New 'ethnicities'

Humaira was a first-generation immigrant to Britain; she was a housewife and lived in a joint family household together with her children and husband, and her husband's brother and family. The large household owns multiple television sets and rarely watches television together. Humaira's husband was an Imam at the local mosque. Humaira was an acquaintance of Reena the gatekeeper and that was how I went to Humaira's house to meet with her and the family. My first visit to Humaira's house was with Reena during the month of Ramadan; I was introduced and my research explained then Reena left me to explain the ethics portion. Once I received agreements from all the members of the house, I told Humaira that I would come back another day because in Humaira's household she did not watch television at all and her daughters had given up watching television for the month of Ramadan. Humaira has two daughters and three sons and there were no male members present in the house during both visits to the house. Jehan and her elder sister Suri were present at home. Suri was pregnant at the time of the visit; she had come to spend Ramadan with her family and said that she would return to her in-laws after *Eid*. Suri said she watched some Islamic programmes during Ramadan; however, Suri had completely sacrificed watching television as part of her *roza*.²⁶ The sacrifice of television viewing during Ramadan was a common feature among many women at the community centre. Humaira's daughter Jehan was 17 years old and I asked her why she had chosen to give up television during Ramadan:

²⁶ Arabic for fasting.

I want to focus on my fasting and my prayers, watching television is very distracting for me. My father also tells us that we should only pray, avoid television, music, sports any form of entertainment during Ramadan. Mom told us girls that it will also keep our minds pure, and that our prayers will be heard.

The focus on piety and purity was a recurrent theme during the fieldwork. Jameela, a participant in this study discussed in detail in chapter 6, had no television set at home. Jameela made a choice out of piety to reject the messages of media and to particularly focus on her faith. Jameela had a computer at home which was what she used to watch any programmes that were recommended by friends of other family members online. Humaira, however did not watch television or use the internet; she did not speak English, so we communicated in Urdu for the entire duration of my visit. However, both Jehan and Suri spoke to me fluently in English while they communicated with their mother in Urdu. I asked Suri about the kind of programmes she watched during Ramadan:

I watch Islam Channel a lot. I watch this channel... called Aap TV. My friends watch it too, I watch *Zikr* on it... Its good, they give you...um...like they give you *Hadiths* and *Ayahs*...on Fridays they have *Surat-Ul-Kursi*...it's a very known *sura* which you are supposed to read on Fridays, so you can read it with the Imam on Friday. And they have *Nasheeds* for Children...um; they have news on as well. I enjoy it. I just put it on...on the weekends they got like, *Muslimmah- Dilemma* and they talk about Muslims in the west and like...I like the show, it's a good show and it gives you tips. It shows you rights of the husbands and the rights of the wife, they refer it back to the *Quran* and *Sunnah* ya...and like...I like it more because of that. I have seen Asian dramas in my friends' homes, I don't like them. Asian dramas are not real lives; it is not the life we have here.

The Islam Channel was a religious channel which was broadcast from Britain throughout Europe. The programmes were generally watched by British-born Muslims, like Suri and other participants of this study. The programmes on the Islam Channel seemed to address the gap in representation and voice the concerns of many of its viewers; the 'border zone' cultures are rarely depicted in mainstream media. While women like Suri find Asian dramas as misrepresentative of their lives, they watch British Islamic channels where the programmes have people like them addressing their issues as more 'real' than 'ethnic' media. However, contextualising religious channels as just being faith based cannot fairly address the aspects of culture, gender and belonging which they also address. The Islam Channel

contributes to the creation of new ethnicities, of identities rooted in the discursive contexts around them. As a British Muslim, Suri is rooted in her local context as she says that Asian dramas do not reflect her life 'here'; she does not just mean that in relation to portrayals, but the recognition of the acute differences in culture and distances that separate her life from the Asian dramas.

Although the household had very limited television viewership, and especially very rare 'cultural' ethnic media present, I asked Jehan if everyone in the house watched Islamic media and she replied that the father of the house watched Aap TV:

My dad watches it [Aap TV], because he loves it [Aap TV]. Because it's in Punjabi or Mirpuri I think...It's a bit different. It's mostly because ...there is a place called Mirpur in Pakistan...because the comedy is funnier, even though it's a really bad one, it sounds funny. He wants to have fun that's why he loves it; I don't watch it because I don't like it.

As a first-generation immigrant, the father has very different media habits. He mediates the distance between the incongruity of his diasporic condition by consuming the images and humour once familiar to him. These images and the semiotic context of the humour were distant from the subjectivities of his British-born and acculturated daughters of this home. This was seen to be the case with other second- and third-generation women who viewed predominantly mainstream British media or Islamic media. Like Alisa in the earlier discussion, a sense of belonging was derived from the images of the home. Such images and sounds also bring a ritualistic connotation to television viewing. As Jehan says, her father watches the images of Kashmiri villages on Aap TV every evening. Jehan's father uses this time to disconnect from Britain to reminisce about the world that remains unchanged in his mind as *home*. It is also ritualised due to how Jehan's father rekindles the images on the television channel within a sanctimonious context, thus the image transforms into a figurative Zion, the land of the forefathers, where he will return to. The otherwise disrupted immigrant experience is stabilised through such patterned behaviour, of normalising the alienness of the surrounding places.

In this manner, Humaira's home creates new ethnicities that are away from the context of culture, race and nation. As Hall (1996) argued, drawing upon the works of young black British film-makers and musicians, cultural production is an integral part of the process of recreating ethnic identities. He wrote that new cultural politics articulated through these art forms results in a real shift in the point of contestation. Involved in this process is a division of the notion of ethnicity between, on the one hand, the dominant understanding which connects it to nation and 'race', and on the other what, Hall (1996) noted as the beginning of a positive conception of the ethnicity of the margins, of the periphery (p. 447).

Conclusions

In this chapter I attempted to distinguish four different processes of ethnicity articulation and contestations in four different households through the voices of the women and their specific domestic spaces. In doing so I presented the rich diversity of contestations and negotiations inherent in ethnic minority audiences of diverse media. Diversity in the readings of media texts and the manner in which the messages are accepted and contested is as relevant to the context of this study as the diversity in the audiences who belong in the narratives of the same 'race', 'ethnicity' and 'culture'. The field of the home presented a complex set of negotiations and control: Yaseen's articulation of piety as opposed to an ethnic identification was also due to her alienation from her ethnicity due to her marriage to a non-Pakistani man and the resistance that followed. By ordering intimate relationships, ethnic groups maintain the boundaries through norms that are difficult to challenge. Yaseen's case therefore presented challenges to various boundaries, namely, that of ethnicity with regard to the Pakistani ethnicity and at the same time she challenged the boundedness of being British.

The underlying theme in all four of the women profiled here is the use of Islamic ideals for the structuring of the 'ideal self'. The new ethnicities paradigm is being absorbed into the postfeminist paradigm of 'the new ethical scenarios of self' (Woods & Skeggs,

2004). The second observation that is critical to this thesis is the interaction between technologies. The use of television for a Voice over Internet Protocol communication in Alisa's home is indicative of this new development, which is remarkable in migrant communication technology. The use of traditional medium such as television has diversified in migrant homes and the growing reach of the internet as a tool for increased interconnectivity creates greater opportunities for the flow of ideas and actions.

The presence of multiple media and genres in the case of Yaseen and Shaheena has indicated a conflation of various ethnicities and the creation of 'new ethnicities', which can be considered to be 'under-erasure'. Alisa as a new migrant to Britain faced a new set of challenges in this country. While media remediated to some extent the physical separation from her family in Pakistan, it was also a daily reminder of the distance. This duality of new media was acutely felt throughout Alisa's everyday life, when she could make a phone call whenever she wished or Skype with her family through video conferencing; although she was still distant, the virtuality of the act was realised. Humaira articulated a new position of disavowing television completely from her life; through this act she maintained a postfeminist project of the self. Through continuous monitoring and surveillance of the self, she attempted to create the ideal self, whereas her daughters used media to attain a similar end by watching Islamic media. These various points of articulation of the gendered self are distinct but also similar in that the women attempted to create a space of self which was reflexive and engaged with their surroundings.

The distantiation from the cultural ethnicity of the first generation is acutely present in the second- and third-generation women, as Heena articulated during the interview about family viewing. In Heena's home, Aap TV²⁷ was watched by her father-in-law and mother-

²⁷ Along with images of Azad Kashmir, Aap TV broadcasts recordings of stage plays with a live audience shown in Mirpur or other towns and cities in Pakistan. These plays retain their local essence; semantically they are closer to an older generation, or those who are recent immigrants to the UK. The narratives in these plays are

in-law. Heena and her husband were born in the UK and did not identify with the programmes aired on Aap TV. Heena told me:

My in-laws enjoy this type of programme you know, even the comedies. I don't understand them or enjoy them. I find it crude sometimes, the jokes. Last time I went to Pakistan, I wanted to leave, like... I mean people are nice and all, but the place is not my home.

Heena's preferences were in contrast to her mother-in-law's choices made a generation ago, which was also evident in how she dressed differently in *hijab* as compared to her mother-in-law who wore *salwar kameez*. The diversity in media genres viewed is also particularly relevant: while there is a generational difference in viewing patterns, differences according to immigrant status and duration in Bradford have also emerged. Humaira's husband, a first-generation immigrant over 50 years old and who has lived in the UK for over 20 years, he preferred to watch ethnic media to preserve his cultural ethnicity. Alisa, a recent immigrant to the UK, watched ethnic media as a means to preserve the memories of her family in Pakistan. Humaira's children did not watch any ethnic media while their father watched it due to the disconnect the children felt from the narrative of the programme. Shaheena and Ahmed were completely distinct from the above audiences, although they watched similar programmes together and actively engaged with the narratives. Shaheena challenged the depictions and distanced herself from pervasive understanding of ethnicity as cultural and moved her identity into a new space with new meanings. This was similar for Yaseen whereby the intersections of various identifications created a unique space of liminality. While seeking to address the issues of her piety, Yaseen truly challenged the boundaries of imagining Britain; women like Yaseen reproduce, reconstitute and resynthesise their identities in their specific local contexts.

Most importantly, this chapter contextualised the families and their consumption of media products away from an 'ethnically absolute' (Gilroy, 1992) position to a diverse and

largely male-centric and use stereotypical references for female characters, much like the 'Taming the Shrew' and political satires to entertain the audiences. These plays are either in Punjabi or Potohari.

dynamic one. I also pointed to the transformative role of media in the household and how the readings of the media texts generate new cultural forms that integrate many facets of the participants' identifications. From multiple locations of being an immigrant, ethnic minority subject and the 'Other', the experiences of the participants have also pointed to their historical roots of heterogeneity of experiences and positions (Bhachu, 1993). Although the mediascape under study was dominated by television, the role of new media in the form of the internet can be seen as ever increasing. As discussed above, Yaseen, Shaheena, Alisa and Jameela have been increasingly using the internet to supplement their media habits. The incidence of Muslim women and their use of internet as an alternative space remains understudied and the presence and strength of the voices of Muslim women on the internet is staggering: Muslimmah Media watch, a website started by a group of young Muslim women, stated this on their 'about' page:

Muslimmah Media Watch is a forum where we, as Muslim women, can critique how our images appear in the media and popular culture. Although we are of different nationalities, sects, races, etc., we have something important in common: we're tired of seeing ourselves portrayed by the media in ways that are one-dimensional and misleading. This is a space where, from a Muslim feminist perspective, we can speak up for ourselves.
[\(http://muslimahmediawatch.org/about-2/\)](http://muslimahmediawatch.org/about-2/)

The role and development of new media is discussed in detail in chapter 8. By including a brief discussion of new media in this chapter, I want to highlight the dynamism of the diasporic mediascape through the agency of the audiences who inhabit this space. Indicative of this dynamism is also the possession of high-end technology that facilitates transnational communication in diasporic households like Alisa's. The choices of media, both transnational and local, reflect the rapidly evolving diasporic households and the gendered relationships in these spaces.

Chapter 6: Mediated narratives of community life

Immigrant life sustains itself through the essential ethnic infrastructure provided by the community in which it lives. If the home represents the space of intimacy and intergenerational cultural reproduction, then it is in community life where gender roles are reaffirmed, take shape and become norms through everyday practice. As demonstrated in the chapter 5, the home is not separated from the world that surrounds it. The values that inform roles within the home are never self-sustained. *Community*, alongside the home and the nation, represents a significant framework that contains and informs the processes of identity construction. Hamilton (2001) wrote that the term ‘community’ has numerous definitions and has both practical and ideological significance to most people, thus posing a complex problem to social sciences (p. 8-9). It is important to mention that in the current study, community is discussed in its varied physical and ideological forms that is pervasive within the ‘new ethnic’ community that is Pakistani Muslim women community of Bradford. This encompasses the community or communities are discussed and include the Bradfordian community, the women’s community, the Islamic community, the Pathan community, the first-generation community, the second-generation community, etc. Thus studying a community is in turn a complex, multi-layered process. All or most of these diverse layers are represented in this thesis in varying capacities.

Community, as conceived by Cohen (1997), is both relational and oppositional, thus defining who belongs within its boundaries and secluding others. These boundaries are contentious yet relevant to the lives of the participants in this study. Cohen (1997) wrote of community as, ‘that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediately than the abstraction we call society’ (p. 15), and this notion is relevant in how it includes the

abstraction as well as the physicality and the boundaries that are frequently associated with the notion of community.

Community is discussed here as the second element of a triangular framework that contains and informs Pakistani Muslim women's identification in Bradford. Community, alongside the home and the nation, represents a mechanism for control but also for sustaining and shaping individual and communal identities. In the case of the group studied here, community plays an important role in three ways. Firstly, the Pakistani community of Bradford is a close-knit group, as a result of its growing membership and the absence of diverse groups for Pakistanis in the city, either based on religion or language. This grouping is largely organised under the aegis of the mosques in the area. Secondly, the community functions as a system of protection and surveillance of practices associated with cultural practices of its members, especially women. Thirdly, the community, as a local entity, filters and interprets ideologies and politics associated with public life thus proving to be more than a cultural container of identity but also a highly political one. These three roles of the community are central to the discussion that unravels in the forthcoming sections of this chapter and with reference to my ethnography in the community centre.

Before embarking on the analysis and discussion, a conceptual clarification is imminent. While the idea of a 'community' does define or unite a large body of ethnically diverse people like the Pakistani Muslims, I do not take this concept at face value but instead I adopt an operational approach to the concept as a reference to the Pakistani Muslims settled in the immediate locality where my research took place, Bradford. This community is hierarchically divided on the basis of caste, clan, age and gender. The subtleties of such divisions are too vast to explore in this limited space, yet they are given some attention because they relate to understanding the narratives associated with the construction of the self among Pakistani Muslim women in Bradford. Thus, here I introduce the main subgroups

constituting this community. Although there are internal fragmentations in ethnic minority communities, in the face of an adversary/adversity the ‘community’ is perceived as one construct by its members, as illustrated in Alexander’s (1998) work among Bangladeshi youth in South London. Community for the young men had become a source of collective identification and action, where the members were aware of ‘the constructedness of this collectivity, something that could be funded, manipulated and serviced, a resource and a demand, a symbol of power and of responsibility...’(p. 443). Community centres such as the one where my ethnographic study took place incorporate and reaffirm the symbolic and physical attributes of a *community*.

This chapter begins with a discussion of community life as it was when I was in the field, and the predominant patterns of media consumption that dominate the maintenance of community lives in Bradford. This section provides an overview of the persistent predominance of television among all media and discusses the particular genres that tend to be consumed among Pakistani women in Bradford. This discussion is followed with a focus on the ideological significance of community as a mechanism for control and as a social structure, influencing and inhibiting the female space. While highlighting the role of community as a system of control and surveillance for women, I demonstrate the complexity of community, which for some women can, at least momentarily, become enabling and allow expression. Among the tools of control that can paradoxically be emancipatory and confining are the gaze and surveillance which are central to the community life of the participants. Another important aspect of women’s lives in the community is the rampant role of ideology that tends to be held onto more rigorously than their forebears in Pakistan. This ideology is also relied upon by media and specifically the new Islamic media which is gaining fast prominence across the European Islamic *Ummah*. In this context, I examine how television

extends its presence and relevance as a community device that transmits and upholds values and norms.

When discussing gaze and surveillance, the role of internalised systems of control cannot be ignored. Drawing primarily from my research in the community centre, I discuss how women have adopted and rejected sets of norms by reflexively engaging with their associated rules. I also demonstrate that in the case of transnational populations, such as the one studied here, community expands beyond the local space and can refer to the national and transnational *Ummah*, which represents key elements of the imagined community (Anderson, 1983) for many participants. Identification with different elements of a community is supported and sustained through the use of media and communication technologies, especially satellite television and the internet. Giving examples associated with the consumption of popular Islamic channels, I discuss the ways in which *Ummah* has become a mediated virtual community with a real impact for many of the participants. My aim here is to focus on the community as a system of socialisation, which provides a network of safety and support to migrants. At the same time community can function as a panopticon observing and controlling the bodies and movements of individuals within it. I shall attempt to unpack each of the layers of mediated community life in the context of the data presented in this study by way of, but not limited to, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, group discussions and the daily interactions that I had in the process of 'living in the field'. In the context of this study the 'field' was dominated by but not limited to the community centre. The community centre functioned as a merged public and private space for women who are housewives from the surrounding area, a working space for women who are community workers and as a generic social space for working women who irregularly attend classes that take place in the centre. The centre is a community space for women, as the mosque is for men. The public spaces available to the participants are limited and the role of the community

centre in developing the skills and socialisation of the women is multifaceted. The centre provides education and leisure and becomes a stage where family relations spill on to the public space. An example of this was evident during one of my visits: I was privy to how women were considering suitable marriage proposals for a member's sister-in-law. For many women the centre fulfils the role of extended familial support, introducing them to available infrastructure that they can access to build up their lives and also as a system of emotional support, especially for those whose daily life is confined to their homes.

I described the role of the community centre in the larger structure of the community in chapter 4. Here I briefly delve into discussing the importance of the centre in the everyday lives of women who use the resources within the community centre. While the centre figures in the daily lives of the participants as a space to socialise beyond the home, it is especially emancipatory for women who are unemployed. Courses that introduce the use of computers, internet, various software, aerobics, and health and nutrition provide valuable opportunities to update unemployed members' skills and to sustain social relations beyond their domestic and familial sphere. As many participants of this study had discontinued their education upon marriage at a young age, courses such as those listed above enabled them to participate more actively in their children's education while also advancing their sense of self-worth. As I noted in chapter 4, Sunni Muslim women in Britain are excluded from a formal social space within the Sunni Muslim community. In this context, the community centre figures as an invaluable opportunity for sustained formal and informal interaction: cultural, educational and social. Even though the centre caters largely to women users and staff, the board members and the manager of the centre are men. There is not a single woman on the board making decisions pertaining to the community centre. However, women who use the centre relay their feedback to the female staff members who collate this for the board to make decisions on the courses and activities that can or cannot be allowed in the premises. The

daily working of the centre is managed by a male manager who authorises the finances, classes and attends various external meetings representing the centre. The three female employees are outreach workers, who are all Pakistani Muslims, two of them British-born and wear the *hijab*; the third employee is the gatekeeper, Reena. Reena is a non-*hijabi* and wears *salwar kameez* and drapes *dupatta* to cover her hair. The choice of clothes is important here in that it demonstrates a visible marker of identity. Laila and Shaheena, the two British-born staff members, draw their primary identifications from their faith and choose to communicate their convictions through their clothing choices; this is further explained in their interviews. Reena, as a recent migrant, derives her belonging from her ethnic belonging to the Pathan culture, which illustrates her choice of *salwar kameez*. Clothing holds special relevance to the participants who use it as a powerful way to communicate their choices and agency.

