Home and identity for young men of mixed descent

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HOME AND IDENTITY FOR YOUNG MEN OF MIXED DESCENT

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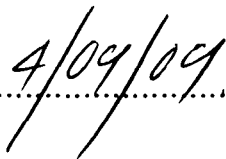
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PhD THESIS

Declaration of PhD

This thesis entitled 'Home and Identity for Young Men of Mixed Descent' was composed by me and is based on my own work. Where the work of others has been used, it is fully acknowledged in the text and in captions to tables and illustrations. This thesis has not been submitted for any other qualification.

Signed ....

Date ....4/09/09.........................

ABSTRACT

Mixed descent identities span ethnic, religious, and cultural identities as well as race. This thesis addresses the multi-layered identities embodied by young men of mixed descent in relation to their ideas and lived experiences of home. I have adopted a feminist methodological approach to my research and have used three different types of methods to conduct this research: one to one interviewing (with repeat interviews), written electronic diaries and photo-voice.

Previous research on mixed descent and the home has located people of mixed descent as 'homeless' (see Ifekwuingwe, 1999, Garimara, 2002 and Carton, 2004). I place young men of mixed descent aged between 16-19 in homes, both in terms of dwelling spaces and wider ideas about belonging. The space of the home becomes a cultural site of their own identities and their family identities. Religious and cultural identities both via material possessions and emotional signifiers affect the identity of these young men and their definitions and experiences of home. These multiple identities are seen within the space of the home, particularly for those inhabiting the parental home. I address the multiple web of identity which these young embody via their religion, culture, ethnicity, and in some cases language. I move beyond the location of mixed race households and place this research inside the home space for young men of mixed descent. Alongside which I explore the idea of home as 'stretching' (Gorman-Murray, 2006) beyond the scale of the private domestic into the public realm.

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for making me laugh when it wasn't going so well. Last but not least my parents for supporting me throughout and making home for me.

Chapter one

Introduction

Mixed race people yeah, they can't relate to any race so what's the point? They are two halves of something but not one thing really yeah half of two races at home is the only place where mixed people can identify them self when you come out of the house society brands you if you are mixed depending on the situation. Really who is going to ever get your mixed other than your family and even then it's not always the case is it? Especially when you are part of a race that can't be together or it's wrong to be together (Daniel).

This thesis explores geographies of home and identity for Daniel and other young men of mixed descent in East London. I use the term 'mixed descent' rather than 'mixed heritage' (Sims, 2007) or 'mixed race' (Mahtani, 2002a) to encompass race, ethnicity, religion and culture (also see Blunt, 2005). In response to my question 'what does being mixed descent mean?' Daniel identified two key themes that lie at the heart of this research: first, meanings of mixed descent for young men with a focus on gender and race; and, second, the role and influence of home and family on narratives of identity.

Early research on mixed descent was preoccupied with an "out-casting" of people and assumptions about their confused identities (see Ifekwuingwe, 1999). Such 'out-casting' was reflected in racist terminology such as 'half-caste' (Wright et al, 2003). More recently, however, more positive terminology, including 'biracial' and 'multiracial,' has come to reflect wider challenges to such 'out-casting' (see

for example, Ifekwunigwe, 1999). In my research I explore the ways in which young men of mixed descent describe and identify themselves, and the spatiality of their identities within and beyond the home. Doing so, the research focuses on the identities and lived experiences of young men of mixed descent (also see Mahtani, 2002a and b). The following questions underpin the research:

1. How do young men of mixed descent 'narrate' their identities?

2. What are the experiences of mixed descent for young men within the parental home?

3. How and why do young men experience home and belonging beyond the dwelling and what are their wider senses of home?

Through this thesis I seek to contribute to the current growing and emerging fields of youthful geographies and geographies of race and racism with a spatial focus on the home. Valentine and Skelton's (1998) work on 'cool places,' for example, demonstrates new research on youth and children geographies (and see also the work of James, 1986 and Dwyer, 2000). However there has still been limited engagement with youth from Black and ethnic minority backgrounds within the field of geography. Although there have been attempts recently to consider masculinities in terms of race and ethnicity (as I will discuss in Chapter four) there has been less work by geographers in this field (although see Dwyer, 2000). Hence I seek through this research to explore the voices of young men of mixed

descent and focus on the space of the home. Although Katherine McKittrick (2007) in her work on 'Black Geographies' stresses the importance of place and 'Black identities' she doesn't consider the politics of home in a fixed sense.

This research explores the importance of the home as a space in which identity is constructed and experienced by young men of mixed descent. It expands on Anoop Nayak's (2003) work on young white masculinities in North East England. He traces place and class based experiences and everyday geographies for young men. Dwyer and Bressey (2008) consider the work of Nayak in their current work on the new geographies of race and racism and suggest that such empirically grounded place- based studies also offer insights into the 'inadequacies' of ethnic categories particularly for young people 'positioned' as "mixed race". I also raise the inadequacies of work on people of mixed descent in attempts to consider the role of space. For example Mahtani (2000), who stresses the importance of space, is not explicit about its role in her research. Hence this research places young men within the home, specifically the parental home, which is yet to be explored apart from the work of David Sibley (1995). I argue that in order to understand the experiences and uses of public spaces it is necessary to consider the private space of the home. This expands on the current literature on home (see Blunt and Dowling, 2006 for a review) by placing young men at the centre of the research on the 'home' and seeks to move beyond the home as a gendered space largely focused around the experiences of women.

Starting point of the research

The aim of my research is to provide an in-depth, qualitative study of young men of mixed descent and their narratives of home and identity. My research was concerned with young men aged sixteen to nineteen and how they negotiated their identities in terms of their gender, age and mixed descent. Narratives of identity are an important part of mixed descent studies as much of the research considers life stories (see for example, Blunt, 2004 and 2005). Somers (1994: 606) outlines the importance of narrative and identity and suggests that narrativity enables an understanding of what constitutes identity: 'it matters not whether we are social scientist or subjects of historical research, but that all of us come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple, and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives rarely of our own making.' Somers suggests that narrative is a way in which people make sense of what is happening through on-going events and peer influences. A narrative of identity therefore draws on the idea 'that people are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public and cultural narratives' (Somers, 1994:614). People of mixed descent are located in narratives of identity that are both of their own making but also the making of others. For young people and children of mixed descent their narratives of identity are a process formed around space and time as well as the "guidance" of others. Valentine (2000), for example, considers narratives of identity for young people and children and examines the institutional space of the school and the narratives of childhood through this space.

My aim at the start of the research was to recruit between fifteen to twenty participants. I found that due to the intensity of the research and also the fact that I had chosen to research a small minority group it proved difficult to recruit a large number of participants. Indeed, although I initially managed to recruit eighteen young men, three of them withdrew from the research after the initial meeting. This proved to be helpful to the research as it allowed for a greater degree of intensity and for a more in-depth study of the fifteen young men and their 'real lives' rather than a wider study. My sample group was diverse, with three young men from mixed South Asian backgrounds, one young man from a mixed white European background, and young men from mixed Black and Black/White backgrounds. Often research on mixed descent has focused solely on the experiences of people of Black and White descent. However the 2001 Census identified that people of mixed descent occupied the following categories: White/Asian 28.6%; White/Black Caribbean 35.9%; White/Black African 11.9%; White/Chinese 10% and Other mixed 13.6% (Owen, 2007).

The fieldwork itself was carried out in the Tower Hamlets area of East London. I began my fieldwork in July 2004 and ended in February 2007. I approached five youth groups in the Tower Hamlets area and recruited participants from four of these groups. I used a multi-method approach to conduct the research and employed three research tools: one-to-one interviewing (with repeat interviews); written electronic diaries and photo-voice. I chose these three particular methods based on the age of the young men. Young men I assumed would have shorter attention spans in terms of in-depth interviewing and so the interviews would not last as long as I might have anticipated (see also Punch, 2008). The use of repeat

interviews allowed for further discussion with the young men as well as presenting an opportunity when their photographs and written electronic diaries could be discussed.

Whilst my initial plan was to ask the participants to complete diaries in the form of written journals, I decided against this as I thought that the young men would be unlikely to complete them. In their place, I chose to use written electronic diaries due to the current rise in computer and internet use and I considered this to be an ideal way to get the young men to fully engage with the research. I also considered it be to an easier method for them rather than asking the young men to write diaries by hand (particularly with the current rise in the writing and viewing of on-line blogs). Alongside written electronic diaries I also asked young men to take part in photo-voice which was also another way to engage the young men within the research beyond the interview.

Summary and structure of thesis

In what follows I examine the experiences of the fifteen young men who participated in this study. In Chapter two I discuss the methodological framework adopted in this study by outlining my approach to the research and the adoption of feminist autobiographical methods. I chose to place the methods and methodological approach at the start of the thesis rather than situating it after the theoretical chapters as I consider that the methods are important to the framing and grounding the whole thesis.

Chapter three outlines the 'autobiographies' of each of the young men included in this study and provides an account of their lives at the time of the research. I place these autobiographies at the start of my thesis in order to situate the young men within the empirical chapters and also to ground the methods which I adopted. Chapter four examines the current literature surrounding race, ethnicity, mixed descent and gender. Here, I engage with three particular themes: race, hybridity and mixed descent; gender and mixed descent; and youth and mixed descent. Building upon these debates, Chapter five explores research on mixed descent and the home and I consider the literature surrounding home, and how experiences of home are structured by gender, age and mixed descent.

The ensuing three chapters present the empirical findings of this research. Chapter six considers the varying ways in which young men of mixed descent 'narrate' their identities, in terms of their peers and their parents. It also examines the importance of masculinity and youth cultures in shaping the young men's identities. Chapter seven focuses upon the importance and influence of parents on the narratives of identity articulated by the young men in this research. As such, this chapter aims to identify not only the importance of the parental home, but also parental authority and how this impacts on the lives of the young men. I consider each of the families of the young men and explore how the parental home can be both a site of belonging and unbelonging. In turn, Chapter eight examines how young men define their own spaces of belonging within the home as well as engaging in a wider discussion of how young men use public spaces. Thus, it considers the home as both a lived space but also as an imagined space which extends beyond the domestic. The final concluding chapter highlights the

conceptual and empirical significance of this research in relation to existing research on mixed descent, masculinity, youth and the home.

Methods and Methodologies

Introduction

Methodology is the knowledge associated with approaching and doing research, whereas method has to do with the actual practice of research. This research is informed by feminist methodologies which acknowledge the importance of gender and gendered perspectives, placing particular importance upon the experiences of women. As Moss (2002:03) argues 'Feminist geographers took up topics that were specific to the discipline: spatialising the constitution of identities, contextualising meanings of place in relation to gender and demonstrating how gender as a social construction intersects with other social constructed categories within particular spatialities among many other topics'. Its primary benefit is that it allows (and introduced) subjectivity within the research procedure and reflexivity (Millman and Kanter, 1975). As such, feminist approaches allow for the development of more interpersonal relationships where barriers between the researcher and the researched are lowered.

Alongside feminist approaches, the methodological framework adopted in this study has also been influenced by research conducted with children and young people (Morrow, 2008). There is now a general consensus that research involving children and young people is substantively different to that conducted with adults such that it is important to adopt methodological approaches that are best suited to the participants in question (Punch 2002). In order to facilitate the participation of

young men in this research, the methodological approach adopted here was also informed by participatory action research which is explicitly orientated towards 'social transformation' (Kindon, Pain and Kesby, 2007:09). This in turn enabled a greater consideration of power relations within the research process particularly in relation to adults working with young people. Furthermore, as illustrated by Pain (2007), Cahill (2007) and Bagnoli (2004), 'Participatory Action Research' approaches enable an exploration of different dimensions of identities by encouraging young people to be 'reflexive' about their lives and identities. Based on the nature of the subject matter that I was seeking to research and the questions that I was asking I considered that the use of a more intensive, in-depth methodological approach as well as a more long term (longitudinal) form of data gathering. I wanted the methods to reflect the purpose and nature of the research which, as I argued in Chapter one, was to consider the voices of young men of mixed descent. I adopted three key methods in my research: one to one interviewing (with repeat interviews); written electronic diaries and photo-voice. Each of these methods was an attempt to actively engage the young men as 'researchers' themselves. In order to explore the 'narratives' of identity for each of the young men it was important to adopt a similar approach as PAR and to have the young men as the authors of their own narratives.

I divide this chapter into three parts: I start by outlining the key elements of feminist methodologies and Participatory Action Research, and illustrating how these have informed my research. I then move to discuss each of the methods which I adopted and the process of analysis. In the final part of the chapter I

discuss my research strategy in terms of how my participants were recruited and ethical questions raised in research of this kind.

Feminist Methodologies

Feminism as a political movement is concerned with power relations that influence not only how individuals relate to each other but also how spheres of life are gendered (Blunt and Wills, 2000). Feminist theory has explored and challenged gendered power relations since the late 1970s and over the 1980s and 1990s. This work has considered women's experiences and within geography and the masculine nature of geography also. Feminist theory has also been adopted by theorists also examining masculinities (Jackson, 1991 and 1994 for example examines the cultural politics of masculinity). The aim of feminism ultimately was to challenge 'objectivist epistemologies through the espousal of situated knowledge claims' (Pratt, 2000:261).

Situated knowledge replaced what was traditionally identified as scientific practice as the 'pursuit of a disembodied, inviolable and neutral objectivity with an alternative formulation that stresses embodied physicality, social construction, and cultural politics' (Barnes, 2000:743). It was first identified by Donna Haraway (1991:195) who argued that 'knowledge does not come from above, from nowhere, from simplicity, but from ground level, from somewhere and from complexity'. Feminist methodologies identify the importance of subjectivity and

move beyond the construction of knowledge as scientific. Speer (2002:784) argues that:

> Feminist research is characterised by epistemological and methodological diversity: it draws on approaches ranging from the phenemological and experimental makes feminist research notoriously resistant to categorisation, a strong trend amongst second wave feminist writing on methodology has been a critique of mainstream scientific methods. Many feminists reject "masculine" notions of objectivity, value neutrality and scientific detachment because they are thought to reinforce the objectification, exploitation and subordination of women.

In recognition of the fact that research is a 'socially constructed process, whereby the identity of the researcher, and the methodology adopted, shape the knowledge produced' (Archer, 2002:109), feminist approaches seek shift to the balance of power and control towards participants (Speer, 2002 and Wilkinson, 1999). Critical to this is an appreciation that all knowledge is situated which suggests that no research is free from the researcher's positionality. As McDowell (1992:413) writes: 'there are real dangers that are inherent in our position within the powerful institutions of knowledge production'. As Gillian Rose (1997:307) argues: 'No feminist should produce knowledge that claims to have universal applicability to all women (or men)'.

In turn, Haraway (1991) argues that differences between researcher and participant must be acknowledged rather than be disregarded as being non-

scientific as traditional quantitative research suggests (see Rose, 1997 for a fuller discussion in her influential work). It is therefore important to understand differences between people and their social worlds and how this affects the research process. As England writes (1994:82) 'we can attempt to achieve an understanding of how social life is constituted by engaging in real or constructed dialogues in order to understand the people studied in their own terms (sometimes described as the insider's view)'. 'Insider' and 'outsider' views recognise that there are definitions of researchers who supposedly embody the same identities as the participants which may allow for a better understanding of participants.

The idea of 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives within the research process considers that the researcher (based on their identity) can be an insider or outsider. At different moments one can be an insider as well as an outsider. It is, I argue, important to trace differences and commonalities beyond traditional understandings of gender, class and race. Valentine (2002a:117) argues that:

> Some of these debates have suggested that researchers who share the same identities with their informants, as for example a woman carrying out the research with women, are positioned as 'insiders' and as such as *truer* access to knowledge and a closer, more direct connection with their informants than those who are 'outsiders'. Underlying this notion of being an 'insider' is the assumption that they can somehow produce a more correct interpretation of informants than those who are 'outsiders'.

Valentine rightly suggests that being a so called 'insider' is a complicated status and as Valentine (2007) argues we need to explore the importance of intersectionality and I would suggest this is just as important in terms of researcher and participant. Moss (2002) similarly, also identifies the idea of 'insider' and 'outsider' and the need for increased attention given to participants within research as well as towards power relations. Feminist research has focused on women conducting research with other women who have tended to be an under researched group. However I adopted a feminist perspective to research young men of mixed descent and I could be defined as an 'outsider'.

My own positionality and identity is part of a wider discussion around women interviewing men and ideas surrounding ethnic matching within research on race and ethnicity. I wanted through my research to explore my positionality as a young, white, female, researcher working with young men of mixed descent. Throughout my research there emerged 'moments' in which I was considered by the young men as an insider and other moments where I was an 'outsider' which was beyond my gendered, racial or ethnic identity. For example, David stated: *"It's easy to talk to you and having you do the research has been great because you know what it's like in East London. If someone who wasn't in the area they wouldn't understand me at all"*. In contrast Ray stated during his first interview: *"I don't get why a girl or like a white girl would do research like this. How comes you're doing this research?"*. Ray identified that my gender and my ethnicity made me an outsider. Feminist methodologies allow recognition of differences associated with age, race, religion, gender and ethnicity between the researcher and the participant. It was my own personal commitment to how feminism

challenges the inequalities of race and gender that led to me to conduct this research. Similarly to Suki Ali (2006) I was concerned with issues of power and inequality which are associated with mixed descent, hence why I chose to adopt feminist perspective.

I made the decision to use a multi-method approach rather than one isolated method and I therefore had to consider my positionality and employ the concept of reflexivity in which I would manage power relations (Ali, 2003 and 2006). Traditionally, research concerning race and ethnicity has been dominated by white middle class men (Archer, 2002). This has resulted in production of theories of knowledge and 'truth' which marginalises 'Others' such as working class women and Black people (Phoenix, 1998). In what follows I seek to explore the issues surrounding women interviewing men and also the process of ethnic matching and the role of race and ethnicity within research. I also explore further the issue of power relations.

Managing differences: gender, race and ethnicity

Previous accounts of women interviewing men have identified the issues of power relations associated with gendered differences (see for example Grønnerød and Jarna 2004). According to Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) an interview between a female interviewer and male interviewee can create a situation where masculinity may be threatened. As they write (2001:189):

An interview situation is both an opportunity for signifying masculinity and a peculiar type of encounter in which masculinity is threatened. It is an opportunity to signify masculinity inasmuch as men and portray themselves as powerful, in control, autonomous and rationale. It is a threat inasmuch as an interviewer controls the interaction, asks questions that put these elements of manly self portrayal into doubt, and does not simply affirm a man's masculinity displays.

Schwalbe and Wolkomir's argument presumes a particular form of masculinity associated with power and control. It was important in relation to issues of power and control to consider the vulnerability of women interviewing men, particularly in relation to the interview location (which I will be discussing in more detail later in the chapter). Lee (1997), for example stresses the issue of the vulnerability of women when interviewing men in relation to the location of her interviews: 'I discussed my reticence to interview men in private with several female informants (women who had been bullied by women, for example, as well as women who had been sexually harassed by men) and women friends. They all reassured me that they too would not feel happy about interviewing unknown men, in a private setting, with an agenda that included sexual harassment' (Lee, 1997:558). Lee's research was focused on men and sexual harassment which therefore explains her particular experiences of a woman interviewing a man:

In total I interviewed nine men in private. My first private interview arose when a man rang me to volunteer his son for the research. The man said that his son could not come to the University because he was working and that he too had information for me. I felt, therefore, that I ought to go to the house to do the interview. After I had agreed to do so, I became very

concerned about the risks involved in interviewing in a man's home. where "he could have set anything up". I began to think about how to present myself in order to avoid the potential for trouble (Lee, 1997:558).

One of the main reasons why I chose not to interview the young men in their homes was the issue of safety as mentioned above. The use of a 'private space' to conduct interviews with men, places women in a potentially difficult position. Women have to consider in what way they perform the role of the interviewer. One must consider appearance, hair, and clothes when presenting oneself as a female researcher to interview men as potentially it can be a threatening situation as well as potentially creating a situation where men assert a greater degree of authority. Hence there is an expanding body of research which has demonstrated the benefits of women interviewing women (see for example Valentine, 1996).

In contrast to the problems identified above a number of feminists are suggesting that women interviewing women does not necessarily produce 'mutually beneficial experience or the production of non-oppressive theory' (Archer, 2002:110). Diane Reay (1996) suggests that it is mutually beneficial to work towards recognising the difference your differences make rather than limiting research to women interviewing women for example. I considered what Bhavani (1988) has suggested as 'researching up' similarly to Alexander (1996).

There is an argument to be made through my own experiences and also Alexander's research (1996 and 2000) and Archer's (2002) whereby young men

have different feelings towards being interviewed by a young woman. As part of my research technique I asked all of my participants at the end of the research process during the second interview what their feelings were towards the fact that I was a woman and how they felt about working with a female researcher. All of my participants had a positive response. For example, when I asked Brian what his opinion was about working with a female rather than a male researcher:

It has been so much easier doing this research with you Akile. I don't think I would have been this comfortable with a guy, particularly because of my problems. It is always easier with a girl (Brian, second interview).

Brian found the research process easier due to the fact that I am female. David also stated the same: *"Having a girl interviewer is better yeah, I think so definitely. You know what men can be like. I think that men working with other men has got all sorts of problems because I wouldn't be able to talk about all the things that I did with you."* This is similar to the experiences of Archer (2002) who discussed with her participants the importance of having a female researcher when researching young men.

But the positionality of the researcher or more specifically the identity of the researcher is part of a wider discussion of the acknowledgement of the researcher as an active person with personal characteristics that will inevitably change the research process as well as the research outcome. For example, during Jason's second interview the following conversation occurred:

Akile: Thanks for taking part in the research Jason.

Jason: Is that it then? Am I never going to see you again?

Akile: Well probably but we can keep in touch?

Jason: Yeah that's good I can still email you right?

Akile: Yeah of course.

Jason: It's been good learning from you as well Akile.

Akile: And how did you find working with a female?

Jason: You mean would I have preferred a man?

Akile: Well yes?

Jason: No I think it would have been talking about issues with a man because guys can be guys.

(Second interview)

Brian, similarly to Jason also spoke of the benefits of having a young, female researcher:

Brian: Now that the research is finished does that mean we won't have any more meetings with you?

Akile: Afraid so Brian.

Brian: That's not good.

Akile: Why? You want to carry on doing the interviews?

Brian: (laughter) No but these interviews have been like therapy for me. You know especially because of my disability it felt like I had someone to talk to.

(Second interview)

The young men identified that the research process, in particular the interviews were a positive experience and made easier due to my gender. I was able to form a relationship between the participants which meant that the young men were able to discuss personal issues within their home and private lives as part of the research. For example, Jason's father was not a prominent person in his life and he discussed how he had seen his father in the street on a few occasions:

Jason: I've seen my Dad around but he is not a part of my life Akile.

Akile: How does that make you feel?

Jason: It's weird you know. Don't really talk about it much. He wasn't a good role model my mum says.

(Second interview)

Jason felt comfortable discussing such issues with me because (I would argue) I am a young woman. Similarly this was also the case with Alexander's research, which is on young Asian men aged between fourteen to nineteen years. As she writes, (2000:43) 'it is the junior group generally referred to as 'little ones' with

whom I had the greatest and closest contact and whom form the heart of the present study. Aged fourteen - sixteen years at the time of writing, these young men form a relatively stable and cohesive core group of friends'. She then goes onto write: 'As a woman the young men were thus able to relate to me without some of the defensiveness or sometimes ebullient humour with which they often tested male 'outsiders'; as our relationship developed they also felt able to discuss and display vulnerabilities, fears and tensions that they did not approach as openly with male workers or senior members'. As Brian and David explained further during their interviews:

David: Do I need to email you more?

Akile: No you emailed me plenty it was great. And how did you feel about having a female interviewing you?

David: It is actually easier to talk to a girl rather than a man. It gets more difficult and complicated when it's a man interviewing other guys.

Akile: In what way?

David: It is jus easier to tell a girl more personal things because you kind of know that she is not going to laugh at you. And also because you are who you are it made it easier. And you have got involved with things in East London and you know about the area it wasn't like you just came in and interviewed us and didn't understand things about who we are and where we were from. You understand it more.

(Second interview)

David's experience of the research was a positive one, so much so that he continued to write and email regular diary entries to me, as did Brian and Tariq. Similarly Jason's mother also kept in correspondence with me. However I lost touch with Ali and Arslan who chose to dissociate themselves from the research as soon as the interviews had been completed. This exemplifies that each interview situation was unique to each participant.

Each participant, as Pamela Moss (2001) identifies, has his/her own biography which affects the interview performance and involves an active participation by the participants. The participant, like the researcher needs to be considered more than a mere store of information or as someone who meets the requirements of the sampling method, just as the researcher is unable to become a disembodied, knowledgeable, professional researcher. Valentine (2002) identifies that the interview is in fact a performance. With reference to Judith Butler's theory of performativity, Rose argues that 'she [the researcher] is situated not by what she knows, but by what she uncertainly performs' (Rose, 1997:316). The participants were in fact active participants from whom I sought to gain knowledge in an interchange of information. This interchange of information was made easier by my positionality. The following is an extract from my research diary:

> *Today I interviewed Jason for the second time and he came with his mum (she dropped him off). The interview went so well we were talking about uni and what uni Jason wants to go to. He told me all about his AS results (he did so well!) He even said that I inspired him. I am really going to miss doing this research! (July, 2005).*

Throughout the research process I kept a research diary which I used as a reference point for recording my experiences as a researcher. A research diary allowed for a greater level of reflexivity as well as a more in-depth understanding of the participants and the youth groups that I recruited from. I was able to consider each interview situation beyond a simple question and answer session and was more of a social encounter in which participants were active in the research process. The impact of race ethnicity and religion on this research is difficult to assess as the young men were from a variety of backgrounds and I would argue that there were moments as I suggested earlier that the young men questioned my ethnicity in relation to the research and other moments where it was not questioned. It was never speculated throughout the research whether any of the young men would have preferred a researcher that was of mixed descent. When I asked Brian whether he would have preferred someone from a similar background conducting the interviews he answered:

> *No I think it would be incredibly difficult to find someone from the same background as me. And besides it has been better that you are not because you are able to listen rather than try to relate which is always impossible.*

Similarly, Craig also answered:

> *I think that it's much more important that you know the youth group and stuff rather than being mixed. You get us more because you know what we are interested in.*

Much of the research conducted on mixed descent has been by researchers who are of mixed descent themselves. For example, Mahtani (2000 and 2002a and b) and Ifekwuingwe (1999) have both conducted research on mixed descent women

and also identified themselves as being of mixed descent. This leads to the question of whether it is necessary to have a researcher that is of mixed descent when researching people of mixed descent. Song and Parker (1995:242), for example, argue that 'growing emphasis upon how racial and ethnic differences shape the relationship between the researcher and the researched in light of black analysts criticisms that issues of race have been neglected by white researchers and that findings by white researchers may not apply to ethnic minority groups or may misrepresent them'. Mahtani's (2000, 2002a and b) work on women of mixed descent in Toronto, Canada, is an example of ethnic matching and offers an example of "insider". As she writes (2002a:473) about her interviewing experience:

> As a self identified "mixed race" woman of Indian and Iranian descent I was interested in examining how other, self identified women of mixed race contemplated this politicised category of identity. My own identification as a Canadian "mixed race" woman creates a set of tensions, definitions of insiders and outsiders and a series of complex positionings, all of which are accompanied by relationships of power none of which are easy to map because they shift continually. Identifying as 'mixed race' altered the material I gathered from interviews. For example, peppered through many interviews was the phrase "you know what I mean, Minelle" accompanied by a knowing glance or smile. Also participants may well have though I was expecting specific sorts of answers to my questions to coincide with my own hypothesis, carved from my own experience of multiracialism.

More specifically my positionality in relation to my participants was complicated as for some I embodied a Muslim woman as well as being part of an ethnic minority and speaking two languages, this identified me as an insider for some of the participants:

Arslan: You know about being home on time and doing my work all that stuff that parents get on your back about. And 'cause I'm going to uni in September I had to work proper hard this year. And he .... [pause] expects us to speak Bengali at home.

Akile: Is that a problem?

Arslan: Well erm, it's not a problem but sometimes you know you drift into English you must do it as well?

Akile: Yeah I do. But you don't like it when he tells you not?

Arslan: Yeah 'cause speaking English that is part of me. I can speak the language don't understand why he has a problem with it.

(Second interview)

The above extract is from the second interview which I conducted with Arslan in which he makes specific references to my positionality and identity. When discussing language, he considered me to be an insider and as having a similar home life to himself in terms of being Muslim and also speaking a second language at home. Hence, his reference to 'you must do it as well'. This was similar to Mahtani's participants who identified her as an insider, and would make similar comments. However, unlike Arslan, Ali questioned my identity, specifically my religious identity:

Ali: What religion are you?

Akile: I'm Muslim.

> *Ali: Do you practice?*

> Akile: No I'm not a practicing Muslim.

> *Ali: That's bad you know, you should.*

> (First interview)

This was a moment in the research process which my identity affected the research in a less positive manner. Ali questioned me throughout both of his interviews about my religious identity. Tariq also asked me about me about my religion, but considered himself to "be more like me":

> *Tariq: How about you what religion are you?*

> Akile: I'm Muslim, but I don't practice.

> *Tariq: I'm a believer, but I understand where you are coming from about not practicing.*

> (First interview)

Tariq felt a degree of familiarity with my own personal history, and referred to this during research process. This was an example how I was questioned in an attempt by the young men to try and 'place me' in terms of issues of religion and culture (Cotterill, 1992). Tariq above is sharing a familiarity with me whereas Ali is questioning my 'authenticity' as a self identified non-practicing Muslim.

Ultimately managing power relations is not through ethnic matching. I argue that in relation to research on mixed descent that ethnic matching is ultimately impossible and it has proved more useful to identify the differences between myself and the young men and how this affected the research process. For

example, Archer (2002) in her research (although not about mixed descent) was around young Muslim men and women, in which she used both a white female researcher (Archer) and also employed an Asian female researcher. Archer found that the issue of race and ethnicity was less 'obvious' when interviewing young Asian men when the interviewer was female. Her participants identified that white women were less racist than white men and therefore felt more 'comfortable' during the interview. The interviews conducted with the young Muslim girls however noted the differences between those conducted with a white female researcher in comparison to those conducted with an Asian researcher (see also Dwyer, 1999 and 2000 and her research on British Muslim girls as a white female and also see Mohammad, 2001 who discusses her postionality as British Muslim female researching people from similar backgrounds as her).

Ultimately, ethnic matching simply assumes Black against White, male against female which reinforces the binary divisions. In her work on ethnicity and race within research methods and methodology, Gunaratnam (2003:81), for example, suggests that:

> There is a need to move beyond the reification of race and ethnicity of freezing and also giving primacy to race and ethnicity within interview dynamics. This point challenges the interpretation and reading of interview dynamics through one category of difference and it engages with postcolonial and multicultural realities of hybridity and hyphenated identities.

Gunaratnam's argument is one that is more plausible rather than attempting to consider ethnic matching. It is particularly difficult to consider ethnic matching in

terms of mixed descent based on the differences within the category of mixed descent. There is also the added dimension of class which will affect mixed descent (as it would any other form of ethnic matching). Song and Parker (1995:243) raise a number of issues which arise from ethnic matching when working with people of mixed descent. As they argue:

> Black juxtaposed to white doesn't accommodate those individuals who are of mixed descent or who are bi cultural and suggests too unitary an experience of ethnic minority status. In addition it is more important to note that the term 'black' has not actually applied to some ethnic minority groups such as the Chinese in Britain. Researchers have tended to reserve the term 'black' for individuals of Afro Caribbean and Asian descent.

I would suggest that it is more important to have empathy with participants. Empathy is referred to by Bondi (2003:72) as 'imaginatively entering into a person's experimental world at the same as relating awareness of the difference between one's own unconscious experience and that of the other means being an observer of the process at the same time as being a participant'. It involves metaphorically entering the world of the participant which is only possible through empathy.

Participatory Action Research

As I was working with young men of mixed descent who are currently under represented I wanted to be able to provide a reflective account of the lives of the young men in my research. I felt that by relying on one method (one to one in-depth interviewing) would not provide rich enough data. Based on the fact that I had recruited fifteen young men I wanted to explore their lives beyond the scope

of a one to one interview. It seemed an obvious choice for my research to be informed by what has been termed Participatory Action Research (PAR) and consider ways in which the young men could be considered 'active researchers' in their own lives and to also further manage power relations of research. Often it is adults that write about and research children and young people and it is important to consider this in relation to the use of PAR. PAR suggests that the researcher relinquishes control and becomes more of a facilitator rather than a director (Kindon *et al*, 2007). Hence why I chose to adopt what I refer to as written electronic diaries and photo-voice.

It was particularly important for me to consider ways in which I could be more reflexive. I was working with young men, some of whom had never explored their identities and how it affects their everyday or their home lives. I therefore considered PAR as one avenue through which to be more reflexive. Kindon, *et al* (2007:17) argue that:

> When facilitated appropriately, methods within PAR embody the process of transformative reflexivity in which both researcher and participants reflect on their (mis)understandings and negotiate the meanings of the information.

PAR is a process in which participants become active researchers in their own lives. For example, Higgins *et al* (2007) discuss their use of peer research with young people in New Zealand. They argue that 'peer research addresses some of the key concerns of PAR in that it recognises that individuals within any community being researched are themselves competent agents, capable of

participating in research on a variety of levels, including as researchers' (Higgins, et al, 2007:105).

It is important to note here that my research is informed by PAR and I am by no means claim that my research is PAR. Rather I attempted to adopt the ideas of PAR which as Pain and Francis (2003) demonstrate has multiple meanings in relation to current interest and use of PAR within critical geography. I wanted the participants to be the researchers (to an extent) within the research, and acknowledge the young men as authors of their own narratives through which I was able to gain a further insight into the identities of the young men. Like Bagnoli's (2004) participants, the young men were able to express (to an extent) what they considered important in relation to their identities and experiences of home. They were given the opportunity to write their diaries in the privacy of their own homes. Although the structure of the diaries was directed by me, the content was by the participants and meant that the young men had a greater level of autonomy and took a more autobiographical approach. I sought to encourage my participants to develop their own language, meanings and vocabulary and their 'opinions and conceptual worlds' (Wilkinson, 1999: 233).

Thus PAR makes room to adopt the tools of research in relation to the participants (Pain and Francis, 2003). Hence the use of written electronic diaries and photo voice alongside one to one interviewing were tools which acknowledged the importance of working with young men of mixed descent as well as considering the increased use of autobiography and life stories within research on mixed

descent (for example, Ifekwuingwe, 1999 and Blunt, 2005). Although I will be discussing this further in Chapter four and six it is important to note here how the use of autobiography has informed how people of mixed descent are defined. As Gorman-Murray (2006:58) suggests in his recent work:

> The idea that an autobiography is a life in process unfixes its narrative; instead, an autobiography presents as a contemplation of becoming. The autobiographer ruminates on the formation of his/her identity, in the process of describing and interrogating the encounters with particular places which have been influential for his/her becoming.

Andrew Gorman-Murray (2006:58) adopted an autobiographical approach in his research on gay men and the home in which he argues 'through narratives and narrativity that we constitute our social identities....all of us come to be who we are (however ephemeral, multiple and changing) by being located or locating ourselves (usually unconsciously) in social narratives rarely by our own making'. The fact that I was working with a small sample group meant that it was important to understand the homes and identities of each of the young men at that particular time and this was achievable through a multi-method feminist methodological approach to the research.

Each method I adopted had advantages and disadvantages. There were also variations in the detail provided by each of the young men. I chose to adopt a multi-method approach as in my previous research I noted how young men during interviews can lose concentration in the interview situation (see Punch, 2002). With the use of written electronic diaries based on the current climate of internet use I chose to use this to my advantage.

Table 2.1: Methods employed by each participant

Participant	Interview completed	Written-electronic diary completed	Photo-voice
Ali	Both interviews completed. First interview lasted 45 minutes and second interview was 20 minutes	Completed two entries into his diary	Did not take part in photo-voice
Arslan	Both interviews completed. First interview lasted was 62 minutes and second interview was 30 minutes	Completed three entries for his diary	Did not take part in photo-voice
Blake	Both interviews completed. First interview lasted 30 minutes and second interview was also 30 minutes.	Completed short extracts in his diary on two occasions over a month	Did not take part in photo-voice
Brian	Both interviews completed. First interview lasted 102 minutes and second interview 90 minutes.	Completed his diary for six months within which he would write one for each month	Did take photographs which he emailed to me however the attachment failed and the photographs were then lost
Carl	Both interviews completed. First interview was 45 minutes and second interview was 30 minutes.	One diary entry emailed	Did not take part in photo-voice
Craig (David's brother)	Both interviews completed. First interview lasted 62 minutes and second interview 45.	Completed his diary entries for a period of three months which he emailed me every week	

Participant	Interview completed	Written-electronic diary completed	Photo-voice
Damien	Both interviews completed. First interview lasted 30 minutes and second interview also was also 30 minutes.	Completed his diary for two weeks which comprised of two entries.	Did not take part in photo-voice
Daniel	Both interviews completed his first interview lasted one hour and his second interview was also one hour.	He completed three diary entries over a period of two months but would email be regularly.	Did not take part in photo-voice
David (Craig's brother)	Both interviews completed. First interview lasted 90 minutes and second interview 120 minutes.	Completed his diary for twelve months with an entry for each month.	Took over sixty photographs
Jason	Both interviews conducted as well as a meeting with his mother. First interview lasted 60 minutes and second interview was 68 minutes	Completed regular entries in his diary for four weeks writing one for each week.	Took five different photographs of his home
John (twin brother of Simon)	Both interviews conducted. First interview lasted 25 minutes and second interview was 30 minutes.	Did not complete diary entries	Did not take part in photo-voice
Marlon	Only one interview conducted which lasted 20 minutes.	Did not complete his diary (although an email conversation occurred).	Did not take part in photo-voice

Participant	Interview completed	Written-electronic diary completed	Photo-voice
Ray	Only one interview conducted lasted 23 minutes.	Did not complete his diary.	Did not take part in photo-voice
Simon	Both interviews completed. First interview lasted 30 minutes and second interview was 23 minutes long.	Diary entries completed for three weeks with one entry for each week.	Did not take part in photo-voice
Tariq	Conducted both interviews. First interview lasted 98 minutes and second interview 120 minutes.	Diary entries completed for six weeks writing an entry each week.	Completed a series of photographs which were annotated.

Interviewing

Interviewing is one of the most commonly used qualitative research methods. I interviewed the young men and also the leaders of the youth groups that I recruited from. The youth group leaders were interviewed at the youth groups and these interviews lasted for up to hour. They focused upon details of the youth groups in terms of their age range, gender, and activities offered.

I conducted two sets of interviews with the young men. The first sets of interviews were conducted at the start of the research process and the second interview was conducted at the end of the research after the young men had

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completed their diaries. My rationale for conducting two interviews was because I wanted to examine how their identities evolved over a period of between three to nine months and to examine how current events were affecting their identities, while I also using the second interviews to discuss the written electronic diaries and photographs with the young men. As such, while the first interviews focused on identifying how young men defined their experience of identity and definitions and experience of home, the follow up interviews were based around the written electronic diaries that the young men completed. Both interviews were in-depth. As Johnston (2002:109) explains 'in-depth interviewing differs from other forms because it involves a greater involvement of the interviewer's self. To progressively and incrementally build a mutual sense of co-operative of self-disclosure and trust, the interviewer must offer some form of strict or complementary reciprocity'. I wanted both sets of interviews to engage with the lives of the young men rather than seek one word answers as in a structured interview survey. In-depth interviews allows for a degree of relationship building between the respondent and the interviewer. As Valentine (1997:111) suggests:

> Interviews, in contrast to questionnaires, are generally unstructured or semi-structured. In other words, they take a conversational, fluid form, each interview varying according to the interests, experiences and views of the interviewees. They are dialogue rather than an interrogation.

