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**How British Mirpuri Pakistani women identify themselves and form  
their identities.**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD IN PART  
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the experiences and the attitudes of Bradford females who have Pakistani Mirpuri heritage. The study has involved people of different ages ranging from sixteen to thirty-five and older women aged in their forties and beyond. The women explore their relationship with their parents, the biraderi (their extended family), career and educational aspirations, involvement with religion and culture and how these fit into their personal identities.

The data was gathered incrementally over three stages. Each stage was equally important, and themes emerged at each stage, which were then explored further. The data comes out from a number of questionnaires, which were followed by interviews. The research evidence creates consistent pictures and provides an insight into the lives and experiences of Bradford females, of Pakistani Mirpuri origin. The concern was to explore the notions of their sense of personal identity in the face of conflicting cultures and conflicts between culture and religion.

The research evidence shows that younger women believed they did share a close relationship with their parents. At times this relationship was tested. The evidence shows that an area of major inter-generational tension was where parents were trying to control the behaviours of younger women by using cultural interpretations of Islam. This was particularly mentioned by younger women in relation to education, careers, and marriage and on issues of freedom generally. The relationship of younger women, with the biraderi (kin) is not as close as their parents' relationship with it. Younger women are leading independent lives and have high career and educational aspirations. The majority of the respondents felt their parents had supported their aspirations.

The evidence shows that younger women feel comfortable with the freedom they have. They wanted to be able to fulfil their education and career aspirations and socialise with friends. The younger women felt they understood Islam and followed religion more than culture. They felt they were able to distinguish between culture was and where parents were confusing religion and culture. The majority of women in this study described having multiple identities and were comfortable with this. Being British did not mean they had to compromise them as Muslims. The thesis demonstrates that Pakistanis are not homogenous and that there are many differences based on gender, cast and sect. At the core, however, is the sense of personal identity and the use the women made of their religious beliefs, not as a sign of the subjection to their inheritance but a symbol of their sense of personal independence.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **The background and need for this research.**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

This is a qualitative and empirical ethnographic study which explores the personal experiences of Pakistani Mirpuri women living in Bradford. The main issues explored are religious and cultural issues, personal identity and aspirations of marriage, education and employment. This chapter introduces the background to the study, its importance in the current climate, and the overall aims of the research.

#### **1.2 Background to events in Bradford**

This study has been carried out in Bradford, a large industrial town in the north of England. Given the events leading up to 2005, Pakistani Mirpuri women have become the most stereotyped of the Muslim Pakistani communities in Bradford and possibly in the United Kingdom. This is largely as a result of people outside the Pakistani Mirpuri community not knowing enough about them. These 'outsiders' have often characterised the Pakistani Mirpuri community as being 'backward' and holding on to ancient traditional rules and values.

The issue of identity, nationality and citizenship has been debated in the political and social arenas and questions of 'belonging' and of 'being British' have been asked for many years. Amongst the many questions being asked time and again by politicians and settled populations is whether one can be a Muslim, specifically a Pakistani Mirpuri Muslim and be British at the same time. It seems that some politicians and political

parties such as the British National Party do not believe that two such distinct cultures, which are infused with so many religious sects and beliefs, can be harmonized. The British National Party wants Britain to remain White and English; 'Asians' and other more visible minority groups are deemed as 'alien' and transgressors. Similarly there are Muslims who say that the only state to which they belong is 'Islam' and that they recognise no other. In this view the United Kingdom is a 'kaffar' society, wicked and alien. On the opposite side many 'Asians' will argue they are British and consider Britain to be their home.

Identity and a sense of 'belonging' are important to us as individuals and as being part of a group. There are several problems in the way that research in this area has progressed. Firstly the problem lies with the definition of what is meant by identity in the personal or social sense, being 'English', being 'British' and being a 'national' or 'citizen'. Is it what the State tells us in terms of citizenship, is it what others tell us or is it based on individual interpretation? Is who we are determined by our birthplace or by our parent's birthplace? Is our identity what makes us unique and distinct from others or is it about shared values and beliefs? Is it possible to have multiple identities or does this cause tensions and confusions? Is identity something that is learned and is a question of finding out who you are? These important questions demonstrate the complexity and sensitivity of the issues involved. It appears that there is a growing assumption that it is only possible to have one identity, which suggests that otherwise problems of dissatisfaction and confusion may arise.

Secondly there has been a tendency to 'label' all people from the Indian subcontinent as 'Asians', thus not allowing for any divisions or differences to be accounted for. Yet this is the labelling of identity in others or oneself. Thirdly, where previous research with relevant communities has been done, it has largely been carried out with older people, community leaders and with males. These people will not necessarily represent the views of young people and especially not women.

The Bradford Commission Report into the Manningham riots which occurred between June 9<sup>th</sup> and the 11<sup>th</sup> 1995 and which had a major impact on the people of Bradford, failed to involve many young Muslim Mirpuri women; instead males and community leaders represented the views of women in the community. Through the interviews a number of important and complex issues were identified. These included, for example, patriarchal control, domestic violence, education and employment, arranged marriages, trans-continental marriages and immigration laws. Although very important, the report lacks in-depth qualitative material specific to Pakistani Mirpuri women because of the relatively low numbers of women participating in the research. There has been a failure to recognise and celebrate positive aspects of the Bradford Muslims and specifically the Mirpuri community.

In October 2005, the United Kingdom Government introduced 'Britishness' tests for ethnic minorities coming into the United Kingdom and planning to settle here. The test is based on the ability of the person to answer questions correctly on issues important to Britain. Whilst some have welcomed these tests, others have argued they are insulting



and are an insufficient and unreliable tool for assessing suitability for attaining 'British' citizenship status. Many settled British people cannot answer the questions asked in the test either.

However, the research missed the opportunity to explore in more detail what life is like for Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford. The current research therefore explores these issues. It looks at how Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford perceive their identities and looks at their career, educational and marriage aspirations. It explores the relationship they share with Islam and how this impacts on their relationship with their parents and family. The issues are personal and social identity, identity through religion and cultural habits and group identity in the biraderi. Biraderi is defined as kinship and the wider extended family.

This data was gathered incrementally over three stages. Each stage was important, and themes emerged at each stage, which were then explained further.

International and United Kingdom domestic events have highlighted the need for research into the Pakistani communities in Bradford, particularly the Mirpuri community. The Mirpuri community has deep-rooted traditional cultural values, which are often practised in such a way as to confuse tradition and culture with religion. Often those most affected by this are young adolescents, and women in particular. Patriarchy and culture are inter-linked and need to be discussed together to understand the effects of these concepts for Pakistani Mirpuri women. These structures of cultural and patriarchal

control over Pakistani Mirpuri women may render them vulnerable to oppression within the family, in addition to the added dimension of racial and sexist oppression outside of family in the sphere of wider society.

The Bradford local press (The Telegraph and Argus, 1998) and United Kingdom national media (Newsnight Documentary, 1999) have also been involved in highlighting concerns of young Pakistani women in Bradford. The Telegraph and Argus local newspaper dedicated substantial space to the issues of arranged marriages during October 1998. The aim was to provide some insight into the lives of the local South Asian communities and not specifically the Pakistani or Pakistani Mirpuri communities. The reports claimed that around two thousand Pakistani women are forced to leave their homes and families each year, in order to escape a forced arranged marriage. These numbers were expected to increase further.

The situation is so sensitive that it has resulted in outside intervention. An alliance between the local police, a local MP, and members of the government and leading community figures was set up to try and address the issues of forced arranged marriages. The situation is very complex. In addition to forced arranged marriages, other issues must also be considered such as patriarchy, domestic violence, cultural, caste and educational and employment aspirations and barriers that hinder women.