The majority of the women who come to use the centre are *hijabis* and do not take their scarves off even in the presence of other women. The manager, aware of the particularities of gendered roles within this group, moves very cautiously between his office and the other spaces within the centre. The place, the performance and dressing of women using the centre is monitored not just by the self, but also by other women who occupy and practise segregation. These are not only self-imposed social norms but also internalised disciplinary systems that are akin to the Foucauldian discourse of sexuality and control, or as Butler (1990) put it, ‘regulative discourses’.

6.1 Community life and internal diversity

A community retains itself through the maintenance of characteristics essential to the group. The participants of this study were part of the Pakistani Muslim community of Bradford. However, within the larger Pakistani group there were smaller community groups based on

language and ‘ethnic’ affiliations, for example Pathans, Mirpuris, Potoharis and Chacchis were the dominant groups present among the participants. Saifullah-Khan (1976) asserted that the term ‘Pakistani community’ disregards the diversity among the various groups settled in Bradford and that *biraderi* must be considered a more effective notion for the communities settled in Britain from Pakistan. Affiliations on the basis of *biraderi*²⁸ are very strong, especially during arranging marriage. The women were aligned with their respective groups in a rudimentary sense by birth; however, they identified a strong sense of community when speaking about their specific groups. For example, when discussions on patriarchal control over women came up, a participant who identified herself as Pathan said that ‘Mirpuri women are usually more forward than Pathan women’. She continued that, ‘Pathan men were warriors and they always exhibit their virility by controlling their women’. This statement brings up multiple issues of identification with one community while emasculating and ‘Othering’ another group. The discussant here simultaneously defined her group and enclosed it by differentiating her group (Pathans) from the Mirpuris. Among the Pathan women, while there was a sense of repression due to strict patriarchal norms imposed on them, there was also a sense of pride and pleasure derived by the women from the martial past of the Pathan group. This demonstrates that while community structure restricts women, they chose to abide by its norms because of their complex relationship to it. The allegiance may seem stifling to the outsider, but the women hold on to it as a means of belonging and fearing alienation but also, and I argue most importantly, it gives them a chance to create and believe in narratives which reinforce pride and cohesion among themselves.

These smaller groups are maintained among the members in Bradford, through ideological systems of *We-ness* supported partly through media. The important example of local ethnic media in Bradford is Aap TV, broadcast from Bradford; the channel is an

²⁸ Tribe groups, it is often also associated with clans as in a common ancestral origin for a group.

acronym for Azad Kashmir, Abaseen and Potohari and/or Pahari. All three are regions of north Pakistan. Mirpuris originally come from Azad Kashmir, and Abaseen are the people from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region formerly known as the North-West Frontier Province. There are many Potohari speakers throughout Pakistan; however, larger concentrations of speakers hail from Rawalpindi and Hazara in the north and Mirpur in Azad Kashmir. Pahari literally translates into ‘native to the hills’, which is used to designate people throughout the subcontinent who live in the Himalayan ranges, and hence languages spoken in these areas are called Pahari. Aap TV is transmitted throughout Britain and Europe. KBC is another channel that is broadcast in partnership with Aap TV.²⁹ The Kashmir Broadcast Corporation is a UK-based ethnic television channel that broadcasts from Manchester. Together with Mirpuri and Potohari, KBC also broadcasts in Hindko. A notable feature in the programming of KBC is that they also focus on English language programmes and news-based non-fiction programmes thus demonstrating an intention to reach out to younger generations and individuals who perhaps reside outside the very close-knit communities.

Indian soap operas, or as the participants called them Asian dramas, were important references among the majority of the women across age group, immigrant status and education level. Hindi films, although watched by many participants, led to oppositional readings, especially among the second-generation British Pakistani Muslims. Hindi films were perceived as pandering to Western values especially in the clothing and relationships among its actors. Television channels broadcast from Pakistan were also watched widely by the first-generation immigrant women: DM Digital, Noor TV and Geo TV were cited as the most watched. Peace TV³⁰ an Islamic channel broadcast from Dubai had many viewers, again from very diverse backgrounds. The diverse viewing choices among these women demonstrates the flexible ethnic boundaries, at least when it comes to exposure to a variety of

²⁹ <http://jklc.co.uk/> accessed on May 16th 2011.

³⁰ <http://www.peacetv.tv/en-gb/> accessed on May 16th 2011.

cultural repertoires. Cultural proximity is in place when it comes to Indian dramas or Arabic television, while the process of sustaining connections with national communities becomes evident in women's use of Pakistani national channels and British channels (the latter is discussed in detail in the following chapter). One of the findings associated with the range of diverse media use relates to linguistic capacities and cultural capital. The better educated the women were, the more likely they were to watch television broadcast in different languages.

Most importantly, viewers who regularly viewed Peace TV were fluent in English and cited that their main reason for watching the channel was due to Dr Zakir Naik's oratorical skills. Many women said that they enjoyed the talking points that Dr Zakir Naik brought to the discussion and that his talks drew information from all religions. Along with the above-mentioned channels, some of the popular programmes on national television mentioned were *Eastenders*, *Coronation Street*, documentaries and other informational programmes. These were primarily consumed by second-generation British Pakistani women. The most popular among the younger women and British-born women was Islam Channel, which has a strong community and online presence. The most popular programmes among the women who watched Islam Channel were *Muslimmah Dilemma* and *Sister Talk*. Most importantly, during prayer times, the channel broadcast call to prayers five times a day, thus reinforcing their adherence to an Islamic way of life. The programmes on Islam Channel also involve fundraising for Islamic charities around the world, resources for Islamic finance and linking the local community with a transnational one. While some programmes were watched on television sets, some television programmes were consumed on the internet. A few young women complemented their participation in the Islam Channel through participation on online forums associated with the channel, enabling discussion of programmes and various other issues that pertain to Muslims. Recently the Islam Channel has also started broadcasting in West Africa highlighting that the channel enjoys wide viewership but also that the

programmes are more *Ummah* oriented than based on a cultural ethnicity. The motto of the Islam Channel is ‘*One World-One Ummah-One Channel ::[sic] Islam Channel*’.

By looking at the most popular media among the participants, I can see that identifications of the community through media are drawn under three distinct themes: cultural, national and religious. Although each can be distinguished as distinct kinds of media, they also overlap. ‘Cultures’ are not neatly drawn into Pakistani or British, or do not vacillate depending on the age of the participants and their migration histories. Religious identification cannot be confined to a separate category as it often merges with ethnicity when it is practised within specific cultural locations and when local cultural practices and practices associated with the country of origin become interwoven. Some women identified themselves as ‘culturally Islamic’ rather than strictly religious, demonstrating a shift in identification from ethnicity to religion. While for a minority, religion became the predominant form of identification, for most, ethnicity and religion merge; they draw from each other while they also stand to convey distinct meanings on their own. I develop this discussion in chapter 8 together with my final reflections on the findings. In the section below, I focus on television and its utility as both a system of expression in communal spaces through the use of ‘television talk’, and as a mechanism of control.

6.2 Community, oppression and expression

For the Muslim women participating in this study, the portrayal of Islamic communities as stifling and secluded is intertwined in the popular and scholarly conceptions and is considered as grossly misleading. In developing a sense of community, this group creates both a sense of togetherness while simultaneously abiding to a set of rules of engagement that tend to prioritise collective needs over individual requirements and which reaffirm hegemonic and ideological systems of *We-ness*. This duality within the social formation of a

community is skilfully negotiated by the women participants of this study. As Abu-Lughod (1993) wrote in her study of Bedouin women of the Awlad, Ali tribe, the sense of female community derived by the women is very strong and retains its sexually segregated nature out of the choice of the members of the male and female groups. As was the case with the participants in this study, the gender segregation associated with hegemonic norms within the group gives them some autonomy beyond the male gaze and control. Thus, and at least to some extent, they maintain the segregation and via their gender-specific places and practices are relieved of stress associated with life at home and within marriage and family.

Although there was no pronounced hierarchy among the women, two distinct characteristics created informal and lived hierarchies in the community centre. Age played a key role and was seen as a token of respect, as well as a particular young, British and religious identity, that of the British-born (English-speaking) *hijabi* women. The latter group has gained a (self-proclaimed) role as community leaders in this community-gendered space. This informal stratification became more visible when this group repeatedly appeared as vocal and visible compared to recent migrants and those who were citizens but were not proficient English speakers.

Having the opportunity to observe the preparation and realisation of a fundraising event for Gaza, I observed these internal dynamics and the ways female identifications are shaped and performed in ways that often miss public understandings of British Muslim women. The event was organised in the community centre. It was an event where the contestations of old community from an emergent 'new' community could be observed. The woman who led the whole initiative was Jameela. Jameela is 42 years old; she was born in Britain and wears a *niqab*.³¹ She has no television set in her home, but accesses information on the internet and watches programmes recommended by her friends and family on the

³¹ Full veil covering the face and body and not just the hair.

television channels' websites. Jameela initiated the organising of the Gaza fundraising event at the community centre.³² The event itself was open to all women and children; however, most of the people who attended were regulars at the centre along with their family members. Jameela was attempting to bring together women from various community groups into a 'new' community group with a new agenda, which could be both of a new political persuasion or even a new religious/ethnic leaning. The formation of this community was based on action while collective identification was secondary. The women had to arrange funds, create an agenda for action, decide where the proceeds of the event would go and choose what logo to use. What this event has illustrated is that women use avenues available to them, in this case a perceived Islamic model of participation and mobilisation for women, to contest the status quo of their community's politics and the nation's ideologies. Also aptly clear is that while invoking their inclusion in the 'Pakistani community' women like Jameela mobilise support for causes and seek camaraderie with other women in the community.

The fundraiser demonstrates how membership within a community group is used to further the projects conceived by women. The community of women in the centre also maintains a sense of propriety through chastising those who veer away. During one of the English classes, the discussion of the class moved towards the Indian drama that had been on television the previous night. An animated young woman in the class began discussing the plot of the episode and how it seemed harsh to a certain character, only to be hastily silenced by an older woman who was also a member of the study group. Later on during an interview I mentioned this incident to the older woman and asked her why she found that discussion unnecessary. She remarked that the young woman was away from her family in Pakistan, and as a self-appointed maternal figure it was the older woman's duty to make sure the young woman stays on track with her family obligations and keeps '*deen*' (faith) intact. Pursuing

³² The event is discussed in 6.4 section of this chapter.

conversations on dramas and watching them inflicted viewers with vain materialism and put 'thoughts' into young people's minds, she believed. Such disciplining is not rare in the South Asian community as Brah (1996) noted in her study among Punjabis in Britain. In the case observed, internal female mechanisms of controlling public discourse are often in place and younger women become aware of the norms and restrictions soon after their entry to the public space.

The allegiances to community groups had both positive and negative implications for the participants of this study. While some derived safety from the familiar, others were overly cosseted using traditional norms, which when flouted resulted in ostracising the individual from the group. As the women often rely on the community for cooperation and representation, to ameliorate other forms of social exclusion, 'ethnic capital' (Modood, 2005) emerges as a shared capital and a system of management of community life. The community in turn relies on women as female reputation and status are linked to ideologies about a community's purity and piety. Honour and modesty are held paramount in a woman in many Asian and Middle Eastern cultures. These are discussed in detail in a number of countries: the Middle East (Abu-Lughod, 1985), India (Ballard, 1994; Brah, 1993), South Korea (Kim, 2005) and Pakistan (Afshar, 1989a; Hussain, 2005; Modood, 1994; Roomi, 2008). Family honour is preserved in many ways, one of the important ways being 'arranged marriage'. The family arranges the marriage of their daughter or son to another 'compatible' family according to the dominant set of values that support the reproduction of regional and caste divides. In the case of the participants of this study, the groom or bride was usually found from within familiar circles. However, some women were also married to their cousins from Pakistan. Four women from the forty-four women interviewed were divorced. All four of them had had arranged marriages. Three of them were married to their cousins from Pakistan, while one of them married her cousin who was born and raised in Britain. Due to the

increasing number of divorce rates among British Pakistanis (Shah, Modood & Dwyer, 2010) the arranged marriage trend could be seen as changing. The arrival and popularity of numerous Islamic marriage websites³³ demonstrates that the patterns of choosing a spouse are changing.

During one of my visits to the community centre, I was privy to the proceedings of an arranged marriage.³⁴ Although the man and woman who were to be married were not present, the family and a few community members sat together and discussed their future without concerns about their absence. The sister-in-law of the woman whose marriage was to be arranged sat on the floor after an aerobics exercise class and said that her husband's sister was now 'beyond' the marriageable age and now, although late, the family are looking for 'proposals' for her. One of the community centre employees remarked that her husband's friend was over 35 and single and was looking for a wife; however, his case was dropped as he was not born and acculturated in Britain. The sister-in-law opined that they would be incompatible culturally because of the woman being from Britain and the man from Pakistan. Then another community centre worker, Laila, was asked by the sister-in-law of the bridal candidate about Laila's brother, who was single. Laila said that he was a '*hijabi*', meaning that he had a beard and he was a devout Muslim. The sister-in-law asked if he wore the long white tunic often associated with *hijabi* men. After Laila replied positively this case was dropped as he was too devout for the woman in question. The sister-in-law said that although the girl was born and raised in Britain, she had very 'traditional' values. The woman had delayed her marriage because she wanted to be in a secure career and by this point she was a practising chartered accountant. Her sister-in-law added that although she had achieved so

³³ <http://uk.singlemuslim.com/> accessed on July 16th 2011; www.shaaadi.com is also popular among many young Muslims around the world to seek suitable partners.

³⁴ Participants of this study drew clear distinctions between arranged marriages and forced marriage; they said that an arranged marriage was similar to 'assisted' marriage, where the family only facilitates instead of forcing the woman or man to decide contrary to their own personal will.

much for herself, 'it is disheartening that she was not married, and her marital status will embarrass the family in social circles'.

To observe the above event in a series of points the predominant one would be the change in the pattern of selecting a partner. Although some aspects of arranged marriage have changed in this scenario some still remain the same. In many families from the subcontinent the family members and community members aggregate their social networks to find a 'suitable' match, which is often a match for the family rather than for the individual. In effect the individuals who marry get in to the marriage contract with the implicit knowledge that their union is greater than themselves. The arranging of this marriage held onto many traditional assumptions that a woman in her 30s would be 'difficult' to marry away although a man who is similarly aged could be found a suitable younger female partner. The group of women also overlooked the educational and career goals that have been achieved by the woman, which is characteristic of how conservative societies view women and men.

The above anecdote is an attempt to throw light on the remaking of traditions while at the same time working within the boundaries of norms. Yunas Samad's (1998) paper shares findings that point to the prevailing *biraderi* system in the arrangement of marriages; however, my findings and empirical data point to a shift in the *biraderi* system. Many recent marriages of the study's participants were not arranged according to the *biraderi* system but through the selection of what is seen as choice of a compatible Muslim partner for individuals. As individual members, some women have claimed changes in the community attitudes towards their personal choices. During an interview with Rameela, a 42-year-old woman, she told me of how she negotiated the challenges posed by the norms set by the community towards her divorce and now subsequent marriage to a man of her choice. Interestingly, during the interview Rameela made a link between the breakdown of her extended family network as a result of her divorce, and her shift away from Asian television:

In reality I've been isolated and ostracised...um, I no longer have a family unit, parents, and even the community members see me as a traitor. The only person who talks to me is my daughter and I see her only once a week. So, um...these dramas and their stories don't appeal to me.

Belonging to the community structure is derivative of belonging to the family unit. Hence Rameela's status in her family was also reiterated in the manner in which the community perceived her. Rameela did not belong to the 'wives' group in the community centre, and as an older woman she was seen more as an anomaly by people outside of her family, to have divorced her husband at a late stage in her marriage. Despite her 'outsider' status, Rameela negotiated access into the Pakistani community and the white, English community. As she said:

If I meet Asian women I ask them 'oh how is your family?', or I ask them for their recipes, and tell them how well they cook. It helps in fitting in with our people. When I am with white people I ask them about a night out, which club or pub they went to. You know, these sorts of questions get people to talk to you, at the same time I fit in to both the groups for the time being.

Rameela negotiated the two communities and their practices with the knowledge accrued from her own upbringing in Bradford. She traversed these paths as both a Pakistani woman and a British woman. The knowledge of each community's working was because Rameela believed in her belonging to both the larger British community and the Bradfordian Pakistani community. As Rameela told me:

When I was in school I used to be conscious of the pants my mother would make me wear under my skirt [school uniform]. This made me stick out as a sore thumb among all the white kids at school. So I would take them [pants] off when I got to school. Because I have light skin and green eyes no one really suspected that I was not a white person. I had really good friends in school; once we grew up they all understood my background and were really nice to me, the small group I was in...And they were all white girls, so I really enjoyed it that I did not have to hang out with Asians all the time. I learnt about their lives and they did about mine I think.

As stated earlier, Rameela located herself in both cultures and demonstrated a shifting and conditional belonging that relies on contextuality. Although it seems like Rameela shifted according to her externalities, her words and practice reveal a much more complex phenomenon than that. The internalisation of the diversity surrounding Rameela is indicative

of the fluidity of her identity. She refused to belong to a single community or be pigeonholed into one discourse of Islam, or one culture or a single defining nation. This process of choosing a discourse to belong in is emphasised by not alienating oneself from the immediate context. Rameela's divorce, however, had a severe effect on her life and her relationships: she found that her extended family no longer invited her to events and even her own sisters would not invite her to family functions in their homes. These instances of glaring ostracising highlight how communities systematically create 'Others' of their own. Women like Rameela use their agency not just to contest systemic norms, but also to negotiate their identities in the given diverse cultural settings around them. Rameela's example also suggests that conceptualisation of community in policy and popular discourse presumes singularity of this concept and understands the idea of community too simplistically. The diversity of cultures that intersect with individual experiences and identifications can be regularly observed in diasporic communities. Assumptions about withdrawn communities, or individuals, often overlook important nuances of community life. Jameela, the *hijabi* woman who did not own a television, cannot be seen as an isolated case, or even as a victim, due to her choice to not use mainstream media and to wear the *hijab*. However, upon a closer look into Jameela's daily life and choices, it becomes apparent that the space she occupied is an intersection of liberal democratic values with scriptural Islam and cultural Islam, resulting in the creation of new identifications. Clothes, food and even conversation topics are deliberate choices in this new identification paradigm, which is developed by the individual to navigate their surrounding contextualities.

6.3 Gaze and surveillance

The community space for Pakistani women is one where women are required to be both visible and invisible (Mohammad, 2005): visible in spaces where the parental/communal gaze

can follow them and invisible from the masculine gaze in the public spaces. Although the male gaze is an important disciplinarian component of patriarchal communities, it is not very often that female gaze is discussed in the literature. Using empirical data I want to discuss the role of female gaze in the community, and the pervasiveness and relevance of female gaze in media watched by the participants. I also want to look at how communities of women impact each other by imposing norms of propriety and obedience, and the manner in which women as audiences critique programmes to fit into their internalised sense of being a 'Muslimmah'. Also imperative in this discussion is how 'gaze' is subverted through the use of the same discourses that are restrictive, creating a complex space of both freedom and constraints.