I used two different styles of interviewing. For the first set of interviews I adopted a more structured to semi-structured approach while for the repeat interviews I chose a more semi-structured to conversational non-structured approach. The first and second interviews were conducted at different time due to the use of different youth groups. The timing of the research was as follows:

Table 2.2: Timing of the research

Month	Actions
June 2005-August 2005	First interviews with Youth Group Tower Hamlets
September 2005-February 2006	Follow up interviews with Youth Group Tower Hamlets participants
April-June 2006	First interviews with Signs and Bethnal Green Youth Club
July -August2006	First interviews with Boys Club Tower Hamlets and follow up interviews with Signs and Bethnal Green Youth Club
August 2006 -January 2007	Follow up interviews with Boys Club Tower Hamlets

Evidently the first interviews and the follow up interview were staggered which was primarily due to the recruitment of participants but also due to the level of commitment of the research. As Table 2.1 identified, the young men participated in various parts of the research based on their level of commitment to the research. Brian for example, completed both of his interviews, written electronic diaries and his photo-voice as did Craig and David. Ray however had a limited level of commitment to the research. Ray only took part in one interview after which I was unable to get in touch with him.

The timing of the research was varied due to the fact that I recruited from four different youth groups. I was accessing each youth group at various times based on the fact that I initially thought that I would only be recruiting from only Youth

Group Tower Hamlets however there were only a limited number of young men who fitted my sample. Hence I then had to contact other youth groups.

The majority of the interviews were located within the youth groups so I had to organise the timing of the interviews according to the availability of rooms at the youth groups. The location of the interviews was an important part of the research, particularly as I was interviewing young men. Research on the home has tended to interview participants within their own homes (see for example Blunt, 1999, 2005, Tolia-Kelly, 2001 and Walsh, 2006). I chose not to interview the young men in their homes and sought to find a more neutral ground or as Edler and Fingerson (2001) refer to in a 'natural context'. This meant finding a location that would be neutral to both for myself and the young men and the home did not provide such a location. Interviewing young men within home I argue would have posed a number of ethical problems.

I myself am a young woman which as I discussed earlier in the chapter poses issues associated with interviewing young men in a private space like the home. Also the young men whom I interviewed were not living alone but with their parents and family which would require finding a private space within the parental home, which I assumed to be the bedroom. The conducting of research in such a private space would have raised two main ethical issues. Firstly, the young men were aged sixteen to nineteen and interviewing adolescent young men in their bedroom could potentially place both the participant and myself at risk. Secondly, using the parental home as the location for interviews could have resulted in the

young men feeling uneasy about the possibility of their parents listening to the interviews, or for some of the older participants knowing about their involvement. For example, Arslan's mother and father had no knowledge of his involvement in the research. His main concern was that his parents should never see his transcript or his diary entries and his participation in the research: *"Please, Akile promise me that my parents don't see this. Especially my Dad"* (Arslan first interview). Hence it was more appropriate for me to conduct the interviews away from the home and to access the home via the method of photo-voice.

As a result the interviews were conducted in two locations which were most convenient for the participants. This varied depending on where the participants were recruited from. Participants from Tower Hamlets Youth Group were all interviewed on both occasions at Queen Mary, University of London campus. Those recruited from the other youth group were interviewed at the youth groups.

Table 2.3: Location of the interviews

Youth group recruited from	Location of first interview	Location of second interview
Youth Group Tower Hamlets	Queen Mary, University of London Student Union	Queen Mary, University of London Student Union
Signs	Signs youth group office	Signs youth group office
Boys Club Tower Hamlets	Boys Club Tower Hamlets youth group office	Boys Club Tower Hamlets youth group office
Bethnal Green Youth Group	Bethnal Green Youth Group office	Queen Mary, University of London Student Union and Bethnal Green Youth group office

I chose to use my university campus as a location for the interviews based on the geographical location of some of the youth groups adjacent to Queen Mary. Youth Group Tower Hamlets had no available spaces in which to conduct the interview, I therefore decided that the best option would be Queen Mary, University of London based on its location and the fact that Youth Group Tower Hamlets uses Queen Mary as a site for some of its courses.

The student union was a public, and highly visible location, and I perceived it to be the least threatening environment like the youth group. Edler and Fingerson (2001:184) suggest that it is particularly important to consider the location of interviews when interviewing young people. As they write:

> In attempting to create a natural context for the interview, the researcher must also take care to avoid creating situations that remind youth of classroom lessons based on "known-answer" questions. Because many students are asked for the purpose of getting correct answers, respondents in a research setting who are asked similar types of questions may seek to provide the answers they feel are expected rather than stating what they actually think or feel.

I considered the students union and the youth groups to be the ideal location for interviewing young men as it could be considered more of a social setting rather than a formal one. If I had opted to interview the young men in an office or a pre-booked room at Queen Mary it may have made them feel uncomfortable. Although the students union at Queen Mary may not be considered as being neutral based on the fact that I was a student at Queen Mary, it was neutral in the

context that it was a geographically ideal location and was a familiar territory for both myself and the young men because of where they lived.

Interviewing participants: first interviews

The first set of interviews I conducted was skewed towards a structured approach and were recorded using a tape recorder (apart from those interviews conducted with five participants -Arslan, Ray, Marlon, Simon, and John who did not want their interviews tape recorded, where I then made detailed notes). I then transcribed the interviews myself, I asked the participants if they wanted to see the transcripts and they all said no. I prepared the following themes for the first set of interviews: Introductions/characteristics of participants; Home and home life; Definitions of identity and home (see Appendix). I divided the interview into three key areas based on my research questions and for the purpose of analysis. The first theme of introductions and characteristics of participants was what I would consider as the introductory questions which enabled me to find out about the backgrounds of the young men and how they defined themselves, who they lived with and so forth. I also explored in the first part the issue of terminology and my use of the term mixed descent. The second part of the interview explored the parental home and their experiences of home with their parent(s). The third part of the interview was focused around how they defined home and what home meant to the young men.

All of my first interviews followed the same format in order for each participant to be asked the same series of questions. This allowed me to find out about all of their backgrounds, home lives, families and lives outside of the home. It also enabled me to develop a relationship between the young men and myself in terms of introductions to each other. I wanted participants to form a relationship with the research as well as myself through an introduction to the aims of the research and why I had chosen to conduct the research. Due to the intensive nature of the research it was important that the young men understood their involvement alongside what the research was about and also to gauge an insight into my identity as the research involved personal information about the young men and their lives.

Repeat interviews

The follow up interviews, which I conducted, could be considered as in-depth life story interview, because it was a process of 'unfolding' the young men's lives. As Atkinson (2002:122) argues:

> Life story interviews foster an unfolding of the self and help us to centre and integrate ourselves by gaining a clearer understanding of ourselves by gaining a clearer understanding of our experiences, our feelings about them, and their meaning for us. The stories we tell of our lives bring order to our experiences and help us to view our lives both subjectively and objectively at the same time while assisting us in forming our identities.

The process of 'unfolding' is of particular importance to the research as it was an engagement with on-going events and processes in the lives of the young men, rather than reducing the interview to a 'snap-shot' of their lives. I refer to the term 'snap-shot' to identify how interviews can reflect a moment in the participant's

life and I wanted this research to extend beyond the moment of the interview. The format of the second interview followed from what the participants had written and discussed in their diary entries.

I engaged with on-going experiences within the lives of the young men and to understand their lives. As Atkinson (2002:124) suggests:

> I have felt that it is important, in trying to understand other persons' experiences in life or their relations to others, to let their voices be heard, to let them speak for and about themselves first. If we want to know the unique perspective of an individual, there is no better way to get this than in that person's voice.

The use of life narratives in my research was a way of 'listening' to the lives of the fifteen young men. I used the term 'listening to' to refer to the fact that the participants in the second interviews in particular spoke of their lives and led the interviews based on what they had written in their diaries.

Written electronic diaries was one such way that the interviews were informed by the young men themselves, as they were a way of formulating questions for the follow up interviews.

> Akile: Shall we just raise some issues that you raised in your diaries. You spoke a lot about being an English man.

Brian: Erm these cultural identities erm, ...I find it annoying because you are part of an ethnic minority you got to be something. At the time of writing the diary I was writing something about cultural identities in English. I don't really think about my cultural identities I am not that bothered really erm and so that yeah I was doing my work as I do I started writing your diary entries. And erm they have the opinions as a group that I will become more African as I got older.

(Brian, second interview)

This is the first part of the follow up interview which I conducted with Brian. Much of this interview was what could be referred to as conversational in which both the interviewer and interviewee are actively engaging in dialogue. By adopting a more 'informal' approach to the follow-up interview, Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001) argue that 'informal moments' occur which can often be the foundations of an interview. When interviewing young people they argue that it is important to gauge the involvement of the young men, and maintain their concentration. They identify informal moments as follows: 'Things sure have changed around here' this therefore 'invites' the respondent into a conversation. Secondly they refer to a 'preface question with a statement that yields status to the informant. For example, "You seem to know what's going on here" cedes authority to the informant and invites help rather than competition' (Schwalbe and Wolkomir, 2001:100) and therefore invites conversation. A third approach is through a link question, for example Schwalbe and Wolkomir (2001:100) write: 'in a field setting where a researcher is in a participant-observer role, it is often possible, during a break in the action, to ask, "I heard you say/saw you do....and I wasn't sure I understood what that was about. Could you fill it for me?" Once

again this invites the participants into conversation. Throughout my interviews I adopted this approach as illustrated below in an extract from an interview with Damien:

Akile: Do you remember what you said about your mum's family in your diary entries?

Damien: What was it again?

Akile: The reunion story?

Damien: Yeah, I had to write that for you because it was so funny that it happened after me and my mum had spoken to you.

(Second interview)

The use of the diaries as the foundations of the structure of the follow up interviews allowed these informal moments to take place. I was able to draw upon participants narratives from their diary entries and ask them to expand upon their experiences and feelings at the time. This approach was in stark contrast to the format of the first interviews. As I have shown in the above example, by making reference to Damien's entry regarding a reunion, I was able to go beyond the question/answer nature of the interview and the interview became more than a research encounter and was more of a social encounter and a process of exchange of information.

As Holstein and Gubrium (2004:140) argue, 'typically we approach the interview as a neutral means of extracting information. Interviewers ask questions. Respondents provide answers. The interview process is merely the conduit between the two participants. The standard vision of the interview process keeps the interviewer's involvement to a minimum. The interviewer is supposed to be neutral, inconspicuous, little more than a "fly on the wall," so to speak'. More specifically it would be useful to consider 'active conversation' and I actively engaged with my participants and attempted to create a sense of exchange of information which could be referred to as 'creative interviewing'. As Holstein and Gubrium (2004:147) argue:

> Creative interviewing is a set of techniques for moving beyond the mere words and sentences exchanged in the interview process. To achieve this, the interviewer must establish a climate for mutual disclosure. The interview should be an occasion that displays the interviewer's willingness to share his or her own feelings and deepest thoughts. This is done to assure respondents that they can, in turn, share their own intimate thoughts and feelings. The interviewer's deep disclosure both occasions and legitimatise the respondent's reciprocal revelations.

The second interviews I conducted were creative interviews which involved an on-going process of conversation between me and the young men. This was made possible due to the use of the diary research method, for example, the following is an extract from David's diaries:

> *"Akile, I really wanted to ask Anna out, how do I go about? What shall I do? We will need to talk about this when I see you next".*

David was in fact "talking" in his diaries which invited a further discussion in his second interview and allowed for a more creative interview:

Akile: It's so good to see you again David. You have got so tall.

David: Yeah everyone keeps saying that! Hope you don't mind I brought Jayne along as well for you to meet?

Akile: That's ok if you don't mind her being present?

David: No that's cool I told her all about you and what you are doing and your research.

Akile: Is this who you were talking about in your diaries?

David: Yeah.

Akile: Oh is it ok to talk about?

David: Yeah that's why I wrote it so we could talk about it.

During his second interview David asked for his girlfriend to be present which I agreed to. The implications of this on the interview process were that firstly it was preferred that the interview not be recorded which meant that I was making notes throughout the interview. It also resulted in David's girlfriend answering questions which were directed at him. This raised an important ethical question in relation to confidentiality. The presence of David's girlfriend meant that the information was being heard by a third party so I therefore had ask her to confirm

on tape that she would not discuss anything that was said beyond the interview and she agreed. The presence of David's girlfriend during the interview was an interesting part of the research as he had written about a number of young girls in his diary entries. Through his diary, David discussed all aspects of his life which allowed me as the researcher into his life. Hence the adoption of such an interactive approach to research methods.

Diary research method

The use of autobiography has tended to be dominated by women (see for example Blunt, 2005 and 2006). I therefore not only sought to have a more participatory approach to the research but I also wanted to begin to increase the role of young men in autobiography and narrative. The use of diaries as a research method is growing in use, for example Latham (2003:2005) uses both interviews and diaries as research methods in his research and argues that they provide the researcher 'with an inter-related mosaic of interpretative snapshots and vignettes of a particular social space and set of social practices in the making'. Through personal writings a richer source of information is obtained. In Blunt's (2003) research on British women in India she found that the most information rich sources were the letters and diaries written by British women as they described everyday life at the time and in the place in which it occurred and was lived. The prime purpose was to represent young men and to make conscious efforts to include participants' voices in their research process. As Eder and Finegrson (2001:197) argue:

> In general, researchers can use participants' own voices, which accurately express their views, and give them some power over the presentation of

their voices as yet another way to combat the power differential inherent in the researcher-researched relationship.

The idea of placing participants into the research is an innovative way particularly in geography. I wanted to be able to fully understand my participants, particularly with reference to their on-going experiences at the time of the research. Latham (2003:1995) makes an important statement in his research, as he writes: 'The question confronting me when I began to study Ponsonby Road (and two other similar places) was how to interpret and understand this new urban culture. How to make sense of Joseph?' I wanted to understand my participants as Latham did, and to be able to do this it would require the use of methods beyond interviewing as interviewing is a brief 'snapshot' into the life of a participant. I wanted to engage with the everyday lives of the young men and their everyday life spatially focusing specifically on the home.

I asked my participants during the first interview to keep a written electronic diary for a period of one month and, if possible for them to complete an entry once a week and email it to me. I opted for the use of email because young people are spending more and more time on the internet (particularly with growth of social sites such as My Space and Facebook) and have access to the internet at home and/or at college/university (see Valentine's work on IT in the home, 2001 and Chapter six). Hence I decided to ask my participants to complete a series of diary entries which they would email to me, similarly to the idea of blogs. I divided the diaries into four parts to provide a clear focus: identity and home life, friends; events; school/college/youth group events and feelings.

In each of the themes I made it explicit to the participants to consider identity in terms of religion, race, ethnicity and gender. I identified the five themes in relation to my research questions and also the first interviews which I conducted. In the first section on identity and home I asked the participants to write about their identity at home. The second part of the diary focused on their everyday experiences of home reflecting on the materiality of their homes and the emotional experiences of their homes. In the final section of their diaries they were asked to write about their families and how family has shaped their identities as well as their material possessions and what makes home for them. Even though I had asked participants to only keep the diaries for one month, three of them continued writing them for five months, thus I was able to keep track of their lives through these diaries over a longer period than I had anticipated.

I did not ask participants to write specific lengths or the form they should adopt. I left this up to them. The decision to provide participants with particular themes to address was made so that there was a clear focus for them whilst writing. The aim of this method was to firstly allow participants to 'guide' the research to an extent. As Bagnoli (2004:12) writes:

> In a number of ways this research made it possible for participants to be fully involved as authors for their own autobiographies. At the level of data collection the open and participatory nature of research did allow young people to contribute as much or as little as they wanted in ways that they found most convenient. They could effectively express their own insights over what they considered important in the process of defining identity.

The diary research method was part of the growing work in geography on PAR and also increased use of narrative research. Written electronic diaries included events throughout the young men's lives and defined the purpose and use of narratives within geographical research. It was an attempt at connecting a succession of events within their lives and allowed the participants to have a longer period of time to connect their thoughts. Brian's diary entries were unique as he was one the most articulate participants, and discussed various on-going events during the summer which was when he was writing his diary. For example, one of Brian's diary entries was based on a conversation between Brian and his aunt through which the moment of the conversation and the memory is 'frozen' (Lieblich et al, 1998) and turned into text. For example, the following is an extract from one of Brian's diary entries:

> *Sorry about that digression. You'll find that these diary entries will be riddled with them. My aunt was convinced that it was partly because I had only been exposed to Zambia, not Zimbabwe and South Africa, which is where my tribe, the Shona people, come from. The name "Shona" is familiar, by the way, because that is Mugabe's tribe. I loathe the way (Loathe. Excellent word) that people act like the most appalling crimes are acceptable because they're tribal. Genocide is genocide regardless of the circumstances. This isn't a digression, by the way, it ties in excellently to what my aunt said next:*

> *"You're part of the Shona, a tribe of thinkers, kings, politicians, wisemen (murderers.)."*

> *This is just silly. Can you imagine anyone saying the same thing to an Irishman ("You are part of a line of drinkers, bombers and Catholics.") or a Frenchman ("You are part of a tribe of lovers, drinkers, chefs, cowards*

and cheese-eaters.")? No. Because it would be seen as being what it is unbelievably racist. To act like my interest in politics comes about because I'm partly Shona is ridiculous. It propagates a myth of the noble savage I have no time for. I am Brian, not because of who my ancestors were, but because of what I am now.

The young men were able to write freely in the private space of their bedrooms (those who had access to computer at home) in which they were able to write as much or as little as they wanted to. For example, Ali, Marlon, and Ray did not have computers within their homes and this effected how often they were able to write in their diaries and also for how long they were able to write their diaries (Marlon and Ray did not complete their diaries). As I identified in table 2.1 and 2.2 this meant that the research was staggered depending on the situation of each participant. For example, Craig unlike Brian's diary entries opted to use a more day to day account within his dairy rather than writing in long prose, for example:

On Sunday, I woke up at 6.30 in order to prepare for the trip to Glastonbury my parents had planned for the day. We left the house at 7:45 in order to catch a 9:00am train to Glastonbury. The train took 1 and ½ hours to arrive there. When we got there we climbed all the way around the big hill there and walked around the village. I found the trip boring. We got home at 10:00. We all went to bed straight away as we   were very tired. Yesterday, I woke up at 8:00. I followed the same coursework schedule as normal. After finishing my work I watched TV until lunch, then went to the local market with my mum. After coming back from the market I went to hang out with my mates. We did not do much outside other than talking to each other. I came inside about 8pm.

Today I followed the same morning schedule as normal. I had lunch at about 2:00. After lunch I watched a little TV. I then went outside to hang out, again nothing eventful happened. I came inside around 6:00. Watched TV for an hour, read a book for an hour then went online and started to type out this email. I will try and email you daily now in order to add more detail.

PS. Can I mention the first names of my mates?

Craig's diary entries although they were not as detailed as Brian's allowed to me to read accounts of his day-to-day, the spaces that he occupied and his relationship with those spaces. This would have been impossible to observe solely through one to one interviewing.

It is important to note here the problematic nature of the variation between the lengths of the diaries of each participant and the fact that not all of my participants completed their diaries, and that three of them continued to keep writing their diaries beyond the research. It changes the relationship between the researcher and the participant and suggests that research can become a personal process for participants and this is important to methodological and epistemological concerns.

Each of the methods which I adopted varied in the detail. The use of photo-voice was one such method that varied in particular as only four participants took part in photo-voice.

Photo-Voice

I adopted the method of photo-voice initially as a way to have access to the homes of the young men. What I originally referred to as a photo-diary is now referred to as photo-voice as it was less of a diary that the young men were asked to compose but more of an insight into their lives and identities. 'Photo-voice is a grassroots community assessment tool that enables local people to identify, represent and enhance their community using photography as the medium for communication' (Krieg and Roberts, 2007:152).

I wanted the young men to take photographs of their homes and home life as well as people and places that affected their identities. Photo-voice allows participants to document their own worlds and this was a way into the home as I myself did not enter their homes. Unlike the use of visual methods in geography such as Rose (2001and 2003) who uses photographs that are pre-taken as part of her research on families and also Chambers (2003) who like Rose examined photographs of family selected by participants I asked participants to take photographs.

More specifically Twine (2006) in her research adopted photo-interviews in which she examined 'family snap shots and professional photographs from weddings' (491). During her research Twine also took photographs of the interview process which also formed part of methods. Twine demonstrated the importance of how her participants narrated their lives and their identities. It also introduced 'reflexivity' into her research process. I wanted, like Twine, to provide a method in which they were able to visually narrate their home lives and identities.

The rise of the digital camera has increased the use of photography generally. When I provided the young men with disposable cameras they all replied that they had digital cameras which they would prefer to use. Through the use of photo-voice the young men expanded the research into their social world beyond the moment of an interview and beyond the text of a written electronic diary. As Strack et al (2004:51) writes:

> A process such as photo-voice provides youth the opportunity to develop their personal and social identities and can be instrumental in building social competency. Youth should and need to be given the opportunity to build and confirm their abilities, to comment on their experiences and insights, and to develop a social morality for becoming a positive agent within their community and society.

The young men were able to take photos within their homes and allow me access into particular sites of their choice. For example, with the use of photo-voice the young men were able to 'recreate' their home lives alongside other aspects of their lives visually. Young and Barrett's (2001) work on street children in Kampala which used visual methods similarly to how I did and identified that the advantage of using this method was that the cameras were able to enter places that otherwise they would be unable to do so. The participants who did take part in photo-voice took photos of a number of locations and people. In particular it provided a visualisation of their home spaces which for two of them were beyond the domestic scale of the home.

I used photo-voice in combination with interviewing and written electronic diaries as a way of entering the home lives which I would have been unable to do. It was

used in relation to the written electronic diaries and one to one interviews. My rationale for doing this was based on the fact that I assumed at the start of the research that the majority of the young men would not complete detailed enough diary entries due the demanding nature of writing diaries. I therefore provided all of the participants with a twenty four film disposable camera. However none of my participants used the cameras that I provided them with and only four of my participants: Craig, David, Tariq and Jason took photographs all of whom used digital cameras [to take pictures with].

I asked each of my participants to take photographs within the same themes as their diaries. I encouraged the young men to be flexible with what they wanted to take photographs of, in order for them to feel less like that they were completing a 'task' as the diaries could have been perceived to be. However the fact that only four of my participants chose to take photographs indicated that photo-voice is a personal research method which will ultimately reveal the private homes of the young men. When I asked the participants in their second follow up interviews why they had not completed their photo-voice all of them said that they had either lost their cameras or they forgot.

However, although this was an advantage it could also be considered as a disadvantage to the research as the young men took photos of what they wanted to and Prosser (2004) suggests that this raises questions of validity. The act of taking a photograph as well as interpreting the photograph is problematic because of subjectivity, and he suggests that those who adopt visual methods 'need to take a

more pragmatic stance' (Prosser, 2001:104). For example, David ended up take a series of random photographs particularly towards the end and this could be considered as non-productive, but the photographs taken in this manner were also some of the more valuable photographs. What I mean by this is that if as a researcher you 'direct' the photographs there is a risk of the data becoming scripted.

Analysis of Research

Analysis of data is what I would consider as an 'ethical dilemma'. During the process of analysis I had to assess what information was useful and what was not. Thus the analysis of the research was a process that required an inevitable amount of rigour. This is particularly important in relation to working with young people and children as the choice of which data is included is based on the decisions of the adult and how the research is interpreted (Punch, 2008). I was the one who would process the information provided by the young men. Archer (2002:112) makes an important point when she argues that:

> Analysis pays attention to how talk does not occur in a vacuum but is contextually produced and negotiated in relation to different audiences, through gendered, racialised relationships between researchers and participants......Analysis thus attempts to expose the relativity of 'race' (and gender).

Thus it was important to be as rigorous as possible when analysing the data which I had gathered. It proved a difficult task though as the information that I had gathered was varied and each young man had provided differing 'amounts of detail to be used as data. Brian for example was one of the most articulate

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participants and he produced extremely detailed accounts both within his diary entries and also during the interviews. Ray and Marlon however were less vocal during the interview (as Table 2.1 illustrates that they only took part in the one to one interviews once and did not complete their written electronic diaries). Hence this raised the dilemma of how to analyse the data and I had to consider this variation whilst analysing.

The first set of interviews which were recorded I transcribed upon completing the interview and those interviews which were not recorded I transferred the notes into a transcript. I analysed the first set of interviews alongside the written electronic diaries.

I manually coded the transcripts myself with the first process of coding being focused around my research questions. I firstly went through each of the interview transcripts examining any data associated with mixed descent, age and gender. I did the same with the written electronic diaries. I then completed another set of codes around the parental home and issues associated with the parental home and identity and then I completed a third series of codes associated with home and gender. I then went through another process of coding through which I was able to consider the next series of questions to be asked in the follow up interviews. It was important to code the interviews and the diaries twice because firstly I would be using this analysis as the basis of the second interview. I therefore had to raise questions throughout the process of coding. Secondly, because of the variation in

data gathered as I stated earlier rigour was important when analysing (see Baxter and Eyles, 1997).

Similarly to Cahill (2007:185) in her research who argued that 'our analysis process became a matter of 'checking back' – do these questions 'sit' together? And, then, taking a long perspective, we considered the big picture that emerged as we sliced together our questions. It was messy, involved practice that engaged us in debates over the political and theoretical implications of our questions'. The use of a multi method approach meant that both the process of data gathering and analysis were staggered.

Once I had analysed the first interviews and diaries I put together the interview agenda for each participant for the second follow up interviews. The follow up interviews were analysed in the same way as the first set of interviews.

The photographs were analysed with participants that managed to complete their photo-voice. During the follow up interviews I decided to analyse the photographs with the young men as I felt that due to the fact that only a limited number of the young men had taken part in photo-voice I wanted the young men themselves to talk through their photographs. Even though they had written comments around their photographs when they had emailed them to me I wanted to explore further the meanings behind the photographs. as well as identify why the young men took photographs of what they did. The photographs were then used to complement the

text in the diaries. I then used the photographs in the empirical chapters to complement the interview and diary material.

I chose to do analyse the photographs in this manner as both Craig and David had taken one hundred and twenty photographs so it would have been impossible to analyse these photographs without their help. During the follow up interviews and through email conversations prior to the follow up interview I asked the meaning behind each photograph and the importance of each photo. Thus the photographs were used as part of the research rather than as data per say. The photographs were used to reinforce what was discussed in both interviews and diaries. I now turn to how I recruited my participants and expand on what I introduced in Chapter one.

Participant recruitment and context of research

Table 2.4: Breakdown of the participants' backgrounds and living arrangements

Participant	Age	Father's heritage	Mother's heritage	Whom the participant lived with
Ali	17	Bengali	Pakistani	Mother, father and three sisters
Arslan	17	Bengali	Scottish	Mother and father
Blake	16	Nigerian	Indian-French	Mother and father
Brian	16	Zambian	South African Jewish	Mother
Carl	18	Ghanaian	Irish	Mother
Craig (David's brother)	16	St. Lucian	English	Mother, Father, brother and 5 sisters
Damien	16	Nigerian/Jamaican	Italian/Spanish	Mother and younger brother
Daniel	18	English	Portuguese/White English	Mother
David (Craig's brother)	17	St. Lucian	English	Mother, father, brother and five sisters
Jason	17	Jamaican	English	Mother and brother
John (twin brother of Simon)	16	Jamaican	Nigerian	Mother, Step-father and brother
Marlon	16	Jamaican	English	Mother
Ray	16	Jamaican	English	Mother
Simon	16	Jamaican	Nigerian	Mother, Step-father and brother
Tariq	19	Pakistani	Malaysian	Mother, father and older brother

I chose to focus on young men between the ages of sixteen to nineteen for two main reasons. Firstly, children have been examined within the context of the family as well as being considered alongside different spaces that they occupy (see Valentine and Skelton, 1998). It is important to consider the social construction of age, just as much as the consideration of gender and race as a social construction. The definition of youth or young people is under constant debate (see Valentine, 2003 for a fuller discussion of childhood transition to adulthood). I considered my respondents to be young men based on the fact that legally they are defined as young adults, in contrast to Alderson and Morrow (2004) who identify anyone under the age of 18 as being in the category of children.

Secondly, my focus on this particular age group is that I seek to explore the geographies of youth. I recruited young men through youth groups rather than through schools. This was based mainly on the timing of the research and that from my previous experience with using school has meant that often schools are reluctant and there is the added issue of schools I had learnt that wanting to be involved within the research process. Also I felt that I wanted to have a more representative sample rather than those who were still in education as this would have only identified those young men who stayed in further and higher education. The youth group represented a space that the young men occupied beyond the school and street and was a space in which they spent time socialising (see also Back, 1996). Rather than view and study young men solely in the public space, I wanted to view adolescence in the space of the home alongside their parents. As Nayak and Kehily, (2007:39) argue: 'Young men are, after all, massively overly

represented in figures for violent crime, poor literacy, domestic abuse, house burglary, racist violence, sexual abuse, car crime'. The over representation of young men in a negative light in research led me to decide to move beyond representations of public images of young men and to study young men at home and in relation to their mixed descent. I define mixed descent as spanning 'racial', ethnic, cultural, national and religious identities. I recruited young men who identified themselves as being of mixed descent, similarly to Mahtani (2002) and Tizard and Phoenix (2002), who recruited participants who identified themselves as 'mixed'. Rather than having a focus on a particular group of mixed descent as Ifekwuingwe (1999) does with her focus on Black/White mixed individuals, I wanted to have a more wide ranging group of participants.

My rationale for working with fifteen participants was informed by a methodological concern to understand the experiences of young men of mixed descent, not to generalise their experiences but rather to observe and engage in the lives of the participants. This allowed for a more intensive approach to research in a geographically concentrated area.

The geographical area where my research was located was Tower Hamlets which I chose primarily due to its racial diversity. All but one of my participants lived in or around the Tower Hamlets area. The 2001 Census identified the ethnic breakdown of the area was as follows: 51.4% White; 33.4% Bangladeshi; 3.4% Black African and 2.7% Black Caribbean. The percentage of residents living in Tower Hamlets who were born in the UK was 65.5%; 3.9% were born somewhere

else outside the UK and 30.3% were born outside of the EU. The religious breakdown of the area is as follows: 38.1% Christian; 1.0% Buddhist; 0.8% Hindu; 0.9% Jewish; 36.4% Muslim; 0.3% Sikh; 0.3% other; 14.2% no religion and 7.4% religion not stated (www.statistics.gov.uk). The diversity of the area identified a large mixture of people as well as a large population of young people. Hence I decided that Tower Hamlets would be the ideal location in relation to ethnicity and religion and also age. Also Tower Hamlets has a large number of youth services and youth groups unlike other boroughs in London. The location of the research in such an ethnically diverse area was important as was the diversity of the sample group in terms of class. I managed to recruit a diverse sample group which affected the narratives of the research in terms of having a sub group of young men who were from mixed Muslim backgrounds which is a shift from the traditional understandings of mixed race as being associated with Black mixing with white (see Chapter 4 and Mahtani and Moreno, 2001).

Tower Hamlets is a unique location in terms of race and immigration (see Kershen, 2005). The history of Tower Hamlets as documented by Georgina Wemyss (2006) suggests that there existed rigidness of racial categories within the area. Racial categories were fixed as 'Asians' 'Cockneys' and 'Islanders'. Hence this very diverse history of race and immigration within the Tower Hamlets area ultimately affected how people of mixed descent were perceived by others but also affected narratives of being mixed descent. Wemyss (2006:43) argues that

'Contrary to the evidence of "mixed race" backgrounds in the population of Tower Hamlets, in all the examples of dominant discourses, the racial constructions of "white" "Black", "Afro Caribbean" "Asian" and "Bangladeshi" were presented as fixed categories. These constructions were consolidated in the news reports that gave the racial breakdown of the borough'.

The long-established and dynamic immigration histories and geographies of Tower Hamlets underpin the rationale for the location of this research. Furthermore, the importance of Islam in Tower Hamlets and its strategic and political links to ethnicity (Glynn, 2008) provides an important context for interviewing young men of mixed descent who identified themselves as Muslim. It is also important to recognise here that although I have stated my rationale for choosing Tower Hamlets, it is also difficult to fully understand the role of location in relation to racial and ethnic identities. It is important to remember that place is multifaceated.

In the recruitment of participants I adopted a network approach. I firstly contacted Youth Action UK which is the main youth service provider and organises the youth groups in the borough of Tower Hamlets. My contact at Youth Action UK then gave me the details of seven youth groups in the area who I then contacted. I compiled an information pack for the youth groups which outlined what the project entailed. I telephoned each youth group and then visited them. In the end I only used four of the youth groups as they were the only youth groups that

identified as having several numbers of mixed descent members. In terms of the recruitment procedure the youth group leaders had a limited role as 'gatekeepers.' I went into the youth groups myself and gave presentations on the research and the young men themselves opted to be involved.

For the purpose of this research I will identify the youth groups under the following pseudo names:

1. Youth group Tower Hamlets

2. Signs

3. Boys Club Tower Hamlets

4. Bethnal Green Youth Club

Youth Group Tower Hamlets

My involvement with Youth Group Tower Hamlets began in summer 2003 where I conducted my Masters research and also worked with the youth group and Tower Hamlets council on a separate research project. This was a youth organisation which was open every summer to young people aged 11-25 where young people could take part in free courses which ranged from dance courses, art, maths, accountancy. 50% of the members of this group were male of whom 47% are Asian, 21% are White, 24% Black, 3% Chinese and 5% from other mixed background.

Signs

Signs is a youth group located near to Youth Group Tower Hamlets. Signs was a single sex youth group for boys of all ages although it had not always been a male-only group. The director spoke at length how young girls chose not to attend and use the facilities offered by this group. He stated that *'On a few occasions a couple of girls have turned up but the boys have just stood there gawping at them so they have left. I think the boys tend to scare the girls and once word gets around here that all the boys go to that youth group they girls don't want to come along really. And I think especially around here boys don't really mix with the girls and their parents' don't really want them mixing either. Particularly as we tend to have a large number of Bengali boys coming here'.* On my first visit to Signs I also observed the number of young Bengali men who attended this group as evidenced by my diary entry: *'The environment of Signs was really intimidating as it was all boys and it was really loud! There were pool tables, table tennis, computers and loud music and there were no girls around.'*

Boys Club Tower Hamlets

Boys Club Tower Hamlets was a youth group specifically for boys aged eleven and older with a number of sports activities available. Boys Club Tower Hamlets along with Youth Group Tower Hamlets was the most diverse in terms of ethnic mix of young men. According to the youth group leader:

It is mega diverse here unlike the other youth facilities in the area. We get boys from lots of varying backgrounds. I think it is because we have a diverse team of youth workers. I know a lot of the mixed boys and a lot of the Black boys come because there are (and I am) Black youth workers.

I asked the youth group if they had any statistics available regarding the racial breakdown of the youth group members but they did not have any actual numbers available for me to view. Boys Club Tower Hamlets had activities everyday of the week: Monday, Wednesday and Thursday for example were football evenings and they all had running sessions.

Bethnal Green Youth Group

Bethnal Green Youth Group was one of the smaller youth groups which I recruited participants from. It was open Wednesday, Thursday and Friday for young people of any age to attend but the vast majority of the young people were under 18. They did not have specific activities in place like the other youth groups but they did organise a number of outings for the members particularly in the summer time. It was located very near to Bethnal Green Park where they used to play football in. The youth workers at Bethnal Green Youth Group were also from the local area.

In total, two participants were recruited from Signs, three from Boys Club Tower Hamlets, five from Youth Group Tower Hamlets, two from Bethnal Green Youth club and three of my participants were recruited via snowballing and were friends

of participants and the youth workers (see Chapter three). Hence, there were some differences between the young men as some of them were from the same family which was not a planned element to the research. It could be argued that working with two brothers is not necessarily engaging with two different sets of experiences of being a mixed descent male and two different homes as they were part of the same family. However, as the research progressed the lives of young men who were brothers proved to be very different, with varied accounts of, and experiences of, being of mixed descent and the home. Evidently there were inconsistencies in the research process especially with the recruitment of participants and the relationships between participants, but as Alexander (1996:20) states: 'Given the personal depth of the study, such inconsistencies were inevitable, but not particularly damaging to my purpose, which never intended to be 'scientific''. These inconsistencies, as well as the personal nature of the research therefore need to be considered in relation to the ethics of my research.

In relation to the construction of my sample I chose to recruit young men from diverse backgrounds rather than limit my sample to a particular community of mixed descent. I chose to recruit young men between the ages of 16-19 based on the 2001 Census data and the fact that children and young people of mixed descent are a fast growing population. Charlie Owen's (2007) examination of the 2001 Census found that the percentage within each age group was as follows: 0-4: 18%; 5-19:17%; 10-14:15%; and 15-19:11%, demonstrating the high and growing proportion of young people of mixed descent. I also considered that education would be important to the research as it would affect the narratives of identity. As

a result, I also wanted to have a sample group that included those who were within both higher and further education and those who had decided to leave education altogether. This was particularly relevant to the location of the research as Tower Hamlets is (as I have mentioned previously) a dynamic research location in terms of class and ethnicity. The class and socio-economic backgrounds of participants affected their narratives of identity, which I will be discussing further in Chapters six, seven and eight.

Research Ethics

I had to consider the ethics of working with children and young people who can be considered as a vulnerable group. The issue of ethics becomes of paramount importance when researching young people as there is a blurred divide between what is defined as 'child' and what is defined as 'young person'. I was working with young men aged 16-19 who legally are defined as adults, however those under 18 within research have been defined as children (see Skelton, 2008). I had to consider this categorisation and whether my participants were able to give their own consent. Skelton (2008) in her research considered the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child 1989 which identifies children as being competent and able to participate in research:

Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of child.

Article 3

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression: this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

(UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1990 quoted in Skelton, 2008:27)

I therefore decided that it was important to consider parental consent for the participants. I decided to ask for parental consent for those participants who were 16 as some of them had just turned 16 and I would consider them to be more vulnerable. As such, participants aged sixteen were provided with consent forms (see Appendix) for their parents and themselves to sign. The form asked their parents whether they agreed for their son to take part in the research and also asked the young men whether they agreed to the research process. For young men over the age of sixteen I designed a separate consent form which asked for their permission only. This decision required careful consideration as I stated previously those under eighteen are still identified as being a child. However my decision to seek parental consent only from those aged sixteen was based on the rationale that I wanted permission from their parents' due to the sensitive nature of the research and the fact that I would be interviewing the young men alone with no third party present. Arslan for example stated that he did not want his parent's to know of his involvement in the project. Alderson and Morrow (2004) state that children over sixteen can legally give consent to numerous other things, as Skelton (2008:28) writes: 'It would appear that there has been recognition of children's rights to make decisions about their own bodies and their health but not

about whether they can participate 'legally' in social research'. Hence I identified that Arslan was able to give his own consent.

There is also the additional issue of involving the parent in research. I would argue that the young men were able to identify whether they wanted to take part in the research without the inclusion of a third party (see Appendix for a sample of the consent form given to participants aged 16 and those over 16). The forms allowed for the young men to give their own consent as well as their parents' being informed about the research and being able to give their consent for those under eighteen. The forms were then stored in a locked filing cabinet and also participants were given pseudonyms selected by myself.

The ethical considerations of the use of written electronic diaries had a separate set of issues associated with the use of the participants' email addresses and it was important that these remained confidential. Diaries were emailed to my work email account and stored in a separate file. For those young men who had email accounts which included their names in the email address I deleted their names and stored the diaries in a locked filing cabinet along with interview transcripts and tapes. It was important to keep the young men anonymous, particularly as the research was based on identity.

Research of this kind means that although names can be changed heritage, age, gender and location cannot be changed. Also the fact that the research was based

on the experiences of fifteen young men and they were recruited from a selected number of youth groups meant that they were more identifiable as opposed to having a larger sample group. I changed the names of the participants and the youth groups however other identifiers could not be changed due to the nature of the research which made me feel slightly uneasy as I had a small sample group and it would be easy to identify the young men based on their ethnicity.

Conclusion

My research seeks to consider the lived realities of young men of mixed descent and their experience of home. My sample group was constructed in terms of my questioning of the term mixed descent rather than 'mixed race' (see Chapter four and six). I wanted a sample that represented mixed descent beyond Black and white. I have outlined in this chapter why I opted to research young men of mixed descent aged 16-19 and why I chose to conduct my research in Tower Hamlets based on its ethnic and racial diversity and also its history.