The Secretary of State, Mr David Blunkett, caused outrage with his opinions surrounding multi-cultural identity in 2001 and 2002. This outrage was felt amongst all Asians but particularly amongst many British Muslims when he attacked inter-continental marriages

on the basis that they will widen the racial segregation divide in Britain. Instead he proposed that all Asians should marry a British born person who would assumingly be more western, speak and understand English and have experience living in a multi-cultural and multi-racial environment (The Guardian, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2002).

The Secretary of State had earlier (December 2001) called for English to be the main language spoken in Asian households in Britain. It is worth noting this 'reasonable request' was made offensive in the eyes of some 'Asians'. Some Asians felt their privacy was being invaded because they were being told how to behave in the confinement of their own home. By encouraging the speaking of English in and outside the home environments the Secretary of State hoped for more integration from parents with mainstream society and also to lessen the 'culture-crisis trap' which he felt many young Asians were experiencing. The problem with this is that there is no widespread research that explores the deeper social, physical and psychological impact that being exposed to two or more very distinct cultures and religions has on a person holistically. Thus what are required are deeper, richer studies, which illuminate the real experiences of Asians taking into account many, many differences including language, sects, class, religion, gender and cultural issues.

Being 'Asian' has been politicised further by Anne Cryer, MP for Keighley, who has for years been campaigning on behalf of Asian but especially Pakistani women in Bradford. She has campaigned against forced marriages, raised awareness of domestic violence in the community and has called for women to have more pro-active roles outside their



home environments. Again she has picked up the point about English language not being a strong point amongst many Asian families.

### **1.3 The research study**

The Pakistani Community cannot be generalized because there are distinct cultural and religious differences as well as different sects; therefore it is important that these issues of arranged marriage, patriarchy, domestic violence, culture and religion are addressed appropriately. These issues will be examined in this study in relation to the aspirations and identities of Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford. Triangulation was used to explore the issues in detail. The fieldwork and research evidence was gathered using three stages.

Stage A consisted of ten respondents aged sixteen to twenty-five and fifty years and above completing a detailed questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of thirty-nine closed questions relating to various cultural and religious issues. This was a pilot exercise to identify some key facts and figures and to assess the scope for this research area. Ten Pakistani Mirpuri women took part in stage A, and the sample being recruited through personal networks.

Stage B consisted of pilot semi-structured interviews, in order to follow the questionnaire with more in-depth research and to give an individual voice to Pakistani Mirpuri females. Interviews with seven Pakistani Mirpuri women aged sixteen to twenty-five were conducted. Respondents were recruited through personal networks.



Stage C was necessary in order to ensure results were valid and consistent. A more comprehensive approach was taken, to include Pakistani Mirpuri females beyond the personal networks. Women were recruited through word-of-mouth, through community workers and community centres. Twenty-nine women took part in this stage of the research. Fourteen respondents were aged forty and above and fifteen were aged between sixteen and thirty-five years old.

#### **1.4 Importance of this research**

This research makes a contribution to understanding the situation, by exploring the attitudes of young and older Pakistani Mirpuri women with regards to a range of cultural and religious issues. Living in a western society may mean that young Pakistani women are more likely to be experiencing different values than their parents experienced in Pakistan. The researcher has several years of networking in Bradford and has established a rapport with local women, and therefore this research will intend to provide the women with the opportunity to express their personal experiences relating to these issues. It will also provide the first-generation with the opportunity to give their accounts of their immigration and settlement experiences, and perceptions of 'Westernisation' in the lifestyles of young women.

There have been a number of studies on the experiences of second-generation Asians and some specifically on the Pakistani community. Most of the earlier studies (Shaw 1988) were concerned with the clash of two cultures and the conflicts that arise out of this. South Asian people have been labelled as confused and disaffected youngsters who have no sense of their identity on a personal or community level. Experiences and attitudes are

far removed from those of their parents who were, by and large, illiterate and used to agricultural lifestyles. South Asians of all ages are apparently considered unable to assimilate or integrate into mainstream cultures because of their identity conflicts. Different writers give different perspectives on young Asians – for some they are the halfway generation (Taylor, 1967); they are depressed or are disaffected, and are problematic since they demand separate facilities (Bhatti, 1978); or are disadvantaged in all areas of life (Anwar 1976). Some earlier studies have been too general in that they homogenize all Asians together and do not appreciate diversities (Taylor 1967). Women have especially been neglected in earlier studies, but Khan (1979) did look at Muslim women in Bradford in relation to purdah, whilst other studies (e.g. Kannan 1978) explored the issues of adaptation through the intersections of age, race and gender.

### **1.5 Aim of the research**

The aim is to identify the views, experiences and attitudes of first and second- generation Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford, concerning a range of issues around personal development such as educational aspirations, employment, marriage, family and inter-generational relationships and conflicts. This is with a view to exploring how they are negotiating their social and personal identities. The research explores the experiences of Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford. Initially it was anticipated that the research would be aimed at young women aged between sixteen and twenty-five. However the lessons learnt in stages A and B, directed the research to include older respondents.

The respondents in this research ranged from sixteen to over sixty years of age. This enabled comparisons to be made between older and younger generations. The research has a particular focus on identity and aspirations in relation to Islam, culture, marriage, career, education and the family. It will explore the hypothesis that the lifestyles and aspirations of Pakistani Mirpuri women have undergone a major shift in relation to the early experiences of, say, their mothers who came to Britain in the 1960s and early 1970s. It will explore issues including education and career aspirations and identify how the family helps support these.

### **Summary**

This chapter has established why it is important for this research study to be done. It will explore the lifestyles of Pakistani Mirpuri women in their own words by allowing the respondents an individual voice. This research will take a fresh new approach by giving the opportunity to Mirpuri Muslim women in Bradford the chance to talk about their experiences, in their own voice, rather than through men who believe they are able to comment on behalf of women. The research provides an insight into the 'real' life experiences of women, by looking at the negatives as well as the positive aspects of being a Mirpuri Muslim Bradfordian.

It will further explore the hypothesis that Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford have identities and aspirations which will result in a process of change in their lives and in their relationships with their parents and immediate family. Sometimes this change might result in tensions within the family, with parental authority being questioned by the young women.



The next chapter explores the context of the Pakistani Mirpuri community in Bradford through the examination of early migratory experiences. This is important in helping understand Mirpuri Muslims in Bradford and in Mirpur, Pakistan.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Pakistani immigration**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter offered an insight into the need and context of this research. This chapter will explore the background to Pakistani Mirpuri people in Bradford, their life in Mirpur, Pakistan and their experiences upon arriving in Britain. This will enable a greater understanding of the past experiences and present influences of cultural habits and behaviours. This is significant in terms of their identity and more specifically their dual identity.

There have been many famous diasporas, and waves of immigrant and South Asians, specifically Pakistani Mirpuris, have been significant in emigrating to Britain. In order to understand the British Pakistani Mirpuris, it is important to be aware of the context in which immigration took place, their settlement and job experiences and the formation of the diaspora. It is therefore essential to outline some of the key socio-economic, religious and cultural characteristics of Pakistani Mirpuris as, despite three generations and more than fifty years of emigration, the relationship between Bradford Mirpuri families and Pakistan are still strong. This needs to be explored and understood.

These relationships have been maintained more strongly by parents who were immigrants themselves and to a lesser degree by their children who marry cousins or members of the biraderi. Individuals may make several trips every year to visit family, to attend funerals and transport the bodies of loved ones who have died and wish to be buried in Pakistan.