In Islam, female gaze is a powerful and potent sexual idea and Prophet Mohammed called it the 'the zina of the eye', or literally 'illicit sexual intercourse' (Erickson, 1998, p. 42). Although Laura Mulvey critically discussed the phallogentrism and male gaze in cinema she avoided problematising the female gaze (Gauntlett, 2008). In the context of television, Ellis (1982) illustrated how 'gaze' is specific to cinema and 'glance' more appropriate to television. Both these perspectives of viewing can be gendered: 'gaze' as masculine and 'glance' as feminine. Female viewing which locates itself within the confines of the domestic space shall only 'glance' at the television between her domestic chores without paying attention to the text (Hobson, 2003). Despite the hierarchical ordering of the visual genres that situate the power of gaze in male dominions, the field of soap opera research and feminist media ethnographies reinstated the feminine glance.

In my fieldwork in Bradford, I have come to notice the act of gaze(ing), and its mediation as a complex phenomenon. I argue that 'gaze' operates on three levels. Firstly, there is the active imposition from women within the community over other women to adopt certain character traits as part of being the right 'Muslimmah'. Secondly, 'gaze' flows from the media to the audiences, through ethnic and religious television programmes and channels

that represent, repeat and reaffirm norms for women. Part of this process of course is the way the audiences engage with the text, through its appropriations and adaptations. In addition, I have observed oppositional readings located within the discourse of 'gaze', where audiences locate the representation of women beyond religious or established cultural norms. Finally, I locate 'gaze' as a system used subversively by women challenging the spectator-spectacle relationship. The use of the same discourse of the 'right Muslimmah' is appropriated to challenge the prevalent Western notions of femininity. Also, this subversion of gaze through a radically different instrument such as the *hijab* challenges the earlier theoretical notions of the gaze. Seminal texts like that of Berger (1993) and Mulvey (1975) have pointed to how women are the object of the gaze and never the subject. By controlling their objectification, I argue that the participants in my study have challenged femininity as perceived to be a cultural commodity in the Pakistani 'community' and beyond.

The complexity of this hegemonic relationship vested in women's bodies and their movements by the community of both men and women and the media narrative cannot be adequately theorised in the term 'gaze'. However, developing the notion of 'gaze' away from its physical connotation and locating this in a discourse of power and knowledge is important in the context of this study. As Schroeder (1998) defined, gaze is a 'psychological and androcentric relationship of power and hegemony located in the gazer towards the object of the gaze' (p. 208). This definition takes the concept of gaze beyond 'male gaze' and into a collective phallogentric movement which transcends the conservative idea of gaze as male-to-female and incorporating women as actively enabling gaze upon other women. As Saba Mahmood (2001, 2005) observed in the case of Egyptian women and the mosque movement, women internalised the norms by adhering to forms of piety. The third element of this discussion I take into account is the role of the gaze within mediascapes. While there is significant research on gaze, especially as a form of surveillance over women, mediation of

gaze in transnational media, and especially religious media, remains underrepresented. In this section I discuss the role of the emerging religious media especially television channels like Islam Channel and their role in the emergence of the ‘Muslimmah’.

One of the group discussions with five women who came from diverse backgrounds revealed some interesting aspects about how women viewed each other’s bodies and movements. Four women in the group were *hijabis* and British-born; the fifth in the group was Reena, the gatekeeper. Three of the women in the group used the centre for the Jujitsu class organised in the centre. I shall call them Huma, Zina and Shijna; the fourth is Yaseen, who took part in the participant observation in the domestic sphere. In the course of the discussion we spoke about the representation of Muslims in the media and the discussion steered towards how some women in the ‘community’ dress inappropriately:

Zina: Sometimes the Muslims themselves misrepresent Islam, innit. They always have these fancy *hijabs* these days, coloured ones with so much going on, I mean that is not what our religion teaches us. It is not for us to interpret, it is given very clearly...

Huma: It’s worse in the Uni here, there are Muslim girls who come in tight suits [*salwar kameez*] and the neckline is plunging and it is clear they don’t come to study. It must be so distracting...

Reena: some girls are like that, but there are so many who don’t wear suits like that. I don’t and no one I know does, these girls are young, so it will change.

Shijna: It is a cultural thing for some, like Mirpuris are like that, but there are some nice girls I know, my friends used to wear suits, but they are good Muslims.

I: what do you mean by ‘they are good Muslims’, what changed in them?

Shijna: they changed their ways, they realised that as women our modesty is as important as our prayers. They cover their head now and wear a *jilbab*. I don’t mean you have to do this to become a good Muslim, but it is very important.

In this group Shijna, Huma and Zina shared their opinions of how Muslim girls should dress. The fancying up of the *hijab* and the glamorising of the *salwar kameez* is seen as violating the code of the ‘Muslimmah’. This creates a clear demarcation of who is to be seen as ‘good Muslims’ and who is not. Reena, the gatekeeper and a recent immigrant, wore *salwar kameez* herself and pointed out that even within the *salwar kameez*-wearing girls there are those who dress modestly. Modesty or ‘*izzat*’ is often an important component of gaze. The women who

gaze see themselves as purveyors of modesty of the community, more appropriately, of the *Ummah*.

Within the South Asian community, the operative concept among cultural norms is ‘*izzat*’. Even with the disavowal of the cultural aspect of ‘*izzat*’, women have adopted a specific form of a religious morality which they express in their public performance of self through their dressing. In this context, they gaze upon women who claim belonging within the community to conform within their prescribed practices of propriety. Then as ‘new ethnicities’ (Hall, 1995) are negotiated, so new conformities are worked into ethnicity. The alternative space of women in this case mimics the patriarchal structure, as the norms and conformities of the alternative structure safeguards the interests of some while ‘Others’ are stifled in the process.

The *hijab* in its everyday use signifies piety, but more importantly has multiple significations for the women. Women use religious performance to compensate for their loss of distinct cultural identity, hence religion becomes a predominant identifier and a political statement, as many young *hijabi* women have suggested. The *hijab* also takes on feminist symbolism through its use as a tool that emasculates the objectification of women. As Haarisha the student of Health Sciences said:

I know they [other students at her university] think I am a victim, but I have always wanted to say that I feel empowered with my choice. I don’t have to dress a particular way to impress people, they have to engage with my brain and not my body, look into my eyes and talk to me...you know, that for me is empowering as a woman.

Haarisha used the *hijab* to contest how the advertising, retail and media industries use and abuse the female body to its own ends. The choice of the *hijab* not only creates a complex problem of subversion by women, but also problematises the values of a consumption-driven society. This is not to suggest that all *hijabi* women reject consumerism, or vice versa.

Haarisha used the *hijab* as a sign of controlling how her body is perceived of as a ‘spectacle’; she used the *hijab* to control the gaze aimed at her. The role of media in maintaining the gaze

on women is recognised by many of the participants. As Hajira, a recent migrant to Britain and a student of the citizenship classes, said:

The women on *desi* channels dress however they like, and then a *Sheikh* will come and tell *us* women to cover up, otherwise we are bringing shame to our families and communities. Why can't the *Sheikh* also say the same thing to the woman who comes on TV in low cut *salwar kameez* this same thing? They like preaching to us, as if we are illiterates.

Hajira did not speak English and her interview was conducted in Urdu. She articulated her frustrations of being the object and the subject of critique and desire on ethnic channels.

Hajira applied the same standards that are imposed on viewers like her on the female television commentators. Through this, she critiqued the media discourse of gaze and repudiated choices made by women, while challenging the religious discourse of the Islamic scholar on the television channel. Hajira also adopted an 'us' and 'them' divide, with 'us' being the viewers against the media rhetoric. Through reflexive use of language and ideology, Hajira challenged the media gaze through its own rhetoric.

As White's (2003) work among webcam users showed the appropriation of gaze through technology by women, I argue that women subvert media rhetoric through the *hijab*, and challenge consumerist social norms that commodify the female body. They problematise the phallocentrism of the gaze and reassert their agency over the manner in which their bodies are objectified, thus complicating the feminist ideals of female agency and power.

6.4 Internalised system of control and of 'Othering'

The 'gaze' extends into surveillance outside the premises of the community centre. The Pakistani community of the BD5³⁵ area are all known to each other. : the men are familiar with each other through mosques and other social gatherings, and the women are known to each other through kinship groups, marriage and through community centres, one of which is

³⁵ Postcode for the specific area of Bradford.

central to my research. Extended families live within the same neighbourhood, and neighbours from the subcontinent usually tend to be very involved in each other's lives. The movement of women is subject to strict rules of public mobility and they are mostly chaperoned. For example, once I accompanied Reena on one of her chores for the community centre, and we approached a *halal* meat store. She began quickening her walking pace and used the scarf to cover her face. While struggling to keep up with her, I asked her what had happened. Reena told me that the people in the store are known to her and her husband and it may not look good to be walking around outside of work especially with a non-community member. I began to be concerned about whether I caused a problem for Reena, or even if my own reputation as a visitor and as a researcher had been negatively affected by my unconstrained mobility outside of the 'community' circles. I asked her why specifically my presence had mattered and Reena said that women should not be seen outside the home or the specific place of work as it reflects badly on her character. Since I was still unknown to many outside the community centre, my presence and my clothing were neither Pakistani nor *hijabi*, this brought an element of ambiguity to my presence in the community public space. This could reflect negatively on Reena, since she was away from work with a stranger which might have elicited questions for her and her family.

This incident made an impact on how I positioned myself in the community. Later in the week I went into the *halal* store on the pretext of buying meat; however, I knew very well that questions as to who I am and what I was doing in that area would eventually come up and they did. The store owner and employees were dressed in very traditional Pathan clothes, and they spoke in English to me. I could see that their identifications were within the strong ethnic context of belonging to their specific ethnic and religious community. Reena, having lived in the area for over two years, had internalised the norms of belonging in that neighbourhood, and living within those set norms was important to claiming one's belonging

in that local community. The agency to negotiate such complex structures of ethnicity is often subject to much larger systems of surveillance and control. Does the alternative space of women, associated with spaces like community centres, allow for agency and participation? Is this space an ally in negotiating with larger patriarchal structures to claim inclusion? While women-only spaces can offer, and have offered, spaces of belonging for many women, in their nurturing character and gendered boundedness, they still have space for the creation of Otherness. The following anecdote elucidates the inclusion and exclusion processes of various subgroups in the community centre, which in turn sheds light on the processes of 'Othering' within the alternative feminine spaces.

The Gaza fundraiser was an important event in the social calendar of the centre. The organising committee of this event should ideally reflect the membership of the community centre; however, the group had only one non-British-born member in it while the centre was used mostly by non-British-born Pakistani women to learn English. I queried this with Reena (gatekeeper), as she was in a unique position as a community centre employee and therefore an insider. However she was not British-born and was alienated from the context of 'belonging' that the others in the group felt. Reena explained to me:

The others, you know, the Pathan women are not allowed like this. It's really difficult for them [Pathan women]. These men at home and the other Pathans in the community will find it very shameful to have the women around the place. It's very difficult to get most of them to the class even, most days I go to each house and plead with their families to send their women to classes. For women who are born here it's a little different I think. They have more freedom, they have confidence to live in this community.

Within the community then there is a perception, and on occasions at least, a reality which stratifies the women's experience. While Pathan women appear as subjects to very strict male and community control, British-born women feel more emancipated. Interestingly, turning to more traditional religious practices and dress are associated with this emancipation process. In contrast, the migrant women, referred to as Pathan women, are clearly seen as different,

and even repressed, unlike themselves, by this emancipated group. Their presence is then slowly reduced from inconspicuous to invisible.

I spoke to the team of event organisers in the third organising meeting that I attended over tea about the absence of the ‘Other’ women: the non-English-speaking women who access the centre on a regular basis. After an initial silence from the women, Reena remarked on how they should be coaxed to participate too since they form the majority of users of the centre. Yaseen replied that the meeting was open to all the members of the community centre and anyone could walk in. I reminded Yaseen that these women found it particularly difficult to come to the centre for English classes let alone a fundraiser meeting. Yaseen pointed out that if their husbands or family did not approve then they should not be attending such events at all. No one said anything after that. It was a stifling moment for me; although I wanted to respond to Yaseen’s statement I knew that would jeopardise my research entirely, shutting the doors of the fieldwork. Word travels very fast in close-knit communities, especially of indiscretions and as an outsider I had to be very conscious of my remarks and the impact they would have.

While we were there sitting together over cups of tea with the organisers struggling to put together the sponsorship and the logistics for an event that would contribute to the relief efforts of an isolated, discriminated people, participants seemed unable – or unwilling – to see or voice opinions for those ‘just around the corner’. The internal fragmentation of the ‘community’ exists on many levels, and the maintenance of these fragmentations is achieved through such processes of ‘Othering’. Class, migration status and *biraderi* or clan affiliations still predominate how the ‘community’ is internally divided. While some women negotiate with the structures, and find tools to exercise agency within the structure, others are left behind.

Media texts and their reading was another complex terrain, where there was both interplay of oppositional and complementary reading of texts. Clothing dominated many discussions on identity and how identifications were derived, mainly due to the furore regarding the issue of veiling that had dominated much of Europe during the time the fieldwork was conducted. An interesting contrast could be drawn from how Jameela drew the gaze upon herself and others around her, and how another participant, Aneesa, obtained her own interpretations to the *hijab* culture and the subsequent 'gaze'. In Jameela's interpretation of religious texts, she dressed in accordance with the scriptural recommendations. However, Aneesa disagreed with the covering of the face (see above). As a deeply religious Muslim woman, Aneesa did not believe that covering the face is obligatory in Islam. Although the religious context in which 'gaze' belongs is open to multiple interpretations, the severity of female gaze or objectification and control of the female body as a site of honour and piety have not changed. As Jameela unravelled her opinions she disclosed that a 'Muslim woman in a low cut neck top is very unlikely to have understood the religion at all', thus women who have not secured their modesty, according to these participants, are deprived from piety and invite the intruding gaze. The constant rhetoric of the right kind of 'Muslimmah' from women has made the patriarchal norms even harder to challenge. Islam Channel's programmes have women at the forefront of their programmes advocating the 'rightness' of the clothes worn and the 'purpose' of a Muslim woman's life. As Kaneez told me:

Me personally, I'm very opinionated so unless I really agree with them I won't concur with the programming. For me Islam Channel is not much learning, because if someone there said something about covering up and quoted a verse then I would have to go and check it, um...verify it, I mean with the Quran. Only then can I agree with them, but I do know for some people watching it is like learning from it.

Kaneez clearly located herself and her understanding of religion at a critical distance from media texts though she talks about media's influence over other people. Her critical engagement with the media is, at least in part, the result of her social and cultural capital. She was an IT professional and works with the NHS; she grew up in the South of England where

she said she went to a school with students from various ethnicities and religious backgrounds which enabled her to see a diverse group of people and how they live. On relocating to Bradford she found that life revolved around religious practices and cultural ceremonies, she said, she found girls were married at younger ages in Bradford than the town she moved from. The articulations of ethnicity are diverse in the northern and southern regions of Britain, as McLoughlin (2005) and Ali (1992) called it: Northern conservatism. While interviewing a Pakistani Muslim policewoman in Bradford, she spoke of the trepidation and fears the 'community' drove into her parent's life when she chose law enforcement as a career:

Once I went to a domestic dispute in an Asian family here, while trying to talk to the woman about the issue she asked me how I could be wearing my pants with tucked in shirt as a Muslim woman, she said I was betraying my faith. I went back home that night, it bothered me quite a bit. But I told myself that she belonged to the same group of people who told my parents nasty things...it's much better now, now that I don't bother with it.

Such instances are fairly common for women who chart a different career path or life choices, as I observed when the Jujitsu instructor told me of her parent's resistance to her decision to become an instructor and the response of the community members. Although resistance to a new way of life is fairly common across subcontinental cultures, the participants of this study were seen to be challenging and negotiating the norms of culture, religion and their communities' expectations of them.

I have come to learn that through internalising the roles and modes of control the women are skilfully tackling issues their grandmothers or mothers could not, like higher education for women, employment and increasing late marriages among women. Talking and experimenting with some choices that do not fully fit within the established patriarchal norms can be seen as steps towards challenging patriarchal communal agendas pushed onto their lives. In reflecting on the tensions associated with different sets of values that some of the women came across, some women referred to ethnic media rhetoric as encouraging restrictive

ideologies and reinforcing tradition. A few participants counterposed the predominant ideological frames of ethnic media to mainstream media's factual programmes. These kinds of programmes – current affairs programmes and documentaries especially – were seen by many as challenging the women's own perceptions of the world and enabled them to think outside already familiar and traditional systems of knowledge.

6.5 *Ummah*: The 'imagined' community

In the context of a Muslim community, it is imperative to discuss the idea of the *Ummah*. For the participants of this study, the *Ummah* was a reference to a real transnational Islamic community that transcends ethno-linguistic differences. Many also highlighted that there were no hierarchies within the *Ummah*. Women who displayed their faith overtly through the *hijab* and emphasised the importance of faith during the interviews were also interested in discussing the *Ummah*. The *Ummah* was most prominent in the discourse of second- and third-generation participants. The salience of the *Ummah* is here discussed in the context of the Gaza fundraiser, which was conducted in the community centre. Due to the relevance of the event to the participants of this study and the political engagement of the women who claimed membership within the *Ummah*, it became a powerful ideological concept that supported a passionate commitment to helping the people of Gaza.

Discussing the Gaza fundraiser, I seek to demonstrate how the belonging to 'new' communities, which to a large extent is what the *Ummah* has become for the participants, contests the limits of the old community formations. The community centre, with the help of the members, organises an annual charity event. For 2008, the beneficiary of the funds was a charity working towards alleviating poverty in Gaza. A group of British-born Muslim women who used the centre for various classes were instrumental throughout the conception, organisation and execution of the event. As a member of the community centre, I participated

in the event and much of the planning, although not as an active member. The women were all strong, decisive individuals and I had nothing more to add to such a capable core committee. I performed a more logistical role, which entailed the printing of posters and distributing posters of the event as far as Leeds. The planning for the fundraiser was completely run by the women: the funding for the event, the sponsorship, and the financial co-ordination on the final day was managed by the women who were on the committee. The committee comprised of Jameela, the 35-year-old British-born housewife to whom I referred above, especially in relation to her choice not to have a television set at home; Yaseen, a 38-year-old British-born housewife, who refrained from watching television but had a television set at home; Laila, a 28-year-old British-born community worker; Arfeen, a 34-year-old British-born community worker; and Reena, the 26-year-old Pakistan-born community worker and gatekeeper.

This core group would meet twice a week to discuss the organising of the event. The meeting was organised by Jameela: with her enthusiasm and natural leadership abilities, she assumed the role of team leader. Jameela led the meetings by starting off the proceedings with a prayer. The group bore not just the responsibility of making the event a success for the sake of success, but there seemed to be a higher, more elevated purpose to these women who were gathered together. When Photoshop, Excel and editing skills were required, university students who were members of the community centre were called in as volunteers to help with the jobs. The first meeting of the core group focussed on setting the agenda for the fundraiser. Jameela spoke first about the importance of the event:

We have all been watching and reading on television and the newspapers, the killing of our brothers and sisters around the world, these innocent people, women and children deserve a safe home. While watching a documentary on the lives of Palestinian people, I was shocked to find they have no access to many things we take for granted here and it is our duty, Allah *Talah* [the exalted], commands us to be kind and generous to those suffering around us and we have this life...so this is our duty you know. So I would like to thank those who are here already responding to my request through Reena. May Allah bless you.