I sought to examine young men over a period of time in order to be able to answer my research questions. In this chapter I have introduced the differences between methods and methodology and explored my use of feminist methodology to approach my research. In order to gain a full understanding and perspective of the identities of the young men and their experiences and definitions of home I needed to use a feminist methodological approach. Other researchers such as Archer (2003) and Alexander (1996 and 2000) have demonstrated in their research on young men that the use of a feminist methodological approach to their

research and methods allowed for a consideration of gender, class, race, ethnicity and sexuality. I was able through my methodological approach to be subjective and consider my positionality as a researcher through taking into account my ethnicity and gender in relation to my participants and how this impacted on the research process and outcomes.

My rationale for the use of PAR to inform my methodological approach and methods was based on the fact that I didn't just want to talk about difference but rather I wanted the young men to talk about themselves. Narrative enquiry is a way of understanding the processes of identity rather than considering it as something static and fixed.

In the following chapter I outline the autobiographies of each of the young men. Due to the nature of the research chapters six, seven and eight are accounts of the lives of the fifteen young men in which I refer to their experiences rather than general experiences. I therefore felt it important to have a chapter dedicated to outlining who each of my participants were and their lives and how they impacted on the research.

Chapter three

Autobiographies of Participants

Introduction

This chapter aims to provide an introduction to all of my participants. It what follows I discuss the backgrounds, families, homes, home lives of Ali, Arslan, Blake, Brian, Carl, Craig, David, Damien, Daniel, Jason, John, Marlon, Ray, Simon and Tariq.

'Ali'

Ali was seventeen when I first interviewed him and had just finished his first year at college. His mother was British Pakistani and had come to London at a very young age while his father was Bengali and had come to London as an adult to find work. I recruited Ali from Signs youth group. Ali defined himself as simply Asian although he qualified this by saying that he was *'mainly Bengali because my Dad is Bengali not my Mum'*. His mother, British Pakistani, had come to London at a very young age. His father was Bengali who had come to London in the 1980s at a later age to find work. Both his parents had lived in Bethnal Green upon coming to London. Ali spoke very highly about his Bengali heritage and also his identity as a British Asian Muslim. As such, his 'mixed' identity was shaped by the dynamics of being Bengali, Pakistani, Asian, British and Muslim. For Ali it was not about being a mixture of anything but more to do with being Muslim and British and the challenges associated with these dynamics.

Ali lived with his parents, and three sisters in a two bedroom flat in Bethnal Green where both his parents had settled upon arrival in London. He shared his bedroom with his three sisters. This was the only home that he had known at the time of research. He was the youngest in his family and thus had grown up with the living arrangements as they were. He had a designated space in his shared bedroom, in which he 'had his stuff' which marked this space as his own.

'Arslan'

Arslan had just turned seventeen when the research started a very quiet respondent and initially was apprehensive about the research at the start. Arslan identified his mother as being White-Scottish and his father as Bengali. Arslan was one of two of my participants that spoke of having a confused sense of identity. He suggested that this was due to the fact that *"Dad says one thing at home and when I'm at school it's different people are asking you all sorts of questions"*

I recruited Arslan from Signs youth group, which of all the youth groups that I recruited from was made up of predominately Bengali young men. At the time of the research Signs only had two members who defined themselves as being mixed (Ali and Arslan), and there was one Black African young man who attended the youth group. The rest of the members were Bengali. This was a problem for Arslan as he spoke of how the other Bengali young men would question his identity as 'Muslim' because he was *"too white"*.

Arslan lived in a flat with his mum, and dad. He did not see his father very much because, according to Arslan, he worked long hours. He had visited Bangladesh on three occasions with his father, and at times through the research Arslan referred to Bangladesh as *'when I go back to my Dad's home'*. Arslan's mother had converted to Islam and as he put it *'looks more Asian than me'*.

'Blake'

Blake was one of the youngest participants. He had just turned sixteen when I first interviewed him. I recruited Blake from Boys Club Tower Hamlets. Blake lived with his mum and dad and defined himself as being between *"mixed race I guess"* and *"Black really"*. His mother was French Indian and his father was Black African from Nigeria. Blake had no other siblings but spent a lot of time with his cousin (whom I also met) whose father was his maternal uncle. His mother did not work and was at home most of the time. However, while Blake spent a lot of his time at home with his mother, he defined himself as being *'mainly Black'*. He argued that since he *'looked black'*, he was Black. Blake had been called a *'nigger'* on three occasions which led him to iterate: *'I am Black, nothing else, because I look it'*. In turn, both his physical appearance as well as his name marked him out as a Black – a point which he exemplified by stating that his cousin had an Asian surname and was therefore classed as Asian. Blake knew very little about his mother's Asian/French heritage as he did not tend to speak to her about it.

Blake had lived in the same flat his whole life. However Blake felt little connection to either of his parents, his home or his possessions stating instead that he spent much of his time at the youth group or playing football.

'Brian'

Brian was the first participant whom I interviewed. He had just turned 16 in June 2004 when we first met. Brian was recruited through Youth groups Tower Hamlets and was a member of the Youth Advisory Group (YAG). Brian defined himself as being 'English'. His mother was of mixed descent herself having a Zambian and White heritage. Furthermore, Brian's mother had been adopted as a child into a Jewish family and had been brought up as Jewish. At the time of the interview, she was a priest at an Anglican Church. As such, Brain's mother embodied a number of different cultures but according to Brian defined herself as being 'African'. Brian didn't speak much about his father other than him being Zambian/South African. He had no contact with his father and did not want to speak about him.

Brian was the only participant who had lived in a number of locations and with people who were not related to him. As a child he had moved around East London with his mother until mid 2003 when she decided to move to Durham to train as a priest. Brian chose to remain in London and lived with his mother's very close friend 'Amy'. Amy was a 'White woman' as Brian described her, and 'very English'. Brian lived with Amy for over six months and defined this period as the only time that he felt at home. He enjoyed his time with Amy as she was very

much like his mother but *'not as African'* as he said. Brian had also spent time in Zambia with his grandparents who also embodied very *'English traditions'*. For example, Brian spoke of his grandparents having afternoon tea at a regular basis. Brian's grandfather was the only male figure who had been present throughout his life. As such, the key people in Brian's life were his mother. Amy and his grandparents, especially his grandfather. In particular, his attachment to Amy and his grandfather were based upon a shared sense of *'Englishness'*.

Brian had a number of experiences of home in different dwelling spaces: his different houses with his mother, his home with Amy and his time with his grandparents in Zambia and the flat that he now lives in with his mother now a practising priest. These dwelling spaces were scattered in different locations.

'Carl'

Carl was eighteen and was awaiting his A-level results and getting ready to start university when I interviewed him and he was one of the oldest members attending Boys Club Tower Hamlets. He defined himself as *'just black really'*. His mother was Irish, from Dublin and his father was from Ghana. Carl lived with his mother at the time of the interview. His sister, who had also lived with them, had moved out a few months prior to us meeting. Carl had no contact with his father since he was six years old. Carl spoke of his identity mainly in terms of the colour of his skin and his hair *'I've got braids so I'm black'*. Even though Carl knew very little about his Ghanaian heritage, the fact that his father was black also defined his as black. This was despite the fact that he knew much more about his mother's Irish culture and had been to Dublin twice. Yet for Carl, Dublin or

Irishness did not represent who he was. On the two occasions when Carl had been to Dublin he had felt out of place and referred to London, particularly central London as being where he felt at home. When I interviewed Carl for the second time he was in the process of moving out of his home and starting university.

'Craig'

Craig had just turned sixteen when I first interviewed him and he was being home educated. Craig identified as being unaware of being of mixed descent and defined himself as 'English'. Craig was from a family of five sisters and one brother and his mother and father. He lived in a house with his family in which he shared a room with his brother, David (who also took part in the research). Craig had lived in the East of London since he was born. He had lived in a house in Bow and then moved to Stepney where they had been living for over five years at the time of the interview.

Craig was schooled at home as his father decided that none of the schools in the area provided a good education. He therefore felt slightly frustrated when he was at home at this was also the space that he had to do his school work. I recruited Craig via Youth Group Tower Hamlets during summer 2005 where he was doing a course at the time of the interview. At this point he was enjoying his home more as he was not there all day. Thus he felt a sense of relief when he did go home. However, during term time his father and mother taught him at home. His bedroom was used for a variety of purposes: doing his school work and

homework as well as the place where he had his lunch. Thus he used his bedroom for a variety of functions other than leisure and consumption.

Craig spent a lot of time with both of his parents and his sisters and brother, David. He spoke of how his father wanted him to become a better person than the 'other people that lived in the area'. He spoke a lot about speaking 'good English' and generally about how he was English.

'Damien'

Before I met Damien I met his mother who he lived with and who, in her own words, was 'half Italian half Latin American'. Damien's mother was a very influential person in her son's life and wanted to meet me before I interviewed Damien who had experienced a number of race and ethnicity related issues prior to our meeting. The youth group leader from Boys Club Tower Hamlets contacted me and I arranged to meet with Damien's mother prior to the research.

Damien was sixteen years old and classified himself as being *'Latin, Italian, Black everything'*. He was very clear that he was not English, and that his lifestyle had nothing to do with 'English or British' culture. Although Damien had not seen his father, who was Black African Nigerian, since he was eight years old, he did see his paternal uncle every weekend and spent his weekends at his uncle's house with his cousin. Damien was taught about both his mother's culture and his father's culture by both his mum and his uncle. It was important to Damien to

embody all of his cultures but he often throughout the research referred to himself as 'Black'.

Damien's home was both with his mother and his uncle. His bedroom, and his passion for football, illustrated his cultural diversity. When he described his room to me when I first interviewed him (which coincided with the World Cup 2006), it was the Italian, and Spanish flags which took up most of the wall space in his room.

'Daniel'

Daniel was eighteen and I met him through one of the youth workers. Daniel did not attend any of the youth groups. I interviewed Daniel twice and he would email me regularly in unstructured formats. Daniel identified his father as White and his mother as Portuguese/Anglo. He was the only participant who had a white father.

Daniel lived with his mother and had three older sisters who no longer lived with him. He did not speak of his father and when I did ask about whether he had any contact with his father he told me that he did not wish to discuss his father at all within the research. He also made limited reference to his mother as she was "always away" and that "I don't see my mum that much my place is really like a bachelors pad". Like Brian, Daniel was very independent he stressed throughout the research how he did what he wanted to do and that no one influenced him: "I do what I want I wouldn't even say that my mum has influenced me that much at all even when I was younger. I can't really answer any questions about my home life because it has always been really independent."

Daniel was one of the only participants to suggest that he was unhappy with his identity as 'mixed descent' and spoke throughout the research how he had always felt as though he did not 'fit in'. Throughout his emails there was often a questioning of where he belonged based on the different incidents that he wrote about in his diary entries.

Daniel was out of two of my participants that were studying at university and this also raised a number of issues for him. For example he spoke on a number of occasions in his emails about the various social events that he attended at university and how only 'Black' or 'mixed race' people would talk to him. He found the idea of 'race' very problematic and felt that one can only identify to having white heritage if they were "100% white".

'David'

David was Craig's brother. David was sixteen when I first interviewed him and turned seventeen before the second interview. David was also on the Youth Advisory board at Youth Group Tower Hamlets. When we first met he was awaiting his GCSE results. David was also home schooled like Craig. However when I interviewed him the second time David had started college and was living away from his parents and siblings. His situation was much the same as Craig's when we first met with the regard to him being home schooled. When he started college, he moved to live in rented accommodation with some other students. David spoke very highly of his parents and siblings when we first met. He spoke of how his parents made him who he was. However, when I interviewed him the

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second time and through his written electronic diaries David expressed a dislike for his home space which he had spoken so highly of when I first met him.

David in the space of time which the research was happening went through a number of changes. His living situation, use of the home and definition of home all changed. He would go home to his family home at the weekend but he felt *'out of place here now'*.

The changes that David experienced primarily over the summer also changed his identity. When I first interviewed David he spoke of his father not wanting him to get involved with *'a bad crowd'*. He referred to his friends as either English or Asian. He did not like to be associated with being black due to the negative associations with being black. He said, *'my dad doesn't want me to end up like Black kids in this area'*. Although David liked the term 'mixed descent' when I first suggested it to him, still preferred to be called English. David felt that because he lived in England and everything was English that is who he was. He expressed a desire to be classified as English more than anything else.

'Jason'

Jason was fifteen when I first met him while working at Youth Groups Tower Hamlets before this research commenced. I then ran into his mother whilst I was in the midst of conducting my research in 2006. I asked her whether Jason would be willing to take part and she was extremely positive about the research.

When I first interviewed him he was seventeen and was awaiting his AS results and was very apprehensive. Jason lived with his mother and his younger brother in a flat which they had lived in their whole lives. Jason's maternal grandmother lived in the block of flats opposite Jason's (she had also lived in the same area her whole life). Both his mother and his grandmother had been brought up in the same area as Jason. Jason's mother was 'White English' and so was his grandmother and his father was Jamaican.

He spoke at length with me about his experiences at primary and secondary school as well his experiences at present at his sixth form. Because Jason had lived in the same area his entire life and had also been educated in the same area his identity was very place specific.

Jason was very family orientated and his life was focused around his mother and his brother in their home which was reflected in his diary entries. His mother was the most important person in his life and he spoke of his Mum being his best friend. Jason spoke very little of his father as he had little to no contact with him even though his father lived in the same area.. He said how he sometimes saw his Dad in the street but didn't speak to him.

Of all of my participants, Jason was perhaps the most aware of his identity as 'mixed race' because he had experienced a great deal of racism and problems because of his ethnicity. He however did not let this faze him and said that it made him more determined to be more successful.

'John'

John was a participant who I initially thought would not be involved in the study. When I was first recruiting from Youth Group Tower Hamlets, both his twin brother, Simon (see below) and he said they did not want to be involved as *'no-one ever thinks we're mixed cause we look black'* . However they had a mixed heritage. John's mother was from Nigeria and had come to London as a teenager while his father was Jamaican. John's father did not live with him. He was sixteen and lived with his mother and her husband who was White English. John did see his father on a regular basis. For John he was mainly *"English because of living in England"*.

Once the research had commenced and I was interviewing Craig and David I contacted John and Simon once again to see if they would be willing to participate and they agreed. They said they had changed their minds because they had spoken to David and he said it would be "cool" if they took part.

John was a very quiet participant and required a lot of prompting when I was interviewing him. He spoke at length about the youth group and the activities that he was involved with. He made numerous references to his mother and the important role she had played in his upbringing.

'Marlon'

Marlon was sixteen and I only interviewed him once. He was recruited from Bethnal Green Youth Club. He identified his mother as being White and his

father 'Afro-Caribbean' and he lived with both of his parents in Bethnal Green. Marlon referred to himself as being either 'mixed' or just 'black'. He also, like Ray, did not really see his identity as being a problem or being a point of discussion although he had been referred to as 'half caste' on one occasion which he felt was racist 'because I'm Black'.

Marlon was very good friends with Ray (see below), as they lived near each other and they both went to the same youth group and belonged to the same football team. He had lived in the same area since he was born and he had a lot of friends that were either mixed descent or Black. When he played football he spoke of being on the team with the other 'Black boys'.

'Ray'

Ray was sixteen years old and I recruited him from Bethnal Green Youth Club and he only took part in one interview. Ray was *'White African a bit black and a bit white'* as he put it. For Ray identity was not part of his life, as according to him not many people asked him about his identity. He lived with his mother who was White, but did not know his father who was nor did his mother discuss this with him. He had lived in the same flat since he was born. Ray spent the majority of his time (particularly as it was summer when I was conducting my research) at the youth group, playing football which was clearly his passion. I recruited him from Signs youth group in Bethnal Green, where when I met him, he was playing football and it took a lot of convincing to take him away from his game.

'Simon'

Simon was the more vocal of the two twins and he defined himself as just 'Simon'. Both Simon and John were both very well spoken but during his interviews Simon would speak in different London accents almost dissociating himself from who he was. Simon's mother according to him had brought them up "really well". He tended to shift between being "English" and discussing Nigerian culture and the traditions associated with it. Simon also spoke about his step-father more than John did. For Simon it was better that his mother was with a White man as *'Jamaicans are completely different to Nigerians, especially the guys, I'm not like them'*.

'Tariq'

Tariq was the eldest participant that I recruited and he was nineteen. I recruited Tariq through a colleague from Youth Group Tower Hamlets (although Tariq did not attend the youth group himself). He defined himself as 'half Chinese half Pakistani Muslim'. Tariq lived with his Chinese mother, Pakistani father and his elder brother, with whom he shared his room. Tariq considered himself to know more about his mother's family and heritage as he had met them. Tariq's mother also spoke a lot about her culture. In contrast, Tariq knew very little to nothing about his father's family or heritage. He had never met any of his father's family nor did his father speak about his family. What Tariq did speak about in relation to his father was his religion. Tariq was a practicing Muslim as his father had insisted that both of his sons were brought up Muslim. Tariq did not have a

problem with this but it did interfere with his life. Tariq felt that his father used religion to control him.

It was difficult for Tariq to understand his Pakistani heritage due to the fact that his father didn't speak about it. When I first interviewed Tariq, his elder brother was preparing to go to Pakistan to meet his father's family for the first time. When I interviewed Tariq for the second time, and asked him about his brother's trip, he told me about the photographs that his brother brought back of his father which was important to Tariq as his father spoke very little of his upbringing and his family in Pakistan. It was also important to Tariq as he himself had never visited Pakistan.

Tariq's home was a divided house in his opinion. His mother's Chinese heritage was symbolised in one part of the house and his father's Muslim heritage was symbolised in another part of his house. Tariq's bedroom, unlike those of the other participants did not symbolise who he was. He spoke of it as just a room where he slept and shared with his brother as his parents tended to use his bedroom as a storage room also. When I first interviewed Tariq he was living at home but was preparing to move out to campus. He was very excited about the prospect about having his own home which he could decorate.

<u>Summary</u>

I have provided a summary of the lives of the young men that took part in my research. Each autobiography varies in detail as not all of the participants provided the same level of detail or time into the research. Hence there are variations in what I knew about the young men and what the young men chose to tell me. Evidently some of the young men were open to discussing all aspects of their lives and others were more reluctant. This was an important of the research as well as being an important part of the methods which I adopted and discussed in Chapter two.

Chapter Four

Understanding mixed descent and gender

Introduction

This chapter aims to identify the key debates surrounding mixed descent and gender in relation to my own research, and seeks to explore how the typologies of gender, race, age and mixed descent come together. It is divided into three parts: race, hybridity and mixed descent; youth and mixed descent and gender and mixed descent.

Taking these in turn, hybridity and mixed descent are terms which have been used to define people who are from multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds. A key issue in relation to mixed descent is clarifying terminology. I explore the history of race and hybridity as well as providing a discussion around contemporary usages of hybridity and its relationship with mixed descent. I examine the changing perceptions of race and ethnicity and how this has impacted on terminology associated with mixed descent. In relation to the changes in how mixed descent is understood and perceived, I also examine the use of life stories within mixed descent research which has identified the gendered nature of mixed descent as well as the importance of age.

Young men have tended to be ignored in research on mixed descent. Research on masculinity and youth has tended to focus on specific marginalised or subordinate masculinities such as young Black masculinities, Asian masculinities and white masculinities. In turn, young men of mixed descent have been largely absent from

this work (apart from Tizard and Phoenix, 2002). I therefore seek to explore how masculinities have been constructed over time and space, and to interlink this with research on mixed descent and masculinity. I explore this in relation to youth and youthful masculinities in relation to mixed descent and how it is often young people and children that are 'out-casted'.

Race, Hybridity and Mixed Descent

Race has a long history and geography (see for example Paul Knox, 1850) and this research illustrates the changing definitions and understandings of race (see John Rex 1986, and Paul Banton, 1983). Racial theory and what constituted and defined race was of particular importance during British and European colonial expansion in the 18th and 19th century (Young, 1995) and was particularly concerned with the superiority of whiteness (see Modood, 1996 for a detailed discussion of 18th century paradigms of race). I will briefly introduce these debates through Banton's work which draws upon Darwin's argument on race as a sub-species. Thus, Banton writes (1983:61):

> When race meant descent, then it may be expected that whites considered alliance with blacks as socially dishonourable. When race meant type, whites would have seen sexual unions with blacks as producing stock physical inferior to whites but superior to blacks. When race meant subspecies, most members of the public would not have comprehended the workings of inheritance and selection, and since it takes time for scientific advances to reach the wider public it might be expected that the typological doctrine would have retained its appeal. Now that race is coming to be defined by bureaucratic and political concerns it is not surprising that there is no agreement upon a clear definition of racism.

Race formed the foundations of European and American society, particularly with reference to colonialism. Furedi (2001:23) for example, suggests that: 'The discipline of race relations emerged as a response to widespread Western anxieties concerning impending conflict on an international scale. Race, which was a positive ideal in the self-image of the West, had becomes a source of concern by the end of the First World War'. There was an overall argument that race was a form of power, associated with the dominance of whiteness and the maintenance of this power. Ultimately, there was a concern of the potential threat that racial mixing posed to such political power. It was this fear of 'contamination' (Young, 1995) and a crossing of 'boundaries' (Parker and Song, 2001 and Young, 1995) that led to a discourse on mixed descent associated with 'biological degradation' (Young, 1995). Delaney (1879) for example, in a historical context argues that (1879:92 in Ifekwuingwe, 2004:52):

> The sterling race, when crossed, can reproduce themselves into their original purity [the three original races in complexion and texture of hair are sterling; pure white, pure yellow, and pure black, with straight hair, and woolly hair; the two first being straight, and the other woolly]. The offspring of any two of the sterling races which produced the abnormal race may become the resolvent race. That is, when the offspring of a mixed or abnormal race marries to a person of sterling race, black or white, their offspring is a quadroon; and if that quadroon intermarries on the same side, the offspring of this fourth intermarriage, is an octoroon (whether black or white), and therefore becomes a pure blood.

Delaney traces the historical context of race and the 'disorder' that racial mixing would result in. The focus on the biology of race has also effected how mixed descent is defined and narrated as it has tended to be preoccupied with the

divisions between race groups as well as hierarchies of race (see Song, 2004). This was particularly apparent during 18th and 19th century colonialism.

European colonialism was grounded in fears of 'contamination' of a white identity associated with maintenance of empire (Kraidy, 2002). As Young (1995:5) argues:

> The historical links between language and sex were, however, fundamental. Both produced what were regarded as 'hybrid' forms (creole, pidgin and miscegenated children), which were seen to embody threatening forms of pervasion and degeneration and became the basis for endless metaphoric extension in the racial discourse of social commentary.

Young's reference to terms such as 'creole, pidgin and miscegenation' and hybridity more specifically became a preoccupation as part of a growing debate about racial mixing in the early 18th century (see Brah, 1996) which sought to 'out-cast' people of mixed descent. Young (1995:8) defines 'hybrid' as follows:

> A hybrid is a cross between two species such as the mule and the hinny, which are female-male and male-female crosses between horse and ass. The point generally made is that both the mule and the hinny are infertile, which results in the species remaining distinct, held separate by an apparent natural check. As a result of this definition, the argument that the different races of men were different species hinged on the question of whether the product of a union between different races was fertile or not.

Young argues that hybridity should be considered within the following five arguments: polygenist species argument; amalgamation thesis; the decomposition thesis; the argument that hybridity varies between 'proximate' and 'distant'

species; and finally the negative version of the amalgamation thesis, and the idea that miscegenation produces a mongrel group (Young, 1995:18). These five positions are primarily associated with a biological understanding of hybridity. The polygenist species argument states that sexual relations between two different racial groups produce infertile offspring. The amalgamation thesis suggests that 'humans can interbreed prolifically and in an unlimited way' (Young, 1995:18). The decomposition thesis is a further discussion of the biological nature of hybridity, and that although cases of amalgamation may occur, they will become extinct. This understanding of mixed descent as being a form of hybridity is similar to the terminology the emerged after colonialism such as 'half caste' or 'half breed' and is not limited to colonial terminology.

Thus, all of the terms during colonialism and beyond had a tendency to marginalise people of mixed descent and maintained the supremacy of whiteness and white power (see Stonequist, 1937 for a historical discussion of 'marginal man'). Stoler's (2000 and 2002) work on colonialism, sexuality and racial mixing, which focuses on the Indies and Indochina, identifies the 'dangers' of sexual unions between coloniser and colonised and exemplifies how 'racial mixing' was 'seen as a threat to white prestige, an embodiment of European degeneration and moral decay' (20). Papastergiadis (2000:175) argues that:

> The unspeakable distaste for – and yet undeniability the presence of hybrids are reflected by the compulsive classifying of gradations of blackness. Each word carried a different status and specified the elements in the union. These names included mulatto, half breed, half caste, mixed

breed, quadroon, octoroon, sambo, mango, mestizo. Up to one sixty fourth black could be distinguished.

Ultimately it was a perceived fear of the conflict of powers associated with whiteness and the maintenance of this that identified people of mixed descent as the 'other'. Papastergiadis' argument indicates the importance of colour and that the terms used led to people of mixed descent being associated with 'Blackness'. Stoler's (2000 and 2002) research on the Dutch East Indies refers to what was identified as the 'mixed blood problem' and the term 'metissage' was widely used to refer to the political nature inter-racial unions. Stoler (2002:110) identifies that 'metissage was first a name then a thing. It was heavily politicized because it was understood to destabilise both national identity and the Manichean categories of ruler and ruled'. As I mentioned earlier, this discourse of 'othering' and 'out-casting' extended into understandings of contemporary understandings of 'mixed race' also.

The presence and use of the term hybridity alongside what Homi Bhabha (1994) refers to as 'third space' is a consideration of something 'new' rather than 'out casting'. However it is essentially about the biology of race. As Katherine Mitchell (1997) asks does this third space risk becoming what she refers to as a 'reactionary space'? Yuval Davis (1996) suggests the exotic 'Other' is replaced with the term 'hybrid'. Mahtani (forthcoming) also rightly suggests that 'Bhabha's notion of third space (a place where alternative identities are envisioned beyond notions of geographical metaphors of margin and centre and essentialised racial labelling) intonates a purity between the pole and there is no temporal component as area for theoretical exploration, clearly lacing a feminist

of colour contemplation of a politics of location'. Therefore I would argue that the term hybridity within contemporary writings and particularly within geographical understandings of it and as a concept of racial and cultural mixing ignores the complexity of cultural and biological hybridity (see Ifekwuingwe, 1999). It is therefore important to theorise and engage with the term race and racism both within geography and beyond as much of the terminology on 'mixed race' is paralleled with race and racism (see Dwyer and Bressey, 2008 and their introduction).

The epistemology and ontology of race is the need for categorisation (and hence it is important to move forward from this). Naomi Zack (2002) explains that the epistemology of race is the process of 'sorting' people into different 'races' and it is the criteria of racial membership of an identity which is the ontology of race. Stuart Hall (1995) rightly suggests that race is a discursive and not a biological concept and that it is a symbolic marker of 'difference'. Theoretical shifts and recognition of race as something which is socially constructed (see Paul Gilroy 1996) have occurred and hence changed how identity is theorised.

The call for the recognition of what Stuart Hall has referred to as 'new ethnicities' (1996) is considered by Dwyer and Bressey (2008:04) as a 'focus which emphasised both the creative and strategic deployment of different forms of "identity politics" and perhaps a more anthropological engagement with the dynamic ways in which ethnic belonging and boundary making is constructed and contested'. The ideas surrounding 'new ethnicities' suggest there has been a

necessary shift in terminology associated with the political and discursive context of 'race' and identity (which I will be discussing further later in this chapter). Ultimately as Anoop Nayak (2006:414) suggests: 'there is an inherent paradigmatic tension in socially constructionist approaches to race. This involves the tendency to view race as socially constituted on one hand, yet to continually impart ontological value to it on the other, with the effect that race can take a reified status'. Pre-defined categories of race have tended to ignore people of mixed descent (see Ifekwuingwe, 2004).

In relation to 'mixed race' and racial mixing race is considered by Stephen Small (2001) who discusses five main discourses surrounding 'mixed race' and 'race mixture'. Small identifies these discourses as 'race purity', 'carnal delight', 'individualism', 'economy and bureaucracy' and 'consumerism'. Race purity is based on the idea of the existence of biological purity and the need to avoid any form of 'degeneracy, mongeralisation and cultural and intellectual decay' (Small, 2001:121). Racial purity essentially identifies the superiority of whiteness (Hutnyk, 2005) and tended to place people of mixed descent as being Black. Parker and Song (2001:08) for example argue that:

> Arguments that people of mixed parentage have to recognise that regardless of how they feel they are black based on awareness that racism will differentiate them from white people. Yet such arguments construct black people and white people as cultural and visual opposites rather than either as part of a continuum or as connected and/or differentiated by features other than race.

Although definitions of hybridity have tended to be historically situated also part of more contemporary understandings of mixed race and mixed descent, and can also be considered in relation to terms such as 'half caste' and 'hypodescent' which were associated with whiteness. Spencer (2004:362) defines hypodescent:

> Hypodescent implies that whiteness is a pure essence whose purity cannot withstand mixture with blackness, while blackness is an antipodal and impure essence. As an example of hypodescent in the context of the American racial paradigm, the child of a white parent and a black parent is categorised as black, but not white. Even if an acknowledgement of partial white ancestry is made, it nonetheless does not confer whiteness on the individual.

Whiteness is then reinforced against Blackness once again reifying race and suggesting that the ideas of 'pureness' and 'contamination' are part of a discourse on 'mixed race'. Spencer (2004) and Spickard (2001) suggest that a child with one white parent and one black parent could not be considered 'white' or even of mixed descent with a claim to partial white heritage. This is specific to the American experience of race, but also resonates with much of the broader debates surrounding colonial racial mixing. Similarly in Australia the term 'half caste' was used widely (see Moran, 2005) which considered 'half-caste' as indicating a breakdown of whiteness.

As identified earlier, these divisions based on colour and castes were the foundations of modern European white identity. Bonnett (2000) examines the geography of whiteness with a particular focus on European white power and suggests that 'Europeans turned whiteness into a fetish object, a talisman of the natural whose powers appeared enable them to impose their will on the world'

(Bonnett, 2000:21). Similarly Dyer (1997) and Jenkins (2002) identify that Black and white are two separate categories with whiteness being at the top of the racial hierarchy and Black being at the bottom which allowed for whiteness to be associated with political power. Dyer (1997:9) argues that 'White people have power and believe that they think, feel and act like for all people; white people, unable to see their particularity, cannot take account of other people; white people create the dominant images of the world and don't quite see that they thus construct the world in their own image'. Dyer is making a clear statement that whiteness is in fact an invisible category and is based on a category of power and is a form of political allegiance. This resonates with the arguments made by Paul Gilroy (1987) and (1993) where he considers the racialisation of the nation-state and his use of the metaphor 'camps' in which the 'victims' of racialisation are in one camp and whiteness is a camp of power (hence the importance of hierarchy).

Geographers have more recently suggested that 'white people can appear dead metaphors, objects whose actions are forever bound to their identities and frozen in time' (Nayak, 2006:417). Nayak (2006) and Bonnett (2000) suggest that whiteness is a category that remains unchallenged. Mark McGuinness (2000:229) argues that:

> White domination is reproduced by the way that white people colonise the definition of normal. Geographers (and others), whatever their characteristics and identifications, need to confront the conflation of hybridity with blackness/non-whiteness, and challenge the 'invisible traditions' that suggest that race equals minority.

The use of the metaphor by Gilroy of 'camps' (2001) ultimately leaves people of mixed descent in an 'in-between' status and hence this preoccupation with whiteness within the definitions and experiences of mixed descent has, as I argued previously, led to an out-casting of people of mixed descent, particularly young people and children of mixed descent. What previous research on mixed descent has tended to ignore is the real life experiences of young people of mixed descent and how they negotiated their identities. However there is now a shift in mixed descent research, for example Tizard and Phoenix (2002). I now turn to consider how there has been shift in the use of race and ethnicity and how this has impacted on mixed descent.

Changing uses of race and ethnicity and mixed descent terminology

There has been a preoccupation in mixed descent research to focus on 'Black mixing with white' such that there is limited work on mixed descent which goes beyond this dichotomy. Indeed, much of the terminology has assumed that mixed descent/mixed race is Black and white. Ifekwuingwe (1999:46) for example argues:

> So why mixed race? Although as problematic as metis(se), my revival of the term 'mixed race' is a necessary, deliberate and discursive political intervention. Unlike metis(se) 'mixed race' is a term that is part and parcel of the English vernacular. Unlike 'mixed race', 'mixed parentage' and 'mixed heritage' retreat from a racialised discourse, thus, someone with White Scottish and White Welsh parents could claim to be both mixed parentage and mixed heritage. To be 'mixed race' presumes differently racialised parentage.

While Ifekwuingwe raises the point that mixed race allows for an examination of multiple identities (as does my use of the term mixed descent), it is limited in its recognition of people of mixed descent who do not have Black and white backgrounds. It is in this context that Mahtani and Moreno (2001) raise the question of whether one can only identify as mixed race if one parent is white. As Mahtani (2001:65) writes in relation to her own identity 'As a Canadian woman of South Asian and Iranian descent, I'm left wondering about my own place in the existing discourse of "mixed race". Can I identify as "mixed race" even though I'm not part white?'

Arguably, this focus on Black and white dichotomies has ignored the multiple dimensions of mixed descent. Blunt's (1999 and 2005) work on Anglo-Indians thus identifies the importance of considering both racial and *cultural* aspects of mixed race (see also Wright *et al*, 2003). Newer understandings and theorisation of identity (for example Hall, 1992) are formed and understood around cultural, social and religious differences. Stuart Hall's (1992:254) definition of new ethnicities is constructed against the existence of the 'Black subject'. As he argues that: 'what brings into play is the recognition of the immense diversity and differentiation of the historical and cultural experiences of black subjects. This inevitably entails a weakening or fading of the notion that race or some composite notion of race around the term black will either guarantee the affectivity of any cultural practice or determine in any final sense its aesthetic value'. Hall's argument reflects the need to understand the existence of differences in society that go beyond simplistic understandings of biology and argues for a shift to understanding personal experiences of identity. For instance, Nobles (2002:47)

argues that 'ethnicity cannot be defined by criterion like origin, whether it is defined by place of birth or descent, since it results from a combination of multiple criteria, having equally to do with origin, place of residence, social networks, migratory path and so forth'. Mahtani (forthcoming) more specifically argues that:

> Ethnicity is a relational term and employed differently in different contexts. Social distinctions made on the basis of national, linguistic, or caste criteria are thought to mark differences in ethnicity, and thus, ethnic boundaries, like racial boundaries, are invented. This means that almost anyone who is singled out as "ethnic" can be given a whole range of "ethnic labels" that can be declared, or rendered, socially relevant or irrelevant

In relation to mixed descent specifically, I identify mixed descent as spanning race, ethnicity, religion, and culture hence why it is important to consider understandings of ethnicity in relation to this. Ultimately the use of the term such as mixed descent by myself (and also by Alison Blunt) is an attempt to incorporate the idea of identity being a process rather than as something static (Hall, 1996). Identity as suggested by Stuart Hall (1996) is an act of 'narrativization' of the self. Including race, ethnicity, culture and religion into the terminology of mixed descent allows for a consideration of these different identities. Although the term 'culture' is itself highly contested Baumann (1996) offers an important interpretation of the term culture which is important in how mixed descent is understood. Baumann suggests that culture is ultimately community = ethnic identity = nature = culture. He argues that 'the tendencies to reify the 'cultures' of ethnic minorities to stylize pseudo-biological categories into

communities and to appeal to popular biological conceptions of culture are not difficult to substantiate in British politics and media' (21).

Reflecting its emphasis on the lived experiences of young men of mixed descent, this research adopts an autobiographical approach. This contributes to the wider use of autobiography in studies of identity (as discussed in Chapter 2). Life stories have been one way in which terminology has shifted and has enabled a consideration of identity as being socially and culturally mobile. More recent work such as Ifekwuingwe (1999), Mahtani (2001 and 2002a) and Ali (2003) has focused on autobiographical research to develop mixed descent terminology and experiences of mixed descent more specifically. Ifekwuingwe's (1999) research on women of mixed descent is based on autoethnographic accounts by the women which exemplifies how the women themselves chose to articulate their identities. The following is an extract from Ifekwunigwe's research, which is an account from an interview with one of her respondents 'Bisi' who is a Black Nigerian and White English woman, married to a White English man:

> The question of what race is my children? What do they feel? It is difficult as well. I think Elizabeth said "I'm one quarter Nigerian" (very specific, very precise), "but I'm three quarters English Mummy". Which is true? I ask my son sometimes. "Do you think you are white?" I don't really know whether he says it to please me or not, but he says "Well no, not really".

Similarly Jon Spencer (1997) provides examples of lived experiences of being mixed descent. The young men in my research provided narratives of identity in relation to their experiences it was therefore important to consider the changes in the ways people of mixed descent are identified and defined. The use of life

stories has meant that labelling of people of mixed descent has shifted towards a discourse of 'post race' (Ali, 2003). Mahtani (2002a) for example found that young Canadian woman of mixed descent were concerned with the preoccupation with labels such as mixed race, and they felt that these labels identified only their racial and ethnic identities. Mahtani suggests that it is necessary to examine the mixed race person behind the pre-existing labels as well understanding mixed descent beyond black and white dichotomies which Olumide (2002) and Ali (2003) have begun to consider.

The young men in my research were from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. I chose not to limit my research to young men from Black and white families. My study involved working with young men from mixed South East Asian backgrounds as well as young men who were from mixed Black backgrounds such as Black African and Afro-Caribbean. This embraces the term mixed descent as I have identified but also integrates Olumide's (2002) theory of the 'mixed race condition'. Olumide (2002) work is a qualitative study of what she refers to as 'mixed race situations'. She considers the mixed race condition to be associated with supposed links and common experiences over time and space for people of mixed descent, she argues that there are five features which accompany constructions of mixed race:

1. It is defined as an ambiguous social location

2. It is a contested site

3. There is a measure of dependency involved

4. It is a conditional state

5. It serves as a point of articulation in the creation, ordering and underlining of race, class and gender divisions (Olumide, 2002:71).

The variability of the mixed race condition indicates that it is specific to the experience of each individual and Olumide considers 'mixed race' to be beyond just 'racial mixing'. There is a valid argument to be made with reference to how a person of mixed descent may 'feel' rather than the existence of an actual category. Olumide (2002) attempts to consider mixed race to be something that goes beyond racial mixing but also considers 'ethnic mixing'. 'Mixed race' and mixed descent are therefore considered by researchers and theorists such as Suki Ali (2003) and Edwards (2008) in terms of 'post race' and 'pro race'. Suki Ali focuses particularly on her own personal history and experience of being mixed descent (or mixed race as she chooses) in which she considers the importance of 'cultural' influences upon the lives of people of mixed descent and hence indicating that different influences on how mixed descent is narrated and experienced. Both Ali (2003) and Olumide (2002) suggest that 'post race' is a poststructuralist approach to understanding race. Edwards (2008) defines the differences between 'post' and 'pro' race as post race suggesting that it is necessary to move beyond racial categories and embrace Stuart Hall's 'new ethnicities'. Pro race however suggests that whilst retaining a focus on race suggests that parents of children of mixed descent should 'teach' their children about their racial heritage. Hence race and ethnicity as well as culture become embraced within the term mixed descent.

Identity spans gender, race, ethnicity and religion and a mixed descent identity for young men is narrated against all of these typologies. For young men narratives of

identity were fluid and as Root (2004:144) suggests, a mixed descent identity is beyond phenotype and heritage. As she argues:

> A person of Black-Japanese heritage may look Filipino and may identify as both African American and Asian American. Similarly, a person of White-Asian background may phenotypically appear more similar to someone of European than Asian descent but may identify as a first generation Japanese American. It is confusing to our linear models of identity to consider that a multiracial Black Indian European who looks African American self-identifies as a mono-racial African American.