Families in Bradford still give financial assistance to family units in Mirpur, sending money for weddings, healthcare, school fees, purchasing electrical goods, machinery, and arranging and taking responsibility for visas when elders or other relative come to Britain. These matters are confirmed by Rose (1969), Anwar (1979), Khan (1979) and Shaw (2000). Several Bradford Mirpuris have businesses, property and land in Mirpur and these are only occupied by the owners when they visit Pakistan. The remainder of the time, they remain locked or partly lived in by 'caretakers' who are paid a sum of money to look after the owner's property (Anwar, 1998).

## **2.2 Factors effecting migration to the United Kingdom**

According to Anwar (1979), Pakistani migration can be narrowed down to four main contributory factors: -(1) the Partition of 1947; (2) the construction of the Mangla Dam, (3) push-pull factors between Pakistan and the United Kingdom known as 'valayat' and (4) the situation in Britain following the Second World War (Anwar, 1979).

### **2.2.1 Partition**

Pakistan did not come into existence until 1947. The lack of tolerance between the main religious groups - Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims initiated the campaign for a separate and independent Muslim nation. It was Mohammed Ali Jinnah who (with the help of Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindu leader) called for independence from British Rule. Jinnah's actions subsequently led to the formation of a separate Islamic state, named Pakistan. (Rose, 1969, Anwar, 1979,).

Robinson (1993) argues that tensions were high at the time of separatism, mainly because Muslims were in the minority and Hindus were the majority and because of the differences in religious practices and values. Robinson (1993) further asserts that Muslims felt uneasy since they were fearful of their cultural and religious values being infringed by the dominant Hindu practices and values and felt that this would impact upon their social, religious, cultural and political interests. Conversely, when Islam began to gain momentum in India, some Hindus saw the Muslims, who had converted from Hinduism, as traitors and this caused further conflict and resentment internally (Mittmann and Ishan, 1991).

Before partition, although Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims lived together, tensions were high because of variations in religious beliefs and cultural practices. Muslims were in the minority whilst Sikhs and Hindus were the majority groups. One of the main areas of contention was the way in which Muslims believed in the existence of just one God-Allah, and they believed that Hindus were 'wrong' for worshiping religious images. Although Sikhism is a monotheistic religion, Muslims feared that they would remain in the minority and have poor opportunities in education and jobs because of discrimination against them (Robinson, 1993). Although the situation was complex, this background information is important as it enables a greater understanding of the Pakistani Muslim Mirpuri community who left Pakistan to settle in Bradford, as well as to make connections with the evidence from this research study.



Years of social and political campaigning from the main religious groups within India resulted in the partition of 1947, which divided India and created Pakistan and then in the The War of Independence, when East Pakistan became Bangladesh in 1971. This independence of Pakistan from India gave 'birth' to a new beginning, a sense of nationalism and Islamic values (Rose, 1969). Muslims wanted a 'unified' Islamic state, independent of India, where they were free to practise and spread Islam. Yet the 'unified Pakistan' created internal divisions where caste, although vehemently opposed by Islam, played a key role between the affluent gentry-the capitalist landowners and the poor workers. Those who owned land were able to exert control over the lower classes and this meant that the poor and rich lived apart (Raza, 1992).

Holmes (1991) argues that after partition Muslims began to mobilize their own infrastructure gradually and steadily. Schools began to be constructed and the spread of Islam through education began; so too did thoughts of nationalism. However, progress was slow and high unemployment rates amongst Muslims meant that poverty was rife. The more affluent castes such as the gentry and landowners were able to enjoy the luxuries of having housekeepers and access to privileges such as health and education.

The lower castes such as the mochis and mohjirs remained poor (Braham et al, 1992). Kannon (1978) asserts that lower class peasant farmers came to Britain because they felt that Pakistani society had always treated them as inferior to the upper castes. They were never given an opportunity to better themselves and therefore felt that Britain would offer the flexibility they needed to do so. This is true to an extent. Many peasant farmers have



certainly settled and established themselves financially and economically in Bradford, where they are not referred to by their caste, but rather by the geographical area they migrated from. However, when they go to Pakistan they are given labels by their caste, and that is how they are referred to. This suggests that Pakistani society still remains very strict in its caste hierarchy of social stratification. It also suggests that lower castes have clearly been accepted in Britain as part of society and obviously have the same rights, for instance to education and health, but in Pakistan divisions still remain. This is extremely helpful in our understanding of the Pakistani Mirpuri community in Bradford, which in the Mirpur context, is made of different castes. This is a complex issue that deserves more detailed analysis, and this thesis will explore this throughout.

Lewis (1994) is also a good reference point in understanding Pakistani migrants in Bradford. Lewis (1994) asserts that the majority of migrants were uneducated men who were poor in Pakistan but at the same time were self-sufficient farmers who were able to live a simple life. They did not have much land but were able to sustain a living for themselves and their family. This relates to Kannon's (1978) view of events.

Anything that helps us understand the present status of immigrants regarding their backgrounds is worth pointing out. Clearly in Pakistan there was a class divide separating the rich from the poor. There are geographical zones within Pakistan in which certain Muslim communities have settled. One determinate of this was where the Muslims had lived in India before the partition, for example in the rural or urban areas. The more affluent people lived in urban areas and were used to the busy life of the town and cities

such as Lahore and Islamabad. The less well off had lived in rural, agricultural areas and found themselves settling in Mirpur, Sargodha and other villages. The Pathans are concentrated in the North West Frontier Province; the Mirpuris are in the Mirpur district of Azaad (Free) Kashmir and Punjabis are in the Pakistan part of Punjab (Bhat and Ohri, 1988).

### **2.2.2 Construction of the Mangla Dam**

The construction of the Dam in Mirpur was a significant factor that resulted in Mirpuris coming to work and stay in Britain. In the 1960s, the Pakistani Government decided that a huge hydroelectric dam should be built. The area chosen was a valley in Mirpur and the dam was aptly given the name 'Mangla Dam'. The construction of the Mangla Dam rendered some Mirpuris vulnerable since many would lose their homes and land. Around one hundred thousand Mirpuris were rendered homeless and around two-hundred and fifty villages were wiped out (Anwar, 1979).

As a result, the old Mirpur town was replaced by a bustling city with large houses and shopping areas, better roads and transport links (Lewis 1994). In return for their homes, property and land, the villagers were given a sum of money, by way of 'compensation', for their losses. Although Pakistani migration to the United Kingdom had already begun, it was only the rich or professional Pakistanis who could afford it up to this point. However, for the poor uneducated Mirpuri farmer, it was the 'compensation' money that made coming to the United Kingdom a possibility. Whilst some Mirpuris used their

compensation monies on starting afresh in alternative areas, other Mirpuris took the opportunity to come to Britain and seek their fortune (Anwar, 1979).

### **2.2.3 Push-pull factors**

The work of Bhatti (1999) is useful in understanding the Pakistani community once they had settled in the United Kingdom. Bhatti (1999) asserts that racism and discrimination were rife in the employment market and those Pakistani men who were well educated in Pakistan were most dissatisfied by this since their overseas qualifications were going unrecognised. They envisaged undertaking work that was not manual, yet they were forced to take up the most menial, manual and low paid work. This current research explores the issue of career and educational aspirations amongst Pakistani Muslim women in Bradford who are of Mirpuri descent to see if aspirations and experiences have changed or remained the same and to see how young female Muslims of Mirpuri descent fit into British society today.