Jameela's introductory statements are detailed with words that signify and invoke the universal Muslim community, the '*Ummah*'. The meaning of the word *Ummah* in Arabic is the 'universal community' for all Muslims under the Islamic law, *sharia* (Roy, 2004). The usage of 'brothers and sisters' while addressing a group of people is commonplace in the subcontinent and in Middle Eastern cultures as it creates a sense of belonging within the discourse among the audiences. This usage is also found widely in European Islamic programming and reappears in a number of transnational Pakistani television programmes. The television presenters directly address their transnational audience as 'brothers and sisters' trying to create a sense of rapport and a sense of commonality among the dispersed viewers. Jameela explained to me how she saw media discourses as central to her understanding of the world and to her decision to withdraw from a regular exposure to mainstream media:

I think it is more after 9/11. I've noticed a lot more women wearing *niqab* as well. It's quite a big decision for a man to grow a beard and for a woman to wear a *niqab*. Especially after being called a ninja and having bottles thrown at you, it is really difficult [Jameela pauses], I remember seeing so many images of Muslims, and Muslim women all in these *niqabi* women standing together it creates panic you know, it [television] shows our community as people to be seen with suspicion, I felt very low and depressed at that time. I decided then not to watch TV at all since then.

Jameela had a very emotional response to the representation of Muslims on television and it affected her to the extent of disavowing it completely from her life. Mankekar's study among women in India (2005) showed similarly emotional responses from the women who watched Indian dramas; however, none to the extent of completely forsaking television and their emotional responses were set in the immediate context of family relationships. Jameela's response was to the politics of the society around her. She repeatedly felt a sense of betrayal from the national media representing a world to which she belonged. As a forerunner of this trend of renouncing television, Jameela was also significant in setting up the Gaza fundraiser event. Jameela's response to television needs to be placed in the larger context of her sense of belonging. She did not derive rootedness from within the cultural construct of being Pakistani; Jameela instead drew her sense of identification from being a British Muslim.

Jameela was reflexive and media literate, used new media selectively and analysed the media rhetoric. Even though her approach towards media comes across as detached, she relied on them, especially the internet, to keep informed about the news and the *Ummah*.

Paradoxically, it is the disavowal of media that made Jameela a reflexive and engaged media user.

Conclusions

In this chapter I discussed how the Pakistani community and its internal fragmentations are central to supporting everyday communal life and reaffirming a sense of commonality around shared practices and bounded identities. While the community space appears as restrictive and even suffocating at times, it can also be a space of ambivalence and reflection. Through a discussion of the diversity within the Pakistani community, I pointed out that there is a multiplicity of voices in the Pakistani community in Bradford and this diversity is reflected in the ways individuals engage and reflect on the ethnic mediascape ideologies. The dominant ‘inside’ players are only a handful – Islam Channel, Peace TV, and the Star Network – while the ‘inside outside’ players are represented by the mainstream British media towards which participants felt ambivalent. While community networks provide the necessary infrastructural support to sustain diasporic life, they also impose strict norms of ‘community life’.

I examined the scope of media narratives within the community, and the role of television talk as twofold systems: firstly, of reaffirmation of strict religious practices and secondly, as reminders of life and value systems that surpass the boundaries of a community. I discussed the gaze, as partly associated with the media society and partly with the traditional norms attached to a close-knit community, in its ambivalence as a system of stratified control and as an internalised system of identification. Although the community space among the participants was gender segregated, most participants did not resist the

segregation or view it as depriving. Tensions around the control of public space were revealed when the women dared to challenge the established boundaries and when they appeared in public in roles that challenged the traditional and specific gender roles established in the community. However, and importantly, when it came to the female public space – especially that of the community centre – segregation was partly referred to as relief and partly as liberating from the multiple systems of patriarchal control that women are subject to at home and in the public space beyond the community centre.

Having internalised the gendered stratification of the public space, the participants adopted nonchalance about the absence of men in the centre and used it to their benefit by freely talking about and discussing issues associated with their gendered everyday life. During conversations I witnessed in the community centre, I heard women talking about issues associated with ‘the feminine space’ for example, health, shopping and personal concerns, which while important to the women, they are glossed over as trivial or shunned as inappropriate when men are present. The feminisation of some public spaces and the segregated community spaces observed, have demonstrated the complex realities of Bradford’s Muslim women and their identifications, which range from sharing intimate moments of support and management of surveillance and go all the way to powerful political mobilisation.

The presence of media in community spaces was seen in a limited fashion; however, ‘television talk’ could be heard widely. Women indulged in conversations about current affairs, soap operas and other mediatised events that affected community life. Often women were seen discussing the soap opera portrayals of familial relations; this could be seen as allaying the stresses they faced in the domestic sphere by talking about the ‘drama’ portrayals with community members. The internet was influential in the community space due to the usage of the medium by the most influential female members of the community centre. The

media-savvy British-born women could be seen using and discussing internet content from a variety of websites, both Islamic and non-Islamic. The use of the internet by the women and the discussions it gives rise to should be seen as an indicator of a vibrant community life.

Once the bastion of immigrant men, new media and technology are increasingly becoming available to women and they are embracing it as a sign of progress and symbiotic knowledge and information exchange.

Chapter 7: Apna Britain – Nation and the ‘Other’

Britain is going through an era where its own ‘national identity’ is in a position of transition (Parekh, 2000, p. xiii). Terms that signified national, racial identities, previously used as markers of difference in society, are being challenged especially as a result of intense human mobility, the globalisation of economic and cultural life, and the transnationalisation of mediated communications that surpass limits set by nation states. This period is also a significant time of change for ‘Other’ ethnicities that have been constituted into the narrative of Britain through various processes of displacement associated with colonialism and neo-imperialism. Peoples of erstwhile colonies have been placed in the outer margins of the British narrative for so long that inhabiting the space of a British subject, and even less so, of a citizen, cannot be imagined as a smooth transition despite the reimagining of the term ‘British’. I see this as a complex process especially because the construction of a distinct cultural identity of Britain has been shaped by the imperialist process of the empire around the world (Hall, 1996). In the imperial ideology of nation, gender did not rest solely on sexual difference as Sinha (2004) pointed out; class, race, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, as well as the coloniser and colonised formed the basis of nationalism.

Belonging to the narrative of the nation is achieved through citizenship; however, there are deeper layers to the idea of belonging for migrants. In the real iconography of nations it is usually imagined within the familial or domestic genealogies (McClintock, 1995, p. 357) As McClintock (1997) pointed out, nations are often the ‘motherlands’ and ‘fatherlands’, and more relevantly immigration issues are dealt with at the Home Office (pp. 90–91). And within this seemingly organic family narrative the nation is arranged hierarchically with the man as the head of the family and women bearing the traditional familial role. McClintock (1997) went further to point out that the colony extends as a ‘family

of black children ruled over by a white father' (p. 91). This attitude during the earlier imperialist era was not limited to the colonies; Catherine Hall (1997) noted that a 'true-born English *woman* was unthinkable. A freeborn English person was clearly a freeborn English *man*' (emphasis in original p. 174). Nations were thus imagined within the bounds of kinship, or most importantly as a brotherhood.

The salience of gender in imagining the nation has been discussed extensively in Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989) where women are seen as the biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities and are often imagined to be the reproducers of boundaries of national groups, and signifiers of national differences in the construction, reproduction and transformation of national categories (p. 7). McClintock (1997) pointed out the construction of the feminist movement in Fanon's (1965) essay on the Algerian revolution as, 'Women's liberation is credited entirely to national liberation, and it is only with nationalism that women "enter into history". Prior to nationalism, women have no history, no resistance, no independent agency' (p. 99). The role of women in the creation of the nation is relegated to that of her role within the heterosexual family; in other words, although she symbolically births the nation, her agency is subordinated to the patriarchal national agency. Sinha (2004) discussed the 'temporal anomaly' in the idea that is the nation, modern as an ideology and traditional in its conceptualisation, in these terms 'identification of women with the 'authentic body of national tradition' and of men with 'national modernity' (p. 192).

My questions steer towards the emergence, role and extent of the gendered ethnic identities of the participants of this inquiry and its belonging in the larger context of the imagined community of Britain as a nation. How do media narratives figure in the contestations and negotiations of national discourse among the participants? What roles have the participants chosen for themselves as citizens of the British nation? These are the

problems I explore in this chapter through responses to mainstream media portrayals of difference, Islamophobia and multiculturalism.

Using four recurrent themes I unravel the particularities of the participants' engagement with the imagined national community. Firstly the discussion reveals the participants' engagement with mainstream representations of difference. The women voiced their concerns of how the 'us' versus 'them' is constructed in mainstream media. They discussed a gamut of media, from television, radio, print and the internet. Their words and practices demonstrated the ways different media influenced their participation and sense of belonging in the British nation. Mainstream media is a concept used to refer to the participants' own categorisations, especially focussing on television and the dominant channels: the BBC network, Channel 4, ITV and, to a lesser extent, other commercial channels available to them. On national television most participants referred to television representations as indicative of public perceptions among a predominantly white British society. I then move on to examine how language impacts the nature of identification with specific imaginings of the nation. The lack of language skills and the subsequent alienation is also articulated by women through their viewings of narratives of the British nation as united under a mono-lingual nation. The overwhelming majority in the first generation compared with the second- and third-generation participants watched television differently due to language barriers. As Yunas Samad (1998) discussed, generation and language barriers are an important consideration when choosing and engaging (or not) with the media.

An important aspect that has emerged in the discussion of the 'Other' in the national framework has been the process of Othering that occurs among various minority communities. Within the 'us' and 'them' spaces, historic hegemonic constructions of the 'Other' exist. To illustrate this I elaborate on specific instances of how 'Other' ethnic groups are perceived by the South Asian groups in Britain. During a group discussion with older

women at the community centre, I had the opportunity to record their particular patterns of media consumption. Two women, Saira and Afreen, had migrated to Britain from East Africa during the uprising of the African nationalist movement in Uganda. Saira told me that they moved to Britain in the 1970s from Uganda with her entire family. I asked her the reasons for their move and Saira said:

The black man wanted our daughters to marry, why would we do that. We do not want to give our daughters to them. So we moved to England, we could not live there in fear.

Saira's fear reflects two aspects of the postcolonial condition. The first is the obvious need to relocate due to the fear of the nationalist movement where Asians were specifically targeted. But also this indicates the essentialist character of the spaces that are constructed between ethnic communities. This could be located within the 'race' paradigm that originated within the imperialist discourse where various peoples were placed within a hierarchical ordering of groups, creating superior and inferior perceptions among 'racial' groups. This extends to the present day. The racialisation of everyday discourse within postcolonialism has been observed in my field of study. When, after the organising of an event, a black courier delivery man came to the community centre office he was asked to wait for the manager who would sign for the parcel delivery. The women in the centre were chuckling at the man calling him '*Kaloo*'.³⁶ The reaction of the women to the man's presence indicated to me that the women rarely interacted with ethnic communities from outside the subcontinent and that the divide between ethnic communities in Britain is highly complex and influenced by the colonialist discourse of 'race', migration and present-day economic outcomes. The construct of Britain as a nation is not a simple divide of 'white and black' but it is a highly complex division of multiple ethnicities and sub-ethnicities, which is still further complicated by the class and gender based divisions.

³⁶ *Kaloo* means black in Urdu and Hindi languages.

In the following section I locate the disgruntled discussions of the multicultural nation. The experiences of multicultural policies for women in their careers, education and the translation of this politics to representation in media were raised over various stages of the fieldwork by participants. I discuss these concerns in terms of Walby's (1989) patriarchal state enforcing a relationship of hegemony, where the relationships are forged between the male state and the male 'elders' of the community (Samad, 1998). Finally I discuss how women regard the values of the liberal democracy they live in as compatible with their practice of faith. Through the many interactions with the participants they discussed the role of the welfare state as one that complements their understanding of Islam. The participants of this study have varied migration histories and presently locate their belonging to the British nation in a distinct and selective manner. However, despite the differences, many participants reiterated the freedoms they enjoy in Britain as women and as ethnic minorities with respect to 'other countries'.³⁷ Through the humanistic values that surpass cultural and religious particularities, the women stated that their belonging within the British nation is not as conflicted as it was always made out to be.

The common understanding among recent migrants belonging to the British nation is primarily associated with the possession of a British passport. The knowledge that without the passport one does not truly belong was cited repeatedly and it was associated with the first-hand experience of many participants. They were aware of the fact that restrictions on travel into Britain displaced non-citizens and positions people very differently when it comes to rights compared to British citizens. Azeeza, a 40-year-old, married woman discussed how the nature of belonging had shifted. Azeeza was ecstatic when I met her at the community centre after her English class and she told me that she had passed the UK citizenship test.

Azeeza, who usually conversed in Urdu, insisted on speaking in her broken English. She said

³⁷ While no specific country was identified when discussing 'other countries', the term used by the participants, a few second- and third-generation women specifically raised the issues of France and the headscarf furore as a violation of human rights and an attack on civil liberties of minority communities.

she was training herself to speak better so she could go out and take the bus by herself and buy groceries. After the class congratulated her and everyone had dispersed, I asked her why it took her so long having been in the UK for 15 years. Azeeza said her husband was against her decision to get a UK passport; while he travelled to Dubai, Morocco and Turkey with his friends on holidays, Azeeza was left at home with the kids. Azeeza sounded resolute when she said that she was determined to get the British passport. I asked her again as to why she wanted one and Azeeza remarked because ‘I want to go to Hajj, as a British. I want to go home [Pakistan] as a British, they treat you differently. I feel proud of myself now.’

Azeeza is a housewife; the main and only breadwinner in her household is her husband who is a taxi driver. The dependency on the husband in Azeeza’s case is manifold and the situation had got stricter due to her very limited English skills. However, Azeeza revealed agency and reflexivity in understanding her subservient position and challenged her husband’s authority, which continued to keep her there. She used the opportunity at the community centre to learn English and undertake the citizenship tests, due to which she possessed one of the most valuable documents in an immigrant’s life. Acquiring a British passport is not just a matter of pride for a migrant but it also brings with it ease of movement, like those valorised in the accounts of modernity (Bauman, 2000). Also a British passport is associated with upward social mobility in the otherwise hierarchically divided, stringent social structure of capitalist societies. Werbner (1990) discussed the various Muslim *zats* or castes that operate in Pakistani societies and how marriage to a relative in the UK enhances the status of the entire family in Pakistan. However, for Azeeza the necessity for a passport was not restricted to social mobility but also became an assertion of her presence and authority within the domestic space.

The second- and third-generation women derived their sense of belonging from a deeper emotional sentiment of being British within their ‘communities’ though not

necessarily in the same way as in Anderson's (1983) 'horizontal comradeship': at the same time that they expressed their sense of belonging to the nation, they expressed their disappointment about being marginalised within it. Second- and third-generation women linked their Britishness to their understanding of the self as a modern, liberal subject (who however never stops being a Muslim too). In my research, many of the women were indeed seen to be actively resisting and negotiating the various identifications constantly foisted at them, like those of the subservient victim of patriarchal mores, the orientalist construction of Muslim women, and the racialising of their ethnicity. Fareeda, a third-generation community worker, said:

I am from here but born to a Pakistani family. My identity means belonging to Britain and I don't fit into Pakistan. For me it's the same as going to China or the Middle East I don't fit in there, because my home is here in Britain.

Fareeda's difference is evident in her physical appearance. Her brown skin and black hair displaces her from the dominant representations of the nation on television as primarily white, Christian and British. Fareeda has never been to the region in Pakistan where her grandparents were once children, although she would like to go. Due to the ongoing war she has postponed the trip indefinitely. But Fareeda's belonging is in Britain; Pakistan is not even a memory for her, as it is outside of her identifications. As a non-*hijabi* Muslim woman, Fareeda tells me that her identifications are rooted in her religion and Islam is what she has practised since childhood and that her national identifications are firmly in Britain.

For migrant communities, trying to belong to the British national imaginary is particularly challenging because of the processes of interpellation that are often used against them. The racialised, orientalist positions keep displacing all Asian migrants from belonging in Britain. The visible markers of difference like their physical appearance, racialising of the ethnic group, clothing, language, traditions and so forth are consistently used against migrant groups to displace them from belonging in a specific national context. In

this context, it became apparent to me that I needed to understand participants' imagining of the self and their community within or outside the nation. These questions were particularly important in understanding second- and third-generation women's sense of self and their commitment to freedom and individual choice. The second- or third-generation women were well aware of the colonial and postcolonial realities that led to mass migration from Pakistan to Britain. They reflected on their parents' and grandparents' experiences of migration and resettlement as being tied to their own sense of self, while they were also well aware of the differences between generations and experiences of and within the British nation. Fareeda discussed this colonial movement of labour and contrasted it with post-colonial migration. She said that her grandparents were recruited by the British as part of the rebuilding of Britain, which gave her a claim to belonging in Britain, an authority which may be seen as not actively present in the post-colonial migrants who only participated in the cloth mills as labourers. Fareeda embraced her Britishness through the historicity of her ancestors' presence in Britain and their efforts towards building the post-war modern Britain. The protests over the Rushdie affair and the Gulf War were watershed moments for youths of the second and third generation when belonging to the British nation was excluded from their remit through the discourse in both public service broadcasting and commercial broadcasting in Britain.

7.1 Mainstream media, (mis)representation and belonging

Negative stereotyping and (mis)representation of Muslim women in the media is a widely researched topic (cf. Afzal-Khan & El Saadawi, 2005; Dwyer, 1999, 2008; Husband & Downing, 2005). Post 9/11 and more so after 7/7, in Britain the negative symbolism associated with the *hijab* has increased. The *hijabi* woman was then reconceived through media as a threat to the modern British nation. Muslims were blamed for failing to 'integrate'

(Husband & Downing, 2005). The ‘clash of civilizations’ (Huntington, 1996) thesis was invoked in mainstream media to further the ‘us versus them’ paradigm, as Fauzia Ahmad (2010) argued in her study of the role of the British media in vilifying a community through the imagery of veiled women and stirring already incensed feelings of fear towards the fully cloaked figure who presents a possible threat to the social order of the Western world. The participants in this study have contributed responses that reflect similar sentiments of misrepresentation and hence alienation from the British national collective.

Haarisha was a second-generation British Pakistani woman. She was a *hijabi* and she identifies as a practising Muslim. Haarisha was a mature postgraduate student of Health Sciences. During my interview with Haarisha, she was very forthcoming and clear as to how she perceived issues of Islamophobia, and misrepresentation in mainstream media. She said:

Overall the media influences people’s lives. It has an impact, if not very quickly...over some length of time. It will impact an individual and I don’t agree with that. I think there are a lot of other things better to do in life, than sitting in front of a TV, wasting valuable time.

Haarisha viewed television as having a negative influence, but as the interview progressed it was revealed that she occupied a highly mediated domestic and communal space. Haarisha mainly used British media, public service broadcasting as well as commercial television.

Haarisha recounted her experience watching a particularly incendiary episode of *Eastenders*:

I mean if I watch something... I can’t understand the [mainstream] media portrayal of Islam in the West. And how all Muslims are radicals, even if it’s a slightest [sic] episode of *Eastenders*...let’s take that. I’ve got friends who say that, there’s a Muslim guy in *Eastenders* and he is gay and he is going to have an affair with an English guy and they have kissed on screen and all that...now you tell me if you have a 10-year-old or 12-year-old sitting in front of that TV, having this programme on.... with you....I mean they tell you this is wrong in your religion, however this person is still having this affair with this person and going against your religion and it is about how you feel, your choice...it is about.... can you see how it misleads. I mean there is freedom of choice, freedom of speech...but I think there should be a limit. And for media it pushes a person’s limit, and the audience wants more, they will never say this is enough...it is feeding that, feeding that need...media has a lot of impact on the conflict in society.