The web of identity that Root traces in her work indicates the importance of how identity is narrated and suggests the importance of narratives of identity. A person of mixed descent cannot be solely identified via ethnicity or parental identity and it is important to consider the importance of internal and external factors which may affect a mixed descent identity (Aspinall, 2003). Rockquemore (1998:198) argues that 'The assumption that biracials have a singular understanding of their racial identity (i.e. as biracial) masks the fact that numerous individuals who are biracial identify themselves as African-American and would continue to do so even if presented with the mixed-race category as an option'. Hence it is associated with a self understanding that can only be narrated via the experiences of people of mixed descent. Rockquemore (1998) identifies a mixed descent identity as follows: border identity; protean identity; transcendent identity and traditional identity.

The identities of border, protean, transcendent and traditional are associated with how people of mixed descent identify themselves (Rockquemore, 1998). A border identity is associated with people who identify as being between Black and white.

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Protean identity is an embodiment of multiple identities and a transcendent identity is influenced by the appearance of a person of mixed descent whereby those with a transcendent identity may be able to 'pass' as white. A traditional identity was one which was associated with those people of mixed descent that identify themselves as Black. Rockquemore situates mixed descent identity within a framework that is 'interactionist' and identities are developed and appropriated through social interaction. Rockquemore (1998) and Root (2004) engage with how a person of mixed descent identifies him or herself through their own experiences. This is particularly important in relation to age as it will affect how identity is narrated.

Experiences of mixed descent and the terminology of mixed descent have shifted (see Wright et al, 2003) and it is important to consider how a person of mixed descent may identify as Black based on preference (Tizard and Phoenix, 2002). Hybridity has also been engaged with a positive space of cultures emerging. Bhabha (1994) for example refers to hybridity as a 'third space' and the creation of a third culture (see Christian, 2004 for a review of third space and Papastergiadis, 2000 who discusses the positive usage of hybridity).

I have the use of terms such as mixed descent, mixed race, dual heritage are part of a broad of an argument surrounding terminology and people of mixed descent (see Runymede Report, 2007 and also Olumide, 2002 and Ali, 2003). The relationship between mixed descent and gender is important and I would suggest that the added dimension of gender changes how mixed descent is narrated and

experienced. Gender like race is socially constructed (Armstrong and Ng, 2005). I felt it was important to examine gender and mixed descent alongside one another in order to understand meanings and experiences of mixed descent.

Incorporating gender into mixed descent identities will change how it is narrated and experienced. Suki Ali (2007) suggests in her paper on 'gendering mixed race' a recent contribution to the Runnymede Perspectives document that:

'if one centralises the issue of gender at the level of theory, then we might consider how certain kinds of gendered theories are being used in the service of work on mixedness....We might insist that gender should not just be referred to as a minor variable, but rather centralised in research and practice that concerns any conception of mixed heritage or mixed race. We might note that it is rarely there, but needs to be built upon....It is surely not helpful to consider mixed race as ungendered any more than other so-called monoracial identities' (9).

Mahtani (2002a:430) suggests that according to some researchers mixed race women are 'more vulnerable to society's reactions to their ambiguous features' than their male counterparts. It is difficult to assess whether this is the case as there has been limited research on men of mixed descent. Blunt's (1999 and 2005) work on Anglo-Indians for example focuses on the experiences of women and home which also identifies the feminine nature of the home. Ifekwuingwe (1999)

and Mahtani (2002a) also focused their research on women of mixed descent and identified the particular experiences of mixed descent for women and how this was gendered. Mahtani (2002:a429) found that the women felt "hypervisible" and that they were 'marked as sexually deviant or exotic and subsequently turned into an object of scrutiny'. The women in Mahtani's study identified themselves according to their life experiences. For young people identity is something that is in process and therefore terminology is complicated by factors such as family, and friends. Twine (1996) addresses the experiences of mixed descent young girls whose fathers were of African American descent and whose mothers were European-American, European-Jewish American or Asian. In contrast to other works on mixed descent Twine demonstrates how the young girls were able to 'adopt' their maternal identity of being 'white'. According to Twine her participants had been 'raised white' which was influenced by their parent's positions and their upbringing. Twine identifies the role of age and gender in how mixed descent is narrated, in what follows I consider masculinity, youth and mixed descent.

Masculinity, Youth and Mixed Descent

Masculinity has tended to be examined and theorised as something abstract particularly in relation to race and ethnicity, in which it has been considered in separate categories of Black masculinity, Asian masculinity. Masculinity as part of separate categories based on race and space has meant that the relationship between race and masculinity has also remained abstract and brief (see Edwards, 2006).

The theorization of masculinity has been concerned with identifying white masculinity as a powerful form hence the identification by Connell (1995) of what he has termed 'hegemomonic'; 'subordinate'; 'dominant'; 'complicit' and 'marginal' masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is associated with what Connell defines as a biological difference between men and women which privileges middle class white men. It has been historically understood as the 'pattern of practice', i.e. those things done over time that have allowed men dominance over women (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Subordinate masculinity in contrast to hegemonic masculinity is associated with 'lesser' men in 'subordinate' positions in relation/comparison to those classified in hegemonic masculinity, for example, Black men and homosexual men. Hegemonic and subordinate masculinities formed the so-called divisions between masculinities. Bonnett (1999) offers a discussion of Connell's four definitions of masculinity and summarises them as follows: Essentialist definition of masculinity, which is an attempt to identify an unchanging and static core to maleness, often associated with biology. The second definition is a positivist definition which is based on empirical attempts to record what men actually do. Thirdly, normative definitions of masculinity which posit a social ideal of maleness, which is portrayed through the media and other socio-cultural forms. The final definition is those associated with semiotic approaches which tend to view maleness as constructed in opposition to femaleness (Bonnett, 1999). The theories of masculinity are not applicable to real life situations and were adopted as a way to enforce white hegemonic power and an imagined hierarchical order (Jackson, 1991) and were

part of idealised forms of masculinity and were over represented with that of middle class white men.

Theories and images of masculinity occupied much of the early literature in geography. For example, Jackson (1991 and 1994) who was one of the first geographers to consider masculinities, identifies the 'first wave' of cultural politics of masculinity within geography which is associated with images of men in the military, sports and hunting and specifically 'hard' images of men and masculinity. Much of this had a strong association with patriarchy and gender domination (see Collinson and Hearn, 1996). In contrast in the 1990s research on masculinity took a shift and Jackson (1991) identifies the 'family man' and the 'new man' (see Rutherford, 1996) as being central to the new images of masculinity. This image of masculinity was predominated by images of white men and heterosexuality (see Jackson, 1994, Rutherford, 1996, and Beyon, 2002 for an examination of images of white masculinity and embodiment). What this research has not considered is the 'real' life experiences of masculinity and merely theorised gender relations and idealised notions of masculinity.

Hence there was a necessary shift in the late 1990s and into the 21st century within the field of masculinity studies into the real lives of men. The second wave of research on masculinity emerged with a focus on the intersections of ethnicity; gender and age (see Ruddick, 1996 for a review on gender and race as interlocking systems). Race, class and age are all dynamics of identity that challenge hegemonic masculinities. Berg and Longhurst (2003) and Frosh et al

(2003) argue that young men are now 'forging' new and flexible masculine identities that are complicated by their racialised and class positions. No longer does the dominant form of hegemonic masculinity influence men's understanding of how they have to 'act' to be accepted as a 'male' (Goodey, 1998).

The shift has led to a consideration of the intersections between 'race' and masculinity. Jackson (1994) examines Black masculinity in opposition to white masculinity. Jackson (1994) identifies masculinity in a similar context to the literature on racial mixing in Britain in the 19th century and situates Black masculinity in relation to ideas of sexuality. He writes that 'the image of the black 'stud' is classic (white) sexual fantasy. White men's fears about the chastity of 'their' women has often been displaced on to an envy for the alleged sexual prowess of black men, simultaneously supporting a convenient belief in the allegedly promiscuity of black women' (Jackson, 1994:54). The concept of fearful black masculinity was formed around a so-called fear of black male sexuality. hooks (1992:89) provides an influential account of black masculinity in the US. She argues that:

> The portrait of black masculinity that emerges in this work perpetually constructs black men as "failures" who are psychologically "fucked up," dangerous, violent, sex maniacs whose insanity is informed by their inability to fulfil their phallocentric masculine destiny in a racist context. Much of this literature is written by white people, and some of it by a few academic black men.

This was similar to ideas of Blackness during the colonial period which has extended into the contemporary period with Black men being perceived as the 'other' in relation to white masculinities. In turn, Asian masculinity has often been considered separately from Black masculinity with Asian men identified as being effeminate and educational achievers (see Mac an Ghail, 1994). Research more recently has continued to be divided into bodies of work separated by ethnicity (although Goodey, 1998 attempts to consider what she terms 'competing masculinities' which I will discuss further later in the chapter).These older hegemonic masculinities are no longer accepted and masculinity has shifted towards masculinities particularly with the current wave of research on young men specifically has identified hegemonic and popular masculinity as being associated with young Black masculinity and youthful masculinities more specifically (Robb, 2007 and Frosh *et al*, 2002). The addition of age into studies of masculinity has transformed what is considered as hegemonic masculinity as well as arguing beyond the 'ideals' discussed in the theorisation of masculinity that authors such as Connell have done.

The emergence of youth as part of geographical research has been recent. Youth have tended to occupy what James (1986) refer to as a liminal space which Sibley (1995) identifies as being between children/adults. Although there is a large body of work which has identified youth and subcultures and the 'problems' of youth (see Hebdige, 1979), geographers have been slow to engage with youth, race and space in particular (however see Aitken, 2001, Sibley, 1995, and Valentine and Skelton, 1998). More recently McDowell (2002a:98) refers to how youth as a collective are facing challenges, as arguing that:

In the United Kingdom, at the turn of the current millennium, youth, and in particular young men, have once again become the focus of both policy and academic debates, culminating in proposals in early 2001 by the Home Secretary to address the problems of the yob and the Education Minister to resolve the crisis among non-academic young men who number the largest amongst the school resisters.

I consider youth as part of my research and focus on young men of mixed descent based on the fact that youth in relation to mixed descent have not been considered since the 18th and 19th century and Tizard and Phoenix' s (2002) research which was conducted in 1993. If, as McDowell has argued above youth are collectively facing challenges it is important to consider 'ethnicity', race and religion in relation to youthful masculinity and to also extend and expand this argument in relation to the experiences of young men of mixed descent.

Early research on children and youth of mixed descent was pre-occupied with the so-called 'dangers' of these children. Brah and Coombes (2000:3) for example argue that: 'From the point of view of the colonizer, the danger with any programme of assimilation which ultimately might result in sexual unions amongst peoples from different cultural and social backgrounds was that the resulting offspring of any such union might eventually outnumber the colonizers and subsequently 'contaminate' not only their cultural legacy but the genetic stock itself'. Children and young people of mixed descent at the time were abandoned and Stoler (2000:330) identifies that it was 'metis youth' that were the victims of segregation in her example where a 'Hanoi Society for the Protection of Metis Youth' was established in relation to this segregation. Children and young people were considered to not 'belong' within any of the 'categories' that existed

throughout colonialism and therefore the abandonment of these young children was due to the understanding that they were not considered to be part of a legitimate category. Stoler's (2000) examination of the relationship between national identity and 'metissage' as she terms it, traces a case of a young man of mixed descent in 1898 in the French Indochinese city of Haiphony who was the son a French minor naval employee and a woman who was a colonial subject, who had been charged for assaulting a German naval mechanic to exemplify the status of children of mixed descent. According to Stoler (2000:327) 'the granting of pardon rested on two assessments: whether the boy's cultural identity and his display of French cultural competence supported his claim to French citizenship rights'. This demonstrates the importance of maintaining whiteness.

Similarly in Australia research documents the experiences of mixed descent children who were forcibly removed from their families. The Northern Territory in the 19th century had a growing number of mixed descent children who were left homeless and without guardians due to forced removal from their families. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (2003) reported that there were growing fears that the "half caste" population would out number other groups. These so called fears were directed towards the children and young people of mixed descent and the government adopted a policy of removing children and young people of mixed descent into what was referred to as the 'Half Caste Home'.

This experience was transferred beyond colonial expansions and also emerged within the UK as children of mixed descent were also out-casted because of their racial mix. Paul Rich's (2004) research for example identifies the issues faced by children of mixed descent in Liverpool and Cardiff who were the off spring of sexual relations between Black seamen and white women. The children were deemed as a social problem and identified 'half caste juveniles' with a particular emphasis on young girls as the problem. As Rich (2004:74) argues: 'By 1929 the *Daily Herald* was already reporting that "hundreds of half-caste children with vicious tendencies" were "growing up in Cardiff as the result of black men mating with white women" while "numerous dockland cafes run by the coloured men of a debased and degenerate type are rendezvous for immoral purposes'.

More recently Tizard and Phoenix (2002) have examined the lives of mixed descent young people and offer a more in depth study of the lives of young people aged fifteen to sixteen. They suggest that there has been a shift from the 1960s onwards in Britain and USA towards a more positive image of mixed descent identity which is primarily associated with the shift in terminology and understandings of race and ethnicity. Like my research, Tizard and Phoenix's work explores how young people of mixed descent define their identities. What this research has not considered is the gendered nature of experience. I identified earlier how Mahtani (2002a) argued that women of mixed descent have particular experiences of being mixed descent. It is important particularly in relation to the examples I have provided on the accounts of young people and children of mixed descent, to consider the gendered experiences of mixed descent.

Little has been said regarding young men of mixed descent within this literature which has meant that they are more or less 'invisible'. Two relevant works on men of mixed descent are by Adrian Carton (2004) and James McBride (1997) who write about their life experiences of being of mixed descent in two different worlds. McBride (1997) is an African American-Jewish man who traces his life with his white Jewish mother living with his mother in a predominately Black neighbourhood. McBride's experiences were less associated with an 'exotic' identity but more associated with feeling out of place, particularly with reference to his mother's identity. As McBride (1997:9) writes:

> One afternoon as we walked home from the bus stop, I asked Mommy why she didn't look like the other mothers: "Because I'm not them" she said. "Who are you?" I asked. "I'm your mother". "Then why don't you look like Rodney's mother, or Pete's mother? How come you don't look like me?"

McBride's concern at the time was his mother's skin colour being 'different' to his own which according to him made his mother appear out of place in relation to him, his peers and their mothers. McBride, had for much of his life identified himself as Black, and was brought up to be 'Black', in contrast to the women in Mahtani's study who negotiated the label of mixed descent. Adrian Carton is of Anglo-Indian descent who similarly to McBride found himself questioning his identity with a constant reference to the effect that place has on identity. Like McBride, Carton has written a self reflective narrative. Because both of these examples were self narratives they are limited to the experiences of the two men when they were younger and are self reflections. This is particularly important in relation to the increase in research on youth, masculinity, race and ethnicity.

Young men are more recently being considered in relation to their ethnic and racial identities. Hence youth is being researched in relation to ethnicity, race and also religion. I identified previously how early work on masculinity attempted to theorise rather than understand the existence of different masculinities and the lived realities of men and young men. Like definitions of race, gender and masculinity are receiving more attention in terms of social constructions.

'Black masculinity' has become a focus of research on young men and there is a current wave of interest in young black masculinities in the late 20th and 21st century. For example, O'Donnell and Sharpe (2000) state that young black masculinity is an exaggerated form of masculinity and the Praketh Report (2000:31) states that 'Black is a badge of street credibility' making particular reference to Afro-Caribbean young men (Frosh *et al*, 2002). Noble (2000) identifies that has emerged a so-called 'ghetto-culture' and also as Archer (2003 and 2002) refers to 'rude masculinities'. These so-called 'rude' masculinities were predominately researched in schools and therefore a discourse of under-achievement has also emerged in the work on young Black men. Frosh *et al* (2002:16) for example, interviewed young men aged eleven-fourteen years of age in twelve London secondary schools. Two hundred and forty five boys were interviewed as part of forty five group interviews conducted, of whom seventy eight were selected for one-to-one interviews. They found that: 'white and black boys particularly attributed the characteristics of popular/hegemonic masculinity to black boys of African Caribbean descent, and racialised Asian boys and black boys of directly African descent as "not popular"'. The discourse of "hardness" and "popular" masculinity are ways of asserting that some boys are more

masculine than others (Frosh et al, 2002 and Goodey, 1998). However it also places (in some research) young Black men in a negative light particularly in the space of the school.

Frosh *et al* (2002) and Nayak and Khiely (2007) examine young people from a number of ethnic backgrounds in relation to one another in the space of the school. Research on young people and particularly young men has focused on them in the space of the school (see for example Connolly, 1998). The focus has been on race and ethnicity particularly Black masculinity within schooling. Sewell's work (1997) is an in-depth ethnographic study in two schools through which he develops two discourses of Black masculinity formulated within the space of the two schools. The first is the 'McDonald' model of masculinity which is based on Trevor McDonald. Trevor McDonald is identified as a 'proper' English citizen. The second model was the 'Yard man' model which is a caricature of the street rebel. Neither of these models actually related to the real lives of the young men but was associated with the teachers' perceptions of the young men. There is a large body of work that examines the underachievement of young black men in school (see for example, Demie, 2001 and Mamom, 2004). This is in stark contrast to earlier research on young Asian men who were identified in contrast to Black men as being academic achievers (see Cohen, 1988, Connolly, 1998, Gilborn, 1990 and Mac an Ghaill, 1994).

Young Asian men however are more recently (although still examined within the space of the school) being considered as attempting to be part of these so-called

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'tough' masculinities which they are adopting through a process of self segregation through which Archer (2001) identifies as being part of a wider discourse on 'brotherhood'. Archer (2001), in her research on Asian Muslim men found that the young men separated themselves from other ethnic groups. The following is an extract from an interview conducted by Archer:

Tamar: How do you feel about black people uh like Afro Caribbeans-

Abdul: Very stupid for mixing in with the whites, very stupid because behind their back they're saying (.) you nigger this that and you negro and

Fazaan: That's what they call them but they're black so are we!

Abdual: It's like I'm not saying they're dumb but by mixing in with the white you know what I mean they always be racist and that saying black bastard this that and they shouldn't be (.) they – God created their heart know what I mean umm that I'm black.

Fazaan: They should realise cos they are more blacker than us! You know like really black instead of brown (Tamar: yeah) they shouldn't be like that (Hightown School)

Tamar: (....) Has anyone been punished for saying anything (racist)?

Deepak: The blacks have

Tamar: the blacks?

Deepak: We – I mean have

Tamar: You have?

Deepak: All the Asians (Hightown School)

(Archer, 2001:92)

The young men in Archer's study referred to their peers at school on the basis of their race. They referred to the whites, Blacks and themselves (whom they referred to as "we") indicating a divide. In turn, research on young Asian men has been dominated with an examination of Muslim identities alongside their ethnicities, and much of the research has focused on young Muslim Asian men (Archer, 2003 and 2001; Alexander, 2000; Hopkins 2006 and 2007). Barrett, *et al* (2006) found that Bangladeshi youths had a stronger affiliation to their religious identities than mixed descent youths in their comparative study. Archer's in-depth study identifies Asian masculinity as being formed around a concept of unity via religion through which there emerges two discourses 'brotherhood' and the 'authenticity of male voices' (Archer, 2002:49). These two discourses were methods of unifying Muslim young men as a powerful group based on one commonality (see in particular Alexander, 2000). As Archer (2003:49) suggests:

> Muslim identity was talked about as unifying force, one that superseded other, possibly conflicting, national identifications and loyalties, such as potential Bangladesh-Pakistani differences. Another boy, Rahan, also suggested that the ideal of Muslim brotherhood and ummas created strength and support through a global network of identifications, saying "You got Muslim brothers all over the world so wherever you go a Muslim brother will help you".

Archer's research indicates a discourse of 'community' amongst young Asian men. The discourse of 'brotherhood' was a creation of belonging for young Asian

men, but more specifically associated with Islam connecting the young men to one another. As Archer (2002:50) suggests: 'Strong Muslim brotherhood might more usefully be read in terms of the intertwining of racial and patriarchal themes, through which the boys resist popular stereotypes of 'weak' and 'passive' Asian masculinity'. The boy's identification could be seen as straightforwardly challenging this stereotype, replacing it with an alternative association of Muslim masculinity with strength. Hopkins (2006) provides a similar analysis of Muslim masculinity in his work in which he identifies two main discourses: patriarchy and aggression and secondly effeminacy and academicism. Therefore the unifying purpose of a Muslim identity maybe considered as a method of creating what may be considered what Benedict Anderson (1991) refers to as an imagined community, drawing a form of allegiance with one another based on a commonality. This also indicates towards a form of 'othering' by Muslim men towards other young men from different ethnic backgrounds. It places young men of mixed Asian backgrounds into a feeling of un-belonging or attempting to 'pass' as Muslim Asian. Much of the research I have referred to here has been conducted within the space of the school and it is important to consider this as my research in contrast is examining young men within the home.

The examination of the space of school has considered youthful masculinities as part of what Frosh, et al (2002:150) defines as 'classroom performances'. They suggest that young men are seen as possessing characteristics of popular masculinities which as I identified previously as being associated with "toughness" and 'paradoxically, while they are feared and discriminated against because of those features, they are also respected, admired and gain power

through taking on characteristics which militate against good classroom performance'. Frosh is referring to the general category of young men as do Nayak and Kehily (2007:39) who identify the over representation of young men in crime rates, poor literacy, domestic abuse, house burglary, anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs) and gun crime. This body of work on youthful masculinities and the problems faced by young has not been limited to young Black men, there has also been an examination of white working class masculinity also (see for example, McDowell, 2002).

Similarly, Anoop Nayak's (2006b) research on working class masculinities involves a multi-site ethnographic research of two groups of young men in school, neighbourhood and city-centre sites in north-east England. The first group were from families with a skilled labour background and the second group were from families that were largely unemployed. Nayak (2006b:815) found that: 'A number of young men from long-term unemployed families found themselves to be more marginalised and isolated than ever before'. Nayak writes further: 'in response to social exclusions, many *Charvers* had developed their own leisure spaces outside of the formal night-time economy, instituting a staunch reliance upon the culture of the street. For *Charver* lads this included the mundane activity of 'hanging out' on street corners, drinking cans of beer, smoking and chatting to friends. Different combinations of cannabis, hemp and marijuana were also popular, as were other drugs including 'whizz' (amphetamines) and 'E' (ecstasy)'. Nayak, similarly to Archer (2007) identifies a discourse of public masculinities, which has demonized young working class men.

My examination of masculinity in this chapter has been preoccupied with young men in public spaces. This is because there has been a lack of work on young men within the space of the home. I wanted to explore how the gendered identities of the young men affected how they narrated their identities as well as their experiences of home, particularly as masculinity has been theorised as an ideal in gender relations and to then be considered as a public figure. I use the term public figure as much of the research has placed men in public spaces. 'Different geographies' of youth, race and ethnicity (Skelton and Valentine, 1998) are being explored which is based on the premise that it is important to consider and understand the different experiences of young people over time and space. Nayak and Kehily (2007) have also considered these experiences of youth and attempt a better understanding 'of place and its relationship to youth' (15). For young men in particular the focus on space has tended to be (as I identified earlier) preoccupied with the space of the school. Youth are occupying a particular social order in which young men are supposedly in crisis and young girls are moving forward in terms of there being polarised experiences of femininities and masculinities (Nayak and Kehily, 2007).

Often young girls and women have been placed in the home (McRobbie, 1991) however masculinity has been considered as 'mobile' and identified by Soep (2005:174) to be 'publicly delinquent, or at least disruptive – boys acting out in class, partying at clubs and concerts, cruising streets in tricked-out cars, or loitering around street corners causing trouble'. Young men have dominated work on subcultures (see Hebedige, 1979 and Hall and Jefferson, 1976) whereas young girls have dominated images of domesticity and the home. McRobbie and Garber

(1975) highlight how young girls were perceived to be out of place in public spaces such as the street and the preoccupation with young girls within the home. McRobbie (1981 and 1991) develops a further argument where she identifies what she refers to as 'bedroom culture' which was a way of emphasising the gendering of space. The private was considered to be a feminine space and the public was deemed masculine.

However there is an argument that is emerging which is suggesting that public spaces are deemed unsafe for young people 'unsafe' and what Tucker and Matthews (2001) consider as an 'adult space'. Tucker and Matthews suggests that the home is more of an appropriate space for children and young people as it a 'safe' space. In relation to this there is currently a growing field of work on young people and fear. Rachel Pain (2005) is one of the key contributors, she argues that those spaces commonly represented as 'safe' may be the sites of greatest risk for young people. Ultimately the home and public spaces such as the park, street, school and so forth are inter-related particularly in relation to young men. I however seek to explore the space of the home for young men of mixed descent. This is based on the arguments formulated in this chapter. I have identified how terminology in relation to mixed descent has shifted over time and space. For young men of mixed descent their identities were influenced by their experiences of home. The home in relation to masculinity has received limited attention (apart from the work of Tosh, 1999). It is therefore important to ask where are the geographies of mixed descent within the current work on mixed descent.

Conclusion

It is important to explore how the typologies of gender, race, age and mixed descent all come together. I have situated my discussion on 'mixed race' and race to consider the differing and varying terms which have been debated. I have therefore explored the differences between race, ethnicity and culture in relation to why I have preferred the use of the term 'mixed descent' within my research. At the same time I have also considered the importance of race in terms of understanding 'hybridity' and the role of 'whiteness' as an essentialised category.

Through my consideration of the use of autobiography and attempting to consider narratives of identity for young men of mixed descent, I hope to explore both different and similar experiences. There are factors – including age and gender – that can affect how identity is narrated The discussion of what Edwards (2008) has termed 'post race' and 'pro race' reflects the dynamic nature of mixed race and mixed descent. In this chapter I have attempted to consider the changing nature of race and ethnicity and how this has affected understandings and 'groupings' of mixed descent. Although research on masculinity has begun to examine the importance of age, race and ethnicity it is yet to include men of mixed descent.

What I have also demonstrated through my examination of these literatures is the need to examine mixed descent in terms of spatial experiences and practices. Although Mahtani (2002a and b) has suggested the need to examine the

'paradoxical' spaces of mixed descent she too does not fully engage with space and how it affects mixed descent as an identity. This is also the case with literature on masculinity which is primarily focused on the examination of young men in public spaces. I therefore seek in the following chapter to discuss the space of the home and feelings and experiences of home and its importance to young men of mixed descent.

Chapter Five

Understanding home and identity

Introduction

The home occupies a space that has yet to be explored in relation to young people, and young men particularly (although see Aitken, 2001). As such, even though the home and its relationship with people of mixed descent and diaspora is a growing area of research (see, for example, Brah and Coombes, 2000, Blunt 2005, 2006, Gowans, 2003), much of this research is limited to women with limited reference to men and their definitions and experiences of home. Furthermore, as argued in the previous chapter, young men have been predominantly researched in relation to public spaces such as the school and the street.

Focusing specifically on young men, this chapter aims to consider 'home' as a place which is constructed in terms of a sense of belonging and identity as well as through imagined spaces of belonging. It is divided into three sections. The first section considers the home as a gendered, racialised and sexualised space in recognition of the fact that the home, as Wardhaugh (1999:95) argues, is not 'merely an anchored physical space but it is more of a state of being'. As such, identity is central to how home is defined and experienced such that a discussion of home must go beyond the 'domestic ideal' (for example, Woolf, 2002) and consider how gendered, ethnic and sexual identities affect experiences of home alongside how age can also affect definitions and experiences of home. The second section focuses on the distinction between the 'Home' and the 'home.' As

this research shows, young men of mixed descent often live in their parental homes which means that their understanding of home is infused and influenced by their parents who, in some cases, are first generation migrants. It is important, therefore, to consider ideas surrounding what has been termed 'Home' and 'home'. The third and final section explores the relationship between youth, mixed descent and home. Although there is some geographical research on children and the home (Valentine, 1997b and 1996 and Sibley, 1995), this research focuses specifically on how young men of mixed descent define the home. The notion of 'Third Culture Kids' explored by Pollok and Reken (1999) is important in this context as it considers how children live within the cultures of their parents and how this can affect their experiences and definitions of home.

Understandings of home in relation of age, gender, race and sexuality

Home is constructed and understood through identity and incorporates social relations in which people can be marginalised or centralised. More traditional theorisations of the home, which can be traced back to 18th and 19th century Victorian domesticity and 'ideal' gender roles, were associated with what is known as the 'separate spheres' ideology which was a key component of gender and class relations at this time. Davidoff and Hall (1987) and Vickery (1993) argue that the world of work was separated off from the domestic realm and furthermore that the: 'separation between sexes was marked out at every level within society, in manufacturing, the retail trades, and the professions, in public life of all kinds, in the churches in the press and in the homes' (Hall, 1981: 74). Dominant gender roles and relations meant that men were empowered in both the

public and the private realm, with the concomitant emergence of masculine spaces (e.g. the world of work) and feminine spaces (i.e. the home). While men were largely invisible within the domestic realm, research illustrates that here too they assumed a dominant position as heads of households (Chapman, 2004; Tosh, 1999). Chapman (2004:59) argues that: 'In the 19th century many skilled workers in Britain consolidated their position in society as a self-reliant, proud and respectable working class men through trade union action, self help and hard work. A keystone to their status was their ability to keep a wife at home while they attended to the masculine role of breadwinning'.

It was this preoccupation with women as homemakers that led to a discourse on 'ideal homes' which considered the home and the heterosexual family as the foundations of social life (see Chapman and Hockney, 1999). Part of the argument around ideal homes dwelt on home-making practices which Blunt and Dowling (2006) argue positioned women as mothers who were primarily responsible for domestic maintenance. Using the example of Tupperware to identify the relationship between women, home and home-making, they argue that: 'By 1950s, Tupperware had become an icon of American suburbia and was an object of mass domestic consumption, imbued with particular ideas about femininity' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 111; see also Vickery 1998). The prominent image of women as central to the home and the domestic sphere also identified the home as primarily a space of belonging, an issue taken up by humanistic geographers who considered the home as a site of emotional belonging (see Tuan, 1971). For example, Saunders (1989 in Johnston and Valentine, 1995:100) argues that the 'home is where people are offstage, free from surveillance, in control of their

immediate environment. It is their castle. It is where they feel they belong'. This raises the question of belonging and the home and whether it can be applied as a homogenous experience.

In turn, the notion of the ideal home has been criticised for being based on romanticised notions of home. Mallet (2004:69) argues that:

> Critics of the ideal home reject exclusively positive descriptions and assessments of home as naive expressions of false consciousness that do not reflect people's diverse experiences and understanding of home. In other words the real and the ideal home are established as oppositional terms. Those who promote the ideal home are thought to have a diminished grasp of reality or the real.

In turn, feminist geographers have argued that the home is a site of isolation for women. For example, Blunt and Dowling (2006:26) argue that:

> The "power geometry" of lived and imagined homes is such that a dominant ideology of home valorises some social relations and marginalises others; defines some places as home and others as not, some identities homely and others not, and some experiences at home alienating, others fulfilling.

This suggests that the home is an experience of 'centres' and 'margins' formulated around identity such that 'metaphors of marginality have been used to insist upon differences between women and a distance from hegemonic culture' (Pratt, 1998:15). As such, it is important to recognise that the home is an ambiguous space of social relations and cannot be simply identified in idealistic and romanticised ways. Rose (1991) in her critique of the masculine nature of geography suggests further that for women the home was a site of oppression and

the ideals of domestic practices were in fact forms of suppression of the self for women (see also Chapman, 2004 and McDowell, 1999). Similarly, Wardhaugh (1999:91) has argued that:

> The home has been constructed as a source of identity and as an essential foundation social order. Such order, however is based on the experiences of many women of the home as a prison. These 'homeless at home' women experience abuse, violence and suppression of self within the supposed safe haven of the domestic home.

It is particularly important to acknowledge that the home can be a site of oppression for women not only due to the domestic chores associated with it but also domestic violence (see Paula Meth, 2003; also Blunt and Dowling, 2006; Wardaugh, 1999).

Furthermore, the ideal home (see Blunt and Dowling, 2006) has also been criticised for portraying the home as a homogenous site for a family unit with little recognition of age and sexuality. Home for older people can become a site of care, out-casting and unbelonging. Moss's (1996) discussion illustrates how the home becomes a problematic site due to the issue of care and the home becoming a site of care and also Isabel Dyck's work (2005). Judy Attfield (2002) in her research examines the culture of domesticity based on a study of a group of residents over the age of fifty five living in purpose built sheltered accommodation for retired people. Built sheltered accommodation is a 'type' or a 'form' of home which was based on the age of the people in question in Attfield's study, where the residents had previously lived elsewhere in another 'home'. Their 'new' homes were in fact a creation of their lives in the "last home" as

Attfield refers to in her work indicating a direct relationship between a home and age: 'Change of domicile together with the re-arrangement of household possessions was taken up as opportunity – to transact and negotiate the passage from one life stage to the next. Thus space becomes an ingredient and a projection of the active formation of individuated selfhood experienced through the active inhabitation of the domestic environment' (Attfield, 2002:258). More recently Varley and Blasco (2001) argue in their research that home, specifically the family home, becomes a confined space for older men in Mexico. They suggest that older men feel out of place in the space of their family homes and found a home space, for example in their cars, or on the roof top of their homes. The 'differences' amongst the members of a family within a home can as Varley and Blasco (2001) argue transform the home into a space of 'unbelonging'. The added dimension of sexuality further considers the home as a site of unbelonging as homes are often designed for heterosexual families.

McDowell (1992) traces the origins of the home as a heteronormative space to 19th and 20th century housing which were built, designed and financed for nuclear families. Valentine (1993) also refers to the presence of the master bedroom and smaller bedrooms for children within homes as being indicative of this. Similarly, Bowlby (1985, quoted in Valentine, 1993:399) argues that: 'the home is the spatial location of family, identity and the place within which family relations are played out'. Thus the very structure of the house incorporates the presence of a family in the development of home. More recently, Blunt and Dowling (2006) suggest that the suburban home is intended for and built for the heterosexual family rather than same sex couples or single people, a point which is reinforced

by Robinson *et al* (2004: 433) who argue that 'heterosexuality is conveniently rooted within the moral landscape of family and home'. For people whose identities do not 'fit' into categories of white, heterosexual, and middle class, the domestic space of the home can become a 'marginal' space of unbelonging. Hence it is important to consider the differences between identities and how this affects experiences of home. Gorman-Murray (2006) provides one of the most recent examinations of masculinity, home and homosexuality. He examines the experiences of home for gay men in Australia and illustrates that gay men stretch their spaces of belonging and how their private practices within the home are taken outside into the public sphere. Using autobiographical research methods within his research demonstrated that while the home is arguably a 'private space' where individuals are free to perform their private selves, enacting their private behaviours and desires' (57) however, for gay men the home 'stretched' out into the public sphere into places such as bars, and clubs which he suggests become 'homelike' where private practices take place. As he writes further (2006:57): 'home is stretched, and ostensibly unhomely bars and beats becomes homelike through functional interaction with, or substitution, for domestic spaces: bars, for instance, become "a kind of home" for some gay men'. The 'homes' identified by Gorman-Murray's participants demonstrated the ways in which gay men 'stretch' their private activities into the public which defines the public and private for gay men and suggests a 'queering' of space. Gorman-Murray's work is one of the few on how gay men use the home and their experiences of home and it is also a consideration of domestic masculinities (similarly the work of Varley and Blasco, 2001).

What Gorman-Murray's (2006) research exemplifies is that place and identity are connected in ways that involve the active processes of exclusion which are associated with gender and other identifiers. This reinforces ideas around space and identity (see Massey, 1992) and suggests that 'experiences of places and spaces are structured in all sorts of ways by broader social power relations, which include race, class and age as well as gender' (Reay and Lucey, 2000:410).

Even while the gendered and sexualised nature of the home has been recognised, much of the literature has failed to consider the importance of race and ethnicity within the home. Thus, as argued above, while the home could be a site of oppression for white, middle class women, for black women it could be a crucial site of comfort and belonging (bell hooks, 1990). Indeed, even while Black women were charged with the responsibility of maintaining domestic spaces and practises of the home, these assumed a crucially political character. hooks (1990:41) argues that:

> Since sexism delegates to females the task of creating and sustaining a home environment, it has been primarily the responsibility of black women to construct domestic households as spaces of care and nurturance in the face of the brutal, harsh reality of racist oppression of sexist domination. Historically African American people believe that the construction of a home place however fragile and tenuous (the slave hut, the wooden shack) had a radical political dimension.

Unlike white women's experiences of home, hooks identifies the home as a site of safety away from what she refers to as 'white power and control' (1990:41). The home was a site of inclusion and was a way of maintaining Black identities which were not under scrutiny as they were in the public sphere.

Research on mixed race Anglo-Indian women also illustrates how domesticity and the home were central to the construction of identities for people of mixed descent. In turn, women were identified as homemakers and this therefore understands the important role of women which empowers women's domestic role within the home (unlike Rose's, 1991 argument which demonstrated women as marginalised within the home). However, although Blunt considers mixed descent and the home it is focused on mixed descent Anglo-Indian women within the same home and reinforces the gendered nature of the home. But it does raise an important discussion of the multiple definitions of home and how home can be considered in a transnational context and which can be created and recreated. In relation to my own research, young men of mixed descent living with their parents were also part of transnational families with transnational connections which affected their definitions and experiences of home. This lends to a discussion of the wider sense of home and belonging.

'Home' and home: transnationality and mixed descent

Research on the home has also distinguished between the 'Home' and the 'home', albeit largely in relation to women and their imaginative geographies of home (for example, Blunt, 1999, 2006 and Walters, 2004 who discusses the Irish diaspora and home). This work has been informed by a growing body of research on home and diaspora which centres upon the idea of 'roots' and 'routes' (see Brah, 1996, Clifford, 1997, Gilroy, 1993, Walters, 1995, and Wolf, 2002). 'Roots' implies an original homeland, or 'Home', from which people have migrated from and to which they may return while 'routes' suggests a more mobile, multiple and

transcultural geographies of 'home'. As such, 'rather than view home as rooted, located and bounded, and often closely tied to a remembered or imagined homeland, an emphasis on 'routes' invokes more mobile, and deterritoralised, geographies of home that reflect transnational connections and networks' (Blunt and Dowling, 2006:199). Furthermore, the concept of homing and 'homing desires' situates diaspora and the home at the centre of the home debate. As Ahmed (2003:02) theorises in her work on uprooting/regroundings and considers how identity and the home, and suggests that 'regroundings of identity, culture, nation and diaspora can both resist and reproduce hegemonic forms of belonging.' The home becomes a mobile concept which travels between spaces through memories and personal possessions, a process referred to as materiality. As Mallet (2004:79) argues that:

> Being at home involves the "immersion of a self in a locality". The locality "intrudes" upon the self through the senses, defining "what one smells, hears, touches, feels, remembers". Equally the self penetrates the locality. Accordingly the boundaries between home and self and between home and away are permeable. As such when one moves away from home the movement itself occurs in relation to home, it is part of the very "constitution" of the home itself.

Mallet understands home as embracing a sense of belonging through memory, which can be understood through material culture. Tolia-Kelly's (2004a and 2004b) research focuses on South Asian women and their personal material cultures in their creations of home. Living in North London away from their 'Home', the women in Tolia-Kelly's study used material objects to create their homes in an imagined context. The material items included photographs, fabrics, pictures and paintings which had meanings beyond their textual content, and

which exemplified their transnational connections. Through the display and acquisition of material items which they related to their homelands and to their heritages the women created a museum of their heritage and identities. For example, writing about one of her respondents, Shazia, Tolia-Kelly (2004a:677) writes: 'Shazia's home was a store of connections to the social and cultural geography of Pakistan, it is a material site of respite from the hardness of living in a foreign country'. Through the display of the personal material items related to their homelands the women could feel 'at home' in London.

Tolia-Kelly's research is also important as it explores the notion of homing. Writing about another one of her respondents, Sheetal, she argues (2004a: 680):

> At the sight of the photograph Sheetal recalls the social life of her family having picnics at Lake Victoria. Although with visualising this sense she remembers the heat of the summer, the scents and sounds of food, cooking, children playing and the rush of the water...This meaning is fixed in a sensory experience.