Bhatti (1999) also asserts that the first migrant men felt duty-bound to send monetary funds to support their families back in Pakistan. To deviate from this obligatory practice was noted by the family and the biraderi as disrespectful, greedy and an abuse of the trust placed in them from the family who also wished to benefit from migration.

### **2.2.4 The problem of the British economy**

The Second World War had left much destruction. Thousands of lives including civilians as well as people in the armed forces had been lost to the War. There had been a huge



loss of an economically active workforce and hundreds of jobs left vacant in transport, the National Health Service and the mills and factories following the end of Second World War (Brahem et al, 1992). The situation was worsened by the lack of willingness from the British indigenous population to re-enter the industries they had once been employed in and start the road to economical recovery. There was a feeling of discontentment amongst some indigenous British people, who wanted to improve their social status and aspired for increased opportunities with numbers migrating abroad to Australia and Canada (Rose, 1969). It could be argued that these Britons were thinking on a similar level as the Pakistani migrants who had migrated to Britain in search of personal achievement and improved lifestyles.

The United Kingdom Labour Government responded to the severe shortage of labour by encouraging planned migration of Irish, Polish and Cypriot migrants. The Government had made it clear that the jobs would only be available until the indigenous British people would re-enter the job market. Effectively the 'planned migrant' job seekers were then subject to either redundancy or deportation. This insecurity made the Irish, Polish and Cypriots a little apprehensive. The British Government had to look elsewhere for support in terms of re-building the British economy. They turned to their colonies and ex-colonies for assistance. They appealed to the Indian sub-continent and to the Caribbean. What was needed was a quick and cheap source of manpower, and the fact that these countries were experiencing poverty, they expected to respond. The response, as predicted by the British Government, was huge (Brahem et al, 1992).



This suggests that the British Authorities assumed that immigrants had low expectations and aspirations and would be willing to take on low paid jobs. This is very significant as it shows that British employers and politicians assumed that Mirpuris and other South Asian immigrants would take on unattractive jobs and would be 'grateful' for the opportunity to improve their lifestyles in Pakistan, since many of the early Mirpuri migrants were peasant farmers. Thus immigration from the Indian sub-continent was actively encouraged and invited (Anwar, 1979, Siddique, 1993).

Hiro (1991) points out that South Asians were being offered Citizenship Rights under the British Nationality Act of 1948 and that immigrants could only have privileges conditionally. In other words they could come and experience life in the 'developed' world but they needed to offer something in return and in this case it was 'cheap' labour. The British Nationality Act (1948) granted British Citizens in the Commonwealth 'equal' rights to citizenship as those born in Britain but South Asian migrants continued to be discriminated against in immigration and in the jobs they took up (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994). This shows that there were clearly different expectations from those of the immigrants and those wanting their labour.

Immigrants saw the opportunity to better themselves and perhaps thought their experiences would be 'better' given that they were being 'invited' or pleaded with to come by British politicians and employers. Husband (1982) asserts this is significant as it helps us understand that their aspirations at that time were ambitious, as from the point of view of the British employers, it was more about productivity and ensuring that the

economy was sustained by using this 'cheap' and readily available and willing labour force.

### **2.3 Immigration patterns**

Pakistani and South Asian migration to the United Kingdom did not happen 'overnight'. On the contrary it progressed in stages and therefore has a long history. Anwar (1979) and Khan (1979) point out there are clear patterns of migratory trends in the Pakistani people. This needs to be understood because it helps to map out the experiences of the Pakistani Mirpuri community, and more specifically the experiences of the men folk but also the experiences of women and children.

At first, it was young, generally married men who migrated to the United Kingdom. They had left behind wives, children and entire families to come and work in the United Kingdom. This stage has been viewed by Anwar (1979) and Khan (1979) as constituting primary migration. Husband (1982) supports this. These men were seen as 'pioneers' by their families, since they had made so many sacrifices for their sake. Anwar (1979) goes on to explain that the next stage of migration was that of 'chain migration'. This was mainly attributed to the pioneers encouraging male members of their extended family left in Pakistan to come and experience opportunities in the United Kingdom. Ghuman (1994) agrees that chain migration:

"Takes place through established network of family members, kinship, relatives and sometimes through friends" (Ghuman, 1994, p5).

Motivated to some degree by personal financial incentive, kinship migration steadily developed. This soon led to 'secondary' migration, where the wives and children came and settled with their husbands (Anwar, 1979). Husband (1982) suggests that immigration patterns were clearly marked with gender, in that the Pakistani males dominated the migratory process and it was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s, with the introduction of the Immigration Act 1968, that there was any significant appearance from Pakistani women.

In order to understand the Pakistani Mirpuri community in Britain, it is important to appreciate their initial thoughts and intentions on coming to Britain. Siddique (1993) argues that many Pakistani immigrants only came to Britain with a view to the short-term settlement. Many were reluctant to leave their loved ones behind because of their uncertainty of what Britain had in store for them and hence:

“Most first generation Muslim immigrants entered Britain via visa clearance through the British embassy in Pakistan and they hoped to return home with money so that they could purchase land and build better houses and raise their social status. They did not intend to stay in Britain any longer than was necessary” (Siddique, 1993, p19).

## **2.4 Settlement and employment in the United Kingdom**

Pakistanis started to arrive in some parts of Britain as early as the 1950s (Siddique, 1993). The migrants settled around the areas where there was work. These were mainly in inner-city areas such as areas of Yorkshire and the Midlands within the expanding industrial sector (Ghuman, 1994) and the National Health Service and the transport industry, especially in London (Castles and Kosack, 1985).

Castles and Kosack (1985) point out that Yorkshire was one of the key settlement areas for Pakistani migrants. Yorkshire was famous for its textile mills and offered the men opportunities they had only dreamed of back in their villages. Rose (1969) and Hiro (1991) assert the long hours, shift work and poor work conditions dampened their hopes and dreams. Initially the men lived in accommodation, sharing with other Pakistani men, usually known to them. It was common to find members of the same family or biraderi living together because, as Ghuman (1994) stated:

“This provided security, continuity and stability to the communities” (Ghuman, 1994, p11).

Khan (1979) asserts that understanding these living habits is important as it shows they were not just about financial security and sharing the expenses, but also to do with male bonding and accommodating the biraderi. So one is able to see the habits and behaviours that the immigrants held in Pakistan being transplanted to Britain in the very early post-Second-World War migratory years. Knowing this, one is able to study the significance of habits and behaviours associated with families in Pakistan and examine whether they continue to operate in Britain amongst the Pakistani Mirpuri community, and especially between the different generations and genders.

Shaw (1988) also pointed out that Pakistani populations were to be found in specific places such as Birmingham, Bradford and Oxford. One reason for new immigrants joining existing communities was to keep expenses at an absolute minimum, but as Shaw (1988) also pointed out that they felt more ‘comfortable’ as they could at least



communicate and feel more familiar with them. The 'English' language was 'alien' to them, at this stage.

Bhabha and Shutter (1994) point out that this is particularly important to understand what the early experiences of living in Britain were for the immigrants, as this will reflect on the aspirations they had and what their expectations were, given that they were considered to have 'equal' rights under the British Nationality Act, 1948. Castles and Kosack (1985) assert the accommodation was usually back-to-back homes, with some lacking even the basic of amenities. This was the case for native British workers at the time too so Pakistani migrants accepted it. The dampness of the attics and cellars posed a health hazard with cases of rickets and Tuberculosis (TB) being high amongst Asian men.