Haarisha found that the particular character on *Eastenders* was used to incite the Muslim community. Although this also reveals much about Haarisha’s prejudice, she placed the

portrayal of a Muslim gay man within the context of Islamophobia, misrepresentation of Muslims and the media causing communal conflict. The appearance of a gay Muslim man as a character on one of the most popular soap operas in the country was debated by a few other women. It was considered that the masculinity of the Muslim man was being rescinded through this portrayal, and it was seen as an issue that affected how Islam was being denigrated by the mainstream media. Haarisha also said that it was important that she watched ‘well-researched’ programmes and she was interested in factual programmes rather than soap operas. Haarisha was contesting and negotiating representations that alluded to her in the mainstream media. As Haarisha remarked on representation and research in the interview:

When I was pregnant with my first son, I used to watch the telly all the time. I was at home and had nothing much to do. During those months I used to feel intense anger at some BBC programmes, this was after 9/11 and Muslims were the enemy or should I say are the enemy! After I had my first son, I realised that I could not take the stress of watching this kind of telly. I only watch recommended programmes, because I feel very strongly about badly researched programmes.

Representation was a subject that elicited many responses from the participants. Jameela was an active member of the community, a *hijabi* and the coordinator of the Gaza fundraiser at the community centre. The response Jameela had towards media representations elucidates another element of many women’s dissatisfaction with what they see as stereotypical representations of Muslims and Asians:

Asian women are portrayed as second-class citizens in society and media, especially women who wear the veil like me...they think that the men sit at home with a stick and control us, but that is not true. I mean we can do what we want in this country... but you know our opinions are shaped by our elders, but it is not like that anymore.

Jameela articulated the notion that a sense of belonging among Asian women like herself to the British society is also secondary, as her religion predominates. This response is salient due to the challenges these responses posed to the idea of the British nation and the representation of *hijabi* Muslims. Jameela derived her sense of freedom from the liberal values of Britain, unlike the French ban on the headscarf, the anti-discriminatory laws and the

welfare state. She emphasised that she had had the choice to freely appropriate a scriptural Islam into her life, rather than follow the cultural Islam of her parents.

Post 9/11 the representations of Muslim women and the way communities around them reacted to *hijab*-wearing women was especially traumatic, as many participants echoed.

Community worker Fareeda said:

Media play a major part in the way the world is shaped. I don't watch the TV and it doesn't shape my life, but for some people it does. Say for instance, they say Muslim people are terrorists, the next white Christian, Sikh or Hindu may believe that. But now you are educated so you will see that differently but there are some people will believe that. After 9/11 there was a lot of stigma attached to Asians. Women were attacked, things thrown at them and abused, all Asians were perceived to be a part of the [9/11] attack. Media were not dousing the flames, so I know a lot of Asians who got singled out.

Fareeda's experiences were informed by her daily interactions with women with whom she worked with as a community worker and interacted with through family and community connections. The attacks on British Muslims post 9/11 were condoned and even egged on through the right-wing attacks by mainstream press and media creating the 'Other' through sustained use of 'factual' reporting as a covert attempt to play to the neo-conservative war tactics of the then Anglo-American regime. Many *hijabi* women spoke to me about how they were called 'ninjas' and 'bin bags' outside of their homes, and many women reported that they went to their children's school early so as to take them home and stay safe fearing backlash. The second- and third-generation women participants in my study responded in a consistent manner over the issue of representation. As Aneetha reiterated:

Aneetha: I watch TV *rarely*. It is not because of the time commitment, it is because I do not approve of media. If it is a documentary, which I know has a lot of research...facts, um, and then I go ahead I will watch. If it has to do with health or nature, then I will watch it.

I: What is it that you do not approve of?

Aneetha: There is a lot of stereotyping...there are a lot of misinterpretations...misconceptions in the media, because I live in the west, um...I think a lot people are brainwashed by the media. Not just in terms of um...influencing people in Western society, portraying a bad image of people living here. Overall with all the media influences in people's lives, it is negative. You know it has an impact, if not very quickly...over some length of time. It will impact an individual and I don't agree with that. I think there are a lot of other things better to do in life, than sitting in front of TV, wasting valuable time.

For second- and third-generation women, such as Aneetha, the issue of media representations was seen as highly significant. Media representations were seen as powerful enough by Aneetha and many women between the ages of 18 and 35 in two ways. On the one hand, they were seen to reflect them being rejected by the larger society while on the other hand, they were seen as shaping the popular Islamophobic perceptions through misrepresentation of Muslims. The remarkable aspect of the above responses is that, although the participants belonged to various educational and class backgrounds in Britain, the majority yielded the same response that mainstream media engages in static and deriding images of Muslim women. However, Rameela, a third-generation British Pakistani woman, gave a different response to how she perceives mainstream media, ethnic media and their different sets of representations. Rameela is a divorcee who spoke of alienation from her family due to her divorce, as discussed in the previous chapter. She told me that the narratives in British programming seem more ‘real life’ to her than the ‘Asian dramas’ that are often consumed in Asian households. Rameela regularly consumed mainstream media in constructing a sense of self that is not singularly set as Pakistani or as Muslim. Her media consumption choices were also complemented by her choices of various kinds of cuisine other than the staple subcontinental food and her clothing, which was distinct from the other *hijabi* women at the community centre. She put great importance on her conscious effort to relate to different cultural references associated with the national community and less so with the local Pakistani community of Bradford. In describing her viewing choices, she made a direct link between representations and her own experience and reflection about her life:

There is an Asian family on *Eastenders* and I can identify with them. You know, I no longer live within a family unit. Asian dramas are constantly focusing on how we should all remain together [...] Maybe because I’m more influenced by British society, I am very independent [...] Also, I don’t watch any ethnic channels. I just watch British TV. I watch *Coronation Street*, *Eastenders* and *X Factor*. When I’m alone and eating my meals I put the telly on for company; my daughter watches Asian TV. Asian channels are very dramatised, I don’t know what is happening. I think they try to make it bigger than real life for women.

The subcontinental diasporic space has been dominated by programming from India. Indian soaps are telecast throughout the day, and follow the telenovela format. Rameela's divorce and her status with regard to her parents and siblings has put her in a unique position where she does not feel a part of family or 'community' life. Rameela's rejection from her immediate surroundings makes her seek out companionship among a larger network of friends who are not Pakistani. This gives her respite from the talk to family, children and domesticity which are no longer a part of her daily life. As she told me:

[W]ith the other friends I can always talk about their life which involves going to restaurants, shopping, watching different kinds of television programmes. I find this more interesting nowadays.

Rameela's identification with the larger British society through the programmes that entertain her and the dysfunctions of the Asian family on *Eastenders* that remind her of the discord with her own family point towards the ways in which Rameela derives her sense of self from the liberal values that she associates with British society. This is clearly evident when she said: 'Maybe because I'm more influenced by the British society, I am very independent'. This reveals the self-reflexive nature of audiences among the participants of this study. Increasing numbers of women are calling for appropriate research and representation of themselves and of their communities. Shafkat, a young single, a second-generation British Pakistani Muslim woman employed as a community worker, argued:

The only thing I have got to say about British media is that when they encourage women to come out and act for themselves they always start in the negative. You know how South Asian women are forced into their marriages; they need to have this freedom and rights. The whole thing is portrayed as a negative. There are good marriages also, they don't show a South Asian women doctor, and they rarely have such programmes. [South Asian] Women are always shown as voiceless, you know especially after 7/7 there were these spates of programmes where they showed women from South Asian backgrounds as oppressed by their men and being treated badly by their families, like they have nowhere to go to, but the white community will accept them without judging. This sort of distorted message about us is so misleading. And they always confuse between forced and arranged marriages, everything is forced for them.

Shafkat points to the alarming trend in the media where in the name of factual reporting, newsworthy items are selected for their shock value. Hence the popularity of stories about forced marriages and female genital mutilation, in both print and electronic media, where they are portrayed as Islamic problems. Rather than examining the influence of culture on Islamic practices and reporting on the strides Muslim women have made in various fields of employment and domesticity, the continued fixation is on the orientalist, victimised role of the Muslim women. As a community worker Shafkat not only works among the South Asian community but also with other ethnic communities in Bradford. Her words are also reflexive of the sense of 'Othering' reproduced in media. Shafkat conceived the British media as an establishment which is external to her notion of how the British nation is at present; she perceived the media as a homogenous group of white people who impose their perception of the South Asian community onto the larger population. This can be contrasted with the Spivakian (1988) notion of 'the white men saving brown women from brown men' (p. 297); here it transfigures into another apt analogy of how the Bush administration constructed its doctrine for the war in Afghanistan as the Western powers' moral obligation to save the Afghani women from the Talibanised male. Similar sentiment was echoed in Jameela's response to watching television.

Jameela is part of a growing number of women who have given up watching television entirely due to their increased alienation from media representations, which they see as a misrepresentation and Islamophobic. The nature of representation is seen as biased and the fact that even rudimentary research on the community being represented has not been looked into was a recurrent point made by participants. Jameela uses her religious identification as a familiar narrative to belong in the British nation because of the perceived rejection from the British imagining. Jameela's rejection of television was not isolated; as noted earlier, one of the homes that I visited while conducting participant observation did not

have a television set and while attempting to find more families for the participant observation, other families also reported not owning a television in their homes. Jameela's disavowal of television stems from her withdrawal from the larger society which she perceives as having alienated Muslim women. She is a second-generation British Pakistani Muslim woman, who, as other second- and third-generation women have asserted, follows scriptural Islam rather than a cultural Islam specific to Pakistan. As a result, Jameela's and the others' sense of self, while deeply rooted in their identification as British Muslims, has become increasingly different from belonging in the national imagined community. This withdrawal is reinforced by boundedness, which they saw as the only response against a white nationalist boundedness. One of the women in the group, Deena, a university student of politics, was roused when I asked her of the portrayal of Muslim women on television:

It is always the same thing, we are a formless, voiceless...huddled black mass, and they find these shots of groups of *hijabi* women walking towards the camera like they are going to bash us. It's really offensive, especially to us, university students, because we struggle every day to have a voice, stand up for ourselves, at home, in the community, and then at the university. But no one shows us like that. The few of us in a *hijab*, is so pleasing to the viewers' minds that the rest of us are also these forms [voiceless victims].

Deena is questioning this nature of reducing the women to the visible markers of difference and as mere agents of a collective. Deena's critique of the national media does not come as an outsider's perspective; she locates herself within the British national context, which is perceived to be secular and diverse. However, the portrayals of Muslim women like her as the antithesis of the liberal majority is what elicits the response of disaffection from the British nation. I argue that, although the disaffection points to a withdrawal from the nation, this exclusion is indicative of the participants sheltering themselves with the familiar notions of the communal instead of locating themselves in an imagined community that has excluded them already. The identifications drawn by women like Jameela, Haarisha and Deena are reactionary, but also critically reflexive of the ways in which Muslim women are constructed

socially through media narratives. As Deena argued, the mainstream media are seen as representative and reflective of the national culture.

The points of view presented above demonstrate the growing critical engagement with national media representations, which, in its extreme incarnations, leads to full withdrawal from them. Ahmad (2010) pointed out that although there have not been significant changes in the way Muslim women are represented in the dominant media, participants' words have shown that there is at least a sense of increased alienation. This can be explained as a shifting interpretative framework among Muslim audiences: taking the politicisation of Islam in Britain after 9/11 and 7/7, it is possible that Muslim audiences have become more aware of stereotypical representations of Muslim people in the media. In addition, while national media might not have changed their ideological frames in which Islam and Muslim people are presented, the growth of alternative systems of representation, especially through ethnic and transnational media, has provided audiences with new points of comparison. Deena's response is not just from an outsider's perspective as she locates herself within the British national context, which is constructed as secular and diverse. However, the portrayals of Muslim women like her as the antithesis of the liberal population is what elicits the response of disaffection towards the British nation. I argue that although the disaffection points to a withdrawal from the nation, this exclusion is indicative of the participants' sheltering of themselves within the familiar spaces and ideas of their community instead of the 'imagined community', namely, the British nation. The identifications drawn by women like Jameela, Haarisha and Deena are reactionary, in that they are reflexive engagements with the notions of how Muslim women are constructed socially through mediatised narratives; further, their identifications question how the category of 'British' is defined and understood. Deena refers to mainstream media as representative and reflective of the national culture (Schlesinger, 2000).

The participants' distance from the national media demonstrates the role of the media in advancing their sense of alienation from the national discourse. Television as the most widely consumed national medium has been increasingly seen to be alienating already vulnerable minority families and misrepresenting their cultural and communal choices. Women in particular see their positions further weakened with the portrayals of *hijabi* women in mainstream media. The challenges for the participants have increased in many ways as the state apparatus of public service broadcasting and the commercial television channels neither provide them with space for reflexive engagement with the text nor do they provide the range of representations they would like to see available in the public sphere. Couldry, Livingstone and Markham (2007) pointed out that transnational audiences make their citizenship choices through subconscious selection of choosing one media over the other. Katz (2009) pointed out that the presence and operation of diverse ethnic media weakens the hegemony of the national ideology. If this is indeed a relevant argument, it could be argued that the consistent selection of mainstream media over transnational media and ethnic media by second- and third-generation British Pakistani women indicates their choices to engage with the national ideologies as well, even if critically.

The critical engagement with national media applies, at least for some, to ethnic and transnational media. Television channels that were previously seen as spaces of culture and values were criticised for their continuing 'moral depravity'. Haarisha, a mature postgraduate Health Sciences student, argued:

Even with ethnic media channels, it is like, take for example, like if you are talking about B4U there I think, nudity is to such an extent. If you think about it, in Hinduism, that is not acceptable. If you are trying to compete with Western media, you have got this ethnic channel showing this [...] what is so unique about them, singing and dancing. They actually reveal more than the Westerners do. I don't know how they stick to their values. Are they trying to show that this is our tradition, our values?

Haarisha's sentiments reveal the crisis in cultural identification with South Asian culture; she sees the 'moral depravity' as one that is inspired by Western culture. She also highlighted that

both cultures have distinctly different values and we should abide by them; however, Haarisha had earlier in the interview spoken about the benefits of the welfare state and how it had affected her own life when she had her children. Haarisha reflexively engages with the media she watches and her values are derived from within the specific context of her family, culture and religion. Asian values are seen as primitive and rigid by outsiders, but women like Haarisha skilfully negotiate the restrictive parameters drawn up for women and challenge the status quo of representation that is mostly exploitative of women and are imposed on viewers as progressive and liberal.

Some responses also indicate the pleasure of some participants while viewing British soap operas like *Coronation Street*, *Eastenders* and Australian show, *Neighbours*; also *X Factor* and *Britain's Got Talent* were seen to be popular as entertainment genre programmes among the participants. Watching these programmes is usually done in groups. The young women who participated in the Jujitsu class indicated that they watched these programmes with other female members of their household, with whom they could discuss the programme, the participants or actors, the attire they wear, the results of reality television competitions, etc. During one of my visits to Shaheena's home as a guest for Eid, the women, young and old, gathered together to watch an *X Factor* episode. While the men were in the living room, the women were dispersed across two rooms, older women in the kitchen and the younger women and children in the second living room with a television that was close to the kitchen. The older women kept walking in and out of the room, watching the antics on the show, sometimes participating by saying something humorous. While most of the scenario may reveal the already prevalent assumptions of gender segregation, I want to emphasise how the programme choice for religious or cultural occasions was mainstream British media, when they could have watched an Asian programme or watched an Islamic channel. The women chose to watch a programme that they identified with, and not cultural or religious

ones to suit the tone of the occasion. This situation was devoid of any tension between the cultures of the older women and the cultural belonging of the younger women, drawing varied interpretations from distinct contexts; the women had a common sense of pleasure in mainstream British television.

I now examine the role of language in the ‘imagined community’ of Britain where due to several restrictions women belong and remain on the border of discussions about the nation. Through the words of the women who were both fluent in English or not, I discuss how their knowledge or the lack of informed their understanding of the British nation and sought belonging in it.

7.2 Language and narratives of belonging

The ‘new diasporas’ (Hall, 1992a) emerge at the point of hybridisation, resulting from the experience of migration and (re-)settlement to new locations. Hall talked about hybrid identities as the outcome of speaking two cultural languages, translating and negotiating these complex positions through an inherent cosmopolitanism. Hall (2006) called this ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ due to its localised nature but also due to how it is necessary for the diasporas that have a working-class migration history to acquire new language skills as a matter of survival and not just as an adornment, as was the case for elite cosmopolitans; I prefer to call this phenomenon ‘necessary cosmopolitanism’. The community centre is a physical location of the ‘new diasporic’ identities. Razia used Jujitsu to construct her hybridity, while women like Nazneen, who take part in the English language course and were waiting to be examined for the UK citizenship tests, are embodied symbols of their own versions of hybridity through a process of acquiring language skills. Nazneen was married to her cousin in the UK, and was born and raised in a village in northern Pakistan; Nazneen had no English language skills when I met her. As part of my contribution to the centre, I was

helping Nazneen with her English lessons. We would move between the familiar words of Urdu and then situate them in the unfamiliar location of English. In positively describing her engagement with this new language, Nazneen said:

I want to learn, I am young now only now can I learn. Once I have children I will be expected to look after them and not to study, so I want to learn now. So when I have children of my own I can teach them, maybe even help with their school work. My mother was not keen on an education for me, but I want English education for my children, *Insha Allah* [God willing] we can send our kids to good schools. I don't know what my husband wants really, but I want to learn and read. At least this way [citizenship classes] women like me are forced to come out to learn. I also like meeting people and talking, see like talking to you, I learn so much.

Nazneen is representative of the many young women who enjoy the classes and take pleasure in the social interactions associated with learning. Although controversial, the English classes for citizenship testing can be seen as a mixed blessing. As a third-generation British Pakistani, Fareeda, a community worker, reacted with regard to the English language classes:

It is another way of preventing people from staying here; you *have* to learn English. It is a way of forcibly integrating people; I think people should have a choice to do this.

For many young and old women who are part of the English classes it was seen as a welcome relief from the grind of their daily chores, where husbands, children and in-laws are all put away for an hour or two to for personal betterment, like the pleasure derived from the reading of romance novels (Radway, 1992). Although not necessarily 'guilty' in the traditional context for some women, leaving their children and household chores behind were seen to be too tedious. It was seen that the majority of the students viewed the classes to be pleasurable due to the elements of social interaction, learning and empowerment it presented. I asked Nazneen to watch or listen to BBC news as a way of preparing for the English language tests. She replied that the language was too hard for her to follow. She only watched some Asian soap operas but that was infrequent. Many women like Nazneen fall out of the audience groupings conceived for the various dominant media programming, and hence they are alienated not just from the mainstream discourse but also disinterested in them particularly due to the caricatured representation of Muslim women who have no language skills. This

removes the relevance of ‘citizenship’ tests from Nazneen’s life because she is far removed from the discourse of ‘Britishness’ replete in media rhetoric. Fareeda, a third-generation British Muslim woman, detailed her mother’s initial experience in Britain:

There is a language barrier for most people so it differs from individual. When my mother came here, she came from a village. For her England was a big place, she couldn’t speak to anyone, not even about her children’s education. When she came here my father was working for 14 hours a day and she could’ve had so many things but she didn’t because there was no support for it. We as kids knew the process when we were growing up and now after 50-60 years if someone says they are not integrated it is ridiculous, they have in their own way. They go to pubs and clubs but they talk to their neighbours, she says ‘hello’ to her other culture neighbours, possibly that’s the only thing she picked up but she tries in her own way.