The photograph in Sheetal's home is associated with 'homing' such that Sheetal associated home with the photograph rather than considering the house which she resided in as home. There is an important argument to be considered particularly in relation to the relationship between so-called 'real homes', 'ideal homes' and actual and remembered homes. Tolia-Kelly's respondents had a number of stored memories and personal histories within their homes (see also Perkins and Thomson, 1998).

Material cultures then have been central to work on the home, and trace the transnational connections of home and identities. Work on material cultures such as Miller (2001) and Hecht (2001) identify that material items produce a 'private cosmos' within the home which reflect the individual's tastes and to an extent their gender, ethnicity, religion and age which means that the home is a reflection of personal identities.

Reimer and Leslie (2004: 139) also identify the emotional investment in items such as furniture within the home. As they argue:

> There are multiple connections between consuming bodies in the space of the home. Furniture consumption frequently is negotiated between individuals and can come to embody shared and negotiated identity. Furniture is tactile as well as visual, and items such as sofas and beds may be explicitly tied to notions of shared intimacy in the home.

Reimer and Leslie's discussion highlights the importance of how items such as furniture within the home can define identities. Katie Walsh's (2006) research on British expats in Dubai in which she examined domestic interiors also highlights the importance of what she refers to as 'mobile homes'. In turn, the home becomes a mobile concept of domestic interior and how the material items which are mobile are moved from location to location so that the home can be re-created. Picking out 'three travelling objects' – namely a painting, a bowl which is used when cooking and a DVD of a British comedy series which is repetitively watched by a group of friends, Walsh illustrates that these are the 'pivot' of their experiences of home. This example highlights how through material cultures the participants evoked their 'homelands' and their homes were sites of storied

memories to other inherited connections and remembered or imagined homes (Blunt and Dowling, 2006 and Tolia-Kelly, 2004a and b).

Walsh (2006:138) also makes an important argument in relation to belonging which is the ultimate aim of transnational connections within the home. As she argues:

> Belonging is often experienced as intangible, as something that cannot be articulated satisfactorily. Yet, at the same time, the mutual constitution of imaginative and materialised belonging is clearly evident in expatriate homemaking. Domestic material culture reveals the interconnections between lived home spaces and a sense of belonging. On moving abroad, home must be re-conceptualised, re-created, and re-lived and three ordinary things, a painting, a bowl, and a DVD suggest the complexity, instability and multiplicity of the notion of home for British expatriates in Dubai.

Walsh's argument is focused on the creation of a space of belonging within a domestic sphere. Likewise, Blunt (1999) discusses the importance of imperial domesticity and the role of white women in home making in her examination of British domesticity in Imperial India. Household management was an important part of British colonialism in India as it was a method of establishing and maintaining Imperial domesticity. White British women performed the vital role of maintaining these practices, and through them the boundaries between the public and the private. In so doing, they drew on 'household guides' which advised British women on their domestic duties within their homes, so as to facilitate the maintenance of imperial power (Blunt, 2006). As such, British women were placed in a position where they would protect both imperial and domestic roles and responsibilities. Blunt (2002:429) argues that 'Imperial power

relations underpinned the domestic roles of British women but also the feminine 'dignity' and 'prestige' displayed on a domestic scale were likened to the successful exercise of imperial rule'.

Moving on then to explicitly consider the homes of people of mixed descent Blunt (2005) identifies a display and embracing of multiple cultures, for example, the importance of both Indian and British culture is clearly evident within the homes of Anglo-Indians (Blunt, 2005). As such, Blunt (2005:53) reports that the: 'Anglo-Indians also described their eating practices as different from their Indian counterparts. Mary, a retired teacher in Lucknow, told me, "I won't sit down to a meal without serviettes, and I cannot eat with my hands, I cannot. I've been brought up that way' (see also Petridou, 2001 and Law, 2006 who discuss the importance of food, food preparation, cooking and eating as a material culture).

Drawing on material cultures, Blunt (2005:58) identifies how the homes of Anglo-Indians were different to those of other Indians 'By fashioning their homes and domesticity as more European than Indian, Anglo-Indians domesticated a series of racial and class differences between themselves, the British and other Indians'. Blunt indicates that material cultures, home and mixed descent were important in relation to one another in the maintenance and experiences of identity. A particular Anglo-Indian heritage and culture was created within the homes, which was influenced by memories and influences of British and Indian heritage. This reveals the differing relationship with material items and identity through mixed descent and the home. Greg Noble (2004:253) argues that: 'The individual creates

the meaning behind the object and overloads it with an intimacy which is part of their subjectivity. For example: 'The accumulation of objects entails the accumulation of being, understood as our senses of self enmeshed in webs of experiences and relations, past, present and future. In the home, these objects help constitute a "material culture of love"'. In relation to mixed descent and the home, the relationships formed with material items is associated with creating a sense of belonging (similarly to the argument by Ahmed, 2003 and Tolia-Kelly, 2004a and b) in relation to the different members of the family that occupy the home. As I was examining young men in the parental home, parental material cultures were differentiated from that of the young men.

Katz (1996) in his study of families and homes of mixed parentage children in one case study of 'family A' demonstrates this difference. He comments:

> In the A family although culture was not talked about there were many signs of cultural influence on the family. Very often there was music playing when I was observing. The music was almost invariably either Reggae or Rap......The food was almost exclusively what I expected a white working class family to eat, for example fish fingers, sausage and chips, lots of Coke. There was no evidence that the children were given any "ethnic" Jamaican food......There seemed to be no conscious decision on the part of either parent to present the children with input from their own culture although culture formed a backcloth to daily family life.

Katz identifies how unconsciously family A, (who were white-Black Afro-Caribbean) were displaying cultural influences based on the mother's white heritage and the father's Afro-Caribbean heritage. The food that was eaten and the music that the family listened to inevitably influenced the 'upbringing' of the children within the home. Katz's work offers a discussion of home for young

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people and children of mixed descent in relation to their parents. I would argue that it is important to consider home beyond the domestic as well as within the domestic for young people of mixed descent as their experiences are scattered and multiple (Ifekwuingwe, 1999).

Home is a cultural infusion which could also be embraced by the children of mixed descent, and concepts of belonging. The use of material cultures and practices to mobilise home are important in discussions of home and identity for young men of mixed descent. Young men can negotiate belonging to different "homes" (Hall, 1996 and Dwyer, 2000a and b). Diane Woolf (2002) in her research on second generation Filipino students in the United States identifies home as the domestic space of their home in the US while their Home 'lies across the ocean' (263). Woolf (2002:285) argues that:

> This Home is morally superior to the home they now inhabit and constitutes the foundation for judging behaviours as proper, appropriate, or shameful. As [the children of immigrants] manage and inhabit multiple cultural and ideological ones, the resulting emotional transnationalism constantly juxtaposes what they do at home against what is done at Home. While this may offer the security of a source of identity, it also creates tensions, confusion, and contradictory messages that can lead to intense alienation and despair among some.

In the same vein, for some of the young men in my research, their parents' Homes were present within their lives and within their homes through material cultures and cultural practices.

Belonging and the home

There is a wide literature on mixed descent households and inter-racial partnering as well work on adoption and parenting (Edwards, 2008 and Katz, 1999). However the wider sense of home for people of mixed descent according to Velina Hasu Houston (1996:278) who identifies as Amerasian is: 'Home is sanctuary from the world, but it is not found in one physical place or in a particular community'. Jayne Ifekwuingwe (1999) in her book *Scattered Belongings* provides autoethnographic accounts of the English African Diaspora. She (1999:iv) argues that:

> In the de/territorialised places, which 'mixed race' cartographers map, the idea of 'home' has by definition, multilayered, multi-textual and contradictory meanings. By virtue of both 'white' English maternal and 'black' paternal continental African or African Caribbean parentage, 'home' represents an ambivalent 'Black' and 'White'. Sense of both place (England) and misplaced longings (Continental Africa and the Caribbean) their family histories are braided from gendered, bi-racialised and sexualised residues of imperial domination and colonised submission.

Home is something longed for according to the above quote and relates back to my earlier discussion of Woolf's (2002) 'emotional transnationalism'. It is also relevant to my discussion in chapter four around experiences of mixed descent and out-casting. It reveals that for people of mixed descent there is a discourse of belonging and unbelonging. Ifekwuingwe in her own narrative of home writes of her identity and power geometry:

> On an empowered day, I describe myself as a diaspora(s) daughter with multiple migratory and ancestral reference points in Nigeria, Ireland, England, Guyana and the United States. On a disempowered day, I am a

nation less nomad who wanders from destination in search of a singular site to name as home.

Ifekwuingwe situates her identity around experiences of her home which she argues are geographically scattered. Drawing upon the work of Adewale Maja Pearce (1990) who was of Black Nigerian and White English descent, she argues that the idea of home is extended to the nation such that the home is experienced as conflicting 'biracialised nationalism'. Quoting Maja Pearce, Ifekwuingwe (1999:41) writes:

> I had to learn as best I could be at home, but even the word home had complex connotations. Where was home? Was it Nigeria, my father's country? Or was it Britain, my mother's country? And how far did allegiance to the one involve a betrayal of the other? My inability to see was inseparable from the sense of betrayal.

Maja Pearce indicates towards the complicated nature of 'belonging' if mixed descent is considered, and his narrative relates both to Brah's (1996) notion of 'homing desires' as well as the concept of the imagined home. Pearce negotiates home between his 'motherland' and 'fatherland'. This also resonates with Blunt's (1999 and 2005) research on the Anglo-Indian community which identifies how the Anglo-Indian community referred to Britain as the fatherland and India as the motherland both before and after Indian Independence. Unlike Pearce's discussion of attempting a so-called allegiance to one or the other, the Anglo-Indian community sought to find a place of belonging which they could identify as home and led to the establishment of a homeland in India called McCluskieganj. Blunt, (2006:164) argues that 'McCluskieganj represented a dream for Anglo-Indian independence that was located within British India and remained loyal to the British Empire. And yet, the vision of Anglo-India home- and nation-building at

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McCluskienganj also appealed to an Indian desire for home'. Existing within these homes were both the domestic home within India but also British cultures which differentiated Anglo-Indians from the other communities, and indeed created a boundary between Anglo-Indians and other communities.

Thus, home for people of mixed descent is beyond the fixed location, hence why there is a large body of work regarding home and mixed descent and belonging specifically (including Blunt, 2005 and Stoler, 2001). The home becomes a mobile concept which I demonstrated through my examination of material culture, but it is also associated with a 'feeling' of belonging, and also being 'out of place'. For example, Edward Said (1999:6) in his memoir identifies himself as being 'out of place' through tracing his geographies of home, and stresses the importance of his racial and ethnic backgrounds in relation to his belonging. As he writes:

> I have retained this unsettled sense of many identities – mostly in conflict with each other – all of my life, together with an acute memory of the despairing feeling that I wish we could have been all-Arab, or all-European and American, or all-Orthodox Christian, or all-Muslim, or all-Egyptian, and so on. I found I had two alternatives with which to counter what is effect was the process of challenge, recognition, and exposure, questions and remarks like "What are you?"; "But Said is an Arab name"; "You're American?"; "You're American without an American name, and you've never been to America"; "You don't look American"; "How come you were born in Jerusalem and you live here?"; "You're an Arab after all, but what kind are you? A Protestant?"

Said traces his 'multiple' senses of identity in relation to his appearance and how other people perceived him. He considers in his narrative how there was a

tendency for others around him to 'question' his ethnicity, nationality, religion and so forth and this is something that I also explore in Chapters six and seven (see also M.B. Pratt, 1984 for her account of identity and home).

As I demonstrated in chapter four, people of mixed descent have often been perceived as being out of place (see Mahtani, 2002a for a critique). Moreover, many children and young people were left homeless because of being mixed descent as seen in the example of mixed descent aboriginal children in Australia who were forcibly removed from their homes. They were homeless in two contexts: firstly they were left nation-less and secondly they were left with no domestic homes. Blunt and Dowling (2006:180) write that 'For the first sixty years of the twentieth century, 'the stolen generation' of children of part-Aboriginal and part-white descent were forcibly removed from their families to be raised in residential homes, mission school and white families. In New South Wales alone, more than 10,000 Aboriginal children were removed from their homes and families' (see also MacDonald, 1995 for a more detailed discussion).

There is a strong argument to be made around the out-casting of people of mixed descent both in terms of the 'nation as home' as well as in historical accounts of being homeless without a domestic space of home and belonging. Autobiographical accounts are now considering 'growing up' as mixed descent and being part of a mixed descent culture within the home both as a fixed and imagined space. Ifekwuingwe (1999:79) work draws upon the account of one of her participants "Ruby" who was a forty three year old woman of Nigerian

(paternal) and English (maternal) descent who grew up in a children's home outside London. The time she spent in a children's home she refers to being the only Black girl and her mother had stopped visiting her when she was five. Ruby had a maternal grandmother whom she refers to in her narrative:

> During the three to four months that I was with her, if people came to the house, she would encourage me to hide or go out. Or she would say that I was somebody that she had known for a long time – that denial.............So I became very adept at hiding. I was sixteen or seventeen – quite big, but I had actually lived quite a sheltered life. That period of time with my gran brought out very much to the force what her attitude to me was and why it was like that. It was 80% because of the colour of my skin; the other 20% was the fact that I was an illegitimate child....................... But had I been a White illegitimate child it would have been very different. So as I say, 80% because of the colour – she didn't want to be associated in the blood line with a black granddaughter. She never had any photographs of me or anything like that.

Ruby was out-casted within her home which she shared with her grandmother and also within the care home she lived in as a young child due to her ethnic and racial identity. As such, an engagement with literatures on mixed race is important as it demonstrates how young people of mixed descent may embrace a 'third culture' and a 'third space' (see Chapter four). It also raises the importance of home as a lived space for young people, as young people and children tend to have experiences of home which relate to age and with whom they live with (i.e. parental home, halls of residence). Ifekwuingwe's participants identified that within their homes they were considered to be 'out of place' which they associated with their mixed descent identities but can also considered in relation to their age. Often the work on youth and the home has not observed the important relationship between 'race', and ethnicity.

Youth, mixed descent, gender and the home

Young people and children have often been deemed to be 'out of place'. As I argued earlier in the chapter, work on the home has tended to focus on women, often living within heterosexual families. Until recently there has been limited engagement of the home beyond the gendered space of the family. In relation to children, researchers have focused upon the parental home and highlighted the controlled nature of home, the existence of boundaries within the home and the 'obsessive control of space and time' by parents (Sibley, 1995:93; see also Wood, 1994 and Wood and Beck 1990). Similarly, Christensen *et al's* (2000) research is focused on 'family time' (see also James, 1998 for an examination of the relationship between home, family and school). In turn, it is important to highlight that this research has been limited to children and their experiences within the family home and that it does not discuss the relationship between gender, youth, family and home which this research seeks to do. It is therefore important to consider the issues which I have raised around belonging both in the fixed sense of home and also the imagined space of home for young men of mixed descent.

The home (in its fixed sense) can be perceived in three different contexts: the home as a safe haven; home as a space embedded with rules; and home as a place of (un)belonging. As Easthorpe (2004:134) suggests 'home has been seen as a socio-spatial entity and an emotional "warehouse" and therefore home can be seen to mean different things at different times to different people'. The additional element of race, ethnicity, gender and youth in constructions of home will challenge traditional experiences of home, particularly with the added dimensions

of mixed descent. In a fixed domestic sense, the home for young people does include a bounded space as Sibley (1995) identifies, but can also be an imagined space with the added dimensions of race, ethnicity and religion.

Dwyer (2000 and 1999) and Woolf (2002) are two of the main authors that have examined the home for young people in terms of diaspora and transnationalism. Dwyer (2000) has examined the home and diaspora among young British South Asian women and explored questions of belonging and meanings of home in relation to their parental homes and having first generation migrant parents. She argues that: 'metaphors of home are also particularly gendered and the young women have re-connected to Pakistan, both symbolically as guardians of familial cultural values and sometimes in practice, through ties of inter-marriage' (Dwyer, 2000:483). She writes further that 'while Pakistan continues to be evoked as 'home' by many of the participants this is within a context of social exclusion where belonging to a British 'home' is often denied them, yet where a fixing of identity to place is required'. The following is an interview extract from one of Dwyer's interviews:

> My mum says when you're at home we speak in our language. Because we're a family and we're Muslims we speak our own language but.....you know we don't really bother we just speak in English.

There is a direct relationship between the young girls in Dwyer's study and their parents heritages. Within the domestic space of the home the parents are attempting to recreate an imagined space of home associated with their transnational homes. However for the young girls who were born in the UK, their

identifications of home and their transnational connections are through their parents and they are therefore part of a third culture which they absorb from their parents. In contrast to Dwyer's study on young South Asian girls, Hopkins (2006) examines young Asian Muslim men in relation to their homes and how they understand the home and their families in relation to their religious identities. Hopkins (2006) identifies that in fact young Asian Muslim men are more religiously and culturally bound than young girls. Dwyer also found that (2000:479) 'local patriarchal gender relations were reinforced by young men' which is an important part of my research given its focus on young men of mixed descent.

In relation to this, there is a growing body of literature on 'Third Culture Kids' (US based) which is also examining home and identity. Third Culture Kids are children that spend, or have spent part of their childhood in countries and cultures other than their own (Pollock and Van Reken, 1999). Third Culture Kids are the first wave of young people being considered in relation to the home. Pollock and Van Reken (1999:6) identify Third Culture Kids experience of "home" as identified through their parents. As they write:

> Third Culture kids are raised in a neither/nor world. It is neither fully the world of their parents' culture (or cultures) nor fully the world of other culture (or cultures) in which they were raised. This neither/nor world is not merely an amalgamation of the various cultures they have known.

Whilst the parents of third culture kids are attempting to recreate a sense of home through material and sensory experiences (for example, Blunt's work on British India), third culture kids are in fact 'absorbing' these cultures. As Blunt and

Dowling (2006:217) suggest: 'rather than view home and identity as static fixed and singular, these articulations reveal their dynamic and multiplicity in relation to different places'. As Sichel (2004:196) writes in her narrative of home:

> "Where are you from?" I was asked and I always answered, "I was born in the States but raised in Venezuela." I wouldn't be defined by place; I was not from anywhere. My sense of family was extremely strong, but my sense of place was weak. Home was not a place, not a country. Patriotism didn't stir my soul. For me, foreign-raised, the question became one of torn loyalties. Trying to belong here, belong there, belong nowhere.

As such, Third Culture Kids shift between homes and are not located in a fixed sense of home. Sichel autobiography is similar to the autobiography of Adrian Carton who is one of the few writers to engage with being a mixed descent male. Carton's (2004) autobiographical work makes an important argument about belonging for people of mixed descent. Of mixed descent himself and identifying himself as Anglo-Indian, Carton writes (2004:76) 'I had always been uncomfortable living in England, although I had known no other country. My friends were Indian and I tended to embrace all things Indian. After all we lived in an area with a very high immigration population settled mostly by West Indians, Punjabis, Gujuratis, Sikhs'. Carton writes about feeling 'comfortable' in India because of possessing a sense of belonging to the Indian community, even though he had lived in England his whole life. Carton's understanding of home is part of an experience of belonging. Belonging for Carton, was associated with his identity and 'where' he felt comfortable and also 'felt' at home.

James McBride's (1997) autobiographical account of being brought up by his white Jewish mother considers how the family and the home will influence how young men of mixed descent will narrate their identities. Throughout his autobiography McBride refers to his home with his mother in New York and how she had brought him up without 'teaching' him about her Jewish culture and religion. He refers to home in its fixed sense which I identify as being important in relation to how McBride defines and describes his. As he writes (1997:09):

> Our house looked like a hurricane hit it. Books, papers, shoes, football, helmets, baseball bats, dolls, trucks, bicycles, musical instruments, lay everywhere and were used by everyone. All the boys slept in one rooms, girls slept in another, but the labels "boys' room" and "girls' room" meant nothing. We snuck into each other's rooms by night and trade secrets, argue, commiserate, spy, and continue chess games and monopoly games that had begun days earlier.

He also refers to his sense of belonging based on his identity and being brought up by his white mother and identifying himself as 'Black'. The above narrative is an example of home and living within the parental home and the existence of boundaries and cultures which influence children and young people. Unlike other accounts of mixed descent which seek to identify a sense of belonging in a transnational context McBride questioned his belonging in terms of not being 'white' like his mother and identifying as Black.

Conclusion

Mixed descent has yet to be considered in terms of space and place. Mixed descent people are often studied as being 'space less'. The home, as defined by

Blunt and Dowling (2006), is one which occupies multiple spaces associated with differences particularly in relation to identity. The traditional understanding of the home, however, has largely revolved around the domestic roles and identities of women. In addition to this emphasis on the feminized spaces of home, research also considers the importance of age, race and sexuality in shaping different experiences and understandings of home. . Despite a growing body of research on transnational and diasporic experiences of home (including Woolf, 2001), 'race' is still significantly under theorized in relation to experiences of home.

Ideas and experiences of home are often closely bound up with a sense of identity and belonging. In this chapter I have demonstrated how many people of mixed descent have been rendered 'homeless' and out of place in relation to the nation as 'home.' . By considering 'imagined' homes I attempt to identify how one can be 'at home' in different spaces and locations through my consideration of Carton's (2004) work.

Ultimately I have attempted to engage with the literatures on home and identity which has demonstrated the lack of engagement with men and the home and people of mixed descent and the home. It is important to consider how young men of mixed descent experience the home both within and beyond domestic spaces.

Chapter Six

Meanings of mixed descent: How do young men of mixed descent narrate their identities?

Introduction

Being mixed race, it's not really a term that I would use as I don't have a racial mixture, only thing I know I am is English and that I am Brian, not because of who my ancestors were, but because of what I am now (Brian, first interview).

Research on mixed descent has shifted between various terms and languages (see Chapter four). Indeed, in contrast to the literature which seeks greater recognition of people of mixed descent (see Spencer, 1997), the young men in my research did not feel any form of empowerment by terms such as mixed descent or mixed race. Instead, they had their own self identified categories and definitions. This is reflected in the above quote taken from an interview with Brian. Like most young people, his identity was in process rather than being fixed, (see Skelton, 2008 and my earlier discussion in chapter two) and rather than forming a narrative of identity which centred on his past and his heritage, he identified with where he was living and his upbringing in the present.

This chapter is formulated around narratives of identity based on personal experiences in multiple social contexts. I divide this chapter into two main parts: terminology and mixed descent and, parental positions and narratives of identity. In the first part of the chapter I aim to consider the differing ways in which young

men determine their own identities as mixed descent and also their gendered experiences in relation to this. Given that my participants were from a variety of backgrounds (see table 6.1), I seek to construct an argument that considers the multiple positionalities of the young men. As such, this section of the chapter goes beyond a consideration of mixed descent as 'black and white' and also includes a discussion of young men of other mixed heritage. It then goes on to focus specifically on the importance of masculinity and mixed descent.

The second part of the chapter is formed around the importance of parental and peer influences on the identities of the young men in relation to my discussion on mixed descent and terminology. I develop my argument around masculinity in relation to how the peers of the young men affected their narratives. I then go onto examine the differences between those living in single parent households and dual headed households and how this impacts on how the young men narrate their identities. This also involves a discussion of class and parental class positions.

Mixed Descent and Terminology

In this research, I sought to examine how young men of mixed descent 'narrated' their identities. The theory of narratives of identity was first considered by Paul Ricoeur (1988) in which he recognised the temporality of identity. Building upon this, McNay (2000:81) identifies that 'The act of self-narration is central to identity formation; experience is organised along the temporal dimensions, in the form of a plot that gathers events together into a coherent and meaningful structure which, in turn, gives significance to the overall configuration that is the

person'. Such views are also evident in the work of Fincher (2004: 330) who argues that narratives 'are forms of thinking/talking that see events as being presentable as a coherent story – with a beginning and an end, and a central or guiding set of circumstances'. In turn, Riceour (1988) argues that identity is not something autonomous but is relational. I expand on what I introduced in chapter one and the work of Somers (1994) and Valentine (2000) and how narratives can trace on-going events which can affect identity.

Within this research, the narratives of the young men reflected senses of identity which were constructed around not only racial but also ethnic, cultural and also national differences some of which are set out in Table 6.1 below (see also Ali, 2003 and Olumide, 2002).

Table 6.1: Outline of participants backgrounds

Name of Participant	Age	Mother's background	Father's background
Ali	17	Pakistani	Bengali
Arslan	17	Scottish	Bengali
Blake	16	Eurasian – Indian-French	Nigeria
Brian	16	White South African/Jewish and was adopted by her Zambian and Zimbabwean family	Zambian
Carl	18	Irish	Ghanaian
Craig	16	English	St. Lucian
Damien	16	Spanish-Italian	Nigerian
Daniel	18	Portuguese/White	White

Name of Participant	Age	Mother's background	Father's background
David (brother of Craig)	17	English	St. Lucian
Jason	17	English	Jamaican
John	16	Nigerian	Jamaican (however John was living with his mother and step father who is English)
Marlon	16	English	Jamaican
Simon (twin brother of John)	16	Nigerian	Jamaican (however John was living with his mother and step father who is English)
Tariq	19	Malaysian	Pakistani

The young men in my research, similar to the participants in Minelle Mahtani's (2002a) research on women of mixed descent living in Toronto, negotiated and debated various terms such as mixed race, multiracial and other such terms. They engaged with the problems associated with the terminology of mixed race and mixed descent and articulated their identities in ways that reflected their social as well as their personal experiences of being mixed descent.

In the first interview that I conducted with Brian I asked him how he would describe his ethnicity:

Brian: The thing is I would always think of myself as English first and then my ethnicity. I think yes, because ethnically you could say that I am mixed race as I don't have a specific culture which I came from....

Akile: What does that mean to you? Being mixed is that a correct term to use?

Brian: Well I suppose for generalisation because all the other terms are to do with heritage. I don't really have a different heritage. London and England are where my culture is. It is where I was brought up. So I wouldn't describe myself as being from different heritages. The only thing that separates me from other and any other English person is that I have a different racial background.

Brian situates his identity specifically in the city and the country where he lives. As such, his narrative is formulated around what I identify as nationality. He negotiated his identity in relation to what he perceived as being important to him, and 'race' was secondary to his national identity. Craig also referred to his national identity: *"Don't really use any terms that talk about being mixed as I am English. I am English because I was brought up in England and I wouldn't use mixed descent really"*. As Root (2004) argues mixed descent individuals can identify themselves as being whatever they feel and as Brian argued while he may 'look' African he 'felt' English and therefore identified as being English rather than identifying as being of mixed descent. Jason, like Brian lacked an understanding of any connection with the term mixed descent and his own identity: *"I ain't just some mixed race kid"*. In turn, Damien chose to articulate his identity via his parental history: *"I am part Latin, part Italian and part Nigerian that tells you exactly where I am from and who I am."* Damien's narrative of identity considered his heritage in relation to his parents, as well as dividing his identity into 'parts' based on his ethnicity.

This said, although Brian identified as being English, he also stressed the importance of race:

> *It made me think that although I am dark skinned............and Asian people think I am black and Somalians think I am from Somalia erm but in terms of my DNA my children are more likely to get white genes than black genes.*

Brian makes a direct reference to race as being a biological concept whereas other participants spoke about race in relation to their appearances. Moreover, unlike Brain, other young men identified as being Black and expressed limited recognition to being 'mixed descent' Marlon was one such participant: *"I am Black because I look Black."* Marlon refers to his identity via his physical appearance which he equates with race, rather than referring to his descent or heritage like Craig and Brian. Marlon's narrative suggests further:

Akile: So how do you define yourself?

Marlon: You know I am Black, why you asking?

Akile: I am asking you how you define yourself, not how others see you.

Marlon: Just Black, my family is black apart from my mum, she's White innit.

Akile: Why do you say you are Black and not White, if your Mum is White?

Marlon: Do I look White? No. Exactly.

(First interview)

Marlon's narrative highlights the invisibility of whiteness which is discussed in further detail later in the chapter. In much the same way, Ray also considered himself as Black. He said: *"I can only be Black because that's how I am and how I look. Sometimes I just say mixed but I'm Black". I'm Black, just look me."* Blake also preferred to be identified as 'Black' which he based on his appearance:

> *Blake: I'm darker and also my surname is a Nigerian surname. When my name is called out people know from my surname that I am Black. Like, for my cousin her surname is [...........] because her Dad is French Indian. She has a different surname to me and people say racist things to her because of her name and the way she looks are not connecting.*

> Akile: So you think that your physical appearance is important when talking about identity?

> *Blake: Yeah.*

(First interview)

Blake's reference to his surname as being Nigerian and the fact that he "looked Black" made him 'feel' authentically Black rather than being French Indian (as his mother is). Blake displayed a sense of satisfaction and nationalism through his Nigerian heritage, in relation to the colour of his skin:

> *It would be weird to have a name like Suni [his cousin] I am glad that I look Black 'cause Suni is proper white. When we were out the other day no one could guess that we were related. Not that it matters.*

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(Diary entry, July, 2006)

As such, it was easier for Blake to claim and pass as Black. I asked Blake further about his cousin and how she "looked" less Black than him:

> *Blake: My cousin right...When her name is called on the register at school, people give her funny looks because she doesn't look like no Indian person. She looks just English and White.*

Akile: How do you think people perceive you?

> *Blake: Sometimes they just don't know. Like sometimes I get funny looks. Like, how could that be your son? But like, I've never had any physical abuse. But I've had people calling me names like half caste. So it is sort of easier to be just Black.*

(First interview)

Being referred to 'half-caste' as a form of name calling is a way of out-casting, an experience which Jason shared with Blake. He discussed one incident during his first interview:

Akile: What terms or words would you use to describe your identity?

> *Jason: Just mixed I suppose generally. Although most people see me as being Black.*

Akile: Why is that?

> *Jason: You just get it that a guy can't just be mixed race, he got to be either Black or White. You cannot be both.*

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Akile: So you think that the term mixed race is ok?

Jason: It's ok, it's better than what we used to be called at school.

Akile: What were you called at school?

Jason: Well, everyone used to just say half-caste. It wasn't a big deal when we were younger. But when I think now.....It ain't a great word is it?

Akile: Not at all.

Jason: You know what though this is funny...[laughs] One time at school this guy called me a diluted nigger. I mean I heard some bad cusses in my time but that was just classic. I couldn't stop laughing at it.

Akile: So you just laughed at it?

Jason: What else am I suppose to do? I can't get into a fight about it can I? It doesn't really bother me what people have to say when it comes to things like that. Because really I am just Jason I ain't just some mixed race kid I am Jason. That's all that matters really to me.

(First interview)

The use of the term 'diluted nigger' is a way of out-casting Jason by his peers who emerged as a significant force in shaping the identities of the young men. This was illustrated by the fact that when I first asked Jason how he would identify

himself, he answered with a consideration of how others perceived him as being 'Black'. However his narrative then displayed similarities with that of Brian who also identified as being 'just Brian', thus considering his identity beyond terms of race and Black and white.

There has been a preoccupation with 'black and white' races in research on mixed descent (see for example, Tizard and Phoenix 2002). My research moved beyond this by recruiting young men from a variety of backgrounds (see table 6.1 above; also see Mahtani and Moreno, 2001). I interviewed two brothers Simon and John who were from mixed Black backgrounds (see table 6.1) who identified themselves as being English: *"I would have to say just English because that's what we know. We haven't known anything else. We don't know much about Black cultures. Even though Mum is from Nigeria and we do see our family I think living where we do......"* *(Simon)*. In turn, Ali, who identified himself as being mixed descent when I recruited him for the research, was also an interesting participant as his mixed descent identity was formed around two different cultures: *"It is two different cultures being Pakistani to being Bengali"*. He expanded further in his interview:

Ali: My Mum is Pakistani not my Dad, so we have been brought up Bengali not Pakistani.

Akile: What is the difference?

Ali: Pakistani people are different to us.

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Akile: What do you mean by 'us'?

Ali: Like Bengali people. This is more 'cause of living in East London. Everyone knows the way it is. Like living the way we do.

(First interview)

For this set of participants, mixed race was a term which they themselves associated with black and white mixed youth. Tariq, for example, who identified his father as being Pakistani and his mother as Chinese crucially identified himself as different from mixed race youth. He said: *"Well I wouldn't say that I am mixed race, because that is really to do with people who are Black and white mixes, in my opinion I would say that I am half Chinese, and half Pakistani, and definitely Muslim. "* The importance of religion was also raised by other young men. Arslan, whose mother was Scottish and father was Bengali identified himself as Muslim: *"I am Muslim that's what I would say first of all because people will understand that because it's just religion if you start going on and on about where your parents are from. And you know what it's what I know to be mixed is just weird isn't it when you ain't got a black parent, I got a brown parent (laughs). "* Religion played an important role in the lives of Ali, Arslan and Tariq and this is how they opted to narrate their identities. In relation to their gendered identities this is of particular importance as there is a growing body of work on what has been referred to as 'Muslim masculinities' (see Chapter four and Hopkins, 2006 and 2007).

Hopkins (2006) and Archer (2001) have identified a discourse of 'brotherhood' within their research on young Muslim men. Ali in his second interview stated the

following: *"I would always always think of myself as Muslim. Just because my parents are from two different countries I don't tell people that I'm different. All of my mates are the same as me, [Bengali] so we all are Muslim so that's what we are. Yeah that's what we are."* This demonstrates what Archer (2001 and 2003) argues in her research.

The gendered nature of this research is particularly important as it affected how the young men narrated their identities. Youthful masculinities I would argue are associated with concepts of belonging. Hence the research and literature on masculinities has also been considered as part of a discourse of 'competing masculinities' (Goodey, 1998). For example, Carl identified himself as being 'Black' and based this on a particular rationale associated with his appearance:

Akile: OK. If I asked you where you are from, what would you say?

Carl: I'm just black. People when they look at me they just see black, so I don't really think any different. Especially at college, I am black I look black. I've even got braids.

Akile: Do you think your braids make you black?

Carl: Well you know like my hair is black hair so I can't exactly be white even if my mum is White.

Akile: OK. If I asked you where you are from, what would you say?

Carl: I'm just black. People when they look at me they just see black, so I don't really think any different. Especially at college, I am black I look black. I've even got braids.

Akile: Do you think your braids make you black?

Carl: Well you know like my hair is black hair so I can't exactly be white even if my mum is White.

(First interview)

Carl suggested that his braids were part of his narrative of identity, a finding which is echoed in other research on youthful masculinities. For example, O'Donnell and Sharpe (2000) and also Frosh *et al* (2002) have identified the popularity of Black masculinity, albeit in relation to Asian and African young men who were identified in Frosh *et al's* study as being 'unpopular'. Carl's specific reference to his braids is an indication of his attempt at being part of this 'popular masculinity': *"What I look like.....yeah it's important obviously especially image"*. Nayak and Kehily (2007) suggest that images of 'hard' and 'tough' masculinities which could be a rationale behind why some of the young men chose to identify as Black.

Identifying as Black was also part of a particular sub-culture. I would argue that at present there is a growing sub-culture of 'fashionable ethnicities'. Carl's braids according to him were a signifier of his identity and a Black sub-culture: *"I look like Rio Ferdinand that's so cool and with my braids I look even more like Rio*

Ferdinand." Carl related his identity to an 'image' of what Black masculinity equated to him. For example, his reference to Rio Ferdinand as 'cool' indicates a particular sub-culture which is associated with music and fashion preferences. He also spoke of his job being 'fashionable': *"I really enjoy having a job and being in the West of London. It is so cool. Because of the way that I look that I got the job."* Carl worked as a bouncer in a night club in the west of London, and he felt that his appearance had been instrumental in getting him the job. In turn, his appearance and lifestyle helped to shape his identity. Karlsen (2004:111) suggests that 'ethnicity, for example, can be potentially defined according to skin colour or ancestry, by lifestyle or social experience and use of a different definition may lead to varying conceptions of who is, and who is not, 'black''. She states further that 'the identity of those around you as well as their reactions will influence how you see yourself at any particular time (so which of your multiple identities is most salient) and what being 'one of those sorts of people' means to you' (Karlsen, 2004:112). Ray's identification as being Black was a reaction: *"I chose to say I'm Black, that's it"* *(Ray)*. The young men in my study each had their own meanings of identity and saw themselves in differing ways. The narratives of Carl, Marlon and Ray and to an extent Blake suggested a preference to refer to themselves as Black or, as Karlsen (2004) argues, how they saw themselves at that particular time was Black.

Similarly, Blake stated the following: *"It is cool now to be Black, Black music and Black artists are cool."* Damien also identified with a similar opinion: *"It is all so cool to be Black now, whereas before it was seen as something bad."*

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Damien's mother also expressed the same view when I spoke to her[1] arguing that it was now much more acceptable to be Black. This reinforces my earlier discussion on new forms of hegemonic masculinity as suggested by Frosh *et al* (2002) and Robb (2007). These newer forms of hegemonic masculinities are associated with Black youthful masculinities which have impacted on young men of mixed descent.

In terms of the importance of masculinity the role of peers was also prevalent in terms of a questioning of identity and of what could be referred to as 'acceptance'. David, spoke of how his peers thought of Black as being cool as Blake, Carl, and Damien have demonstrated in their narratives. He spoke in his second interview of how his St. Lucian heritage was questioned by his peers who were St. Lucian: *"Because I'm part St. Lucian the St. Lucians at school expect me to be Black and speak and act a certain way"*. Further in his second interview he elaborated:

Akile: What is the St. Lucian crew?

David: It's some random name that they [people at college] have come up with. But you see there are a lot of people from St. Lucia at my college and they think that somehow I am letting them down by not being in their crew as they like to call it.

Akile: What they actually segregate themselves off because of them being St. Lucian?

[1] Before interviewing Damien his mother asked to meet with me and discuss the research and the questions. The meeting proved to be very useful to the research as she provided answers to some of the questions of the research through her own experiences.

David: Yes that's exactly what they do. And they want me to be part of it as well. But I just don't see myself as St. Lucian.

Akile: Why? What do you mean?

David: How can I claim a heritage that I know nothing about. Do you understand what I mean? Like, I haven't been to St. Lucia since 1992. I don't know any of my St. Lucian family.

(Second interview)

David, during his first interview and throughout his written electronic diaries identified as being English. His second interview was an example of his identity after he had begun college which demonstrates the importance of his peers. Marlon, more specifically suggested that his identity was formulated around what others perceived him to be:

Marlon: You know you got to know what to say when you are with your crew.

Akile: What do you mean?

Marlon: I think that if you started explaining to my mates about being mixed they would just tell you that I am Black. But like my mum, I am sure she would say Marlon's dad is Black and she is English.

Akile: So do you define your identity differently to your friends than your mum does?

Marlon: Well sort of I don't really talk about my identity at all to any of them.

(First interview)

The use of the term 'crew' by both Marlon and David highlights the importance of peer groups in shaping identities. It relates to the growing work on youthful masculinities (see in particular Alexander, 1996 and 2000 and also see chapter four) which is formed around what has been referred to and what I identified earlier as 'competing masculinities' (Goodey, 1998). The idea of competing masculinities for young men of mixed descent is complicated by the multiple statuses that they occupied because of being mixed descent; how their peers identified them as well as how they identified themselves. Carl's narrative for example, highlighted this: *"All of my mates just see me as Black and I can see why. I am a Black guy"*. Due to peer group influence I would suggest that Carl, Marlon and Ray felt it 'easier' to identify as Black. For instance, the young men had a tendency to refer to their 'mates' and how they saw them as 'Black'.

The use of terms associated with appearance had a tendency to exclude and include the young men. The questioning of their identities was a questioning of mixed descent and what it meant to be of mixed descent and essentially a shifting between centres and margin (Pratt, 1998). This is particularly important with regards to what could be referred to as 'growing up mixed descent'. There is a large body of literature which examines children of mixed descent (Jacobs, 1992) and also (Cauce *et al*, 1992) which focus on mixed descent adolescents in

America. As Cauce *et al* (1992:214) argues 'identity for all children. having friends is the utmost social achievement and an indication of social competence`.