Siddique (1993) points out that early immigration experiences were often depressing. Pakistani immigrants felt isolated and did not 'fit' into British society because of their religious and cultural habits, some of which were clearly visible. Muslim men had beards and wore traditional Shalwar-kameez and Sikhs wore turbans. Anwar (1979) points out that some of immigrants felt the British authorities had failed to ensure that their religious and cultural needs were met because of the lack of religiously sensitive services such as hallal meat shops and prayer facilities, the lack of understanding of their needs by employers. Once the wives and children arrived in the United Kingdom, then the men lived in households with one or more other families and so overcrowding was a common feature.

Khan (1979) and Shaw (1988) point out that Pakistani women and children started to arrive in Britain mainly during the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies, in response to the fear that immigration rules would be applied more strictly. Many women and children had been left in villages in Pakistan whilst their husbands came and worked in Britain. This was quite accepted since it ensured that more money was being saved and sent back to families in Pakistan (Hiro, 1991). However, once people in Pakistan began to get information, presumably from one another, that British authorities might be closing the doors on immigration, husbands were pushed into bringing their wives and children to the United Kingdom. This shows that how patriarchy was operated in Pakistani Mirpuri families, since men were making the decisions, to come to England in the first place and then when their women and children were to arrive. It is worth questioning whether the men would have brought their families over if they had not been persuaded by the rumours of stricter immigration policy.

Another view on the housing and settlement of Asians is given by Dhaya (1974), who argues that the Asians generally did have the worst housing in early migratory period, but states that this was not as a result of racism from the indigenous population, but was because the migrants preferred the specific areas for their own personal reasons, and were aware of the type of housing they would experience as a result of this 'choice' (Brown, 1984). Shaw (1988) found that although distinction or stratification by class or caste is not permitted in Islam, the Pakistanis in Oxford did operate it in their daily lives (Shaw, 1988).

It is important to understand the settlement experiences of Pakistani women in Britain, since they arrived even more at a disadvantage than their Pakistani men folk had been. It is particularly relevant to this study because one is then able to see if changes have occurred in the behaviours and habits of Pakistani Mirpuri women over the years, whether there has been a shift in attitudes in the Pakistani Mirpuri community and to see if young Pakistani Mirpuri women who are born or brought up in Britain have the same cultural and religious values and habits as their parents did and still have. It is important to assess these changes not just between the generations but also to understand the first generation immigrant Pakistani Mirpuri women themselves. Whilst the men were able to settle into their lifestyles relatively easily the women found it harder. This is supported by Anwar (1979) and Khan (1979).

According to Rose (1969), Pakistani women were uneducated, had no command or understanding of the English language and were oppressed and controlled by their men folk. They had never experienced living in cold and damp climates. Their early immigration experiences were suggestive of isolation and depression. Men went out to work and the women and children stayed in the house.

The roles that men and women were supposed to play were clearly prescribed (Allen, 1971). This is an important issue to this research as it allows us to see how men and women are expected by their families and society generally to behave in public and in private areas such as the home. As in many other societies, men assume the role of the breadwinner and women take on more domestic responsibilities. Khan (1979) points out



that traditional men and female roles are followed closely by peasant Mirpuris both in Pakistan and in parts of Britain, for example in Bradford. Rose (1976), Anwar (1979) and Khan (1979) point out that Pakistani immigrants were following traditions and habits in Britain that they had once done in Pakistan. Siddique (1993) says that for Mirpuri arrivals to Britain and Bradford it was typical that a:

“Village based culture began to take form once Muslim women began to arrive” (Siddique, 1993, p21).

Furthermore, Butterworth (1967) suggests that Mirpuris in Bradford brought with them different values than for example, a Pakistani from Islamabad, because of the different societies to which they are exposed. Islamabad is a large city and cosmopolitan where it is commonplace to see men and women in work environments, when those from rural backgrounds do not have these opportunities. Families from Islamabad are likely to be more liberal in their attitudes, for example towards marriage, education and work of their females whilst those from rural backgrounds are likely to be stricter and less ambitious. Anwar (1979) supports this argument.

Butterworth (1967) that the practice of ‘purdah’ renders women vulnerable to male oppression and places them at a disadvantage because it restricts their participation and movement in society. Purdah is a system used by men to control the behaviour of women in public and private places. The system might be open to abuse and misrepresentation.

Since the early 1950s, as the population of Mirpur Pakistanis has grown, they have become more established and have made homes in places such as Bradford. Siddique



(1993) points out that racism from employers and trade unions resulted in Pakistani employees having little choice but to look at alternative ways of being successful. After all they had, at the time, come to Britain to make as much money as possible and to use it to improve their lives in Pakistan.

There has been an emphasis on self-employment and providing services for their own community. Large stores, for example Haqs and Al-Halal, originally began by providing foods and goods for Asians, especially Pakistanis and many smaller grocery outlets have been established. Special schools or madras's (schools usually attended in the early evenings and weekends to recite the Q'uran and hear preaching) have also been established (Lewis, 1994). Siddique (1993) points out that the emphasis on catering for ones own community has assisted the settlement of immigrants and this has enabled them to be:

“A quite, self-contained law abiding community as more and more Muslims continued to come into the city” (Siddique, 1993, p21).

## **2.5 Pakistani Mirpuri women and immigration**

In order to understand Pakistani Mirpuri women's experiences in Britain, South Asian women were subjected to virginity testing under the Immigration Act of 1968. This was later discredited on the grounds that it was humiliating and unfair (Husband, 1982). Bhabha and Shutter (1988) point out how migratory patterns have developed further with inter-continental marriages. The children of immigrants have grown up and many have married people in Pakistan. Young British females who marry men from Pakistan are

scrutinised the most, because it is assumed that their husbands will arrive in England without being properly equipped in terms of language and qualifications. This might mean that men do not integrate into British society and that they are only marrying someone from England for other reasons like financial gain. The Immigrant Act was implemented in 1988, with strict marriage guidelines with a view to clamping down on 'marriages of convenience' (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994).

Brah (1996) points out that the major clause of the Immigration Act (1988) concerned the 'Primary Purpose'. This rule was about the persons in the marriage being able to satisfy the Entry Clearance Officers that the marriage was 'genuine' and that there were no financial or economical reasons behind it. Asian women, particularly Pakistani women who had undergone arranged marriages with men in Pakistan were particularly badly affected because of the need to fulfil 'the Primary Purpose' rule within the marriage guidelines.

Men coming into to the country were deemed a greater threat to British jobs and resources so it applied also to them. As Husband (1982) pointed out, this did seem harsh since it would be inevitable that men would eventually work to support growing families here and in Pakistan. This is an interesting point as it suggests a rather stereotypical views assuming that women who came into the country would just fit into being 'housewives' and not work. It suggests they thought Pakistani women had no other aspirations. This is one of the areas that will be explored in this study. Bhabha and Shutter (1994) say that:

"The primary purpose rule has constituted to prevent numbers of women from living in Britain with their husbands, especially if the

men come from the Indian sub-continent” (Bhabha and Shutter, 1994, p78).

## **Summary**

This chapter has discussed some of the key characteristics of Pakistanis in Britain, making specific reference to Pakistani Mirpuris. It has been argued that the term ‘Asians’ is misleading since there are distinct cultural, religious and linguistic differences, which make each group of ‘Asians’ distinct. Asians are not a homogenous group, there are divisions between one group of Asians and another just as there are between one group of Pakistanis to another. These make the group heterogeneous and complex. Pakistani Mirpuris have had a complex immigration experience and settling into Britain has not been easy for reasons of racism, discrimination and personal interest and conflict.