While this section is about language and belonging in a national context, women like Nazneen are the extreme cases of dissociation from mainstream media due to the lack of any linguistic skills in the national language. However, Fareeda in her words narrates the desperation of a new migrant to belong and to communicate and how she attempts to socialise in her own way. While mainstream media language was unapproachable for first-generation migrant women, many second- and third-generation women watch mainstream English language media as observed and discussed in our conversations. Rameela is a second-generation Pakistani woman, who was born and raised in Britain. Rameela locates her pleasure in television viewing in the British soap operas, as the Asian soap operas displace her from the context of the family, which is distant from her everyday experiences and widely prevalent in the storylines of Asian soap operas. Rameela also finds a place within the discourse of British television because of the language barrier; she is not fluent in Hindi or Urdu, the predominant languages in which Asian soap operas are produced. Again in Rameela’s case it could be seen as an anomaly that despite the language issues, Rameela’s daughter who is a third-generation British Pakistani woman watches Asian soap operas. Hence I can argue that above accessibility of language lies the context of the narrative and how the audiences situate themselves in the television narrative. Rameela’s displacement is

her daughter's belonging, and Rameela's language barrier is overcome through her daughter's identification with the narrative in Asian soap operas.

Second- and third-generation women consume various English language media, especially television, as these media use the only language they are fluent in. The cultural references are also familiar to them, as well as the geography of the place shown on the television soap operas on mainstream British media. During my conversation with Areefa, a second-generation woman, she said that her viewing of *Coronation Street* and *Eastenders* was made more pleasurable because it gave the impression that the show was made in a city similar to hers. Areefa said she does not use ethnic media. While she understood Urdu, the Urdu spoken on some of the ethnic television programmes was very difficult for her to follow. This reveals that while second- and third-generation women are alienated from the transnational linkages with the 'homeland' through the dispossession of language skills, so the first-generation Pakistani women in Britain are distanced from the inability to participate in the linguistic and cultural attributes of the British nation. The imagined community of the nation is sustained through the use of one language which then reinforces the belonging in the British nation of women like Areefa.

Areefa was a returning mature student, and her main interests are health and religion, which were also the topics of her primary television consumption. Areefa watched religious channels that are in English, which means her choices are limited to British Islamic channels, or infrequently transnational Islamic programmes that are in English, which may not be the case all the time. As she said:

I try and watch Peace TV sometimes, but I don't get a lot of time between classes and my family. I prefer Islam Channel more because I relate to the issues shown on it more. Like when they discuss issues of women living in Europe, that is really what I want to know about. Also I feel that I relate to how the women talk, like their language etc. I feel like someone I know is talking *with* me, most times watching television is like people talking *to* you right. [Emphasis mine]

Language forms an important part of discourse, communication, and consequently, identity. Also, in this case the familiar accent of the hosts on the Islam Channel is closer to Areefa's context than the programmes on Peace TV. The pioneer of Peace TV, Dr Zakir Naik, a physician and Islamic scholar, uses the Quran and science to reinstate religious belief as the centre of individuals' lives. Although this channel was popular among the women in the study, Islam Channel was viewed by larger numbers of second- and third-generation participants. Islam Channel has women hosts, all of them *hijabis* and British; also the channel is aired from Britain. The narratives of Islam and Muslims on this channel are located in the local experiences of Muslims. It could also be seen that the language and accent on Islam Channel communicate the localised experiences of the hosts and the content with the audience. This creates a familiar bond between the message, medium and the viewer. Striking in this triumvirate is the creation of both complementary reading and oppositional reading of media content. Familiarity with the language also enables second- and third-generation women to actively contest the texts which they are presented with. As Fareeda said:

I cannot accept everything, even on Islamic channels these days; I refer to the Quran or ask the Imam. We should always question the ideas thrown at us.

Fareeda uses the messages reflexively like many of the other women who responded similarly. Proliferation of television channels does not indicate that the audiences are passively ingesting the messages, but, at least in part, that audiences are interested in engaging with different media. Despite the proximity of language, women like Fareeda challenge television discourse. However, second- and third-generation women showed greater propensity to engage with mainstream British media and British Islamic media, rather than transnational media broadcasted in their parents' languages. This is the belonging and acculturation that society and mainstream media seek from the second- and third-generation Muslim women, which media representations actively ignore.

7.3 Belonging to the multicultural nation

Discussions of multiculturalism have been ongoing in academia (cf. Modood & Ahmad, 2007; Parekh, 2000). However, the pervasiveness of opinions on multicultural state policy among ethnic minority communities has rarely been discussed. While minorities are spoken about, they are often not given a voice. In this study I had the rare opportunity where the data presented itself with discussions of the unremarkable state of multiculturalism in Britain. Multiculturalism regales one unified South Asian culture (Alibhai-Brown, 2000a),³⁸ and does not recognise the multi-faith nature of Islam in Britain. This section of the discussion does not engage widely with television and multiculturalism, but as an intrinsic part of state policy towards minority communities multicultural policies have everyday ramifications for minority communities. Modood (2007) criticised Parekh's (2000) take on enrichment of one's life when people come into contact with the Other. However, while the divisions within all groups are rarely taken into account while addressing the points of contact, these differences are also potential points of conflict. This section unravels the responses of the participants to the multicultural state, especially in relation to television narratives.

Issues of secularism and multiculturalism were both a bane and boon in the eyes of the participants. Some viewed multicultural policies as an 'eye-wash', as Fareeda, a community worker, put it:

All these notions of multiculturalism and women you know it irritates me. Somehow I don't see us as being accepted by anyone. Even in my work, I've had to face many snide comments about my ethnicity which I don't find acceptable but I keep quiet because I don't want confrontation. These agencies who talk about integration and assimilation I have no idea what they mean, or want us to do about it...

Fareeda, a British-born Pakistani woman, placed herself in the British context, because, as she told me, 'I don't know any other culture'. Fareeda's views of the failure of the multicultural state were also informed by her experience as a professional. Being a

³⁸ Alibhai-Brown (2000) discussed multiculturalism's failure to recognise the complexities of minority communities aside from 'samosas, steel drums and saris'.

community worker she told me she was sent only into Pakistani Muslim settings to work. However much Fareeda distanced herself from the Pakistani cultural context, the council viewed her as a Pakistani Muslim woman. This is congruous with Carole Pateman's (2006) argument that the welfare state inadvertently contributes to the subordination and isolation of women. Making a mockery of the multicultural policies and refusing to locate Fareeda in another discourse, she felt alienated from the state-sanctioned rhetoric of multiculturalism. There is an important question on whether the state stereotypes women like Fareeda into specific areas of work, thus limiting their experiences, career development and exposure to the social fabric's cultural diversity.

Greater transparency in the daily operations of the council might facilitate and enable greater exercise of agency and engagement from staff like Fareeda, who are dedicated in their work and want to explore the wider society through their work. State policies could be seen as patriarchal in this case and it works to create islands of ethnicised communities in cities like Bradford, in ways that reinforce segregation. Fareeda went on to tell me that 'while cultural practices exist in all religions from the subcontinent, only Islam and Pakistanis get targeted in the state and media rhetoric of multiculturalism'. This point is important and reflects the perceptions of many participants. Many of them felt that cultural practices like arranged marriage, which is often merged in national imagination with forced marriage, have become symbols of Otherness which reinforced boundaries between 'us' and the 'Others'. The same issue is raised in Modood and Ahmad (2007) who studied 'moderate' Muslims and their understanding of multicultural policies. Their respondents repeatedly argued that the British state panders to the dominant South Asian culture while ignoring the more marginalised minorities. They spoke of how Bollywood and Asian-titled programmes received more attention in councils than proposals that were related to religious persuasions. This deliberate oversight by government organisations can be linked to how South Asian

culture is orientalised into Alibhai-Brown's (2000) 'samosa, steel drum and saris' – multiculturalism rather than a bottom-up approach to community relations.

Within this same context of scepticism towards multiculturalism, Haarisha, the postgraduate student of Health Sciences, spoke about 'secular' politics not having made any significant progress. She said:

Secularism gets everyone into one mass, but that in reality would never happen. I want to practise my faith, but that does not mean I will be hostile or derogatory to another faith. I wish the policies would keep that in mind. Give some credit to the people of faith. Sometimes I wonder if the policies are made on another planet. I mean why would they want all of us to not believe in anything; that would surely lead to chaos.

By raising these issues Haarisha sought more active recognition for diversity within the multicultural politics of Britain. Perhaps a greater engagement from a grassroots perspective rather than a top-down approach would benefit policy and democratise the discourse around cultural diversity. For example, the concerns that plague the Pakistani community in London are very different from those in Bradford hence a more localised approach towards both the minority and majority communities in Bradford is urgently required. Haarisha articulated her Britishness from within the comfort of her faith, and she felt that in a professional or university space it is increasingly required that people like her be apologetic of their choices. Multiculturalism here is seen to be driven by the fear of non-assimilation. Haarisha had specific anxieties in relation to intercommunity spaces, where there seemed to be a limit on the toleration of difference. Rather than being a politics of creating collaborative frameworks, the state, alongside the national media, often marginalise further ethnic audiences by pigeonholing them around a narrow set of cultural practices.

Another issue that was raised by a few mothers who had school-going children was that of sex education in schools. Sex education, although not under the purview of multiculturalism, is associated with state policy and ideology. Here I briefly look into this issue as raised by Areefa, a mother of two young boys:

The sex and relationship education for 5-year-olds they have made it compulsory in schools, I've got two young boys and I don't want them to be taught at this age about such topics. It is my responsibility as a mother to teach them that, I can understand school has a certain role to play in this but I'm not going to let them be taught at 5. I think this is about holding your values under the microscope all the time and being apologetic and a victim. I begin to feel sometimes it is a daily struggle.

Areefa's predicament is indicative of the confusion associated with cultural diversity and its management. On the one hand, her critical stance turns against paternalism, as seen to be operated by the state, which has been detailed in the works of Pateman & Puwar (2002), Yuval-Davis (1989) and Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989). On the other hand, another reality reflected in these words is the resistance to mainstream education which is seen by some as a threat to their community (or communitarian) values. Areefa's equally critical stand towards what is seen as state policy double standards, driven by culturalist ideologies, can be seen in another instance. She said:

So it is not right to go into someone's house and tell them that what they are doing is not right, for example I can't go to a house here and say that their 13-year-old pregnant daughter is making a mistake. And it's naughty... it's their culture. I think there are double standards, and although there are government initiatives to help women it is forcing their opinion on us, instead of talking together with these women. This is what we can give you, this is what you want and we can meet, instead of forcing women to do something. It is not just the issue of getting women out for their economic prosperity, it is important for your mental health and social health to have friends and there too it should be let us help you because you need help. We don't have the right to go into any culture and say that their culture is wrong.

As Areefa assesses it, the state policies are directed towards policing certain communities while the state does not interfere with other regressive practices when it comes to white populations. Multiculturalism is seen by Areefa as actively monitoring some communities for the benefit of the state. The private space of the 'Other' is constantly politicised and made a spectacle within the national context, and this causes chasms in the way women are incorporated into the public sphere, and the victimisation of the 'Other' women to validate the existence of a paternal state.

7.4 Complementary reading of liberal values and Islamic values

Studies among British Muslims have indicated the opinion that the British state and its welfare state policies are embedded within the central tenets of Islam (Abbas, 2005; Modood, 1998, 2007). Progressive values that are considered as modern and Western have also been called by scholars as shared Islamic values (Abbas, 2005; Lewis, 2002; McLoughlin, 2005; Thobani, 2010). The finding in this inquiry is not dissimilar where interviewees have remarked of instances of British state policies being complementary with Islamic teachings. I do not discuss 'Islamic values' as an essentialised, straitjacketed idea; in fact I state quite the opposite, drawing on the humanistic values associated with cultural particularities. I draw on the complementarities between the value systems of participants as practised in their private spaces and the mainstream democratic values.

Azeeza was the first non-English-speaking woman I interviewed. The advantage Azeeza associated first with her British passport was her freedom, the ability to exercise her desire to travel and to challenge her husband's efforts at trying to keep her homebound. She told me of the advantages of having the English language course in such close proximity to her home since she could not drive or take the bus by herself because she did not know how to read English. Azeeza told me of how the welfare state in Britain works on the ideals of '*Zakat*' which is the Islamic tenet that calls on every Muslim to tithe to the poor and needy. Azeeza recounted the various ways this is achieved in the British state; she talked about the NHS, the state benefits for poor young mothers and disabled children, which had particular resonance as Azeeza's nephew was disabled. Areefa a British-born young mother spoke with me with similar appreciation for the NHS:

I'm also a British national, I was born here. I can understand why they classify people; they want to ensure equality in work space. I did a degree in Health Sciences and the NHS wants to reach out to ethnic minorities. The poorer people and the ethnic minorities suffer a lot and inequalities are far greater in these groups, but this is a very important charitable aspect of Britain, which should also be seen as Islamic.

Haarisha, a returning university student, echoed this same feeling of pride in the state and its institutions:

I mean...it is my freedom of choice...I am very privileged to be British; I mean the whole conversation, my freedom of choice, my freedom to express myself [sic]. I know you could do that in other countries, but not as much as in this country. We are privileged with all these facilities...education, employment, you can go out there and definitely you can achieve anything. Take our welfare state. So what makes me proud to be British, is basically is looking at society. I mean there is such fairness, in our country, it is unbelievable. You got welfare state, they doesn't let you die from an illness. You got social security giving you money if you ever fall into poverty, you got education., that gives you your beliefs...and I wouldn't say that you are brainwashed by capitalistic thinking, I mean in this day and age you have to be, you wouldn't have competition in the world...I mean like Karl Marx would say that you are brainwashed by the ideology of capitalism...no, I don't think so. I mean we have our way of socialising with people, I mean...I am quite privileged to be British.

Haarisha had pride in her belonging to Britain and also defended the liberal economic and political system. This response indicates a sense of nationalism and pride in Haarisha, which was also derived from the fact that she could access the resources of education, employment and health services provided by the state. Haarisha and Areefa were both in completely different social contexts to that of Azeeza. Haarisha was born and raised in Britain, also had formal high school education, after which she married and started a family. When the opportunity presented itself, Haarisha took up a course at the local university. Haarisha placed her 'Britishness' within the discourse of freedom and equality; as a Muslim woman she told me that the ideals were advocated in Islam for women to work and contribute, which is what she will do. She spoke of being productive in the economy as her children had grown up. Her belonging to the nation was articulated in a variety of ways, from charitable welfare activities to even promoting the freedom of women. Freedom was noted to be of great importance to exercise one's free will and self-development, especially as Kandiyoti (1991) noted, through Islamic scriptures which while allowing women to have greater freedom were overlooked by cultural forces in the lands to which the religion had spread. In effect the participants of this study discussed their belonging in Britain as full members of a society,

whose values are compatible with theirs. The women engaged, embraced and adopted liberal democratic values, though they tended to subject those to their system of faith.

Another perspective on the issue of freedom and employment is that of Ayesha, a police woman in Bradford, whom I met at the community centre during the Gaza fundraiser. She was in her uniform and kept aloof from the attendees of the fundraiser as she was there as part of her duty. Once she was done with her policing duty, Ayesha agreed to be interviewed for my study. While we sat down in the interview room at the community centre, Ayesha settled down with her tea and I asked her about her choice to be a police woman. Ayesha began by telling me of her childhood dream to be in the army or in the police force. She always found herself attracted to careers which enabled her to rely on her athletic frame and interests. Ayesha told me of how she was an avid Wimbledon viewer. She reminded me that the liberal values of British society and her education were what helped her make the choice and enabled her to communicate with her parents and other family members that being in the police force was what she was going to do. Ayesha discussed this:

Here [Britain] there is the freedom to be whoever you want to be and go and do whatever you want to do. Um, I...like I think we are in charge of who we are in this country...because of that we have a lot more women in higher jobs and who are quite famous because of the jobs that they do, but on the flip side there's not enough women who are at those positions, because it still eh.... [It is] still a male-dominated society.

The decision to choose an unfamiliar path for Ayesha was partly due to the confidence she placed in the state's guarantee with the basic rights for every individual that enabled her to fulfil her ambitions. Ayesha located her belonging in the British nation by utilising the law that preserved her decision, and also by negotiating her culture by turning her parents' opinions in her favour. Ayesha distinguished between the position of women in Britain with that of women in her own family in Britain. She talked about her family and the resistance she faced from her family regarding her career choice. Although Ayesha spoke of freedoms enjoyed by Pakistani women in Britain, she interspersed her responses with nuanced

understanding of the subtle form of control that exists in the wider British society towards women. She acknowledged through her experiences in her 'community' that the controls on what women are allowed to do are stringent, but she also pointed to the male-dominated society that forms the core of the 'modern, liberal British state', of which she has been an integral part especially due to her position in the police force. Ayesha occupied that liminal space (Bhabha, 1994) from where not only is her ambiguity more pronounced but her participation in the nation state more challenged.

Conclusions

Throughout this chapter I demonstrated that participants of this study actively negotiated their identities as British citizens and constructed their 'new ethnicities' by challenging the idea of a static and ahistorical Britain. They located themselves critically towards Britain's imperialist past and kept their distance from the Eurocentric discourses predominating in policy and in national media representations. However, and at the same time, they articulated their own identities and value systems at the crossroads of their cultural or religious particularity and the predominant values associated with liberal democracy, especially those of freedoms, respect and individuality. In varying degrees and modes they interpreted their role in the nation through discourses available to them on mainstream television. Mainstream media were seen by the participants to be more representative of national interests and imagination while transnational media were most often seen as culturally significant yet limited in their representations of the increasingly changing identifications of the British Pakistani Muslim women. These women considered their representations on public service broadcasting and commercial British media as indicative of British society's perceptions of them. They also found that they were often reduced to outdated stereotypical orientalist

images by mainstream media, despite the participants of this study admittedly rearticulating themselves in their fields of employment, domesticity and in the politics of Britain.

As indicated in the study by Mohammad (2005), British Pakistani women have been increasingly seeking education and employment. This tendency is indicative of how women perceive their own roles as changing within British society. Also as the women in the present study have indicated, there is a perception of rejection and alienation within mainstream media representations of Muslim women. This has inadequately placed the women in a regressive context which allows for no voice and/or pastoral or patronising policies from the state. Second- and third-generation women in particular resisted such depictions and used ethnic channels such as the Islam Channel as alternative spaces that represent their identities as British, Pakistani and Muslim. The responses have also revealed how women viewed the welfare state as one of those elements of the national system of care and support that demonstrates the strengths and the positive values associated with liberal democracy. They also cherished the freedom accorded to women to work, to be educated and to develop themselves as holistic beings.

Media consumption patterns also point to new directions in identifications. Mainstream media were consumed critically by women in the second and third generation. Their critical engagement with those national narratives indicated that they resisted hegemonic understandings of Britishness, without resisting and rejecting Britishness as identification. My findings confirm Yunas Samad's (2004) observations that demonstrated that second- and third-generation youths in Bradford predominantly consumed mainstream national media. First-generation migrants demonstrated quite different attitudes with their media consumption primarily located within the Asian ethnic and transnational mediascapes. It is no coincidence perhaps that for this group, national identity represents a narrow system of rights and responsibilities associated with formal citizenship rules.