There was an attempt by the young men to 'belong' to a group in an attempt to be 'accepted' by their peers in particular. This was in relation to masculinity. and masculine ideals (idea of 'tough' and 'powerful' masculinities associated with 'Black Masculinity). It appeared that for both Blake and Carl in particular being part of a popular form of masculinity was important hence their tendency to refer to 'Black'. Daniel whose mother was Portuguese/white and his father was white English also identified as being Black:

> *Daniel: Blackness is mixed race people even the Chinese are black. So we don't have a chance to be influenced by anything, the moment we step out of the house we are Black. So you just go with it and people think you are Black. But situations and different people can affect mixed race people I think.*

Akile: What do you mean?

> *Daniel: Like when I go clubbing and I'm with my friends I'm a Black boy out. But when I go to the library and I'm reading a book well......I'm a white boy.*

Akile: Can you expand on that, it's very interesting.

Daniel: Like when you go clubbing the people that approach me are either Black or mixed race. But when I go to the library it's the white people that approach me. Talk to a Black guy in the library and they think that you are probably messed up.

Akile: What do you mean?

Daniel: All this has to do with society and other guys I think in particular branding you.

Akile: You mean stereotypes?

Daniel: Well there are Black guys that love to read books and there are white guys that can drink till tomorrow but people don't see that they see what they want to see.

Akile: What do you mean?

Daniel: Well Black and white people they don't need masks do they.

Akile: What do you mean?

Daniel: You can see what they are can't you, but mixed race people they need a mask because they need to be something because need to put you somewhere and people see me as Black most of the time.

(First interview)

Daniel was one of the only participants to explicitly discuss the importance of different spaces when discussing his identity. He raises an important point that it was others 'branding' Daniel as Black rather than considering his mixed descent that led him to narrate this identity. Although in the above interview extract he considers that in the library he is perceived as white this is the only reference that he makes to whiteness.

Similarly Arslan and Tariq throughout the research identified themselves as being Muslim, they experienced a 'questioning' of their 'authenticity':

Akile: Well, how would you identify yourself?

Arslan: Well Muslim.

Akile: So you are Muslim?

Arslan: Yeah, but you know people never think it! You know what I always get when people ask me?

Akile: Ask you what?

Arslan: Where am I from?

Akile: No?

Arslan: You don't look Bengali, you're so White, blah blah. It's such a load of crap.

Akile: Does that upset you then?

Arslan: It does, but you know it upsets them that I'm whiter. You know the other Bengali guys, because Bengali girls prefer guys that are not so dark like some of the guys around here.

(First interview)

Similar to what I referred to earlier in relation to race as a identifier of identity, Arslan makes a similar statement to Blake and how he 'looked' different. During my first interview with Tariq we discussed how others perceived his identity:

Akile: What do people think when they meet you?

Tariq: Most people, especially at uni think that I am Chinese. They're shocked when I say I'm Muslim.

Akile: Why is that?

Tariq: Because I don't look like I'm Muslim. The people at my uni are mainly Muslim because of being in the East End. So like most of the guys are Muslim and you know they look and act a certain way, and I'm just not like that.

Akile: What do you mean?

Tariq: Well, you know they act like they are really good Muslim and stuff when really when they do the opposite of what their parents tell them.

(First interview)

Both Arslan and Tariq are set apart from their peers who they referred to as other Muslim men. This relates to the argument by Archer (2001 and 2003) who in her research found that young Asian men referred to themselves as being "we" and their white peers as "them". Archer (2003) and Barrett *et al* (2006) have suggested that a discourse 'brotherhood' and the 'authenticity of male voices' (Archer, 2002:49) was a way of creating what could be perceived as a 'imagined community' amongst Muslim men. I asked Tariq why he was questioned by his peers when I interviewed him on the second occasion:

Tariq: I just think that they only know one type of Muslim and that's just someone who is either Bengali or Pakistani, basically Asian. They just see me as Chinese and I'm not Chinese. When you say to them that you are fasting they think you are taking the piss.

Akile: And how does that affect you? How does that make you feel?

Tariq: I try not to let it bother me but most of the time I tend to have female friends as they don't really question you about these things.

Akile: Why is that?

Tariq: I have a really close friend that is a Muslim girl and it is not a problem she never questions me or asks silly questions like some of the other guys at uni can ask.

Akile: Like what?

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*Tariq: Just stupid question most of the Bengali guys can be so silly. I just
don't let it bother me. I know that I am Muslim just because they don't
understand it. It's really their problem.*

(Second interview)

Although both Arslan and Tariq identified as Muslim they were challenged by
their Muslim peers, which is particularly influential as the area of Tower Hamlets
is predominately Muslim (see also Chapter 2).Together with their peer groups,
parents also had a profound impact on how the young men narrated their identities
which I turn to consider now.

Parental positions and narratives of identity

Parents, as well as household composition had a fundamental influence on how
young men expressed their identities. Those from mixed Black backgrounds could
be divided into two different sub-groups who expressed different narratives of
identity: those who lived in single parent household with their single white mother
and those who lived in dual headed households. This was an important part of the
research as it was predominately the young men with white mothers who chose to
identify as being Black (apart from Daniel whose mother is white). Daniel for
example, even though neither of his parent's was 'Black' he identified as being
Black but also suggesting the following:

Akile: Why identify as Black?

Daniel: Because my mum is mixed and that brands her as Black.

Akile: Why?

Daniel: Well white means 100% white, you can't be partially white, and living with my mum you are influenced by that.

Akile: What do you mean?

Daniel: Well it has influenced, but not a lot I make my own decisions. I do my own thing and I know that society brands you Black so it's just the way it is. My mum is not white really she is Black like me, maybe it would be

different if I spent more of my time with my Dad but I don't know, I can't think about that really.

(Second interview)

Daniel, similarly to what he suggested in his first interview once again raises the point of only being able to identify as Black. He suggests that the absence of his father has meant that he was largely influenced by his mother within the space of the home. There is a large body of work on single parent families (see Bumpass, 1989, 1995 and McLanachan, 1994). The important point in this research in relation to single parent families was the invisibility of the mothers' whiteness in relation to the young men's identities. Carl lived with his mother who was White Irish, yet he identified as being Black even though he had little to no contact with his father: *"Don't have anything to do with my Dad, that's the way it has always been and I haven't seen my Dad since I was like nine. "* This was common for a number of the young men who lived with their single mothers, i.e. Daniel, Marlon, Ray and Jason. While Jason told me that *"Don't see my Dad at all anymore. I saw him a few times in the street, so I know who he is, just don't know anything about him "*, Ray and Marlon had never met their fathers. Thus Ray said:

"*I ain't ever seen my Dad*" and Marlon stated that: "*Don't know much about my Dad and Mum doesn't talk about him. I wonder about him but that's it. I've got my Mum*". I would say that these young men were attempting to acquire their paternal identities which they also associated with as part of a popular and hegemonic form of youthful masculinity. Blake, as I illustrated earlier, preferred to be identified as Black and stated the following: "*I wouldn't like my Dad to be where my Mum is from because it's weird she is like mixed as well but not like me*". As such, I would argue that Blake actively 'passed' as Black. This resonates with Ali's (2003:13) research which illustrates that passing as Black is less complicated than claiming a mixed descent identity or passing as white which she identified as impossible. In the same way, it appeared to be difficult for the young men in my research to associate themselves with their mothers' whiteness[2]. Damien's narrative illustrated this:

Damien: Like...Being Black, because that's what people think when they see me and that's what my mum has taught me to fight against.

Akile: What do you mean?

Damien: Well, cause, like being Black, and being around here it's problematic. People just think that you are trouble and the police stop you and stuff.

Akile: Why do you think that they stop you?

Damien: Because I look Black.

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[2] It was difficult to assess the roles of the participants mothers' in the research as I did not interview family members.

(First interview)

Daniel also stated that he was unable to identify as being mixed because others perceived and *'branded'* him as Black. McBride's (1998) autobiography also identified similar findings. His white, Jewish mother was central in his life but he also identified as Black (although this was based on his mother 'raising' him Black). Tizard and Phoenix (2002: 101) further illustrate that young people who referred to themselves 'Black' were 'holding these views was not related to living with a black parent – they were often held by young people living in an otherwise all-white household'. In much the same way, even while these young men in my research were living with their white single mothers, they failed to identify as being part of a white heritage. Whiteness appeared to be inaccessible to them (see also Stoler, 2000). Jason spoke about the invisibility of his mother's whiteness in relation to him: *"It is just that people see you as Black and think how can that be your Mum because she is white"*. Marlon also made a similar comment: *"I think that people will always see you as Black because my Mum is White not me"*. The young men saw their identities separate to their mothers' identity. Damien also made reference to his mother being White and his ethnic identity being different to hers:

> *We had to go to this reunion thing which I didn't want to go to (but mum thought that it would be fun). People kept asking Mum if I was her son because I'm darker than her. It was actually quite funny (Mum and my aunty Claire kept laughing) I don't think they even knew half the people there. It seemed a big deal to be with a Black guy in my mum's culture.*

(Diary entry, August, 2006)

This reinforces the arguments around whiteness and racial mixing which are used to maintain the boundaries of whiteness. Similarly Lazzare (1997) in her account of raising her mixed descent sons as a white mother also discusses the issues of raising what she refers to as 'Black' sons. Rather than viewing her sons as being of mixed descent she spoke of her sons as being racially different to herself in terms of the colour of their skin. Like one of Olumide's (2002:31) participants who stated that: 'As a white woman out on my own, I can go anywhere. As a white woman with my black kids, I am called names. As a white woman out with black kids and a black man, I am a "white bitch" and my kids are "black bastards"'.

Within all of the narratives of identity the young mentioned their parents occupying various positionalities within their homes and lives. Narratives of identity among young men who lived in dual headed households were subtly different from those expressed above. For these young men – Brian, Craig and David – being English was also an important aspect of their identity. Simon and John spoke about how they disliked being referred to as Black. Living with their Nigerian mother and English step-father, they argued that they were different to *"other Black guys"*:

Akile: Would you consider yourself Black?

Simon: Well, I know I am Black but I just never think of myself like that.

Akile: Why? What do you mean?

Simon: Well...I am mixed, especially........well because of my cultural mix. I have loads of different cultures, but I am not like other Black boys.

Akile: What are other Black boys like then?

Simon: You know the "rough riders in the hood". They think that they are all like well.....gangsters. But it is just an image.

(First interview)

Simon's reference to 'rough riders' is similar to masculinities being identified as 'tough' and 'hard' masculinities (see Chapter four and also Robb, 2007 for a review). Simon wanted to be disassociated from this image and argued that he was not Black, or like "other Black boys". Although I did not explicitly discuss class with the young men it became an important part of the research as it evolved. In the context of research, class was understood to refer to the class of the families of the young men. For example, Simon identified the importance of his mother's education in relation to how he was brought up. When I interviewed Simon for the second time I asked him to expand upon this idea of 'rough riders' and the issue of class:

Akile: I am not sure what you meant by rough riders that you spoke of the first time I interviewed you?

Simon: Well, what well... what did I say again? Oh yeah yeah. You know like the guys from street.

Akile: Do you mean boys from poorer backgrounds?

Simon: Well you know the boys that get mixed up with the wrong crowd. You understand. Well...sometimes they try to be cool and they don't have any other way...well...they don't have any decent friends.

(Second interview)

Simon, unlike the other participants who identified as Black, preferred to disassociate himself from this. He perceived himself to be part of separate group based on him having a different set of friends (which goes back to my earlier discussion on peer influences). However Simon referred to the important role of his mother and step-father in how he narrated his identity:

We have been brought up different, because of my Mum being educated and so is my step Dad. So well it's very different.

Similarly, John referred to his mother's role:

It's my mum that has encouraged me and my brother to just be English because we live in England and we know all things English like, that's how we were raised. We are not in Africa like to be acting some of the ways that other Black boys act.

Simon also stated that:

My mum didn't want us to learn how others act, like you know, rough. She always said we have to learn to be respectful and brought us up to be English because we live in England and being English is part of a heritage you know.

Identifying as English was present throughout the narratives of Craig, David, Brian as well as Simon's. They situated their Englishness in relation to their class status, which was associated with their parental class positions. For example, in Twine's (1996) work on young women whose fathers' were African American and mothers were European-American, European-Jewish American or Asian, she argues that these young women were raised white through their 'immersion in a

family and social network which embraced a racially unmarked, middle class identity' (Twine, 1996: 208). While the upbringing of the young men in my research was difficult to examine as I did not interview their parents or family, it could be inferred from the narratives of the young men. Brian, for example, said that: *"For all people who are Black, Asian or any other ethnic minority if they are middle class it is difficult for them to be anything"*. Brian went on to write in his diary:

> *I am neither black nor white nor Asian. What I am, very definitely, is middle class. (I probably sound unbelievably trite in print.) The chances are that I will marry someone from a similar background, and that they will either look white or be white. My children will be white; or at least they will be perceived as being white, which is the important thing.*

Brian's argument suggests that because of his class status he was unable to identify with being Black as well as difficult to identify as mixed. Craig also considers his identity in terms of class and upbringing: *"I would consider myself White based on my experiences, they haven't got anything to do with being Black."* Similarly, I quoted from David's narrative where he stated he could not identify as being St. Lucian because of having an English upbringing and living in England. It also indicated towards a particular understanding of 'Black' being constructed against white by Craig and also Simon and John. For these particular young men to be associated with being Black was part of a rather negative imagery of Black masculinity (see Chapter four for further discussion of this).

Therefore as Twine suggests in relation to her participants, 'race' in terms of being Black based on the way that they "looked" (as Carl for example, demonstrated earlier in the chapter), was not a part of their narratives of identity

as children. Sewell (1997) and also Frosh *et al* (2002) identify two models of Black masculinity in their research on the role of class in shaping ethnicity: the 'McDonald model' and the 'yard model.' The 'McDonald model' identifies a middle class Black identity which like Trevor McDonald exemplified a 'proper' English citizen. The 'yard man model' on the other hand was a caricature of the so-called 'street rebel' (see Chapter four also). Although Sewell's research was focused on the space of the school, these two models were reflections upon the upbringings of the young men in his study. Twine (1996:209) similarly argues that:

> The acquisition of a white cultural identity begins in childhood and requires a confluence of factors. Being raised by a white parent is often necessary but not a sufficient condition for the establishment of a white identity. A white parent is not necessary to acquire a white cultural identity. Individuals with Asian parents (Chinese, Korean, and Japanese) were also able to acquire a white cultural identity in their predominately white suburban milieu and white schools.

Twine is suggesting the 'acquisition' of identity whether it be in this instance being, Black, English, or mixed is associated with how the young men were brought up as well as class. Brian considered himself to be white and that his future family would be white, which minimises the importance of his Black heritage and validates what Twine has suggested above. Brian also considered it unimportant that neither of his parents were white in relation to him identifying as white or English. He went to say:

Akile: How would you describe yourself?

Brian: I would say I was English, English Atheist.

Akile: What does being English mean to you? Culturally, religiously and socially?

Brian: I would say it was a lot of things. Partly my education. You are educated in an English school, I speak English, and my friends are English. I eat English food. The books I read are English, the television programmes I watch are English, produced in England so everything that is important to me is either part of English culture, or it has become English over time or was English to start with.

(First interview)

He expands further in his diary entry:

I've been doing a lot of thinking about how I describe myself, namely as a **BLACK ENGLISHMAN.** *Why do I give myself this label? I thought about it (to be honest, I think the answer I gave on the tape lacked a little something), and I realised the answer lies in my dreams. Stop for a moment. Picture your perfect place and moment. That will, undoubtedly, be steeped in your own culture and upbringing. All my perfect moments were English, or at least West European.*

It is important to consider why Brian referred to himself specifically as a 'Black Englishman'. Brian's narrative suggests that class provides him with the ability to identify with different labels.

More specifically, the use of the term English by Brian, Craig and David challenges traditional understandings of what English may mean. Often the term English as a way of identification has been assumed to be an exclusionary term. Ifekwuingwe (2002:326) in relation to mixed descent identifies that 'popular folk

concepts of Englishness are invented imaginary narratives of origin and national identities perpetuated by so-called 'indigenous' Englanders for the purpose of maintaining social boundaries and excluding those perceived as both outsiders and racially, ethnically, religiously or linguistically different.' Englishness has been seen as being synonymous with whiteness. Yet, while Brian identified himself as a Black Englishman, Craig and David see themselves as simply English as shown above. Both Craig and David were home educated and their identities were influenced particularly by their father *"I spend a large amount of my time talking with Dad about politics and that is why I chose to identify as English" (David)*. Rather than identifying Englishness in its traditional context, (for example as Kresner 1998:5 argues that English identities of the 19th and 20th century being stereotypical of characteristics of 'cricket playing, honourable, liberal, White and Christian'), Brian, Craig and David challenged these understandings of the traditional 'English subject' (Gilroy, 1992). They demonstrate that their identities were part of a narrative of national identity within which they located themselves.

Brian identified as being English because of living in England and embracing what he refers to as English culture which shows the need for greater recognition of people of mixed descent within research on nationality and heritage. Recently, the Commission for Racial Equality in 2004 completed a piece of research focusing on the decline of Englishness and British identity. The participants from the CRE research identified themselves as being from the following backgrounds: White English, White Scottish, White Welsh, Black Caribbean and Black African, Indian Pakistani and Bangladeshi. There were no participants from mixed descent backgrounds. The participants from non-white backgrounds preferred to identify

as British rather than English (see also Mahtani, 2002b on Canadian nationalism and mixed descent). Similarly, the Welsh participants also did not identify as English, in contrast to Brian, Craig and David who as mixed descent young men preferred to identify themselves as English. I asked Brian in his follow up interview why he identified as a Black Englishman:

Akile: Shall we just raise some issues that you raised in your diaries. You spoke a lot about being a Black English man.

Brian: Erm these cultural identities erm, ...I find it annoying because you are part of an ethnic minority you got to be something. At the time of writing the diary I was writing something about cultural identities in English. I don't really think about my cultural identities I am not that bothered really erm and so that yeah I was doing my work as I do I started writing your diary entries. And erm they have the opinions as a group that I will become more African as I got older.

Akile: Why do you think that?

Brian: I think it's possibly that they see my mum and see that I will grow up and be like her and directly being raised by her and when people see that then that's what they think. Perhaps that is something that they find difficult. People always disapprove of things they don't agree with or understand it.

Akile: What does your mum think about you having an English identity?

Brian: Erm... I don't think she minds. I will eventually inevitably end up marrying a white middle class girl which will make me white English

middle class also. We are all moving on that it is partly what made me
think.

(Second interview)

Brian narrated an identity that he considered to be white as well as Black middle class. He felt that he would eventually be able to identify as white because of his class position. For example, he stated the following:

Because my mum is white mixed race and so is my dad. Erm.,......But anyway we were talking about this and when we go to university we will probably meet people that we will spend the rest of our lives with erm.. and we were suddenly struck as to what a small isolated group we are. And it occurred to me suddenly that I am not quite ethnic enough to fit into groups. Actually most middle class blacks and Asians are segregated. Erm.. and so by this time I was going down the long depressing avenue and erm I thought if I did the most likely thing and married someone white.

As Twine (1996) suggests because of his upbringing and class Brian was able to access such terms as English. Similarly to the findings by Tizard and Phoenix (2002:100) who found that 'for the whole sample, including the black and white groups, the use of the term 'half-caste' was strongly associated with social class. Young people from a working-class background were much more likely to use the term 'half-caste' than 'mixed race' (71% did so, against 43% of middle class young people). I would argue that the young men who identify as being from a middle class background have access to a wider terminology. As Mahtani (2002a:474) suggests:

The majority of the women interviewed in this study had had access to a university education through which many of them began to learn a language to define themselves outside of restraining racial labels. Their

education affected how they 'read their race', reflecting the complex ways race and class are constructed

My argument therefore is formulated on the importance of parental positionalities and how this affects how the young men narrated their identities. Unlike 'Black' participants who identified the importance of their peers, the Muslim young men identified the importance of their parents, and especially their fathers, in how they narrated their identities. Tariq for example stated the following about his upbringing: *"My Dad insisted that we were brought up Muslim. My Mum is still a Buddhist, she didn't convert. It's me and my brother and my Dad who are Muslim" (Tariq).* Tariq states here that his father 'insisted' upon his upbringing being Muslim. Although Tariq identifies as having greater knowledge of his mother's heritage and how he embraced this, he then refers to his upbringing as being Muslim and the authoritative role of his father (see Sibley, 1995 and also my later discussion on positional parents within the space of the home).

Ali as I identified earlier in the chapter considered his mother's Pakistani heritage to be separate from his and his father's Bengali heritage. Arslan also identifies his father as being central to his identity:

Akile: Tell me about your mother.

Arslan: She is, or was .... Yeah... she was Scottish. She came to London when she met my Dad.

Akile: Who did she live with before?

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Arslan: Her parents.

Akile: Were they both Scottish?

Arslan: Yeah, I think so. You wouldn't think it looking at my mum. The only thing Scottish about her is her freckles.

Akile: How does that make you feel?

Arslan: What?

Akile: Well that your mum is in some ways Bengali, like religiously and culturally?

Arslan: You know I don't mind it's fine, but it's the fact that we live in London and my dad is so strict.

(Second interview)

The young men in this research all lived with their parents which I would argue had a direct impact on their narratives of identity. Hence the young men tended to refer to their parent(s) throughout the research, which was particularly apparent within the narratives of Ali, Arslan and Tariq. The following is a diary entry by Tariq from summer 2005:

This week I have been down in London a few times as some friends celebrated their birthdays. One friend had a birthday at a restaurant in

London and a few of the people were surprised that I was Muslim and that I was half Pakistani. One friend asked if I felt more Chinese or Pakistani and I said that I didn't feel more than the other but I'm more in touch with my Chinese side because I've met my Mum's family many times in Malaysia but I've never met my Dad's family and know little about my Dad's childhood and culture.

Tariq identifies his ethnic identity as being 'more Chinese' because of his greater knowledge of his mother's Chinese heritage. The family and the home therefore play an integral role in how the young men narrated their identities. For example, the following is an extract from the first interview I conducted with Ali:

Akile: What is your house like?

Ali: I don't live in a house. I live in a two bedroom flat with my mum and dad, and three sisters.

Akile: What is it like culturally, in your home?

Ali: It's well you know Asian.

Akile: Is it Asian or is it Bengali, or is there no difference? Or is it like a mixed household with both you know your mum and dad's culture?

Ali: It is Bengali.

(First interview)

Ali identified his home and home life as being Bengali Asian, similar to how he narrated his identity. Ali identifies his home as being 'Bengali' and therefore his upbringing as also 'Bengali'. When I asked Ali what makes his home and life Bengali he replied *"Everyone is Bengali around here just like my Dad. We all have the same set up around here we are all Bengali" (Ali).* Ali's identification with being Bengali was associated with his father and where he lived and the Bengali culture that surrounded him in the surrounding area that he lived in as well as his home.

Hence it is important to consider the home more generally when examining young men of mixed descent. The young men narrated identities which referred directly to their experiences of identity within the home as well as other internal and external factors.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to examine and understand the terminology experienced by young men of mixed descent and the role of parental and peer influence upon their narratives of identity. My use of the term mixed descent was an attempt to consider a way to explore the relationship between race, ethnicity, culture and religion. However this chapter has demonstrated the varying ways in which the young men in my research narrated their own identities. These differences were formed around race, class, religion and also citizenship which also coincided with parental and peer influences upon the narratives of the young men.

In contradiction to theoretical positions that seek to critique biological understandings of race, some of the young men in this research reinforced biological ideas about race as they narrated their identities in terms of being Black and equating this with skin colour. The experiences of race for the young men in my research varied based on their class positions. Although I was unable to determine their class positions as I did not interview their parents, the narratives of the young men suggested that Brian, Craig and David were middle class. These three young men tended to narrate their identities as English, with their sense of nationality superceding their perceptions of ethnic or racial identity. As Mahtani (2002a and b) has argued, class changes people's experiences of race and mixed descent, and is an area that requires further research.

This chapter has also considered the importance of gender in the lives of the young men and how they narrate and experience being of mixed descent and the importance of space, particularly the important role played by the home and family upon the narratives of identity. I have considered how the 'intimate' space of home for young men of mixed descent affected their narratives of identity. As I have identified in this chapter religion, race and class affected the narratives of identity. For example, the importance of religion in the narratives of Ali, Arslan and Tariq was strongly associated with their experiences within the parental home. In the following chapter I will be examining the home and parental positions and their impacts on the young men's narratives of identity.

Chapter seven

Exploring the parental home: experiences of home and mixed descent

Introduction

"I wouldn't be like this if it wasn't for my parents and home life". (David)

"My Dad has played an important role in my life at home we have been taught everything by him". (Craig)

"I am mainly going to say that I am English because my Mum is Nigerian and my step Dad is English so we refer to all things at home as English". (Simon).

"If your mum is white then I think you will identify as white because you live with her and you spend most of your time with her. But if your mum is mixed then you will identify as Black". (Daniel)

Chapter six explored the importance of parental influence on the narratives of identity for the young men in my research, the above quotes illustrate this further. David, Craig, Simon and Daniel all identified the importance of their parents in how they narrated their identities. I would refer to this as being part of 'upbringing'. Upbringing and the home is an important part of the identities of the young men and this expands upon Blunt's (2005) research on Anglo-Indian family homes. As Blunt writes (2005:55) 'For Anglo-Indians their 'way of upbringing' reflected a masculine middle class imperial heritage that was more closely aligned to British than Indian domesticity'. Blunt suggests that Britishness was re-created within the homes of Anglo-Indians for three reasons: firstly because British men in India wanted to re-create familiar homes in India. This was through establishing the English language, manners and customs within the home.

Secondly, it was suggested that Indian women who married British men should be segregated from their Indian community and thirdly it was thought that by re-creating a British way of life that the children from these unions would identify with their paternal ancestry. The role of the family was important in relation to how the home was experienced for the young men. Family and the home have been discussed in relation to children and women's role within the home, but it is also important to examine how the home and family can affect both children's and young people's identities. The young men embraced a 'third cultural' experience within their homes because of their mixed descent identities and also because of living with their parents which affected their sense of belonging.

This chapter builds upon themes introduced in the previous chapter on the influence of parents in shaping the young men's identity by focussing specifically on the parental home. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first section considers the importance of the parental home and upbringing. As demonstrated in Chapter five, the home has been considered as a site of authority and rules for young people and children (for example Sibley, 1995 and Aitken, 2001). Yet, it is also a space which is critical to the creation of identities through the presence of multiple generations, cultures, religions and genders. I seek to develop an argument around the role of the parents within the domestic space of home through an examination of home and the concept of 'upbringing'. The second section of this chapter focuses on the concept of belonging and the home and wider understandings and definitions of home.

Parental homes and upbringing

The domestic space of the home can be considered as a space of (dis)order, security, privacy, comfort, inclusion and exclusion (Sibley, 1995). These multiple experiences of home are associated with differences associated with ethnic, racial, gender, sexuality, and age which exist within the parental home. For example, Daniel when I asked him about living with just his mother: *"Living with my mum I can't really say anything because it has always been the case. Living with a mixed mother I think is different than living with a white mother, you can see the difference, Well that's what I think."* In contrast Ray and Marlon were living with just their single white mothers: *"It is just me and my mum and that's the way it's always been. I mean I don't know any different, like to have my dad around" (Marlon).* These two examples identify the differences amongst the participants and their families and relates to the different 'types' of families identified by Sibley and Lowe (1992) in their research on home and family and also suggests how different ethnicities within the home have shaped the narratives of identity for the young men.

The 'types' of families identified by Sibley and Lowe (1992) in their study were: 'personalising' and 'positional families', and 'disengaged' or 'enmeshed' families. Personalising families involve a negotiation of 'rules' within the home with the children, whereas within positional families, power is vested in the positional and dominant members of the family which tends to be the parents. In turn, 'enmeshment' and 'disengagement' examines interactions within the family. Enmeshed family members are involved with one another and deny personal

space to children whereas disengaged families are the opposite where there is a lack of, or poor, communication and individuals within the family may feel isolated (Sibley and Lowe, 1992). As the interviews with the majority of the participants indicated, positional families predominated in this research with power relations clearly shaped by an authoritarian positional parent who controlled most of the spatial boundaries within the home (see also Sibley 1995). They also exhibited elements of being 'enmeshed' and 'disengaged' families. A diversity of homes and living arrangements was therefore evident among the young men in the research which are summarised in table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Outline of the participants' homes and living arrangements

Participant	Single or two parent home	Living arrangement and type of dwelling space
Ali	Two parent home	Lived in a two bedroom council flat in an estate in Whitechapel with his mother and father and three sisters. He shared a room with his sisters.
Arslan	Two parent home	Lived with his mother and father in a council flat Bethnal Green. Arslan was an only child and his mother's family were in Scotland and his father's brothers lived in Whitechapel.
Blake	Two parent home	Lived with his mother and father in a council flat in one of the estate in Bow. His mother's family lived in the South of London and he did not know much about his father's family.

Participant	Single or two parent home	Living arrangement and type of dwelling space
Brian	Single mother home	Lived with his mother in a house in Bethnal Green. Prior to the research he had been living with his mother's friend in her house in Mile End.
Carl	Single mother home	Lived with his mother and sister in a flat in Stepney his sister moved out just after the research had started.
Craig	Two parent home	Lived with his mother and father and 1 brother (David) and 5 sisters. He shared a room with his brother David.
Damien	Single parent home	Lived in a flat with his mother and younger brother in Bow.
Daniel	Single mother home	Lived with his mother in a house around Bow.
David	Two parent home	As Craig
Jason	Single mother home	Lived with his mother and younger brother in a council flat in Stepney.
John	Two parent home	Lived with his mother and step father and twin brother (Simon) in a house in Bow.
Marlon	Single parent home	Lived on a council estate with his mother near Bethnal Green.
Ray	Single parent home	Lived with his mother in a council estate in Bow.
Simon	Two parent home	As John
Tariq	Two parent home	Lived with mother and father and older brother in a house with three bedrooms outside of Tower Hamlets, he shared a room with his brother.

Due to the differences amongst the living situations there were also variations in the upbringing of the young men. Upbringing refers to the lived domestic space of the home, those who reside within that home and how these individuals contributed to the lives of the young men. The young men spoke at length about how their home lives and what they had been "taught" by their parent(s) impacted on their identities. The following is an extract from Brian's diary:

> *I had to defend my Englishness at my aunt's party, and I found myself talking about upbringing with a pregnant lady. Her husband is Nigerian, so the child will be mixed-race. We talked about educating him about Nigeria. I feel this is so important - after all, while I chose to be English, I'm glad I got the full range of choices. But what of my own children? Is it fair to teach them about something I don't identify with mentally, and they won't visually? I think not. After all, it is perfectly acceptable for my mother to teach me about Christianity (Okay, there are all sorts of arguments about that statement, but let's just take it as fact for now), because she believes it to be true, but it would just be crass for me to do the same to my kids. The same could be said about African. I'm not African and never will be, and I shouldn't expect my kids to be either.*

(Diary entry, August 2005)

Brian outlines the meaning of upbringing in reference to identity. He refers to his upbringing as being 'English' and hence, as I identified in the previous chapter, he considered himself to English. He associated his upbringing with the role of his mother and how she 'taught' him within the space of his home and how his aunt will 'teach' her child about Nigeria. Although Brian did not speak explicitly discuss about the importance of his home, his reference to upbringing situates his argument within the home.

The domestic space of the home for young men of mixed descent is an infusion of cultures which they are taught by their parent(s) but also cultures which are 'caught' (Pollock and Reken, 1999). The idea of cultures being 'caught' is something that embraces two cultural differences from both parents with an inclusion of their own cultures. Pollock and Reken goes as far to say in their discussion on 'Third Culture Kids' (see Chapter five for a fuller discussion of this) to suggest that catching of cultures and being part of a third cultural experience is different to that of someone from what they term a 'monocultural community'. In relation to mixed descent and my research this argument considers what the young men were discussing in terms of their parental cultural and religious differences. It also refers to the ideas raised by Olumide (2002) which I raised in Chapter six. Olumide's research presented ideas by her participants also around 'teaching' children from mixed descent families about both heritages from parents. Other participants in her research however suggested that they wanted their children to understand that racial differences did not matter. Brian in his narrative above referred specifically to the term 'teach' and how his mother taught him about Christianity which identifies the role of his mother and his home-life in how his identity was narrated.

In contrast to Brian, Simon and John suggested that their mother had raised them not to "*consider race or ethnic differences*":

> *Simon: Mum has never said you guys are Black and things are like this and that. Maybe because of my step-dad.....Don't know.*

Akile: What do you mean, like what is it like at home?

Simon: Mum does her thing we see my real dad on and off but we are not really influenced by like mum's heritage you know.

Akile: Do you have things in your house that represent your heritage?

Simon: No not really nothing actually.

Akile: What about your dad?

Simon: We don't actually go to his house so I wouldn't know.

Simon's home life and upbringing could be considered as being invisible to 'race', ethnicity and religion as the above interview extract suggests. As I demonstrated in Chapter six Simon and John identified themselves as English and that they had little to no contact with their father. Hence what this indicates is the importance of who the young men were living with and how they were brought up in terms of their heritage, ethnicity, and religion.

Brian was one of the young men who lived with just his mother (as table 7.1 shows). The differing homes identified in table 7.1 also reflected the different families and upbringings of each of the young men. There existed differences for

the young men who lived with both parents in comparison to those who resided with only one parent. Within the homes of single parent families there was only one parent who could be identified as the positional parent. I asked Brian about his home life and who has influenced his identity and his experiences of home:

> *Well...erm....I wouldn't say that I had any main male in my life. I mean even my mother when she want to train to be a priest I lived with my mum's best friend because my mum thought that she would have disrupted my education moving me with her. When my mum went away for two years when I was in year eight and nine there was the possibility that I may have had to move Birmingham or to Huddersfield or some other godforsaken place we decided that I should stay in London. My mother's best friend Andrea is white and this is what has made be more Anglicised, more well spoken.*

> *I think that I am more Anglicised also and well spoken because of the fact that my mother was from Zambian family. In Zambia all the schools are either very small or you are sent abroad and my mother was sent abroad to go to school here and she speaks to me in a way that I speak also.*

(First interview)

Brian's home life was associated with his mother and he made no reference to his father. Yet, as illustrated in the previous chapter, the young men living with their white mothers indicated that whiteness was normalised within the home and their lives. This was demonstrated through their narratives of identity and their identifications with being Black. Brian referred the important role played by both his mother and her friend, and how they shaped his identity. This did not apply across the board to all the young men who had similar living arrangements. For example, Marlon, said in response to a question about his mother's role in his life and home: *'Yeah my mum, she's ok, she's around it's just really normal, in our house it's really normal, like other families'.* Marlon's use of the word normal

suggests that he considers his mother's whiteness to be invisible as a cultural identifier. This is particularly important in relation to the limited engagement of white women and race (see Frankenberg, 1993). Marlon through his narrative reinforced this 'normalisation' particularly with his reference to his mum being "normal". Jason also makes a similar argument when he refers to his home as being "typically English":

Jason: I like what my house looks like, it is obviously my mum's house, but I like her taste.

Akile: Do you think that your house is a typical home?

Jason: My home is very typically English, which is obviously because of my mum.

Akile: What makes your home typically English?

Jason: The stuff that we have is just English. But....actually you know my mum's music collection is proper Black music. Like stuff like, Luther Vandross stuff that normally white people wouldn't listen to.

Akile: What do you mean that the stuff you have is English?

Jason: You know having our music system in the front room, like food that we eat, and the fact that my Nan lives around the corner from us. It just makes us have more of a English home than anything else.

Akile: What do you mean that your music system is in the front room, how does that makes you more English?

Jason: You know, in some other families they have the music system in the kid's rooms. Don't want no noise, you know in other families. Do you understand?

(Second interview)

Jason refers to his home and mother as being 'normal' which he identifies with being associated with his way of life, as well as his reference to material items such as their CD player and or the food eaten as being 'normal'. When I asked Jason what he meant by normal: *"Like you know stuff that is meaningless you know. The stuff we use everyday not ethnic stuff"*. Marlon also suggests a similar narrative:

Akile: What is it like at home?

Marlon: What do you mean?

Akile: Is there a dominant race, religion in your house?

Marlon: It's not something that I think about...........not really, it is just a house that I live with my mum.

Akile: Does your mum have things around the house that relate to her identity like who she is?

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Marlon: Nah...not really she hasn't really got anything because she is just normal. It just isn't an issue at all.

(First interview)

There was a tendency by the young men to normalise their mother's heritage as well as their home lives and the material items within it. Both Marlon and Jason made the same statements in relation to their mothers. Whiteness became normalised within the homes of these young men in the sense that it was ignored as a cultural identifier. In terms of the literature on the home, race and ethnicity has ignored cultural identifiers of a white identity (although see Blunt's discussion of Anglo-Indian homes, 2006). Brian raised a similar point in his first interview:

Nearly all the normal stuff is English. Furniture, all the stuff that people buy that have no purpose that is there to look nice all of that is South African, everything which is related to work and living is English erm...I guess that is because my mum works with the church I mean that's what relates to her. There a lot of variations of crosses, Celtic crosses, oh dear I know the names of different crosses that's when you start to worry.........When you know the name of different crosses.

(First interview)

Brian's home is a store of his mother's personal belongings which reflects her identity (I will be discussing material items in more detail later in the chapter). This was not just limited to the homes of those living with just their single white mothers. Arslan goes as far as to prefer to be 'normal':

Arslan: You know, I don't know. Sometimes, well.........not sometimes....When I am with my Dad (at home mainly) I have to say Bengali, or he gets upset.

Akile: Why?

Arslan: Because really I am. My Mum has to converted to Islam and stuff and she can speak Bengal and so can I. So we are a Bengali family. But I don't know....

Akile: I am not sure I understand what you mean?

Arslan: I would really prefer it if my Dad doesn't see this?

Akile: Of course, this is strictly confidential.

Arslan: Well, I would really have preferred it if my Dad was like White, you know?

Akile: Why?

Arslan: Well then it would be ok to be like English and stuff, now because he is Bengali and Muslim so are we and I can't be anything else but that.

(First interview)

Arslan considers that his identity would be invisible in much the same way as what Doane (2003) term as 'the invisible norm'. By being Bengali or Muslim, Arslan felt that he was more 'ethnic' and not 'normal'. He also felt that he was unable to embrace his mother's Scottish heritage: *"My mum doesn't talk about her heritage or anything really. Because when you marry a Muslim you have to*

become one to. And all my family see her as one of them. " This also identified the positional role of Arslan's father within his home in relation to his mother.

Within the homes of the young men who lived with both their parents, the positional parent was more authoritative and more visible. Craig and David identified the central role of their father within both their homes and lives: *"My Dad is the key person in my life we do everything together. But since I started college he decided what time I have to be home and he influenced what I will be studying at university. But apart from that he decides a lot of things, like what time I should be home, what time I should do my homework and who my friends are. So sometimes it's too much" (David).* Unlike previous research on masculinity and home (Tosh, 1999; Chapman, 2004; also see Chapter five), David situates his father as playing a central role in both his upbringing and home as opposed to his mother. In fact throughout the research David and Craig made little to no reference to their mother.

The positional parent was particularly apparent in the narratives of Ali, Arslan and Tariq and this was manifest in terms of both their Muslim identities and their lack of autonomy (Jones, 1995). Both Ali and Arslan identified themselves in relation to their fathers. Ali stated that his home was Bengali because his father is Bengali. *"Mum hasn't really got the Pakistani thing because she is Bengali like the rest of us at home ".* Arslan more specifically states that: *"Mum is Bengali now, and has changed her religion to Muslim, you wouldn't put her down as Scottish ".* It emerged that the family home, in the experiences of Ali and Arslan, was a

paternal home. Furthermore, in contrast to previous research which highlights the importance of women to homemaking practices and the family (see Chapter five) my research identified the central role of the father within their families and their homes. This was demonstrated via the upbringing of the young men. Both Ali and Arslan throughout their narratives progressively revealed that their mothers had adopted similar cultural and religious identities and practices of their husbands.

Akile: What is it like in your house?