This chapter has addressed why and how Pakistani Mirpuris came to Britain and has looked at factors to immigration to the United Kingdom, including the construction of the Mangla Dam and immigration patterns. These are important issues that help us to understand the Pakistani Mirpuri communities in Pakistan and in the United Kingdom. Some of the cultural matters such as caste, and attitudes to women, are clearly associated with the past.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Pakistani women- an exploration of the research**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores previous research that has examined issues related to British Pakistani Muslims and identities in relation to gender, religion, culture and character formation.

The disturbances in Bradford in 1995 and again in 1997 which involved clashes between young South Asians and the police over reported racial harassment resulted in the destruction of many local Asian and White businesses. The issue of identity and nationality is one of the most hotly debated and contested issues in present times especially in the light of the recent atrocities committed by young Muslim men in the name of Islam. More recently, the events of 9/11 in which the World Trade Centre in America was targeted by terrorists and the London bombings in 2005 and have all brought to the forefront the issue of allegiances to Britain and Islam. The issue in this current research is whether young Muslim women of Pakistani Mirpuri descent attach a specific label or identity and if they feel they are part of British mainstream society. More importantly is whether these traditional labels of people, which are primarily based on religious, cultural and ethnic factors, have any significance to Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford at the present time.

Cohen (1994) suggests identity can cover a wide and varied range of issues of identification depending upon ethnicity, disability, nationality, religion, age and cultural

issues such as dress and music that people listen to. Identities can be situational and therefore are flexible and not static. Cullingford and Din (2006) point out that identity can refer to a personal identity but individualism can often be marred by group characteristics. There is a danger that by doing so, important differences such as nationality, geography, class and caste are not identified. Hall (1992) points out that identities are the character of the person. Hall (1992) uses the concept of a 'cultural supermarket' to suggest that identities are fluid, adaptive and flexible and are asserted depending on the demands of the situation (Cullingford and Din, 2006). Alibhai-Brown (1994) suggests that 'new' identities are continuing to develop and emerge in British immigrant communities. There is a generational change.

Chimisso (2003) points out that constructing identities can be complex and complicated because people are having to make choices about who they are. Sometimes issues including family and politicians can influence these choices. Chimisso (2003) points out that identity suggests something personal and meaningful to the individual:

“The term ‘identity’ suggests that something is *identified* ...to talk about identity in relation to human beings means answering one of the questions ‘What are we?’ or ‘What makes us human?’ or ‘What makes me who I am?’ (Chimisso, 2003, p6).

### **3.2 Youth identity**

Different writers give different perspectives on young Asians. Taylor (1967) suggests they are the halfway generation and are depressed and disaffected; Bhatti (1978) points out they are problematic since they demand separate facilities; Anwar (1976, 1982) suggests they are disadvantaged in all areas of life. Some earlier studies have

homogenised all Asians together and do not appreciate diversities in religious beliefs and cultural values (Taylor, 1967). Pakistani Mirpuri women have especially been neglected in earlier studies but Khan (1979) did look at the Muslim women in Bradford in relation to purdah whilst other earlier studies, for example, Kannan's (1978), explored the issues of adaptation by age, race and gender.

There have been a number of studies on the experiences of second- generation Asians and some specifically on the Pakistani community. Most of the earlier studies (Shaw 1988) were concerned with the clash of two cultures and the conflicts that arise out of this. Young people have been labelled as confused and disaffected and who have no sense of their identity on a personal or community level. Young people were likely to have different views than their parents, who were likely to be illiterate and used to agricultural lifestyles. Young people are reported to be unable to assimilate or integrate into mainstream cultures because of their identity conflicts.

Mirza (1997) points out that when ethnic minorities assert or make demands on the majority culture, conflict and tensions may arise between them and the indigenous people since this is viewed as a threat to the majority culture. Abbott (1998) talks about the possible 'culture clash' as being a result of expectations of parents to that of their children. It is also about not accepting rules about behaving in western society. Cohen (1994) uses the term 'fuzziness' to describe the ambiguous nature of using terms such as 'Britishness' and 'Englishness'. The same could also be said about Scottishness and Britishness, Welshness and Britishness and Irishness and Britishness.



Language is important as it is the way in which people communicate. Chimisso (2003) asserts the importance of this by suggesting that it is not just a cultural identity characteristic but also attaching to religious identity.

Joly (1995) found that Asian adolescents were likely to experience a conflict of identities between ascribed identity (at birth) and values of identity attained through socialisation. Therefore at first the individual has experience of their own ethnic identity and more specifically of a specific group identity and then through socialisation the individual is exposed to other usually Eurocentric values of identity.

The Bradford Commission Report (1996) into the Manningham Riots made reference to assimilation and integration and pointed out that Muslims in Bradford were the most alienated of the South Asian groups. Young Muslim men in particular were reported to be the most disaffected.

Patterson (1963, p10/11) used the terms assimilation and integration in the context of early migratory experiences:

- Assimilation means "...complete adaptation by the immigrants"
- "integration applies (to)...the incoming group as a whole, through its own organizations adapts itself to permanent membership of the receiving society..."

Watson (1977) supported the ideas of 'hyphenated identities'. Hyphenated identities can be defined as using more than description or label to describe ones identity. Modood et al (1994) found that more young people than before of South Asian origin preferred using hyphenated identities than simply being British, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or Indian. Khan

(1979) points out that many people encounter confusions and question their identity. Asian and Caribbean adolescents, have more pressures because they are exposed to more than one culture. Kroger (1989) argues that pre-1960s research on adolescence tended to concentrate on negative issues and the anxieties and turmoil of young people growing up and coming to terms with their identities. In the 1960s the debate shifted towards looking at identity through 'nationality'. Kroger (1989) supports previous studies by acknowledging that adolescence can be a difficult time for teenagers and is especially complicated when young people are deliberating what their identity is.

### **3.3 Patriarchy, gender and identity**

Studies around patriarchy and oppression are widespread (Oakley, 1979, Walby, 1990). However a gap exists in understanding patriarchy and oppression experiences amongst Asian women and particularly the pitfalls are even more apparent in relation to the experiences of the Pakistani Mirpuri community. It is important to understand that there is no one definition for what constitutes patriarchy, how it impacts on the lives of individuals and how it manifests itself generally.

Female oppression has a long history is embedded in history (Charvet, 1982). Walby (1990) has pointed out that capitalism and private and public patriarchy optimises the subordination and oppression of women in society. Hearn and Morgan (1990) point out how young girls are socialized into being 'lady like' whilst young boys are encouraged to be masculine and are not allowed to express their 'femininity' thus the gender roles are due to socialization. It is within the family that patriarchy and gender roles are allowed to

be legitimised and which is permeated into the external environments like the employment market (Rowbotham, 1973, 1989).

Patriarchy and oppression are often interlinked because it is widely accepted that men can use masculinity to treat women unfairly (Din, 2001). Men can oppress women through violence generally and widely through domestic violence. Oppression of the woman can be as a result of a physical, mental or sexual nature (Dobash et al 1985, Hoff 1990, Dobash and Dobash 1992). There is no time limit to when or how long the violence will last or the intensity of it. Hamner (1996) points out that the abuse of women can take on different forms:

- Emotional abuse (degrading the women into self-pity and lack of self-esteem),
- Economic abuse (male putting barriers to the woman in household finance, education and employment terms)
- Sexual abuse (penetrative or oral) against the wishes of the woman and intimidation are all examples of patriarchal male manipulation and privileges.

Brah (1996) and Bhopal (1997) point out that all of the above apply to South Asian women but they have the added cultural barriers such as enduring the violence in order to preserve the izzat of the family and fear of reprisals from male family members in particular if they choose to leave the matrimonial home. Kelley (1993) points out that there is public and private patriarchy and that over the years because of the feminists movements there has been a shift that has assisted uncovering patriarchy and making it much more visible.