The younger women in the study, especially second- or third-generation British Pakistani Muslims, have been increasingly identifying with a scriptural Islam rather than the cultural Islam that came with their parents. While it is not apparent if this shift in religious practice in itself leads to a more engaged, reflexive individualism, this new form of religiosity empirically was observed among participants who were more emancipated and outspoken. Mahmood (2005) argued that the movement of piety points to young women who are actively seeking to negotiate and reconstruct the perceived limits of femininity within Islam. The younger participants of this study did not express self-inflicted anxieties of belonging to the British nation, but they echoed the fear that their visible difference was seen by the mainstream media and society as alienating. The imagined community of the nation was far from Other to the participants, especially those born and bred in the UK. Unlike popular representations of groups like the one studied in this thesis as being withdrawn from the national community, what participants again and again confirmed was their emotional and political commitment to the nation.

Chapter 8: ‘Apni’ Britain – Women’s journeys into the project of the self

‘Apni Britain’ has given me the opportunity to delve into an intellectual and personal journey during a challenging time for a culturally diverse Britain, much like the journeys of the participants of this study, although far less complex in many terms. The pain of dislocation, separation and the crisis in identity that one faces when confronted by the hegemonic conceptualisation of Otherness become distinct moments of identification emergent within the context of the diasporic life. The gendered nature of migration has presented particularly intense experiences of exclusion for women. In the context of this study, gendered connotes the migration ‘HIS-tory’ of the British Pakistani community in Britain. Even the colloquial usage of the term ‘Apna’ to denote the Pakistani community in Britain is the male term meaning ‘ours’ while the female term for this, ‘Apni’, is rarely heard in the public domain. The gendered nature of the community and the ‘Northern conservatism’ (Ali, 1999) characteristic of the Pakistani community in Bradford, has been undergoing radical intervention. The radicals in this case are the women who are challenging the patriarchal cultural norms from within, less so through the ideals of Western feminism, but through adaptations of an Islamic postfeminist interpretation of ‘the ideal self’ (McRobbie, 2004, 2009). Although McRobbie argued that postfeminism has undermined the strides achieved by second wave feminism (2004), I urge readers to read the concept of postfeminism in the light of the ‘Other’ women, who have historically seen themselves outside the feminist movement. Postfeminism, through its emphasis on the ‘the ideal self’, has made it possible for the outliers to be part of a larger movement. Using this idea of the ‘ideal self’ Muslim women are transforming the manner in which scriptures are interpreted in their communities to oppress them. Badran (1995) pointed out that the role of contemporary Muslim women in revising the traditional interpretations of scripture and women through the ‘hermeneutics of the *ijtihad*’,

in other words through critical re-reading of scripture and canon law, are reshaping their sisterhood into an Islamic feminism. Moghadam (2002) argued that feminisms ‘should not insist on a narrow definition’ (p. 1166). Keeping this in mind, I would go further and point out that Islamic feminism is in effect a post-feminist response to the struggles of Muslim women with respect to the specific contexts they come from. Context is central to the development of alternatives to Western feminism, which was also noted by McClintock (1997), where she stated that a ‘good deal of this kind of feminism [Western feminism] may well be inappropriate to women living under very different situations. Instead women of color are calling for the right to fashion feminism to suit their own worlds’ (p. 109).

As demonstrated in earlier chapters, honour is a critical component of Islamic femininity; however, traditionally women have not been seen as possessing their honour (Haeri, 1999) and instead the men of the family have been seen as owning the honour of ‘their’ women. As Haeri (1999) illustrated in the discussion of rape victims in Pakistan:

Objectifying honor in persona of a woman, men possess honor just as they possess gold and land...Logically, as it follows, women cannot possess honor in the same way as men. They represent honor; they symbolize honor; they are honor...women lose a sense of individuality in the eyes of the community. (p. 64)

Preserving honour/*izzat* is detrimental to being acknowledged as an individual among community members. Even minor acts like divorce are considered deviant behaviour which brings dishonour to the family. Reclaiming their sense of self and thereby honour is a very valuable, poignant struggle for many women living in strict patriarchal mores. Thus the post-feminist locus on the self cannot be seen as diminishing or undermining other struggles.

Space, place and honour are intrinsic to the way of life of the participants. An intermingling of these aspects in their social and domestic contexts has influenced their identity politics. Honour and *hijab* have emerged as overarching themes of reference for the participants but both these terms signify wide and complex semantic evolution and

applications. Identity through the responses of the participants of this research can be located within their emic understandings of differences and particularities. As stated by one participant, her experience of post-divorce alienation from her immediate family and community contributed to her withdrawal from programme narratives that were steeped in the domestic; at the same time, misrepresentation in the mainstream media led other women to withdraw from the mainstream British media. The women narrated specific media viewing contexts that affected their identification with various representations in the media. The negotiations with various social structures that influence everyday life in diasporic communities have presented new challenges for the established patriarchal ways. For some of the women, mainstream media were seen as propagating covert messages, which divert them away from their religious obligations while at the same time misrepresenting the women and men of their community. This reflexive engagement with media texts indicates a high level of media literacy and the knowledge among some women that all media, including Islamic media, need to be critically consumed. Women extrapolated meanings of the texts on their own and also through discussions of the texts with their family and friends. Male members were seen to have a considerable impact on how women read the media texts, but many women supplemented the communal meanings emerging within family and community social formations with their own individual readings that included, on occasions, purposeful research on topics presented in the public domain.

Television was observed to draw out deeper concerns and provide interpretative frameworks for understanding family trauma, ethnic boundaries and national sentiments. The responses to television viewing differed across different generations. In this research, there were first-generation migrants and second- and third-generation women born in Britain. The diverse engagement with media and with narratives associated with the family, the close-knit community and the nation has illustrated that, while identifications are constantly being made

and remade, they are also rooted within a certain historical context from which the subject enunciates her position. The identification is stabilised for a brief moment in history in the life of that specific subject into a position of being or becoming an identity. Yet, narratives of the self, of a community – local, national and transnational – are also subject to the discursive practices of individuals and the socio-cultural constraints they are subject to, especially in the segregated city of Bradford and within a country currently going through intense debates about the future of multiculturalism.

The ‘remodelling of the self’ (Gill, 2007, p. 230) through rigorous self-policing has been a recurring observation in the process of constructing the feminine self in my fieldwork. As noted by Gill (2007), the postfeminist³⁹ turn in the construction of gender has meant a ‘Bridget Jones’ Diary’ (McRobbie, 2009) manner of keeping records of one’s constitution, a fundamental matter of *being* for the feminine subject, and a reflexive documentation of self. In a similar fashion, the participants in this study utilised various situated and distant but specific knowledge systems associated with their families and communities to self-regulate their own femininity. In a Foucauldian sense, these knowledge systems work like technologies of self, both educating and policing the self. Building a sense of self around belonging to Islam serves such a purpose of self-disciplining; not as a simple top-down method of domination but as a reflexively adopted discourse to belong in. This then seeks answers from feminists on the intent of *freedom* for women. Much like Bridget Jones, who seeks her love in Daniel more than a feminist intervention, women really seek to belong to an externality that has been internalised (like the man whom Bridget believes ‘completes’ her), than to locate belonging within oneself. Walkerdine (1990) demonstrated how family structures position girls to make them be ‘good’. This project of self can be read in

³⁹ I use postfeminist here not as a backlash on the feminist construction of the women, but to problematise the feminist as perceived to give voice and rescue the subject (Gill, 2007). Judith Stacey (1987) valiantly argued that post-feminism incorporates, revises and depoliticises many of the fundamental issues raised by feminism; it also incorporates the issues raised against feminism by postcolonial women scholars.

conjunction with the post-independence nation building and its impact on women in Bengal, as Sinha (2004) noted;

[In] nineteenth century Bengal there was a construction of a spatial dichotomy in nationalist discourse between an inner and spiritual world, where the cultural authenticity of the nation was located, and an outer and material world, where the nation acknowledged its subordination to, and the need to borrow from, the modern West. This spatial division acquired a gendered dimension in the division between the 'Home' and the 'World'...In this context, the Bengali *bhadramahila* (respectable woman) was assigned a *new* identity in nationalist discourse, defined against both the excesses of modernization associated with peasant and lower-caste/class women in India. Only the reformed and modern woman, and not the 'traditional' woman, could truly embody the cultural identity of the new nation-in-the-making.' (p. 193)

Similarly, in the lives of the participants in this study, there was spatial dichotomy in discourse and on how they embodied various roles within their households and outside. However, there was clarity in the outlook of the participants, where a modern woman trades the pastoral cultural outlook of the older generation for her modern understanding of Islam. The role of media emerges as significant in the context of the postfeminist gender project. The media become tools which function as an extension of the specular constitution of human subjectivity. By that I mean media use and choices reflect the changing nature of the audiences. Media for the participants of this research led to a range of reactions, varying from deciphering pleasure, to introspection and white noise. These variable positions have contributed to the post-feminist media ethnographies that have continued to construct the women audiences as anything but the hermitically sealed category of domestically constrained and trapped subjects. I locate the renaissance of Islamic ideals of the participants within a post-feminist project of the self, due to the non-identification of participants with feminism, which was most often perceived as aggressive and Western.

Post-feminism as an ongoing phase incorporates a diversity of feminine voices that encompass the construct of femininity which could be possibly located within a recontextualised feminist post-feminism. Cultural identity relies on group allegiances and especially on the maintenance of femininity within restricted contexts to control the

multiplication of the group (Mohammad, 2005). Also, sustaining and transmitting culture among the younger generations is considered to be the duty of the mother (Anthias, Yuval-Davis, 1993). However, increasing Islamic identifications are challenging some of these ideas by creating a post-feminist challenge to cultural processes. Here choice and empowerment are valorised, albeit with constraints; there is also the dominance of a ‘self-makeover’ (McRobbie, 2009) paradigm which motivates individuals to re-evaluate the cultural practices of their groups.

While drawing from the works of Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991), McRobbie (2009) pointed out the restructuring of femininity in the post-feminist era:

[I]n this period of second or late modernity women are slipping away from communities where gender roles were fixed and are called upon to reinvent themselves. Through internalised self-monitoring practices (the diary, the life-plan, and the career pathway) replace reliance on set ways and structured pathways. Self-help guides, personal advisors, lifestyle coaches and gurus and all sorts of self-improvement TV programmes provide the cultural means by which individualisation operates as a social process. As the overwhelming force of structure fades, so also, it is claimed, does the capacity for agency increase. (p. 19)

McRobbie’s (2009) assertions are partly reflective of the participants’ identifications in this research. However, there were very interesting and radical departures in the process of identifications among the women in this research. The participants, while contesting the gender roles by claiming equal rights and voices, did so within the parameters set by a structured pathway, which they saw as scriptural Islam. They subscribed to the structural limitations set within the discourse of their faith though there is a visible process of appropriation of this faith to a postmodern identity, which becomes apparent as they set themselves apart from their parents’ and even partners’ religious practices and priorities. So, while they sought to reorder the South Asian cultural limitations, they ascribed their identifications to another structure, one which they could negotiate and would provide a collaborative framework for the women.

Religion has become a peculiar system for drawing identifications as it does appear as fixed and bounded, but it is also practised in such varied ways that gives a space of re-interpretations and performative adaptations. Thus, what might appear as a retreat to traditional Islam (and what the women themselves referred to as ‘pure’ or ‘scriptural’ Islam), is a particular version which fits and is compatible with different elements of their identities, especially as outspoken individuals and as politicised Muslim subjects. Although the role of ‘self-improvement TV programmes’ (McRobbie, 2009. p. 19) is in every way relevant to the context of my research, McRobbie’s projection is in this case extended to religious television. Engagement with a reinvented, televisual and transnational Islamic community through shared viewing also transforms the idea of late modernity, as McRobbie (2009) termed it, into ‘reflexive modernisation’ (p. 20).

This idea of ‘reflexive modernisation’, through the ‘project of the self’, prioritises the individual interpretation of the universal, which particularises it and adopts it to Western European realities. The particularisation of the universal when it comes to Islam is expressed both in terms of the politicisation of religion as a response to Islamophobia and in terms of the reinvention of post-feminist subjectivities within Islam. Within this context of particularity, the relevance of Gadamer’s concept of ‘prejudice’ as Harindranath (2000) proposed becomes relevant. Harindranath (2000) discussed ‘prejudice’ as entwined in specific contexts of the viewer, which can be located in McRobbie’s (2009) notion of the individual interpretation of the universal. Gadamer (1975) discussed the term ‘prejudice’ as a ‘fertile ground that makes understanding possible’ (in Harindranath, 2000, p. 155), which Harindranath used as a reference to audiences’ engagement with media texts. Similarly I invite through this thesis an understanding of particularism within a non-essentialist paradigm from where interpretations are made, and with meanings constructed within specific contexts. Particularities in this framework become context dependent, understood from a grounded

theory perspective. Particularities are derived from within specific environments, within a specific socio-economic system, within a historical trajectory and without the notions of boundedness and primordiality which particularities are usually associated with. As Laclau (1995) pointed out, universalism's association with liberal democratic theory was originally conceived for societies far more homogenous than the one participants (and most of us) live in. As societies diversify and as individuals' experiences and social relations expand beyond bounded nation states, there is a need to deconstruct both liberal democratic theory and its institutions in order to shape a more inclusive universalism. If we recognise the need to deconstruct liberalism and universalism, should we not also deconstruct bounded particularisms? Lodziak (1995, p. 140 in Chaudhuri, 2010) argued that ideologies do not generally motivate people who are motivated by quotidian, everyday realities. In such cases, grand theories and abstract doctrines, such as socialism, liberalism, neo-liberalism and religious fundamentalism, are less relevant to the interpretation of social and cultural relations associated with the construction of the self. I use Lodziak's (1995) argument to build my case: particularities located in the everyday do not become contained within it and within the micro-narratives of the quotidian, but also become particular positions for constructing subjectivities and (gendered) communities around discourses that link to universalism. These are associated with self-improvement, morality and citizenship. Media consumption and the construction of meanings around them reflect the merging of the particular with the universal.

In this concluding chapter I trace the arguments presented previously and discuss the ways in which they inform my conclusions. This chapter also discusses the findings and how they influence the theoretical arguments I make in conclusion as I argue for a particularism-focussed understanding of self-making within a highly ethnicised community. I then reflect on the relevance of this study for future research. This focuses on new media users, exploring

the reflexive modernisation paradigm by focussing on women users of new media within highly ethnicised communities.

This research set out to explore the negotiations of identities and identifications through television consumption among Bradfordian Pakistani Muslim women. As there is a gap in literature on ethnic women audiences and television and specifically on the nature of television consumption among Pakistani Muslim women, its role in the negotiations and construction of identities, I hope that this thesis contributes to studies in two areas, which to some extent merge in the wider field of audience research: those of ethnic gendered audiences and that of the feminist audience ethnography. By integrating theories of cultural studies, feminist theories and media ethnography, I have constructed a challenging account of how women actively negotiate their identifications through various discursive positions in their daily contexts. I proposed looking at migrant gendered identities in a new context; when Woodward (2004) postulated that ‘identities are created in a crisis’, I would argue that migrant identities are created within a series of crises. Migration is a process that is replete with crises, during displacement, movement, settlement and as migrants come across majoritarian ideologies that reinforce ‘Otherness’ and social exclusion. These multiple moments of crisis affect diasporic imagination. In the following sections I discuss the findings that reflect the ways in which agency and reflexivity among the audiences studied help us understand ethnic women audiences.

8.1 Reading media: Media literacy

Within a group which in itself was characterised by a range of experiences and identities, a resounding feature was prominent: that of many participants’ critical readings of the media. Many of them, especially the younger British-born women, showed a good level of understanding of the media as ideological systems which have specific agendas and which

participate in the construction of popular perceptions about the national community and about minorities. While younger and better educated women were most likely to articulate this critique, they were not the only ones who reflected on media's ideological role: first-, second- and third-generation women remarked on the agenda-setting power of the media. Mainstream national broadcasters in particular were discussed critically and on the basis of their biases, and their failure to represent the aspirations and fears of the South Asian migrant communities. Most felt that British Asians were either absent from television programming or misrepresented. Media literacy and critical readings of different kinds of media appeared as directly derived from reflections associated with the post-9/11 political context of media consumption as well as from the diversification of mediascapes and the emergence of new ethnic and transnational media. The scepticism that loomed over the Iraq War of 2003 among British Muslim people was discussed by Gillespie (2006), who also pointed to the sense of a 'legitimacy deficit' shared among many of her interviewees when evaluating the media. Gillespie's (2006) study also pointed to the unanimity in the interviewees' responses indicating the 'legitimacy deficit': those with higher political and intellectual capital responded with political astuteness, while young people remarked on how the government had failed their trust.

Similarly the women in this study pointedly spoke about the framing of Islam as the 'Other' in mainstream media. These representations caused them distress and some discontinued their viewing of mainstream television channels or switched to new media so they could have more control in choosing which programmes and information to consume. While some women indicated their disappointment with mainstream media, others pointed at the failure of South Asian ethnic and transnational media to represent their desires and identities. Some blamed transnational South Asian channels and Bollywood cinema for having 'sold-out' to the West, remarking that the 'actresses in Bollywood now wear less

clothes than their counterparts in Hollywood'. Indian soap operas were criticised for their over dramatisation of the housewife as the afflicted soul, and overly simplified plot lines where the mother-in-law is always the troublemaker. Women identified their roles as far more complex than those depicted in the media, indicating that the media literacy reflected in the lives of the participants was far more nuanced than that of separating propaganda from information on mainstream television channels. But they actively engaged with the media they used and challenged the various depictions inflicted on them on a regular basis. As one participant indicated, she was sceptical of the agenda on Islamic channels, where similar to other media outlets, a specific ideological and political agenda drove the broadcasts.

The complex nature of television viewing in particular and of media consumption in general is complex, as the media habits of the women have revealed. Media literacy is not free-standing. On the one hand, there is the politicisation of Muslim identities and on the other social relations around family, local community and transnational networks become frameworks for conversation, deliberation and critical viewing. These networks can also at times become alternative sources of information that challenge the media power of ethnic, national and transnational media. The participants' mediascapes were complex and representations were far from being owned and distributed by singular media outlets. While media diversification constructs complex mediascapes, it also requires the audiences to filter and evaluate the validity and relevance of information and representations available to them. The participants as consumers of news programmes were shown to validate the news on television by discussing it with other members of their family and their network of friends. The peer-to-peer social network was also seen to be very strong, as a few women noted that if there was a good programme on television their friend would text them on their mobile phones and recommend they view it at the same time. This kind of simultaneous viewing led

to a subsequent discussion with many participants of this study, where the validity of the programme itself would be debated.