Arslan: Well my dad is at work till late so it's just me and my mum most of the time.

Akile: What is your dad like at home?

Arslan: He is alright a bit tough compared to mum. But that is expected.

Akile: In what way is he tough?

Arslan: You know about being home on time do my work all that stuff that parents get on your back about. And because I'm going to uni in September I had to work proper hard this year. And he like... [Pause]...expects us to speak Bengali at home.

Akile: Is that a problem?

Arslan: Well....erm...It's not a problem but sometimes you know you drift into English you must do it as well?

Akile: Yeah I do. But you don't like it when he tells you not to?

Arslan: Yeah because speaking English that is part of me. I can speak the language don't understand why he has problems with it.

(First interview)

The above narrative demonstrates the dominant position of Arslan's father as he exerted control within the home through both religion and language. In the second interview that I conducted with Arslan we spoke further about language:

Akile: I just want to talk a bit more about your dad and his insistence upon you speaking Bengali at home. Is that still the case now?

Arslan: Yeah, it will never change.

Akile: What about when you move out of home?

Arslan: What like have my own place?

Akile: Yeah which you will, or not?

Arslan: Yeah of course. I ain't going to be like my dad. I want my children to do whatever they want.

Akile: No not whatever they want you mean within reason [laughter].

Arslan: [laughter] well yeah course. But you know I am not going to make them speak Bengali.

Akile: Are you going to marry someone Bengali?

Arslan: I reckon my dad will expect me to.

(Second interview)

Positional and dominant fathers were therefore particularly apparent in the case of those young men who had South Asian backgrounds. In turn, this dominance was displayed in terms of determining religious and language practices within the home. One could argue that language was a way for Arslan's father to connect to his homeland in a transnational context. Religion also played an important role in this context. Tariq, for example, wrote the following in his diary in summer 2006:

> *My dad got angry at me because he called me to pray around sunset and apparently I took my time so he started shouting and saying that I'm slacking with my prayers. A lot of conversations with my dad involve religion as my dad is a strict Muslim. He still doesn't trust me when I go out and tells me what I can do and can't do. Especially if I'm going to be back late. He's traditionally minded and would prefer I stay at home than to go out. My mum is a little more understanding.*

(Diary entry, July 2006)

The young men who had South Asian fathers reproduced their fathers' religious practices within the space of the home as did their mothers. As Tariq referred to in his narrative earlier when he referred to his father and the importance of prayer, *"At home I feel comfortable, but when I am with my Dad it is all about Islam, everything we do is about Islam. In my house everything is about Islam, everything we do is about Islam that is all our relationship is about at home"*

(Tariq). Tariq identifies that his home is associated with his father's religious and cultural practices. Tariq's father's religious beliefs and practices were privileged within the home, which resulted in Tariq's relationship with his father being formed around religion, with an importance upon prayer in the home and within the family.

In turn, the predominance of their father's religious beliefs can be seen as an example of the dominance of patriarchy within Islam and within Islamic families. Yip Art (2004:338) for example, argues that 'Maintaining family honour (izzat) is therefore a responsibility of paramount importance. Altruism, care and respect towards parents and elders, strong family ties and loyalty are inextricably linked to ones expression of religious faith'. He expands further that 'The Shari'ah and Hadith emphasise the rights of parents and relatives and ideal family duties and hierarchical relations'. Religion therefore is placed at the centre of family life (and identity as I discussed in Chapter six) and used to maintain a sense of control within the families of Ali, Arslan and Tariq which was identified through the discipline in relation to prayer.

Yet, prayer was also a religious practice that the families of Ali and Arslan did together and was a way of connecting people within the homes of the young men, which also indicates that there also existed practices associated with enmeshed families alongside with being a positional family: *"We all pray in our house, it is good for you. And it's probably the only thing that we do together. Especially with my sisters" (Ali)*. This was also the case in the home of Arslan:

Arslan: I pray when I get home, don't do it when I am at college – other guys don't like me in the prayer room. But I do it at home in the house. It is important to pray as it is at least one way of doing something that connects us I guess.

Akile: What do you mean?

Arslan: Well we are all Muslim as a family. It is something that we share and it is important.

(Second interview)

The use of the term "we" and "it is important to pray" refers to the collective cultural practice. I refer to this terminology and raise the point particularly with reference to Arslan who separated himself from his father's culture, ethnicity and religion to the extent that I would suggest it seemed that his culture and religion had been forced upon him. In his discussion about prayer he wanted to pray voluntarily rather than being forced to do so. Daniel also spoke of the importance of religion within his family:

Akile: Do you have anything within your home that represents your identity?

Daniel: At the moment the most important and only thing that represents peoples identity when at home and what they can use to do together when lost is religion or something or someone that they love a lot and for me it's religion. It is something that has always been part of my life and family and it is important to me.

Akile: So religion is important to you?

Daniel: Yeah it's the one thing that you can rely on have at home and go to church with my family every Sunday. It's just something that we do together. And this is important as my mum is not around much really and allows us to have something in common and it is something that is present within and throughout and my house you see it when you come in.

Daniel like Arslan spoke of the idea of religion remaining constant and as something that he did with his family. Hence it was an important part of their upbringing.

The practice of prayer as part of paternal religious identity was also displayed through material culture within the homes of Arslan, Ali and Tariq through the presence of prayer mats for example Tariq spoke of these things: *"We have a lot of prayer mats in our house amongst other religious symbols in the corridor in particular. And my Dad owns a lot of things and obviously the Koran we have in our house".* Tolia-Kelly (2004) and Miller (2001) work considers how material cultures create a private store of the self and is a reflection of gender, race, ethnicity and religion. Similarly, the work of McCloud (1996) and what she terms the 'Muslim home' as she writes:

Muslims often mark their homes as a space of difference and separation by a sign on the door. This is especially important for those living outside a Muslim enclave. The sign creates a boundary that signals both a warning and a welcome. To non-Muslins, the sign serves as a polite warning that the visitor is about to enter a different space and time. For other Muslims, it is a sign denoting refuge. The phrase, "THIS IS A MUSLIM HOME/PLEASE REMOVE YOUR SHOES" is on the door of hundreds

of African-American Muslim homes and apartments in Philadelphia and probably in other major cities as well' (McCloud, 1996:68).

McCloud identifies the presence of boundaries to identify 'Muslim homes'. She writes further: 'For the owners of the space, the sign symbolises the success of having created a boundary that defines an area of control. The sign dictates an attitude: in this house, it says, the hostile environment of racism, religious intolerance, and discrimination are locked out; prayer space and hospitality are guaranteed'. With reference to the homes of Ali, Arslan and Tariq, there were a number of markers that signified that they lived in Muslim homes both through the practices within the home and the material identifiers. For example, the presence of prayer mats within the homes of the young men as they mentioned above.

Use of the phrase 'area of control' was also apparent in Ali, Arslan and Tariq's homes through their discussions of rooms which were used to pray in: *"We pray in Mum and Dad's room. We use my parent's room to keep the prayer mats and that's where we pray"*. Similarly Arslan stated that: *"We have a room in the house which we pray in"*. The use of particular rooms which the families used to pray in indicated the importance of religion within the family which also reflects the positional role of the fathers within these families.

It also separated the parental bedroom both as being a communal space for them to pray and hence a 'Muslim space' as well as a bedroom. This also reflected the positional role of his father as it was only in the parental bedroom that Ali could

pray. He stated that his father did not like him to pray in other rooms: *"He does get a bit irate when I take the prayer mat into my bedroom. Because he says that is disrespectful to move it. Like the mats would know (laughs)"*. So far I have demonstrated the influential role which the fathers of Ali, Arslan and Tariq had over the young men in terms of their religious beliefs and practices. However although there was a positional parent there also existed a 'third cultural' experience similarly to the ideas surrounding 'third space' (Bhabha, 1994). Although not always visible the young men were also embracing third cultural experiences. Similarly to what I referred to earlier in terms of cultures being 'caught' the homes of some of the young men embraced a 'third space' created through their material cultures and also cultural practices. It is therefore important to consider the home as 'third space' of identity for the young men and not just solely as a positional family space but also as part of an enmeshed family also.

Home and Belonging

The home is a store of memories expressed through possessions as I demonstrated in chapter five. Through my examination of Tolia-Kelly's (2004a and b) work I suggested that material items are used to create a sense of home and identity both real and imagined. Given that all my participants lived in their parental homes, they had limited scope to create a sense of belonging in their homes. It was their parents who created 'homes' as those demonstrated in Tolia-Kelly's work. For example, Tariq's photographs presented his home as a hybridisation of two religions and cultures as illustrated by the captions he wrote for his photographs. As such, they also demonstrated his lack of autonomy within the home.

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Image 7.1

Tariq wrote that:

"This is a photo of my hallway. My Dad's sitting on the stairs and is on the phone. The Chinese picture was given to my mother by relatives in Malaysia and it means luck".


Image 7.2

Tariq wrote the following caption to the image: *"This is photo of my hallway. The two images are Islamic the one on the right is Allah and the one on the left is Muhammad."*

Photos 7.1 and 7.2 demonstrated the two different religions that existed within Tariq's home. He refers in his commentary to photograph 7.1 that the Chinese picture belonged to his mother, whereas his commentary for photograph made no reference to the Islamic images as belonging to his father. This is significant in terms of Tariq's identification in chapter six as being Muslim and his further identification of the problematic nature of his father's positional role and religious beliefs.

Image 7.3
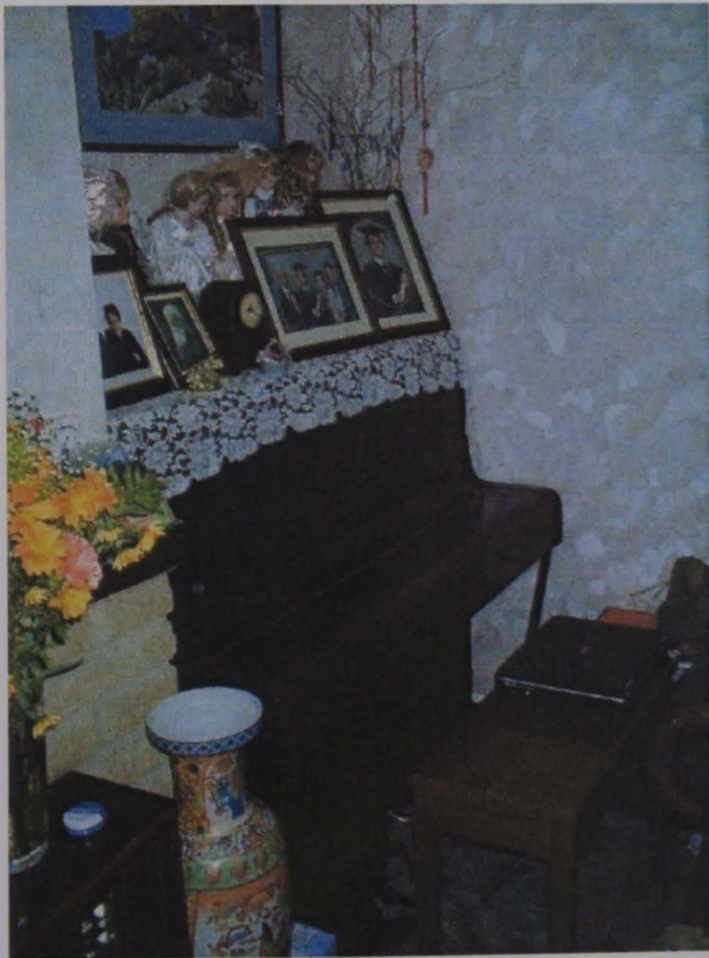
Tariq commented that:

> This is a photo of the piano in our sitting room. The two photos on the far end are of my brother's graduation and the one next to the clock is one of the founders of the Baha'i faith (my mother's religion). The one next to that is cut off but it's a picture of me and my brother which was taken

during my parent's 25th wedding anniversary in 2000. The painting in the background was painted by a neighbour. My mum bought the Chinese vase from London and the flowers are for my mum from her colleagues as she has moved jobs recently

Photograph 7.3 further demonstrates the lack of autonomy within the home for Tariq. The material items within this photograph were either part of his mother's heritage or were associated with family more generally. I asked Tariq in his second interview why he had taken mainly photographs of his mother's and father's heritages, religions and personal belongings.

Tariq: It wasn't on purpose that I took those photographs. I took photographs of my house which really is my parent's house with their things so most of the important things are theirs.

Akile: What do you mean?

Tariq: It's their house and they have things that...like the picture of my Mum's vase, it wasn't meant to be a picture of the vase but her things are everywhere ....Like particularly it's stuff to do with her faith that she keeps everywhere.

Akile: Is that not your belongings as well?

Tariq: No because it is hers. It's not like she is Muslim like me and my brother and my Dad. So she is the only one that has those beliefs really. But I do learn things from her all about it as well as being Muslim.

(Second interview)

Because Tariq identified as being a practicing Muslim he identified his mother's faith as separate but he also embraced his mother's heritage. His photographs were therefore a visual display of hybridisation through material items. The images of Islamic symbols in the hallways and the Baha'i family symbol in the front room are examples of a material display of his parental heritage.

The hybridisation of parental cultures also emerged through the practice of cooking within the homes of the young men through an infusion of the two different heritages through cooking and food. The following is one of Tariq's diary entries:

> *Week two*
>
> *The rest of my week I spent at home and I usually end up having chores to do as my parents use it as an opportunity to make me work. So I had to do a lot of cleaning and cooking to do. Lately my parents have been teaching me how to cook Malaysian and Pakistani dishes as they think it is very important I learn how to cook their food.*

(Diary entry, August 2006)

Tariq learning how to cook dishes from different the two different countries his parents originated from. Hence he was embracing both heritages. It is particularly important to stress the fact Tariq was being taught to cook by his father. Due to the patriarchal nature of Muslim families (see Chapter four and also Hopkins, 2006) young men often viewed the home as a space of consumption and leisure (Hopkins, 2006) and it was often young girls and women who were involved in the 'home-making' processes. However, teaching Tariq how to cook traditional Malaysian and Pakistani food was a way of connecting him to his parent's

homelands and cultures. For example, Valentine's (1999) research on food and cultural identity found that Pakistani families wanted their children to maintain their cultural identities and to acknowledge that family was rooted in another place. Food as a material item within the home is a process of connecting identity to material items. Cook and Harrison (2003), for example, examine the role of food upon the materialisation of a postcolonial geography, through the example of 'Grace' foods which is a Caribbean food company. Examining one extract from the research which is a quote from the Director of Grace foods 'The Grace consumer as someone who like that sort of family get together where there can be rice and peas and ackees and all this, that and the other. But they're also buying Heinz beans and tomato ketchup and you know, are quite at home with that' (2003:301). He states further 'I am English......I'm proud to be Black but I'm English and I've got my own identity. And this (Caribbean food) could be part of that identity because there's a connection' (Cook and Harrison, 2002:302). Cook and Harrison's example although not associated with mixed descent does demonstrate how food is a material item can represent ethnic identities in terms of their linkages to 'Home'. There are two key points to be made from the research conducted by Cook and Harrison in relation to my research: firstly food represents a material item connected to the young men's parental homelands and secondly the concept of food as a hybrid material culture. For example:

Akile: What kind of food do you eat?

David: When it is my mum cooking it is mainly English food, she does sometimes cook Mediterranean food. But my dad usually cooks West Indian food, but sometimes he does come up with the odd stew.

Akile: So what is West Indian food?

David: Plantain and yam. You should try it.

Akile: So, are there differences ethnically in terms of what is cooked by who?

David: Not obviously. But my mum only cooks steaks, stews, roasts and dad can cook his own foods like I said.

David's father's cooking practices was an example of hybridisation of food materials. His father, like the example in Cook and Harrison's work, integrated his West Indian heritage into his British heritage by cooking both traditional British food and also West Indian food. Brian did most of the cooking in his home. Like David's father, he integrated different cultures through his cooking. Daniel was another participant that spoke of cooking, he first raised the fact that he cooked in his diary: *"Well I got to go now duty calls I have to cook my dinner can't live off take-aways."* I asked Daniel when I interviewed on the second occasion about his cooking:

Akile: You wrote in your diary a few times that you cook, what do you like to cook and why do you cook?

Daniel: (laughs) Yeah I cook. I had to get sorted with mum not being around a lot or at all lately.

Akile: Who taught you to cook?

Daniel: Well it was mum she taught me a few Portuguese dishes and then well I did it myself.

Akile: You taught yourself?

Daniel: Well I went on Google and it was there I found loads of recipes and basically taught myself after that.

Akile: Was it important to learn to cook Portuguese food?

Daniel: Well that's what my mum really knows well. So I guess.

The fact that Daniel's mother taught him how to cook Portuguese dishes identified that she was attempting to connect Daniel to his Portuguese heritage, even though he seemed unaware of it. Although Brian does not refer to the food that he cooks and eats as being either Zambian or British, he does refer to specific dishes:

Akile: Does your mum cook?

Brian: I eat a wide variety of food. I eat all sorts of foods lots of different tastes.

Akile: Does your mum cook?

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Brian: Yeah my mum cooks, well I cook, because of my mum having her weird priest job she has bizarre hours. My mum can cook, but I would rather eat at the times that I want to eat, because I am....

Akile: You are very independent?

Brian: Yes I am, I mean the stuff that I can cook is from a wide variety of places but it is just very easy. I can cook any kind of pasta and pasta sauce. Tiger fish is my speciality.

Brian extended my earlier argument around how young men were taking up domestic responsibilities such as cooking which is something that has tended to be associated with women. In relation to this and food cultures I also asked Brian about the types of food that his extended family ate:

Akile: When you visit relatives what kind of food do they eat?

Brian: Well British culture has kind of taken over, there is Zambian culture for poorer people but for the...but it kind of the colonial culture, you know the ex pats that are still there have little Britain, and they have their Telegraph mailed in, but erm...My Granddad is very culturally very Zambian/Jewish but in terms of what he eats he is very British.

(Second interview)

The discussion so far has identified the importance of parental culture, particularly in reference to the third culture experienced within the homes of the young. Religion, cultural practices, language and food are all part of transnational connections with homelands. Brian, for example, in the above quote spoke extensively about his grandfather and his cultural practices in Zambia. As such,

transnational connections are also important to the young men (see also Dwyer, 2000 and Wolf 2002). Some of the young men in my research spoke of their parental transnational connections in relation to their identities as well their experiences of home.

Transnational homes

Within this research there was a division amongst meanings and experiences of home between the parents of the young men and the young men in question. Although I did not interview the parents of the participants, the young men spoke at length about their parents and their influences. Hence I was able to gain an insight into how home was understood from the parental perspective (see also Dwyer's ,2000 work on South Asian Muslim girls which revealed the symbolism of Pakistan as Home within the domestic home of their parents). Katie Walsh (2006) in her research on British expatriates and transnational homing discusses two meanings of the word 'home'. She uses the term belonging to describe what might otherwise be referred to as 'sense of home', and secondly she discusses the idea of home as a simple expression of the self and that the process of homemaking is an important part of the home that is lived in. The work of both Dwyer and Walsh identify the importance of Home in creating home, as it is the process of homemaking that is important. Daniel identified how his mother visited Portugal "all the time" and how she really thought of Portugal as 'Home".

Akile: What does 'home' mean to you?

Daniel: Somewhere. I know where it is for my mum – Portugal.

Akile: Why do you say that?

Daniel: Because she always coming and going.

This is in contrast to Daniel's own understanding and definition of home:

Daniel: Home is somewhere I don't know where. Somewhere is your mind.

Akile: What do you mean?

Daniel: I don't know where home is supposed to be. I mean I live in a big house. I guess home is somewhere where people don't judge and you can be yourself and you can belong. I'm not sure that there is a place like that if you are mixed.

Akile: What about your mum?

Daniel: She can go back and forth to Portugal I guess she feels like she belongs. I guess.

Thus there is a difference between what Daniel identified as home in comparison to what he considered his mother's definition of home. Woolf (2002:285) in her work discusses the difference between experiences of home for children of immigrant families and their parents, as she writes:

While this may offer the security of a source of identity, it also creates tensions, confusion, and contradictory messages that ...can lead to intense alienation and despair among some. The son who is told, "Just because

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you live here in America, don't be influenced by everything you see, because you are Filipino and should know who you are and where you come from, is being told to differentiate between home and Home.

The experiences of the participants in Woolf's study were associated with space: the experience of living in a country that is different to that of their parents and living within a home that the parents are creating within the cultures of their own countries of origin. For the young men in this research I have identified that the process of homemaking *was completed* by the parents through their personal possessions, religious beliefs and practices For example, in Tariq and Brian's homes, it was their parents who possessed items that were linked with different countries and heritages. For example in Tariq's home his mother had a number of items associated with Malaysia and Brian's mother had items associated with her South African heritage, whereas Brian referred to his material items as 'English'. Thus what emerges is a hybridisation of cultures and religions within the home.

While a sense of belonging was created through identifying with Home, this was not evident for all the young men in this study. For example, I asked Brian about time he spent in Zambia and his sense of belonging:

> *Well sometimes we go to Zambia because of all of the adopted Jewish relatives being there because my grandmother once she left South Africa because of Apartheid married who I think of as my grandfather because I never knew my grandfather who died in South Africa because of struggle. For some reasons my Jewish family has ended up in Zambia and my Zambian family has ended up in Cambridge, for some reasons that's where my grandfather is living with his girlfriend. When I am in Zambia, I feel very uncomfortable because I am actually aware of being black yes.*

(First interview)

Brian's discussion of Zambia which was where his extended family lived was a place where he felt that his identity was being questioned by those who lived in his mother's Home. Brian associated his sense of belonging with his identity. For example, in the previous chapter he narrated as being English how his identity was part of where he was from –England and he "felt comfortable in England" *"because I have lived in England my whole life that's what I know. I have been brought up in England"*. Brian referred to his identity as being English and being part of English heritage in his first interview:

> *When my mum went away for two years in years 8 and 9 there was the possibility that I may have to move to Birmingham so we decided that if we had to move to Huddersfield or some other godforsaken place then at least I would have had the two years in London. In the end I didn't have to move at all.*

Hence he considered England to be his home and where he considered himself to belong. By contrast, his discussion of Zambia highlighted a sense of un-belonging:

> *I am very aware when I am in Zambia that everyone around is white, my mother looks white even though she isn't. Obviously my grandfather is white. I don't like have any servants and guards. Obviously you do need guards in Zambia. Obviously you do need guards in Zambia. I actually don't like the knowledge that the police have guns. I actually don't like the knowledge that the police have guns. I actually like and really like and value about living in Britain is that you can go outside and blend into the crowd. When in Zambia I was aware that I was one of the few well to do black people. Whenever we went to places all the waiters and waitresses were black, and it just feels very strange. I guess you don't think of anything of it when you have waitresses here, because it is such a wide*

variety of people serving you that you don't think anything of it, but when it is all black it just feels very strange. I actually can't understand how someone can live somewhere their whole life and then go back to wherever and feel more at home. I genuinely don't understand, it's going to sound that I am saying that Britain is obviously better but I just don't see (and I don't think Britain is obviously better) but I just don't see how you can live in one place and then suddenly feel comfortable in another. Maybe this is because of my mixedness.

(First interview)

Brian in his narrative identifies that he did not consider Zambia to be Home as he felt that there was nothing that he was able to relate to, and this made him feel uncomfortable. This was similar to the experiences of Carl when he visited his mother's Home in Ireland

> *Carl: I've been to Ghana once and I was just a baby so I don't remember anything. I have been to Ireland a few times and with my mum to visit her family and stuff. It's weird but it isn't home to me, like it is to my mum. You see I don't think of myself as Irish or being from Ireland because I am from London. I feel uncomfortable when I am in Dublin but feel comfortable in London. I just feel aware that I am Black in a White city.*

Akile: Why do you say that?

> *Carl: Well there's not many Black people in Ireland is there? And it's not like I belong there because I live in London and I'm from London. Mum is the one that is Irish. I mean she goes back loads to see her family. My sister doesn't go back there either that much. I mean I think in total I've been there ......three times.*

Like Brian, Carl uses the phrase of feeling uncomfortable in the places that his mother's considered as Home. This is similar to the findings in Adrian Carton's (2004) his autobiography where he argued that his ethnic identity made him feel uncomfortable in specific countries and unable to "feel at home". As he writes (2004:76) 'I had always been uncomfortable living in England, although I had known no other country. My friends were Indian and I tended to embrace all things Indian. After all we lived in an area with a very high immigration population settled mostly by West Indians, Punjabis, Gujuratis, Sikhs'. Home is therefore understood for the young men in this study as a place of familiarity: "*I mean....we don't have anything....well we have a few pictures of St. Lucia on the wall in the hallway, and there is a big map of Britain in the lounge. That means home to me, Britain is home to me" (David).* David referred to Britain as home and did not perceive St. Lucia as Home as his father did due to a lack of a sense of belonging.

Belonging is an important part of how one defines and experiences home. The young men have suggested in this research that there was a lack of autonomy within the space of the domestic home which was demonstrated through their descriptions of the home as being a 'third cultural' experience. The homes of the young men displayed multiple cultures, religions, and ethnicities which affected how the young men narrated their identities. However, the lack of autonomy was evident through the lack of identification of the domestic space through their personal identities. This was particularly apparent in Brian, Carl and David's discussion of their parents' home in the transnational settings of Zambia, Ireland and St. Lucia. It is important to consider how young men defined their own

experiences and definitions of home, particularly in relation to the lack of autonomy.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter has been to explore further the role of the parental home and how it affected the narratives of identity for the young men in this research. I also considered the importance of the experiences of the young men within the parental home. I developed an argument based on the role of the parents within the domestic space of the home through tracing the importance of upbringing and examining material culture and cultural and religious practices within the home. I traced the differing experiences of the parental home for the young men in relation to David Sibley's (1995) work on different 'types' of families. I adopted Sibley's argument around the 'positional families' as well as 'enmeshed families' and the interaction between these different 'types'.

Within the parental homes of the young men there existed what could be referred to as a 'third' cultural experience based on the diasporic identities and attachments of their parents. For example within Tariq's home, a range of cultural and religious practices and material items focused around his parents' identities as first generation migrants. As I have demonstrated, growing up as a young man of mixed descent is not a uniform experience. However what was constant throughout all of the young men's experiences was their lack of autonomy within the parental home. This is something that I would assign to their experiences of

gender and age rather than being specific to their mixed descent identities. In what follows I seek to explore the gendered experiences of home and space for the young men in my research.

Chapter eight

Definitions of Home for young men of mixed descent

Introduction

"I really want to have posters on my wall if I lived alone I would definitely have posters on the wall. In my bedroom I don't have much of my stuff. I don't really have many things" (Tariq).

The preceding chapter has illustrated how the domestic experiences of the young men were formulated around their parent(s) and their parental material cultures and cultural practices. This chapter seeks to explore the definitions of home for the young men. I divide the chapter into two parts: home and creation of a 'personal living space' and home beyond the domestic. The first part is a further consideration of the parental home in relation to the issues raised in chapter seven and how the home as a bounded space has meant that young men are restricted in what they can define as their 'own' space within the home. My discussion is formed around the "bedroom" cultures of the young men, similarly to the work of McRobbie (1975 and 1991) and her work on young girls and their bedroom cultures. I seek to develop an argument around how masculinity and youth shape experiences of home. In relation to this I also move on to discuss how the young men extended their spaces of belonging into the public sphere.

Definitions of home

Kaika (2004: 266) identifies that home should be a space of freedom, as she writes:

The dwelling space of the modern (bourgeois) individual became constructed not only as a line separating the inside from the outside (a house), but also as the epitome, the spatial inscription of the idea of individual freedom, a place liberated from fear and anxiety, a place supposedly untouched by social, political and natural processes, a place enjoying an autonomous and independent existence: a home.

As I identified in Chapter seven the young men in my research all lived with their parents which affected their home lives and impacted on how they narrated their identities. The presence of a positional parent meant that the domestic space of the home lacked a sense of autonomy for the young men and there was a tendency among the research participants to refer to their domestic spaces as belonging primarily to their parents. For example, Tariq stated (as he did earlier) that: *"If I didn't live with my Dad I would have pictures on my wall. At the moment I don't have any because my Dad doesn't let me. So yeah I would have lots of pictures if I lived alone" (Tariq)*. Tariq suggested in his narrative that living with his father meant that he also lived with a number of rules imposed upon him. When I asked Tariq during his first interview how he would define home he stated the following:

Somewhere where I feel safe, especially the area, like where I live it's near [location]. but that is not home for me, it is not a safe place to be, it is really racist with some people being part of the BNP. And a place where I can enjoy myself. Like if when I go to France and I enjoy myself I will consider France home, but if I don't enjoy myself I won't consider it home. I do think my home as home but it is also a place with lots of rules. I have grown up in that house. My bedroom is not part of what I call home, it is just somewhere I sleep. I have a bed and a cupboard and that's it. There are loads of other stuff in there like my mum keeps all her toiletries there and my dad keeps his uniform there. I consider the front room my main home space. I also like to be in the kitchen. I like to cook.

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(Diary entry, July, 2006)

When I met with Tariq after he had returned from his time in France I asked him about his experiences of home:

Akile: What was it like in France Tariq? Did you miss your home here?

Tariq: Yeah I did, but it was good in France. I was staying with a family who were so cool. But there wasn't much to do even though I had no one telling me what to do, which so weird. It was home for a few months but I never thought that I would say this but I did miss my family and the rules. But it was so so nice to be away from my parents too. It was kind of good being in a place that wasn't to do with mum and dad...you know?

Tariq identifies the presence of rules within his home in relation to religious practices which affected how he defined his home space and which spaces he felt were his own personal 'home space'. He identified that his time away from his parents in another country was a time where he was able to 'own' a space he considered to be his own personal space. This was particularly important for Tariq because of his lack of autonomy within his parental home. For example, in the first interview I conducted with Tariq I asked him about his bedroom:

Tariq: In my bedroom it is all my Dad's stuff and my Mum's stuff.

Akile: What kind of stuff?

Tariq: My Dad keeps his work uniform in there and my Mum keeps some of her stuff which she brought back from Malaysia.

Akile: So it's not really like your bedroom?

Tariq: No not really and also I share it with my brother and with my parents' stuff in there it's not really my own space as everyone uses it.

(Second interview)

Tariq's bedroom had become a communal area for the family without any boundaries to identify it as his own personal bounded space. It is important to reflect back on Chapter seven and the argument by Sibley around the home and family to consider how young men defined their spaces of home. Sibley (1995:97) argues:

> Space enters this scheme both as an enabling and as a constraining medium. Suppose we had a positional family in which the dominant parent tries to exclude the children from areas which the parent categorizes as 'adult space'. If there is a separate living room which can be isolated and labelled as an adult space, boundary enforcement will obviously be facilitated and children may feel excluded.

In relation to Sibley's argument around 'adult spaces' Tariq was unable to use his bedroom as his own personal space because it was used by both his mother and father. Due to the dynamic nature of home, the young men's experiences of home were imbued with the influence of their parents. David at the start of the research was home educated however in the middle of research he went to study for his A-levels at a college near his home. At the start David made the following comment: *"I like being at home and talking with my Dad. I enjoy my Dad's company, we have political discussions with each other which I enjoy" (David).* This is in stark contrast to David's later diary entry which reveals that he did not like being at home, primarily because he did not 'feel at home' as his identity was being put

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into question and he felt that he had to negotiate his identity when he was at home. When I asked Arslan about how he felt about being at home and being away from home he stated the following: *"Being away from home is great, but it's about being away from my mum and dad. Not because I don't love them or anything like that. It's just well.... It's a sense of freedom and no hassle. Being away is about doing stuff away from them. I've only been away from them once when I went to France on a school trip it was great being away in another country" (Arslan)*. Arslan indicated that being away from his parents allowed him a sense of autonomy, as he was away from a series of rules. Similarly in the context of 'transnational home' (see discussion in the previous chapter) the young men felt they didn't belong. It is therefore important to consider how 'home' was defined by the young men themselves, and where they considered as a place of belonging, particularly in terms of their identities.

Bedroom cultures: defining personal living space

In the previous chapter I identified the importance of the material items within Tariq's home in relation to his mother's and father's religions. Tariq spoke of the importance that his mother and father placed on their material items, however, he identifies posters as key material items that he would like to acquire if he lived in his home, which I argue as being part of Tariq's subjectivity. I asked Tariq where he kept his personal belongings due to his bedroom being a shared space:

> *I keep my clothes in a pile by my bed and I don't really have any other stuff. My books and that I keep in the front room which is kind of more like my own space. I do my work down there and watch TV as well there.*

(First interview)

He also took a photograph of his bedroom as part of his photo-voice:

Image 8.1

He made the following comment: *This is a photo of my bedroom which I share with my brother. Mine is the one on the left (NOT the Spiderman sheets!!!) There are a few pictures on the wall but most of these I bought in China last summer with the intention of using them for my accommodation when I move out for the next year of uni but since that never happened I decided to stick them on the wall because it was so bare. The picture of the man on the left of the photo is another Baha'i picture and the poster on the right is Malcom X and it's my brother's.*

Although Tariq suggested that his bedroom was not a space allocated solely for him, his photograph does indicate that he did have some sense of autonomy within

his bedroom. He expands in his diary entry on the use of the rooms in his home in diary entry:

August, 2006

> *One of my mates has a similar house to mine and we both spend most of our time in the lounge or dining room because the TV and PC are in these rooms. We only use our bedrooms to sleep in. My bedroom doesn't have anything personal to me as my dad never allowed me to put up posters of people as it's not allowed in Islam but when I did put up posters they were always cartoon-like but they always ended up being taken down somehow. I'm used to it now and it doesn't really bother me. Also, like my mates, we have lots of other stuff in our bedrooms that's not just for our bedroom so the rest of my family use my room a lot to store things and constantly come in and out so it's not really a place that I consider my own.*

(Diary entry, August 2006)

Tariq identified rooms in his house as being used for particular functions and he reinforced a lack of autonomy within his parental home. Other participants had a greater level of authority over particular rooms which were allocated for their own use such that they had the opportunity to identify their 'own spaces'. Often this was identified as the bedroom which the young men clarified through the use of signs which some had on their doors whereas others spoke of how they explicitly told their parents to keep out:*"Keep Mum and Dad out of our room"* was a common phrase throughout Craig's and David's diaries. Simon and John were also brothers but, unlike Craig and David had signs on their bedroom doors: *"I have a sign on my bedroom door it says "Danger keep out" so that is a sign telling Mum to keep out" (Simon).* John also had a sign on his bedroom door which read *"John's room".* The discussion of the bedroom by Craig, Simon and

John was a discussion of a separate territory occupied by the young men through the creation of boundaries. They identified their bedrooms as being separate to the rest of the house. I asked Brian about which room he would consider to be his own personal space within his home:

I quite like my bedroom, it also.........my room it feels like home, one because it's decorated by me and because you choose the colours of your room. Colour themes different than what you have in the rest of the house. The colour makes a difference. My bedroom is white mainly but it has blue curtains. The great thing is that it's the sun facing, you don't open the curtains and you get this wonderful blue light.

The bedroom was ultimately a space away from the parental gaze which in the case of David and Craig also meant a space away from their teachers as they were home educated. While there has been some research which examines the importance of bedrooms for feminine subcultures (see McRobbie, 1991), there has been limited engagement with how young men use their bedrooms. This research illustrates how the bedroom functioned as a room away from the home in its entirety. Craig and David were both home educated at the start of the research and this changed their experiences of home and the boundaries within the home. Their bedrooms were also spaces where they would also do their school and home work alongside where they would spend their spare time also. Unlike Tariq who opted to take photographs of his entire home, Craig and David only took photographs of their bedrooms and other spaces such as the park and college (see image 8.2 and 8.3).

As such, the bedrooms of the young men are defined as a separate space within their homes, which could be identified as what has been referred to as 'personal living space' (Gosling *et al*, 2005). Gosling *et al* (2005:52) identify personal living space as a space which is 'much more than a bedroom but less than a full-fledged house, a personal living space is typically a room nestling with a larger residential setting while affording primary territory for a designated individual'. They suggest further that: 'personal living spaces can include an adolescent's room nestling within the family household, a room within a college dormitory suite, a room within a boarding house that serves meals'. The place of the bedroom metaphorically became home for the young men, reducing the scale of the home to what McNamee (1998) refers to as the 'micro-space' and what Supski (2006) refers to as a 'microcosm'. This indicated the importance of power and control over territory for the young men. The young men were able to assert a degree of control and freedom. Arslan made the following comment about his bedroom: *"I do like my bedroom. I like hanging out in my bedroom because there is no one to bother me. If I am in my bedroom my Mum and Dad think I am studying so they don't come in unless they need me to do something in the house".*

Daniel however spoke of the bathroom:

I suppose the only place that is private, like really private where you can think and like have private time is the bathroom I would say. Anywhere else in the house people can burst in on you and enter your space even though I live in a big house you know that it's not really your space is it. I guess.

Simon more specifically referred to what he liked doing in his bedroom: *"When I am at home I just hang out in my bedroom reading my magazines, playing PS2*

and those kinds of things". The statements made by the young men identified the bedroom of the young men as a place they could claim as their "own". This was through the fact that the young men had acquired material items which was a display of their 'territory' which created home for young men in their bedrooms. Image 8.2 below is of David's 'half' of the bedroom which he shared with Craig. He wrote the following commentary: *"My side of the room, computer is shared"*.

Image 8.2

Image 8.3 David wrote the following commentary: *"PC and my Playstation!!!"*

Image 8.3 above is another photograph of Craig and David's bedroom. These two images were of over fifteen of their bedroom which included their playstation and computer.

Examining the series of photographs taken by Craig and David, their bedroom aesthetically indicated that it was very much 'their bedroom'. The presence of their own cereal bowls, books and school books along with the untidiness of their bedroom are important examples of their autonomy. They had their own possessions in their bedroom and also controlled access to their bedroom. Indeed, both Craig and David were responsible for cleaning and tidying their own rooms as they did not allow their parents to come into their rooms. In the second

interview which I conducted with David I asked him about his bedroom and also the photographs that he took of his bedroom:

Akile: David I just wanted to ask you about the photographs of your bedroom.

David: Yeah sure.

Akile: It was a bit of a mess, and I was just wondering whose responsibility is it to tidy your room?

David: (laughs) Well me and Craig are suppose to tidy it up between us, but as you can see neither had bothered at the time. You see sometimes the girls come in and shout at us for being messy but we never bother to tidy up with the hope that they will do it for us.

Akile: Does your mum and dad come in and tell you off about the mess?

David: They don't really come in and out of our bedroom that much apart from when we used to do our school work in there. But not so much anymore.

Akile: So since you went to college then is your bedroom a different sort of space?

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David: It does feel more homely because I'm not doing my school work in there. I mean of course I do my homework in there and so forth, but it really is a place to hang out.

Akile: Because of sharing your bedroom with your brother does that mean you don't really see your room as your own room, if you understand what I mean?

David: I understand what you mean, but no not really me and Craig are pretty close so there isn't any sort of divide in our room really.

Akile: Do you like hanging out in your bedroom? Do you hang out in your friend's bedrooms as well? Do you go to your friends houses in general?

David: Yes to all of your questions. I like to hang out in Jodie's bedroom when I go round there it's a place to chill out away from my mum and dad.

(Second interview)

The images of the material items which they displayed were how the young men created their personal living spaces and created boundaries between the rest of home.

The material cultures that I discussed in Chapter five and seven were those which associated with parents, women, and transnational homes thus reflecting particular cultures and religious practises. In contrast, the young men identified material items which as Noble (2004:253) argues: 'The individual creates the meaning

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behind the object'. Brian personified this through his discussion on materiality and identity: *"Bookshelves represent who I am. I have history books, political books and things related to what I want to do with my life. There is quite a variety, some fiction. I also have a large collection of sci-fi novels and fantasy novels and in a way they are my own things. They are my books. I like to read a good sci-fi."* The meaning associated with the bookshelf in Brian's bedroom was derived from his enjoyment of reading and also as Brian referred to in his previous narratives of identity and as Attfield (2000:157) argues 'the example of household things such as the dressing table and their associated furnishing practices that follow have been selected for their role in the process of self creation'. Alongside his bookshelf and books, Brian had items in his bedroom that were more specific to his interests: *"I have lots of pictures and posters on the wall. Sometimes it's stuff that I find amusing newspaper stories that my friends have sent me, which has particular significance to me, photos, drawings, poetry, postcards from friends and family" (Brian).* Brian's refers to the possession of material items that had significance to himself i.e. in relation to his identity, which he kept in his bedroom.