Torres et al (1999) points out that feminism challenges the relationship between men and women and the unequal balance of power the two have. Men generally have more power in relationships than women. They can ultimately make decisions on every issue and women are not encouraged to take part in decision-making processes. Feminists argue that biological differences does not make it acceptable for men to be considered as the breadwinner and therefore the holder of power and neither is it acceptable to assume that females and males are 'taught' how to behave as they are getting older (Oakley, 1979).

Oakley (1979) points out that domesticity and the home environment is the root creator of patriarchy and oppression. The roles ascribed to women by society and men in the home allow for oppression and patriarchy to flourish. Women are nurtured to believe and accept roles that men want them to do such as do housework and to be a dutiful and obedient wife and mother. Women are dissatisfied with not having their domestic labour recognized since many women undertake full-time work and are mothers and housewives all at the same time. They are juggling a multitude of identities whilst men usually have one role to fulfil and that is to be the breadwinners.

Imam (1994) suggests that there is a lack of work on Asian women's experiences of domestic violence and access to provision. Mama (1989) has argued that structures set up to deliver a safe haven for Asian victims of domestic violence are not achieving their aim. Younger Asian women are more likely than older Asian females to feel comfortable and safe in a mixed racial and religious refuge and are more likely to talk freely about their experiences.

Asian women do largely prefer to seek salvation in a women's hostel or refuge outside of their immediate area to reduce the chances of them being traced (Imam 1994). Younger women were more educated than their elderly counterparts so were able to find out about services and sources of help through agencies whereas because of language difficulties the elderly women found the information through social networks, particularly local community centres.

Bhopal (1997) points out how patriarchy assists men to manipulate and control women within the home (finance, domestic chores and responsibilities, restrict employment and education). Kanter (1977) suggests that the type of work women undertake and their low wages is because of patriarchy and capitalism. Segregation within the labour market is symbolic of their roles and responsibilities they have in the family (Barrett, 1988, Walby 1991). They are mainly based in the caring, clerical, catering and teaching professions but the senior positions are occupied by males. Marxist feminists argue that employers exploit women and that they constitute a 'reserve pool of labour' that employers will use in times of labour shortages and pay them the most menial wages (Barrett, 1988). The dual labour market places women at a disadvantage since women are kept in lowest paid and lowest status jobs .

Brah (1996) argued that Asian women have been neglected in terms of research on understanding their experiences of patriarchy and oppression. Asian women may also have experiences of oppression from other women such as mothers-in-law or sister-in-law who may act as 'gatekeepers' to women participating fully in society. Brah (1996) further states that western feminism does not address the fundamental issue such as race,

class, caste or religion in their discussions of patriarchy and oppression and how this impacts on the way women see their own identity and how others see their identity. This is also supported by Mirza (1997).

Khan (1979) points out that the family and parents play a key role in identity formation in young people because parents are more likely to pass on habits, behaviours and culture to their children. Therefore ultimately identity is moulded by parents. There are 'problems' or hurdles which individuals may come across in their bid to fit into society and these may include taking on habits which they would not normally acquire but will do so just to be accepted or fit into with others. The problem is that this is compromising their individuality and 'natural self', just to be accepted. The person may experience frustration when they find they are unable to balance their personal identity and that expected by society.

Brake (1995) suggests that a key component, which either supports or hinders identity expression and formation, is patriarchy. Males in Asian families tend to restrict females through controlling their daily lives and because of their male pride do not want anything to happen which may impinge on the family's izzat. Khan (1979) defines izzat as being very important to Pakistanis in Bradford and in Pakistan. Females usually carry the honour of the family so they have to behave in a suitable way that does not tarnish their family's honour. Raza (1992) mentions that Pakistani females are under considerable pressure from their parents to behave in accordance with their rules. Those who rebel are punished.



Similarly Adams (1988) suggests that patriarchy actually hinders identity formation because women are not allowed to be themselves. Instead they are prescribed codes of behaviour by males and must be dutiful wives, sisters and mothers otherwise in the view of males in the community, they are deemed as being English or westernised.

Kershen (1998) looked at Islamic and National identification amongst British Bangladeshis and concluded that young Bangladeshis are on a journey of self-discovery. They are striving to create a 'whole-self' and that they face many dilemmas and struggles in their quest. Identities are thus fluid and contested and heterogenic and not homogenous and fixed. Brah (1996) points out the formation of 'new ethnicities and identities' whereby race has become linked to debates about nationhood whilst ethnicity debates are linked with cultural and religious habits.

### **3.4 Pakistani females**

The need to find a personal identity plays an important role in the lives of Pakistani women who are of Mirpuri origin; there is no class or age divide since all women attach identity with respect. Whilst these women do accept that patriarchy and oppression do exist in the community, there is now a shift from simply accepting this as the status quo to actually making a challenge to it. Rather than being submissive and remaining oppressed Pakistani women of Mirpuri descent are no longer willing to accept that men or other women, importantly can be allowed to get away with perpetuating this inequality. Traditional attitudes and customs, which are often practiced under the guise of religion, are being challenged and the younger women are taking on some cultural values

to suit their needs. In essence they are moulding a new identity, which encompasses some traditional values, but are also incorporating new values which shows off their British identity.

These traditional attitudes and practices can be traced back to their roots in Mirpur Pakistan. Traditionally roles are very similar to the traditional roles ascribed to English women in Victorian times. Women were expected to stay at home, produce several children, cook, clean and look after the house and her husband. In Pakistan similar patterns still exist where women have set and clear rules of domesticity, child rearing and seeing to animals. Men work and have the minimum input into the household tasks and take little interest in the lives of their wife and children.

Saeed, Blain and Forbes's (1999) study involved sixty-three young teenagers aged between fourteen and seventeen. They found that Muslim affiliation was strong as too was hyphenated identities amongst the young respondents. Muslims felt they had been labelled as 'enemy within' by English people. Dosanjh and Ghuman (1996) found that amongst second-generation hyphenated and biculturalism were important definitions of identity:

“...The second generation are increasingly prone to question the traditional values and to exercise their right to individual choice...” (Dosanjh and Ghuman, 1996, p19).

Dosanjh and Ghuman (1996) found that marrying someone from the Indian sub-continent will diminish with coming generations. Mothers more likely to be involved with their young children's schooling and that religion was important to all the respondents.

Muslim parents in particular wanted young people to recite the Q'uran. However there is no mention of reciting the Q'uran in order to understanding its meaning.

Conway (1997) points out that young British Muslims mould their identity by taking into consideration many factors, which can sometime seem like conflicting with Islam. In terms of relationship with their parents, young British Muslims have a similar outlook to their white English counterparts.

Anwar (1998) suggests that the level of freedom young Asians got depended upon their parents backgrounds, so those who came from towns and cities were more likely to allow their children more freedom compared with parents who had little education and were from villages. Young female Asians resented the strictness upon them and said that they would allow their children more freedom than they had.

Anwar (1998) points out that Muslim parents in particular did not want their daughter to 'hang out' with white girls because they feared they would be exploited and let astray by white girls 'improper' conduct.

### **3.5 Work**

Brah (1996) is important to this study. Pakistani women tended to come to England after their Indian counterparts. Asian women are labelled with the same meaning when in fact the group is far from being homogenized. Although there are shared experiences between Asian women for example experiencing racism and discrimination there are many differences too and that includes differences in employment patters. Pakistani women and



Bengali women were less likely to be economically active whilst Sikh women are more active. However, modern times and the rising cost of living means that more and more women from different backgrounds have made it a necessity to contribute to the household income.