8.2 Diversity among participants and in their readings

The heterogeneity of readings among the participants indicates that a more complex understanding of the ways in which diverse audiences create meanings of the media they consume needs to be reflected in scholarship. Liebes and Katz (1995) demonstrated the differential readings in different ethnic groups; however, the reliance on culture as a homogenous and single framework for interpretation of disparate readings between groups has been critiqued (cf. Harindranath, 2000) for its use of essentialist paradigms to discuss interpretations of audiences within single ethnic categories. As the findings of this study indicate, the complexity of interpretations of media texts was disparate among individuals within the same ethnic group. The diversity among participants and their interpretations varied, especially as their migration histories, origin, cultural capital and linguistic skills varied. This means that even within first- and second-generation migrant women, there were significant disparities. Women who migrated from the cities of Pakistan, for example Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad are equipped with more social and cultural capital to negotiate the stringent norms of patriarchy. As indicated in Mohammed (2010), it is clear that a feminine public sphere exists in the 'large cities of Pakistan' albeit unevenly developed (p. 153). The existence of such a public sphere in the cities encourages the scope of a modern femininity, which travels with the migrant to the UK. However, in the case of smaller towns and villages, the grip of cultural Islam coupled with the stringent patriarchal South Asian cultural values dominates social relationships. The grip of patriarchal culture dominates in these regions due to the lack of education, poverty and unemployment. The culture that is retained in these areas stagnates to create oppressive regimes for both women and men. However, this

observation is far from a generalisation that women migrants from large cities possess more cultural and intellectual capital to interpret or challenge the media texts. This only indicates that the contextuality of the migrant life and the socio-economic and cultural experiences in their *homeland* influences participants' understanding of the media texts.

Likewise the next point of diversity among participants was evident in the different viewing choices of first-generation and second-/third-generation migrants. The first-generation migrant participants showed preference towards transnational cultural programmes, like soap operas and news from Pakistan. In contrast, second- and third-generation migrants in Britain indicated a preference towards English language programming, which included both mainstream British media and Islamic television in English. Initially this seemed like the more logical relevant analysis of this diversity; however, it emerged to be more complex. Second- and third-generation women derived their belonging from their faith, leaning towards particular interpretations that they referred to as scriptural Islam, while first-generation women sought a cultural Islam, hence the cultural traditions of South Asia and the media held more relevance. It can be said then that the first-generation women held on to identities rooted in cultural Islam, according to the practices of the subcontinent while the second- and third-generation women sought more political engagement with their religion, seeking to address issues of patriarchal subjugation, racism and female empowerment in the discourses of Islam.

8.3 Resistance to primordality of identities

The act of interpreting the meanings of media texts also involves creating both complementary and oppositional readings to the rhetoric of the text (Morley, 1986. Without 'romanticizing the audiences to be semiological guerrillas' (Carragee, 1990, p. 92), I locate their opposition to various representations of women, ethnic minorities and Muslims as their

resistance to the primordiality popularly associated with minority groups. Also these oppositional readings are not just limited to mainstream British media but they also extend to ethnic media, both cultural and religious. Reading mainstream media texts should be viewed as an act of creating reflexive identifications through constructing both complementary and oppositional meanings. Challenging representations on both mainstream media and ethnic media thereby updates the term of audiences within a poststructuralist analysis that recognises the emergence of active agent-making meanings.

The responses of large numbers of participants as consuming factual programming on television are similarly located within the of reflexive modernisation narrative. Gendering of news consumption has been undertaken in very few studies (for example Ross, 2007). Rizvi's (2007) paper on British Pakistani women and news cultures pointed out that news programmes are passively consumed by women and further mediated by the men of their household. In my thesis I point to how women aggregate information from various sources including the people of their household and use it to make sense of their own realities meaning that women do not just look for mediation of the news from media sources through the men of the household, but seek to construct complex and contextual interpretations of the news that they view. The role of media in engaging the reflexive agency of the participants within their specific contexts, can also be seen as significant. The women interviewees showed great interest in discussing representations of Muslim women in the media and also spoke extensively about the static and stereotypical representations of women in transnational South Asian media. Where women were continually shown within the realm of the domestic sphere, the only challenge appeared to be the mother-in-law. This was seen as primitive and non-conducive to the current role of changing femininity in the participants' own lives. They spoke of how ethnic media failed to contextualise the increasing role of scriptural Islam in the lives of the participants and other South Asian Muslim women. Interviewees of various age

groups spoke of a 'cultural degradation' in South Asian entertainment, which they spoke of as trying to emulate Western cultural norms. The participants seemed to invoke South Asian culture as a form of resistance to the cultural imperialism embodied in Western media, thus they often projected upon the subcontinental media culture a role of cultural resistance to the dominant Western conceptions of society.

8.4 Turning to the internet: Realising virtual subjectivities

The diasporic media space was seen to be inhabited by a plethora of media platforms: newspapers, radio, television, computers, webcams and mobile phones were frequently presented as integral elements of the women's everyday lives. The most consistent and persistent medium that existed across various households was television, yet during my study, I did observe the advance of the internet and the way in which it presented challenges to the domination of television. All households that participated in the ethnographic research owned a minimum of one computer, which was used for various purposes. The computer was used by women, men and children, while older women were seen not to engage in computer use. Computers were in all cases placed in visible locations to all family members, with children permitted monitored usage and women using computers mostly during the daytime. The dominant users of the computers were the men in all the observed households. Women also sought advice and help from the men when using the device, software and dealing with installation. A few of the participants indicated that they did not own television sets at home and in its place they used the internet to keep abreast of the news and other information that they thought relevant.

Women used the internet for shopping, keeping in touch with friends and seeking information on various domestic chores, career advice and children's education. The role of

the internet within the home of the participants was seen as ever increasing. Women spoke of how they tailored the information available on the internet to suit their needs. One participant spoke of creating specific tags on Google's search engine so that she could receive information relevant to her interests. Another spoke of how she used peer networks to access information specific to her. She used real connections to suggest various informational programmes, which could be seen on BBC iplayer or Channel 4OD online. This helped this participant control the messages that were being relayed to her family and herself, thus being a producer and consumer of media at the same time. This can be seen as a challenge to the traditional media because of its imposition of messages on audiences rather than a proactively constituted representation.

The current discussions regarding the role of the participants as producers of content can be seen as premature. At the same time the presence of blogs like Muslimah Media Watch can be seen as furthering the notion of agency and reflexivity through the notion of the ideal self. The blog is a collaborative effort of many contributors, who take on discussions of the media and Muslim women. As the creator of the blog Fatemeh wrote:

In August 2007, I started Muslimah Media Watch [MMW] as a place to complain about the way Muslim women appeared in the media. In the four years since, MMW has expanded into a worldwide network of smart, engaging Muslimah writers. We've transformed the blogosphere and the classroom with our critical look at media and Muslim women, and I'm incredibly proud at the work that my MMW sisters and I have done.

Twenty-five women contribute to the blog as well as guest contributors and a series of regular commentators who contribute through their various postings to the articles and opinions to the blog. The blog itself forms a node where other women bloggers who run independent blogs on similar issues can converge to contribute and discuss. While this space is in development, it is an exciting and entirely underdeveloped area for the participants of this research and many other ethnic minority women. This area of research could be

developed further to explore the emergence of post-feminist projects of the self, of modernisation and reflexivity.

8.5 Structures and systems of control

In my critique of feminist media ethnographies, I argued that a greater reflexive analysis is required of the alternative feminine spaces. While there is a glorification of alternative feminine spaces as structures of empowerment, rarely is there an acknowledgement of how patriarchal hierarchies exercise control, and how gaze is reproduced within these alternative structures. I was confronted with the question of understanding hierarchical structures and power relations while avoiding essentialisation of the participants by constructing close and ever-present categories for understanding these tensions.

Throughout the period of the study, women used television narratives to both contest and construct their positions within domestic, communication and national life. While the majority of the participants were not in paid employment, they negotiated very complex settings of the self within the context of their domesticity. For some women, television provided a relief from their work while others worked around the television schedule. Along with women, men and children also contributed to television talk within the household which led to a symbiotic environment to debate notions of belonging within specific discursive contexts. The discussions were rich in detail and duration among groups of women. Within the confines of the community centre, housewives used television narratives to further their political and religious ideologies. While they challenged the television narrative, there was a consensus in opinion; very rarely were there disagreements between women. This was indicative of how the community is organised. The women have internalised order associated with systems of control, while also exercising it towards each other. The community shared information with each other and the members were monitored through the eyes of each other.

However, women in general have been seen to negotiate this ‘monitoring’ in several ways to pursue their personal ends. The notion of the empowered feminist was not shared by the participants; they located themselves within the recontextualised feminine, hence the relevance of post-feminist gendering among the participants (Gill, 2007; McRobbie, 2004, 2009). Gender identity was not a unifying factor among the participants and neither was it seen as a defining factor of their experiences. Sinha (2004) noted that during the first wave feminist era, Western feminists had a ‘maternal’ approach to the feminist movement from other parts of the world, which further led to national self-determination catalysing into a feminist issue in many erstwhile colonies. The feminist project has been branded by the nationalists in the post-colonial context as a ‘bourgeois and Westernised project’ (Sinha, 2004) and this has survived into the second-generation BrAsian women, who have located themselves away from the feminist context. Islamic identity has emerged as a *unifying*, emancipatory regime of self in the lives of the women in all three spatialities of lived and symbolic belonging.

In conclusion

Appadurai (1996) argued that media are used by the diaspora in the process of constructing a sense of self. Media images, he argued, offer brief moments of ‘reality’ that deeply affect the ways we understand ourselves and others. The notion that new forms of identification might materialise from these mediated realities is similar to Stuart Hall’s (1995) concept of ‘new ethnicities’ that confront and reinterpret the meaning of ‘nation’ from a diasporic perspective. Theories of diaspora have extensively discussed emergent identities and identity construction as an ongoing process. As pointed out by Gilroy (1997), the concept of diaspora ‘puts emphasis on contingency, indeterminacy, and conflict’ (p. 334) and diasporic identity must be understood as dynamic and contrapuntal, emerging from tensions across points of cultural

difference, very much unlike the fear-mongering policies of management of cultural difference that is prevalent across Europe today. Jacob Levy (2000) argued that multiculturalism can only be defended as a realistic 'multiculturalism of fear' rather than a hopeful, 'multiculturalism of rights' or 'recognition'. Levy (2000) suggested a difference-conscious approach instead of a state imposed policy of cultural mixing. Diversity, he argued, needs to be understood as an inevitable fact of life. Again, I assert the need to locate particularities of diversity within a recontextualised enabling framework.

While media pursue a misconstrued politics of 'race', the real state of economic deprivation suffered in the inner cities and, in some cases, in entire towns in Britain, has gone unnoticed. Riots, as moments of explosion, are indicative of the economic depravity of young people. The many riots of Oldham, Burnley and Manningham reflected moments and places of such crises. More recently the London riots of 2011 are indicative of the continued deprivation suffered in the most vulnerable areas of the country. The northern cities are now ghosts of their former imperial glory. Buildings that earlier signified wealth and productivity of the British working class now lie in disarray due to the lack of funds or vision and coherence in government policies about the future of entire areas of the country. In the case of Bradford, instead of investing in the communities in a sustainable manner, the regeneration efforts focussed on the development of a city centre shopping mall. This place has been abandoned like a huge crater in the middle of Bradford city centre, leaving a space filled with poverty entrenched in a lack of opportunities followed by communal tensions between groups who engage in a twisted turf war in many localities of Bradford (Samad, 2004).

The emergence of channels like Islam Channel and KBC are a testament to the emergence of 'new ethnicities' among the Pakistanis of Britain. While to a large extent, driven by ideology, these channels have been steering away from the top-down communication patterns familiar to the old order of television production, they do still

challenge that construct and engage with their audiences through interactive programming, phone-ins and write-ins; for example, Islam Channel maintains a discussion board online for audiences, creating a space which has potential for an organic synthesis of community and programming. The Islam Channel is expanding and KBC is still growing. What is left to be seen is whether, during this period of growth, Islam Channel will still be as bottom-up as it was initially or whether it will end up incorporating the power structures that exist in traditional and large media corporations.

These media entities are not always intentionally constituted as alternatives to the mainstream, but among their audiences they are perceived as constituting an independent media space that helps sustain the ethnic infrastructure needed to sustain ethnic identities. A community, like the one studied here, is not just a reflection of ongoing ethnic identities; it is also a formidable political group in Britain. Women seek their belonging within the group mostly due to their alienation from the dominant British context, but also due to the political negotiating powers the group has as a large community in Britain.

Gardner and Shakur (1994) wrote about the rejection of culture and embracing of Islam in the face of racial rejection in Britain. Importantly, their research was published prior to 9/11, which is popularly considered to be the moment that transformed relationships between Muslims and non-Muslims in the West. However, Gardner and Shakur's (1994) work pointed to the much earlier deterioration of the relationship between communities in Britain and disaffection among young people in Asian communities (Werbner, 1990). This disaffection points to systemic alienation and failure to reach out to the ethnic minorities that were racialised in their cultures as immutable, essentialised bubbles (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1993). While the minority ethnic communities of Britain have been reorganising themselves on the basis of different affiliations as compared to the earlier generations, these processes have evolved and the articulations need to be part of the scholastic narratives on ethnic

communities. While Mahmood (2005) pointed out that the ‘politics of piety’ worked in favour of the Egyptian women in the times of Mubarak’s regime, the changing nature of feminist politics indicates a far more complex organisation of women in highly gendered societies. The blogger Aliaa El Mahdy⁴⁰ and her posting of nude pictures of herself on her blog protesting against the repression of Egyptian women by the military regime indicates a politics of irreverence to the established patriarchal politics. Mona Elthawy (2011), in her *Guardian* article, pointed out the distantiating of the liberals from El Mahdy’s act:

Some in the liberal camp have accused Mahdy of ‘harming’ the revolution by allegedly confirming the stereotypes of revolutionaries that its opponents hold. Shame on them! Why allow those opponents to set the agenda for ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Since when do revolutions allow their conservative opponents to set the agenda?

Elthawy’s words reflect the distinct feminist politics at work within Islamic communities. As Mojab (2001) pointed out the failure of Islamic feminism in Iran, and the subsequent rise of liberal feminism among exilic Iranians points to the relevance of ‘new ethnic’ identifications, its agenda and future course in highly complex gendered societies and in the agency of women to control the highly patriarchal vehicle of religion in their emancipation. Functioning within the imposition of universalistic paradigms on disparate populations as problematic, has been discussed in Young’s (1989) article critiquing the idea of universal citizenship.

However, this notion continues to be propagandised in the multicultural and liberationist assimilation talks of the conservatives in Europe. With this rhetoric as the backdrop, media in diasporic spaces have become major components in the performativity of self providing basic structures for the flow of information and categorisation of knowledge about ‘us’ and ‘them’. There must also be a renewed understanding of the concept of ‘bounded communities’, where the theory and practice of ‘bounded communities’ must reflect the inherent diversity within

⁴⁰ <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2011/11/17/egypt-shocked-after-female-dissident-blogger-posts-nude-photos.html>

Also the much circulated article by Mona Elthawy, writer and lecturer, on the *Guardian’s Comment Is Free* section: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/nov/18/egypt-naked-blogger-aliaa-mahdy>

these constructs and how this diversity is reflected in the identifications that constitute collective identities.

My aim through this thesis has been the discussion of the ‘politics of piety’ in the UK, not within the analytical framework of religion and the politics it contributes to but as a post-feminist response to the crisis in the identifications that were rooted in culture and ethnicity. These identifications are insufficient in relation to the contemporary issues that affect the ‘Other’ women of Western societies. The influence of the discourses that revolve around the ‘ideal self’ has had a profound impact on how the participants perceive themselves and want to stage their identities to the world. This message is also reflected in the media content that the participants consume. Also paramount in the project of the ‘ideal self’ is the impact of postmodern reflexivity and the use of agency to actively challenge, bargain and negotiate identities away from the collective identity that is often thrust upon women and enforces conformity. This conformity is ‘objectively’ confronted through the interplay of remoteness and nearness (Georgiou, 2011, p. 17) to the diasporic culture as discussed by Georgiou (2011). The Arab women in Georgiou’s (2011) study adopted an amalgam of nearness and strangeness to the cultural politics of their origin. So through ‘critical proximity’ (Georgiou, 2011, p. 17) to diasporic culture, women have enabled their post-feminist ideals of selfhood.

Through this study I understand critical proximity as a generational response to the enforced suturing of the British-born generation to the cultures of the parent generation. These times are exciting as well as increasingly disturbing for the politics of identity, in that, while one corner of the spectrum points to the rising revolutions, the other point to the rising conservativeness. The diverting priorities associated with different politics of identity point to the lived reality of deprivation and poverty rather than the abstract constructs of ‘race’, ethnicity and culture. The dyads of East/West, white/black, believer/infidel that have informed praxis will eventually disintegrate to be replaced by the discourse of the ‘haves’ and

the 'have nots', and the politics of power that govern it. It is in these times that I have narrated these stories, these journeys, each one fantastic in its particularity, and yet mediated by an underlying discourse of gender, class and power. This complex nature of ethnic identity and the identifications that foster these identities reflect the current social and political climate. The complementary and critical readings of media are affected by these events that feed into the context of the engendered audiences. This inquiry illustrates that context is ever changing; its objective reality remains elusive. The diasporic scapes that make up the fecund backdrop of interpretations are but a mirage in the desert. The nature of its reality is a momentary illusion, which seems convincingly evident to the nomadic inquirer wandering the sands of knowledge.

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Appendix 1 – Descriptions of interview, focus group and house visit participants⁴¹

First Generation	Second Generation	Third Generation
10 women	15 women	5 women
8 not in employment 1 self-employed 1 employed in the public sector	4 full-time university students 3 part-time mature students 8 not in employment	4 women employed in the public services 1 not in employment
Languages Known		
Potohari, Punjabi, Urdu and English (limited)	English, Potohari (limited), Urdu (limited)	English
Radio Channels		
Sun radio service, BBC Urdu service	BBC Asian network in English, Islamic radio service, Sun radio service	BBC Asian network. Sun radio service, Islamic radio service
Television Channels		
DM Digital, Noor TV, Star TV, ARY Digital, Geo TV	BBC, Islam TV, Peace TV, Star TV	BBC, Channel 4, ITV, Islam TV, Peace TV, Star TV
Internet Use		
Limited use: language limitations and restricted access within the household and outside affect the way new technologies were perceived by these women, i.e. there was a gender gap in the usage among the first-generation migrant women. The men used web-based and telecommunications technologies more for transnational communication, especially with family members outside the UK. There was also more than one device in use in these households at any given time.	Due to increased representation in education and employment this group showed the most propensity to consume new media technologies for education, entertainment, shopping and communication. Decreased gender gap in usage of new media technologies in households where women have received college education.	Very high propensity of new media use, especially internet use. Again, web-based technologies were used by women on multiple technology platforms, for example, smartphones and laptops.

⁴¹ This table is by no means exhaustive of the participants of this study, but offers a broad framework of the trends that were evident during the fieldwork.

Appendix 2 – Media literacy OFCOM study

The data presented below is from the OFCOM study of media literacy among ethnic minority adults in the UK. This OFCOM data espouses the findings of this thesis with regard to the higher percentage of media awareness and literacy among the participants of this study. This also implies that this aspect of the finding of this study can be extended to the larger British Pakistani population.

The following table summarises home ownership of digital television, internet access and personal use of mobile phones. The multiple platform ownership measurement illustrates the proportion of people who have access to all three of these devices. The last measurement refers to the percentage of people who have access to all three of these devices. The last measurement refers to the percentage of adults (16+ years) whose household is currently not connected to the internet but who intend to be connected in the next 12 months.⁴²

⁴² http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/market-data-research/media-literacy/medlitpub/medlitpubrss/ml_emg08/

Key access measures:

	Indian adults	Pakistani adults	Black Caribbean adults	Black African adults	UK adults total
**Multiple platform ownership	62%	65%	55%	62%	53%
Digital TV ownership	83%	89%	81%	82%	82%
Mobile phone take- up	90%	91%	88%	95%	85%
Internet take-up	76%	72%	64%	69%	62%
*Willingness to get internet	25%	35%	30%	30%	15%