Each material item within each of the bedrooms had its own particular meaning to each of the young men. For instance, Marlon, Simon, John and David all spoke of the posters that they had in their bedrooms: *"I've got loads of posters on the wall in my room" (Marlon).* Similarly David also spoke of his posters as well as his interest in football in relation to them: *"I've got loads of posters of footballers. I support Arsenal even though they are not doing that great."* The theme of posters in the bedrooms was further identified within Simon's narratives: *"I've got*

posters of girls on my bedroom wall and my play station in my room ". Ali, who perhaps because he did not have a room of his own, spoke of the items he had around his bed: *"I share a room with my sisters. It isn't a problem really, it's the way it is. I keep my things around my bed and they keep their things around theirs. Like, I have my trophies [for sports and academic achievements] around my bed which prove that I am good, good at things ".* Ali identifies items in relation to his achievements which he also relates to his identity as a higher achiever.

These items as Marcoux (2001) argues in relation to posters, suggested that the young men's bedrooms were a symbolic centre of home for them. The placing of posters on the walls of their bedrooms created a sense of home for the young men in their bedrooms which were associated with a sense of belonging in relation to their identities also. Hence, material culture is, as Noble (2004) suggests, part of subjectivity and a process through which the young men acquired their identities as well as the material items that they spoke of. The young mens networks of space, objects and relationships were separate to that of their parents. Material items which the young men identified in the previous chapter cannot be divided between parental and the young men, but were associated with their parental heritage. It is therefore important to identify the differences between those material items associated with heritage and memory in comparison to those material items that are associated with now and present. As Noble (2004:238) argues:

Our domestic objects, especially those prized possessions we maintain for years, constitute key resources in the ways in which we go about objectifying the complexity and continuity of our selfhood and its relatedness to others, retaining these in the objects and spaces of our everyday environments. This is a much stronger claim than the emphasis given to memory in the study of the meaning of things.

Noble (2004) argues in favour of how material items constitute and objectify identities rather than represent memories and meanings of material items. Likewise I would argue that the material items that I discussed in Chapter seven and those which I discuss in this chapter are associated with identities both in terms of heritage and the past but also in the present. For the young men who spoke about material items it was a way of exemplifying their interest and how they spent their time.

The relationship between the material items and the young men were highly gendered. For example, David, alongside Simon spoke of his playstation being the most important item in his bedroom: *"My posters and my ps2 that's all there is in my room (and my bed)" (John)*.

Image 8.4

Image 8.4 is of David's bedroom wall (more specifically it was David's side of the bedroom which he shared with his brother Craig). David took a series of photographs of his bedroom wall which had a number of different posters. As such, posters and play stations were the two key material items that were identified as being important in the creation of sense of home and identity. Unlike in the previous chapter the young men were referring to items that reflected the current increase in gaming and IT (as demonstrated by Valentine and Holloway, 2002). David's his first diary entry specifically mentioned his playstation:

I'm David and I'm 16 and living in Tower Hamlets. I live with my parents, 4 brothers and 4 sisters. I don't go to school and was taught at home instead, in fact, I am still waiting to receive my GCSE results in about 2 weeks time. I have loads of different hobbies, but the foremost ones are sport and computer games. My favourite possession is probably my PS2, because it is a gateway out of this chaotic world where we don't seem to have much control into one where you are in charge – and also because it's great fun to thrash my brother at something!

(Diary entry, October 2005)

David also took a series of photographs of his playstation games as part of his photo-voice. Image 8.5 is one of the photographs that he took:

Image 8.5
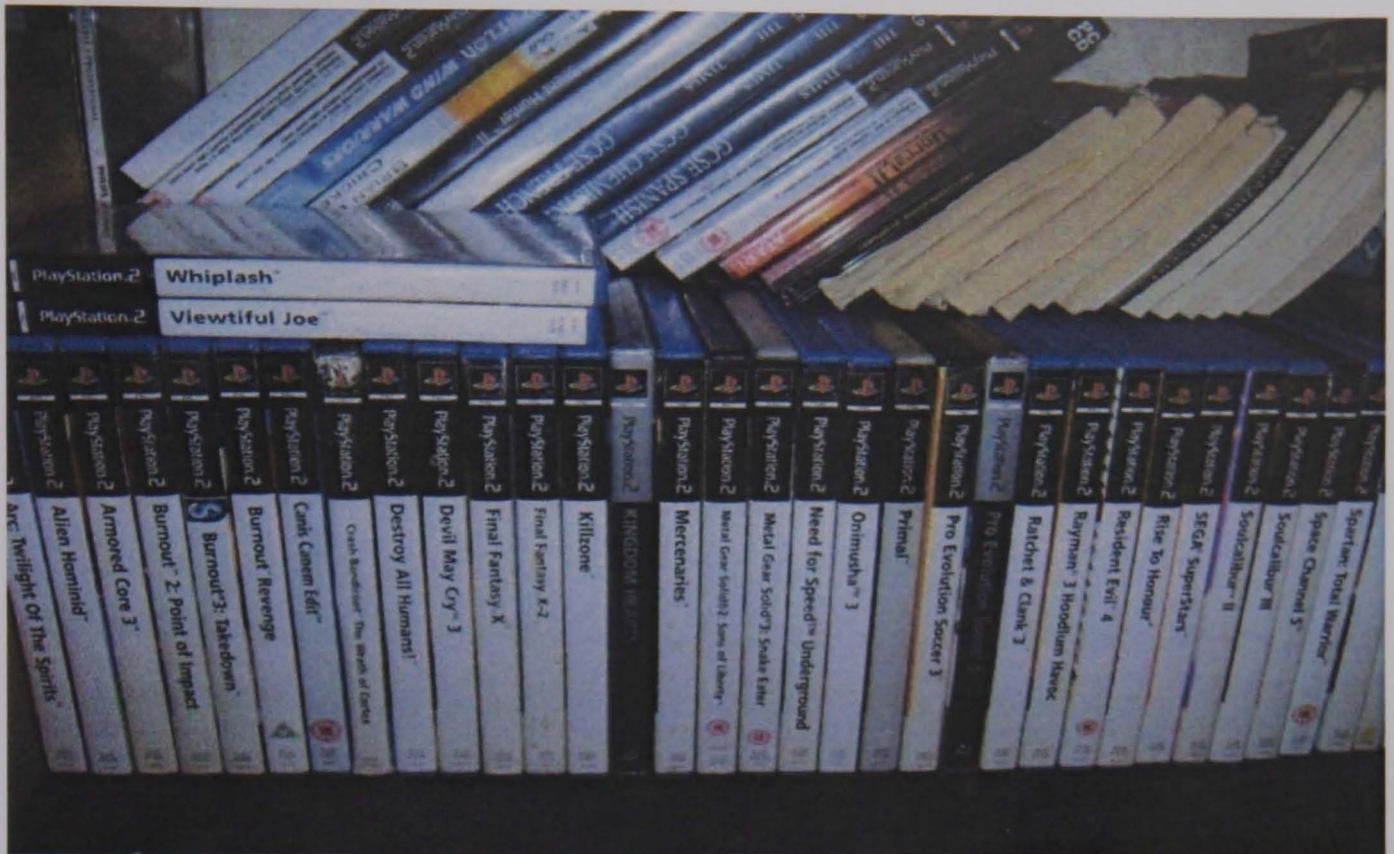
David suggests that importance of his playstation as being part of his life in the present. This echoes the findings of Mehta and Balk (1991) whereby the material items he refers to are 'transitional objects' similarly to my argument earlier in relation to Greg Noble's work. As can be inferred the young men spent a vast amount of their time talking about their bedrooms and their playstations, in particular Simon and John: *"I like being in my room and playing on my playstation it is the only time to myself. Like me and John had to have two different separate playstations one for him and one for me it would have just been like too too much. But we do play together as well"*. Simon also argued that: *"We have two playstations one in my room and one in Simon's room. We got two so that we wouldn't fight about it if our friends came round and want to play"* *(John)*. Similarly in McNamee's (1998) research on home for children and young people found that the computer in the family home which supposedly belonged to all of the family, but was however kept in the son's/brother's room. The location

of the play station in the young men's bedroom identified firstly a sense of ownership and secondly a form of control. As McNamee (1998:204) argues: 'the physical ownership of computer and video games, and the physical control of spaces which arise from it, are of symbolic importance to teenage boys in the domestic sphere'. Therefore the rationale for having two playstations in Simon and John's home was a way in which Simon and John possessed a sense of ownership over their personal living space.

Valentine and Holloway (2002b, 2000c and 2001) identify how the availability of personal computers and other media in children's bedrooms is impacting on their lives. Valentine and Holloway (2002b:303) argue that 'for some adult commentators, this is a cause for concern. The fear is that computer-obsessed children will socially withdraw from the off-line world of the family and friends, thereby missing out on the imaginative opportunities for play that the outdoors is perceived to offer, and that they will become addicted to the screen'. Figure 8.5 is of David's play station games. As can be seen from the photograph David had a large number of games which were all associated with fantasy worlds, which reinforces what Valentine and Holloway refer to in their research about being withdrawn from reality. David's narrative and photographs demonstrated the importance of his computer and his play station. Similarly, Jason referred to using the internet: *"I just sit and listen to music in my room on my iPod 'cause like I said the main CD player system is in the front room. I go on the internet, but my mum checks what I am up to on line" (Jason).* Craig similarly to Jason divided his time at home in his bedroom playing on his playstation and accessing the Internet:

"Today I spent most of the day in my room on the Internet and playing ps2" *(Craig).*

David and Craig's photographs of their bedrooms displayed the autonomous nature of the space as well as their own relationships with the material items, which I would argue was associated with age and gender and a growing use of IT within the home also (see Valentine and Holloway, 2001). This increase in the use of IT and gaming I would argue is part of a wider discussion on how young men are spending their leisure time. When discussing the time that they spent in their bedrooms. Hence, in relation to the preoccupation with their playstations and their bedrooms they also identified how they preferred to spend their time beyond the bedroom via the internet.

The young men were able to access different places and people via the internet from the space of their bedrooms. They were also able to connect with their friends with their use of the internet from their bedrooms. In a study of young men and their use of information technology, Valentine and Holloway (2001) argue that the internet creates social networks for the young men. As they write (2002b:304): 'one example of these social networks is the computing cultures of which some of the boys we interviewed were a part of. The meaning of computer use in the home for this group was not simply shaped by negotiations with other household members, but also with other boys. These boys developed and extended their friendships in their local area through a shared interest in computing'. In relation to my research I argue that the connection made by young men when they went on line created a sense of home and a sense that they were

able to invite others into their 'home'. Daniel spent a large majority of his time 'chatting on msn' to his friends: "*I go on line and chat don't do much downloading but like chatting to my friends on-line, like obviously I chat to people I know I don't chat to no random people. But yeah I'm always logged in either when I'm out I stay logged on in case anyone wants to send me a message*". A possible explanation for the preoccupation with the internet as well as their playstations maybe due to the lack of autonomy in the parental abode was gained in their bedrooms through their youth sub-cultures. Craig's diary entries were structured in such a way that he described all of his day to day activities and events, which allowed me to gain an insight into his use of spaces and particularly his time inside his home and his bedroom:

This week has been busy for me:

On Sunday, I went bowling with my brothers and sisters and with some of my mates. It was great fun. After bowling went to Pizza Hut. After that we went to St. Giles Park to hang out. After that, I went home and played my PS2 until midnight, then I went to bed. On Monday, I spent most of the day outside playing football and hanging out with my mates. At about 5pm, I went to St Giles Park again and then visited the river bank nearby. We arrived back home late, so as a punishment my dad sent me to his allotment to do the watering. After that I went home and played my PS2 until 1am. On Tuesday, I went ice skating. After I got home I went to the river bank by St. Giles Park again to chill out. When I got home I watched TV until 11pm. On Wednesday, I went out with my brother. Then we went to the river bank where I made new friends. When I got home I went on the internet until 0030. Today I went to visit my grandfather with my brother in North London. When we arrived we were given a tour of his new house. We left and returned home at 6pm, then I watched TV until 7pm and then I went to use the internet and started typing this e-mail (Craig).

(Diary entry, August 2005)

Craig divided his time between a number of spaces and activities. I asked Craig about his leisure activities further when I interviewed him: *"I always go on msn and chat with my friends at night. We can't go out at night with our friends so we are all on msn chatting. So we meet up in the day at the park or somewhere around if it's my friends"*. He suggested that the internet was a way of connecting with his friends whom he also spent time with during the day at the park. His time was mainly divided between being in his bedroom (where his computer was located) and at St. Giles Park. This I would argue is part of a culture of what some of my participants referred to as 'hanging out'. The young men had also created a culture of 'hanging out' in their bedrooms which can be understood as part of a strategy to get away from the parental gaze. Studies of young people, particularly with reference to the work on sub-cultures (Hebdige, 1979) have focused on ways in which young people have sought to challenge and escape parental authority. 'Hanging out' referred to practices and activities which the young men did within their bedrooms: *"I hang out at my friends houses in their rooms, or sometimes they come over and hang out in my room" (Craig)*. Hanging out entailed two main activities: playing on their playstation and spending time on the internet but also 'hanging out' outside.

Ali, for instance spent a lot of time at the youth club as it allowed him time to do things he was unable to do at home: *"Being at Bethnal Green Boys club every night after sixth form is better than being at home because I can play pool, listen to music go on the internet I can't do these things at home can I."* In a similar way, David stated: *"Being at college and really being away from home and mum*

and dad, and of course my sisters is good. It is good to be away from them and have some kind of freedom. And because I've made so many great friends and college it is great being with them and hanging out with them. I mean for Craig it is different because his college is terrible and he hasn't made any really good friends but I think once he transfers to my college he will feel the same as well" *(David)*. David identifies clearly that he felt a greater sense of freedom away from home which was associated with being away from his family. He also expressed a sense of belonging in the space of his college which he suggested his brother was not experiencing. He discussed the importance of being away from home further in his second interview.

Akile: What about being at home?

David: Home is a weird place to be.

Akile: What do you mean?

David: I spend so much time at college and feel so comfortable around my friends that college is almost home like to me.

Akile: What do you mean its home like to you?

David: I actually prefer being at college I love it so much, and there is no one hassling me.

Akile: Why who hassles you at home?

David: My dad. He worries a lot and time keeping I am bad, but being at college I don't really want to go home. At college I don't have to be the eldest and the responsible one, I don't have to take responsibility for other people's actions.

Akile: So you feel less comfortable at home than you did before when you were being home educated?

David: Don't get me wrong I am very glad that my parents home educated us because the schools in this area are so bad and I think that we would have done so badly if we had gone to any of the schools in the area.

(Second interview)

Because David considered his home as an authoritative space (see above and Chapter five and seven), he stated that he 'hates going home'. He suggests that the space of his college was less of a controlled space in comparison to his home, and was almost 'home like' thereby relating a greater a sense of belonging to the space of his college. The following is an extract from his diary:

16th October 2005

I officially hate going home for the weekends. All that seems to happen is that my sisters and "friend" (we sort of made up) are on my case 24/7. Raven keeps going on about how I make lame excuses for dumping people (I told her that I just didn't feel "it" anymore, if you know what I mean), I have a split personality because I act differently with my sisters, my friends and my parents, how I'm geeky, boring, lazy and so on. I can't stand coming home at the weekends now because the moment I walk through the door she is there and shouting something in my face.

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The extract from David's diary above, illustrates some of these experiences of unbelonging. While David originally identified his home as a place of sanctuary, after moving to College he found his home was less of a place of belonging but more of un-belonging. As such, David's experience illustrates a shift between centres and margins (see Pratt, 1998; also Chapter five). The home became a marginal space for David due to his family and peers but also due to his differing experiences at college: *"College is so different but it is so great. I get to do what I want and with who and without hassle."* He identifies that college offers him a sense of freedom (I will discuss this further later in the chapter) it is important to consider and to identify how the young men created a sense of home within their domestic spaces and their lack of space within the home.

Image 8.6: David commented on his photograph: *"My college"*.
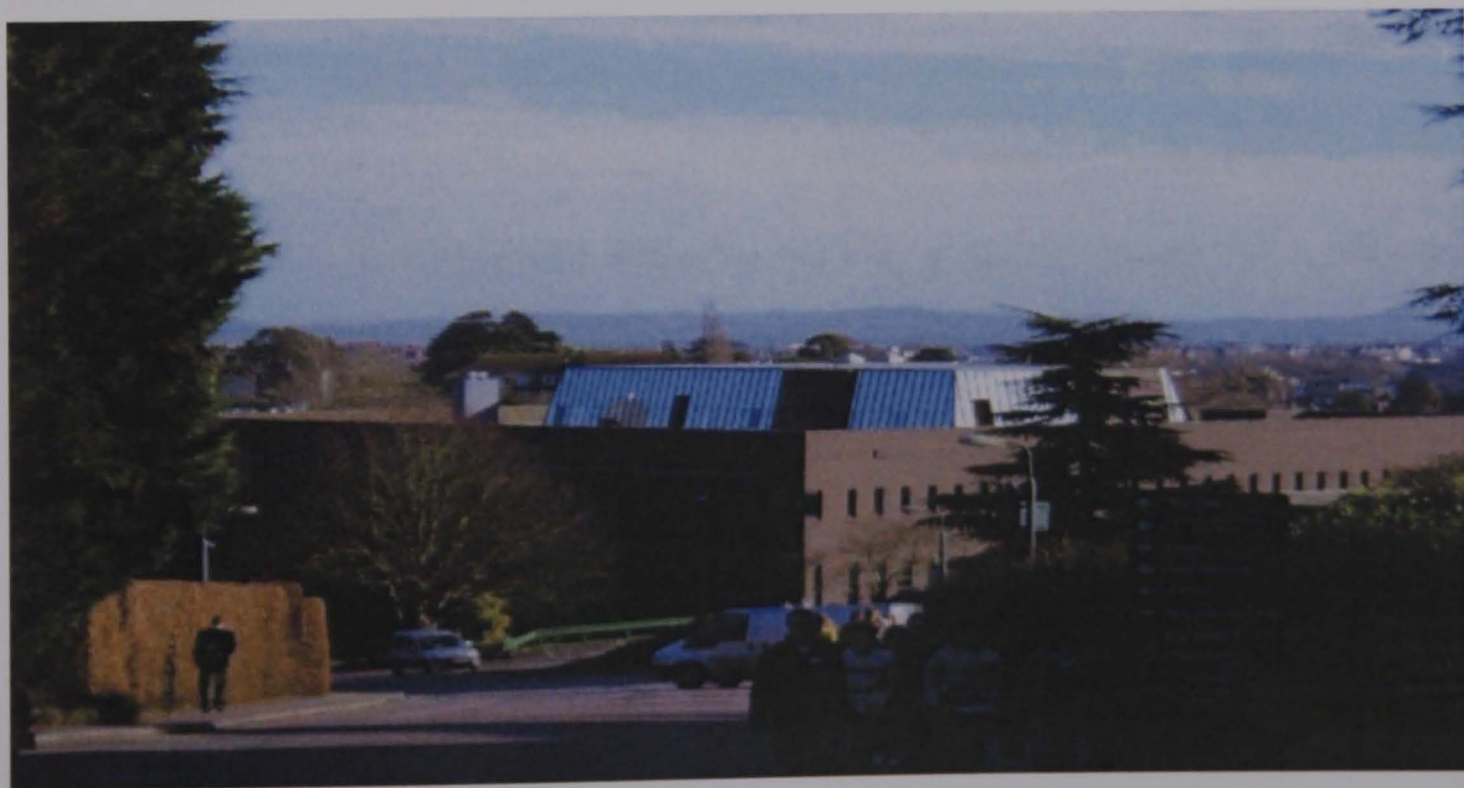
As part of the research David had photographed sixteen different areas of his colleges and the people he liked to spend his time with, whereas within his home

he only photographed his bedroom and had no images of either other rooms or his family. The above photograph was one of six photographs that David took of his college[3].

When I interviewed David the second time we discussed the photographs of his college:

> *The thing is that this is the first time I have had freedom away from my family. I have made lots of different friends and I have my girlfriend now so we can't really hang out at home so I spend all time at college or at her house which is pretty cool. Her mum is ok about us whereas my mum and dad don't know that I have a girlfriend. I doubt that they would approve of it anyway even if I did tell them.*

(Second interview)

David's experiences of home are different to those of the other young men because of being home educated. His home space was both one where he was educated and also where he lived. Hence when he started going to college he experienced a sense of freedom and autonomy away from his parents and away from a number of rules which were present at home:

> *You know Akile I have a mobile phone now and it took a lot of convincing for my parents to get me one, but I think that they got me one so that they can check up on me. Now I am at college they obviously see less of me and they don't know exactly what I am doing all the time and I think that's why they gave in with the mobile phone.*

(Second interview)

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[3] I have not included all of his photographs as they included other people in them who I do not have permission from to include in this research

The home is ultimately a space of rules for the young men. Wood and Beck (1994) for example, consider that a house or room is possessed with a number of rules which all have their own meaning. Similarly Aitken (2001:18) suggests that rules within the home have values and meanings which are embodied in ceilings, floors, door and houseplants. Adults who live in the house respond intuitively to the rules but the presence of kids makes them explicit. For the young men it was the rules and the presence of the parents and their parental cultures that infused a presence of rules and order which they followed within the home. Hence why I would argue the young men identified a greater sense of belonging beyond the space of the home.

Public spaces such as the park where places Craig and David spent a lot of their spare time should be considered as part of where young men can experience and define a sense of belonging. Aitken (2001:16) argues that 'children must have time to do nothing and space within which to do it. They must have the freedom to take-off down the street when they see something interesting going on'. However in the present climate public spaces are deemed dangerous, particularly in relation to youth violence and crime (see Chapter five and Pain, 2005). Yet this said the young men in my research spent a lot of their time in outdoor spaces. Like Craig, David also spent a considerable part of his time in the park:

> *I like to hang out outside. Most of the time in the summer holidays we tend to go to St. Giles park a lot most of our friends are there. Because of living in the area and all of our friends being from the Youth Group Tower*

Hamlets we all tend to hang out in the same places so it is kind of familiar and homely.

(First interview)

It is important to note here that at the time of the research it was the summer holidays hence why Craig and David spoke at length about their leisure time. In the second interview I conducted with Craig I asked about the time he spent in the park:

Akile: You spoke a lot about in your diaries about the time you spent at St. Giles park you must enjoy spending your time there?

Craig: Yeah I spent so much time there over the summer.

Akile: So you enjoy hanging out outside in the park?

Craig: Yeah it becomes a second home.

Akile: What do you mean?

Craig: You know because of hanging out there so much. You spend so much time, well actually because of being there so much. And things are different because I don't go to school.

(Second interview)

Craig's definition of the park as being a 'second home' demarcates the space of the park as a space of belonging for him. As his brother David stated, it is a

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'familiar and homely' space. As such, Craig and David exhibited what Gorman-Murray (2006) identifies as 'stretching' the home whereby public spaces become home like based on the greater level of autonomy experienced here. Brian for example spoke in his second interview that he considered outside spaces as being 'homelike':

> *I think the canal walk from Roman Road to Mile End Park is like home to me. I like to find routes to walk and walk to different spaces. And I walk to various different spaces. But erm.. that is one of the walks I like doing. It is walk I can do blind now. I can see the spaces in my mind. I like walking along the river also past the big wheel that is a walk I like to do in the summer. The canal walk is one of my home spaces because I am free. What other spaces are my home spaces....... I sort of think that Mile End Park, yes that is where me and my friends go to.*

(Second interview)

Brian also embraced specific public spaces as home like which in his case can also be attributed to the fact that he had moved a number of times: *"I am quite pragmatic about but I think home is somewhere I feel safe and but I think possibly because I don't have a fixed ethnic identity as it may be called I regard home as a safe place. Erm but also because I have moved about a lot quite recently. I lived with someone else while my mum was in Durham then I moved back here and actually I home very quickly. But I think yeah..."* Brian's identification of 'homing' quickly identifies home as a process rather than a fixed concept of such as the 'ideal home'. I asked Brian in the second interview about what he meant about homing quickly:

> Akile: When you say home very quickly what do you mean? What makes your home 'home'?

Brian: I live there and I feel safe there.

Akile: But what does homing mean?

Brian: It is about where you feel safe and where you feel at ease. That's why I like walking it makes you feel free. I like spending time outdoors rather than being inside.

Akile: Do you have like a specific space that kind of personifies you? Within your home?

Brian: Within my home, right...... Well I don't actually spend that much time inside. I just go home to sleep. I am not the kind of person that likes to spend time inside. I therefore prefer to be in the park where I can think and I can read.

(First interview)

Daniel's concept of home was also beyond the domestic:

Akile: So where is home for you then?

Daniel: I would have to say somewhere in my mind.

Akile: OK what do you mean?

Daniel: Like somewhere in my mind where I can call home.

Akile: Like where?

Daniel: Somewhere outside, Somewhere far away from where I actually live. Wouldn't actually mind being outside in the wilderness away from

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people and away from people judging me. It's the judgement and lack of freedom that makes a person not belong.

(Second interview)

Daniel's definition of home above extended his quote from Chapter seven and is associated with belonging, he also stated *"Sometimes you got to be away far away from people"*.

Blake, like Brian considered outside spaces as being what I refer to as 'homelike'. Blake identifies the 'football' pitch as being 'home like' as evident in the following exchange:

Akile: What spaces do you define are home to you?

Blake: Like my house is. But it's my mum and dad's house. I want a bigger house. Like I like my house but when I move it will be great.

Akile: So do the people who are around you make a space more homely?

Blake: Yeah cause like you feel more of a connection to it.

Akile: How would you define home to you?

Blake: Like I like to hang out outside and I love playing football especially with the youth group guys we always, always play football. It's like home to me – a second home, that's what my mum would say I think (laughs).

Akile: So the football pitch/field at …is like home for you?

Blake: No not home like, but a space I like to be a lot of the time doing what I love.

Akile: What do you mean?

Blake: Like I spend enough time there for it to be like my home but obviously I don't sleep there or nothing. It's my mates that make it a place that I want to just be like.

(Second interview)

Blake considered the football pitch to be a key space which was familiar to him and where he preferred to spend most of his time. Matthews *et al* (1998) suggest that young people create places and generate and attach meaning specific to these places which, in my research, were considered as home like places and what Matthews *et al* define as the creation of a fourth environment. Blake, for example, indicates above that playing football and being outside on the football pitch as his fourth environment. For David, his fourth environment was his college while Brian and Craig identified the importance of being outside.

The theory of the fourth environment is important in relation to why young men may chose to spend their time in public spaces and how they identified with public spaces in relation to their gendered identities as well as their age. As Matthews *et al* (1998:195) argue:

> Through their developing environmental transactions young teenagers frequently come into contact with places in ways not envisioned by adults. For example, children's play areas become convenient places where groups could hang out during the evening away from the adult gaze; the local shops become a social venue where teenagers from one group could come into contact with other groups and show-off their latest clothes and hairstyles, and wait for things to happen; and alleyways and back passages provided spaces for exciting mountain bike races.

My argument on definitions of home for young men is beyond their identities as mixed descent but is more associated with gender, and age and also a lack of autonomy within the parental home. There is a gendered difference when examining public spaces in relation to young men. Tucker and Matthews (2001:163) argue that 'where girls occupy public spaces they may be seen by adults as being the "wrong" gender in the "wrong" place, being exposed to risks in such "unsafe" spaces'. The geography of fear has tended to focus on the geography of women's fear and identifying particular public places as fearful to women (although see recent work on young people's fear such as Pain, 2005 and also Chapter five).

The gendered nature of my research is particularly important as this is an examination of how young men defined their spaces of home. All of my participants spoke of the time they spent outdoors as well as indoors. The use of

public spaces like the park or the football field was ways defining boundaries of space that they perceived to be autonomous to them. Jason identified the football club and the youth group as being key spaces where he and his brother would spend a large amount of their time. However unlike some of the young men such as David, Jason preferred to be at home with his mother:

> *I spend so much time playing football outside and of course because it is part of the youth group I spend time there to. But my mum comes down to the youth group which is great. The best time I have is at home with my mum. I love hanging out with her and I know she doesn't like me hanging around the streets because of so many people getting into trouble. But she is fine about the youth group and football team because she knows Mark (youth group leader) and she knows he will look out for me.*

(Second interview)

Jason was the only participant to comment on his relationship with his mother and the importance of her. Even within the public spaces he spoke of the presence of his mother which the other young men attempted to get away from (for example, Craig and David).

Hence for young men, home was defined through a sense of belonging and also through the amount of time that they spent outdoors or away from home in a number of different public spaces which they associated with having a greater level of freedom and also being around their peers rather than their parents. It is important to contextualise the research and raise the point again that at the time of

the research both gun and knife crime were minimal (or appeared to be minimal) hence the young men were not concerned with street crime, gang culture and other current issues associated with young men in public spaces. This is apparent in the interviews conducted with the young and also through their diary entries.

Conclusions

This chapter has considered experiences of home both within and beyond the domestic. I firstly explored home and personal living space and secondly the home beyond the domestic. I demonstrated how living within the parental home limited the autonomy of my participants in Chapter seven. In this chapter I have extended my argument as to how young men experience their own sense of belonging focusing not only on questions of mixed descent but also its intersections with gender and age. Hence I focused on the importance and significance of what McRobbie (1978) referred to as 'bedroom culture' and considered the role of IT and playstation culture. I have demonstrated how the location of the playstation was a signifier of 'personal living space' for the young men, and expanded on the literature by Valentine and Holloway (2002) as well as exploring domestic masculinity.

The exploration of such an intimate space of the home in relation to masculinity and mixed descent is something that needs further consideration. Domestic masculinity more generally is yet to be fully researched (see Chapter five). The young men in my research were identifying the importance of autonomy and the

need for spaces to "hang out" which they equated with public spaces such as parks and suggested that these spaces were 'homelike'. Like Gorman-Murray (2006) I explored the notion of 'stretching' the home. 'Stretching' the home for the young men in my research was a way to gaining autonomy and claiming a 'home like' space. Through their cultures of 'hanging out' the young men acquired differing spaces of belonging which is something that requires further consideration. Hence this chapter has not only explored the experiences of home for my participants in terms of their 'mixedness' but has also raised the question of meanings of home for young men more widely.

Although this chapter focused on the experiences of young men more generally it also highlighted the particular experiences of young men of mixed descent. For example I demonstrated in Chapter seven the lack of autonomy that Arslan experienced in terms of his choice of language he could speak within his home. The emphasis on greater autonomy in the public space could possibly had greater meaning for the young men based on their mixedness in terms of the lack of autonomy some of the young men had over their ethnic identities. This is something that is being explored in relation to parents of children of mixed descent by Caballero et al (2008) in relation to the household and is something that needs exploring in terms of the home also.

Chapter nine

Conclusions

I am confused because of the football. I never know who to support. I want to support really Italian because I feel more Italian than anything else, because at home it feels more Italian, and Latin. Don't really know why there is a big issue about me not supporting England. My mum was saying that I can support whoever I want. I got into this fight at school, because they were asking me why I am not supporting England, because I live in England and that I should have an English flag in my window. But I don't feel English. I said that I haven't got an England shirt or the England flag at home, everyone wanted to beat me up at that point" (Damien).

At the time of my research it was also the World Cup 2006 and this impacted on the narratives of identity for the young men. Within the majority of the interviews the young men referred to the World Cup and how it impacted upon firstly their identities and secondly where they considered 'home'. This thesis has attempted to explore two key issues: firstly how young men of mixed descent narrate their identities and secondly how they experience and define home and consider the important role of space in relation to identity.

Narratives of Identity

Stuart Hall (1996:04) suggests:

Identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and

positions... [and] are constantly in the process of change and transformation.

Identity is something that is constantly in process rather than static. This was particularly apparent among young men of mixed descent and closely connected to space and place. The narratives of identity constructed and interpreted in this thesis have demonstrated the differences amongst young men of mixed descent. Ultimately I have stressed the importance of space in relation to how mixed descent is experienced and narrated. Although Mahtani (2002a and b) for example, has considered and researched women of mixed descent she has failed to develop an argument around the importance of geography and spaces in relation to the identities of the women in her research.

Although there have been ongoing debates around 'mixed descent' terminology, the narratives in this research make an important argument in relation to the 'post' and 'pro race' argument. One aim of this thesis has been an attempt to move beyond the reification of 'race' through my use of the term mixed descent to encompass ethnicity, religion and culture as well as race. However, for some of the young men it was important to identify as 'pro race' by highlighting the importance of 'race' in their narratives of identity.

Much like Mahtani's research there were variations amongst whether young men opted to consider themselves in terms of their 'race' i.e. 'I am Black' or those who preferred to identify as 'English' and stress their nationality. These differences

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were closely associated with class. The wider relationships between race and class have been discussed by Paul Gilroy (1993). As demonstrated in this thesis, the relationships between race and class affected how young men of mixed descent narrated and understood their identities. . For Brian, Craig and David, identifying themselves primarily as English, contrasted with Carl, Daniel, Ray and Marlon who stressed the importance of identifying themselves as 'Black'. As I suggested in Chapter six, and as Mahtani (2002a) argues, class and education means that some of the young men had access to differing terminology. Ultimately this also demonstrated the importance of home and family to how young men narrated their identities.

Home and Identity

The home as I have demonstrated in this thesis and specifically in Chapters seven and eight can be identified as both a lived space (the parental home) and an imagined space. In her research on the role of the 'spiritual home,' Suki Ali (2003) suggests that being at home, feeling at home, knowing where you come from and where your spiritual roots are is crucial for mixed race identities. Hence I have attempted in this thesis to understand the home for young men of mixed descent. Previously the home has been considered in relation to diaspora as I considered in Chapter Five where I discussed the work of Tolia-Kelly (2004a and b) and Walsh (2006) who have examined diasporic homes in terms of identity and also material culture. Chapter seven stressed the importance of the parental home and family upon the narratives by the young men. The material cultures that were discussed in Chapter seven were primarily associated with those of the parents.

My reference to David Sibley's (1995) work on 'types' of families identified how the family can impact upon identities. In Chapter seven I developed ideas around the importance of 'positional' parents and how this affected both material and cultural practices within the homes. The parental home became a site of material items emotionally inscribed by the parents of the young men. Chapter seven expanded on the literature reviewed and brought together in Chapter five. 'Race', ethnicity and religion were materialised in some of the homes of the young men through items such as religious symbols (for example the presence of Islamic symbols placed in variation locations within Tariq's home). For other young men (as I considered in Chapter eight), their material cultures were associated with their own personal youth cultures. Items such as playstations and computers were of primary importance to the young men, hence identifying the importance of subjectivity when considering material cultures (see Noble, 2003).

Home for young men in this research shifted between the lived domestic space of the parental home and also the imagined spaces 'stretched' beyond the domestic sphere and into public spaces Public spaces such parks and football play areas become areas of autonomy that the young men could claim as 'home-like'. This expands on the current literature on young people and public spaces (see Pain, 2007) and how young men use public spaces. The participants in my research identified greater control and autonomy away from home spaces controlled by their parents. At the time of the research, there was less concern with crime and the carrying of knives by young people hence the use of public spaces was not deemed by the young men as being unsafe nor did I question them on the issue of safety. It is therefore important to consider this research further.

Limitations and Recommendations for further research

This research has introduced the importance of narrative research and using research methods that are suited for working with young men. I adopted newer methods more suited to allow young men to have what I would refer to as 'voice' within the research. However, if I had the opportunity to conduct the research again I would have attempted to encourage the young men to use photo-voice more fully and to be more aware of the use of photographs as a tool for research. Although I was able to produce richly informed data the fact that not all the young men took part in each of the methods used limited the research.

There are two key issues that need to be considered beyond this research: first, the importance of emotions and emotional geographies in relation to experiences and definitions of home; and, second, the importance of space in relation to mixed descent. Greg Noble (2004) points to the importance of considering subjectivity in relation to material items. I suggest through this research that there is a need to consider emotions and emotional geographies (see Bondi, 2001). This is also important when discussing the home. Often definitions and experiences of home are tied to emotions and there is further scope to explore this particularly in relation to mixed descent and expanding on what Ali (2003) terms the 'spiritual home'. The parental home is a particularly important site in relation to narratives of identity. I would suggest that further research should be conducted into the home and young men specifically, particularly in relation to young men from diasporic families .

As Doreen Massey (1993 and 1994) has highlighted, spaces of identity are an integral part of geography. As geographers we are ideally suited to consider the importance of space to the lived experiences of mixed descent. As this research has shown, spaces within and beyond the home play important roles in helping to construct narratives of identity for young men of mixed descent.

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APPENDIX

Consent form: 16 year olds

<u>**Research on Young Men of Mixed Descent and Home in London**</u>

Thank you very much for helping with my research and I am grateful for your time and help. My research is based on young men of mixed descent and the home.

With your permission I would like to tape and transcribe our discussions and use both photo diaries and electronic diaries as part of my research. If you wish, all details which identify you will be changed, unless you agree otherwise.

If you agree that I can identify you in my research please sign here:.........................Thank you.

I .... agree that Akile Ahmet can tape our discussion on .... and that she can quote from the transcripts, and diaries which I will be writing.

I ....(Parent(s)) agree that ....can take part in the research. Please sign here.......................

I Akile Ahmet, agree that unless given permission to do otherwise, will change your name and other identifying details in the transcript from this discussion and when quoting from them..............

Consent form over 16s

<u>**Research on Young Men of Mixed Descent and Home in London**</u>

Thank you very much for helping with my research and I am grateful for your time and help. My research is based on young men of mixed descent and the home.

With your permission I would like to tape and transcribe our discussions and use both photo diaries and electronic diaries as part of my research. If you wish, all details which identify you will be changed, unless you agree otherwise.

If you agree that I can identify you in my research please sign here:..........................Thank you.

I .... agree that Akile Ahmet can tape our discussion on .... and that she can quote from the transcripts, and diaries which I will be writing.

I Akile Ahmet, agree that unless given permission to do otherwise, will change your name and other identifying details in the transcript from this discussion and when quoting from them...............

Interview agenda for first interviews

The purpose of this interview is to seek your assistance in helping to understand the experiences of young men of mixed descent and their experiences of home. I would like to tape record the interview so that your responses can be accurately transcribed, however if you prefer not do this I will take notes. The interview is confidential and I agree not to reveal your name or any identifying information to anyone. The information you give will be used in my PhD thesis.

The interview will explore a number of areas associated with your identity and home. I have divided the interview into three key areas. The first theme is around introductions. In the second part I seek to explore your parental home and your experiences of home with your parent(s). The third part of the interview is focused around how you define home and what home means to you. You are, of course, free not to answer any question or to withdraw at any time. Do you have any questions before I begin?

Introductory questions

1. How would define yourself in terms of your identity?

Possible prompts:

- Mixed Descent

- Mother and father heritage

- Religion

- Nationality

- Place of birth

2. What affects how you identify yourself?

3. What is your opinion on terms such as mixed descent or mixed race?

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4. What are your experiences of being mixed descent

5. Who do you live with?

Possible prompts:

- Any negative/positive experiences

- Friends/Peers

- School/Youth group: people's present

Home and Home life

6. How has your home and family and home life affected your identity?

Possible prompts:

- Living arrangements

- What and who influences you the most within your home

- What is your house like?

- How much do your parent(s) influence your experiences of home?

- Are there visual displays of your heritage within your home i.e. material items?

- What is your most valued possession?

- What are the differences/similarities between you and your parents?

- Differences between them and you

Definitions of home

7. What is your definition of home?

Possible prompts:

- How do your parents influence your experience of home?

- What makes home for you?

- How much time do you spend at home?

- Are your friends able to come in and out of your house?

- What do you like to do at home?

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8. How much do you spend at home?

9. Does your identity vary depending on where you are (spatially)