Asian women in particular were adamant that both men and women should share domestic chores equally. If both partners are also working there needs to be even more equal sharing of tasks. Brah (1996) found that parents who opposed their daughters from education or pursuing a career did in fact celebrate happily once success has been achieved. Women worked in order to comply with immigration legislation where a cross-continental marriage had taken place. If Asian girls decide upon wearing the shalwar-kameez or other forms of Asian dress that is outwardly obvious there is a danger of them being mocked. Listening to and attending bhangra concerts are an increasing pastime for young South Asians. Bhangra has been changing with modern times and has introduced so many more young people to its sounds and words (Baumann, 1990).

### **3.6 Abuse of women**

Merchant (2000) argues that the Asian feminist movement has developed as a direct response to Western feminism's neglect and marginalisation of Asian women. Fikree and Bhatti (1999) researched into domestic violence and health needs of Pakistani women in Karachi using semi-structured interviews although the author gives rather a lot of statistical evaluation. Physical abuse covers anything ranging from hitting and slapping to threatening. Women revealed to being physically abused whilst pregnant and reported that they had subsequent miscarriages as a result of the physical abuse. Although factors



such as low income, lack of education and marital age were identified with women most at risk if they belonged to these groups. No one is immune irrespective of having more money, more education and marrying at a later age.

Moghissi (1999) argues that the balance of power amongst Muslim women varies; leading to a misconception that one Muslim woman's experiences will be the same as another Muslim woman's experiences. Wilson (1978) argues that there is a history of Asian women's struggles which white feminism has often neglected. Wilson (1978) cites the Grunwick Photo processing strike, which involved Asian females in August 1976. The fact that these women stood up to their felt discrimination and oppression by their management policies and were proactive shows that these were powerful and strong women of great integrity.

Afkhami (1997) points out that the main reason why people confuse Islam with oppressing women is that it has been due to cultural interpretation made through mainly males and that they will use this position to argue in favour of themselves at the expense of women.

Stowaser (1997) points out that if one looks at the Q'uran for guidance it is clear that men and women are equals but the inequalities raise out of cultural interpretations of the Hadiths and Sharia.

### 3.7 Islam

Siddique (1993) points out that Islam emphasises the importance of Muslim women and how they should be treated and respected by Muslim males. Islam gives the women great honour and prestige for being a Muslim woman:

“...The Prophet (pbuh) proclaimed that ‘women are twin halves of men’ and that ‘paradise lies under the feet of your mother’” (Siddique, 1993, p26).

Jacobson (1997) studied young British Pakistanis in London. Jacobson argues that for young Pakistanis, their affiliation to religious identity is stronger than their ethnic identity, mainly because they saw Islam, their religion as having a wider, universal application whilst their ethnic identity was confined to a situation or place. Respondents believed that Islam had universal application and felt a close association with the ‘umma’. Religious practices such as the hajj or umra provided Muslims with a stronger identity and self-realization.

Raza (1992) makes specific reference to Muslim women and their experiences of Islam and identity. It is argued they are oppressed within a community set in its values and one, which does not take too kindly to change of any kind. The notion of ‘izzat’ (status and prestige) is central to the Muslim community and the family. The ‘izzat’ depends on the behaviour of Muslim women. Oppressing women is anti-Islamic and reflects patriarchal control, ostensibly legitimised through socialization and culture.

According to Raza (1992) a system of hypocrisy and double standards prevails in the Pakistani Muslim community, since there is little emphasis or pressures on males, which prohibit their opportunities within the home and externally, but for females pressures exist. Males are considered an 'asset' to the family since it is with the paternal line that the heritage of the family will continue to prosper, whereas females are considered as a burden'. Raza's research is sharp, although a little narrow on some points.

### **3.8 Dress**

Anwar (1998) points out that Pakistani and Bangladeshi women were more likely to wear Asian dress compared to other Asians, although respondents suggested that by wearing Western clothing they would be seen by others as having more freedom and being more modern.

Secor (2002) found that women who chose to 'veil' felt protected from sexual advances of men and felt they had more freedom to be out of the house. The author argues that women wore modest attire over more fitted and western garments which they revealed once inside safe space. Women felt judged if they chose not to 'veil' by those that did 'veil'. The word 'turban' is used in her analogy of the headscarf and this is quite misleading as the turban is not a Muslim or Islamist symbol but a Sikh one. Some younger women argued they did not choose to adorn the 'veil' out of fear that it could pose a restriction to their career and educational aspirations with one young woman actually reverting back to 'unveiling' since she found that she was unable to have the freedom to express herself in mainstream society.



O'Neil (1990) points out that women find that their identity is stronger through veiling, but O'Neil also argues that veiling is done in order to 'oppose westernisation'. However this empirical research shows that women veil, not because they oppose westernisation and want to work against it or to isolate themselves but to be part of society in the way they choose to, thus exercising their freedom to be who they are.

Mernissi (1994) suggests that in the Q'uran there is frequent reference made to both men and women to preserve modesty through their body language and dress. However it is common to find that this is more widely applied to women more than men. She distinguishes between public and private veiling. The hijab has a dual purpose in that not only is it worn by women as symbol of affiliation to their religion but also worn to control sexual aggression between the sexes.

Mittiman and Ihsan (1991) suggest that men and women only wear traditional clothing styles to show they oppose westernisation influences. This is too naïve to assume as it brings into question why has there been a trend for Western designers and White English people to take on Asian influenced clothing styles and trends such as henna and bindis and nose studs. It also assumes that people in Pakistan do not wear clothing deemed as 'western' such as trousers, ties and skirts for example.

Chimisso (2003) argues that the media and political events have tarnished the wearing of headscarves say for example as the case was in France, where the 'foulard' (headscarf) has become synonymous with resistance to living in mainstream French society. Franks's



study (2000) carried out with nine white women who were Muslims and wearing the hijab. Semi-structured interviews were used and some women took part in a questionnaire study with predominantly middle class respondents aged 24-46 years. Franks (2000) points out that veiling and hijab studies have tended to focus on Middle Eastern countries. Franks concluded that there are misconceptions about the hijab by westerners and that by wearing the hijab women are able to enter otherwise male dominated territories. A British born Asian Muslim responded is cited as saying:

“Non-Muslims see wearing the scarf as ‘*very unBritish*’ and women who wear it are even seen as ‘fanatics’ or ‘terrorists’”  
(Franks, 2000, p924).

Sharma (1980) argues that although the word ‘purdah’ has been taken to identify with Muslims it is also associated with other South Asian faiths. Afshar (1999) argues that the ‘moral police’ of Iran enforce their own rules on women to wear the veil and any woman not conforming to this risks being punished and reprimanded. The State imposes the chador that is unmanageable since it can be quite suffocating to the wearer.

Siddique (1993) points out that by wearing the hijab women are less likely to attract male attention and will not be raped:

“A woman dipped in cosmetics and perfume, with semi-covered breast, though she would not wish to be assaulted by the passer-by, may end up being raped. Hijab protects women from rape”  
(Siddique, 1993, p64).

This is insulting to both Muslim women who do not wear the hijab and to non-Muslim women as it suggests that dress codes determine whether a woman is raped or not.

Siddique (1993) also suggests that Pakistani women do not wear the 'proper hijab' because it hinders their education and career advancements. The current research study demonstrates an opposite picture.

### **3.9 Marriage**

Joly (1995) found that marrying into a family can be a complex process since sometimes there is conflict and tension between the in-laws and even other sister-in-laws. Even then young people would never consider putting the in-laws into residential homes when they got older. With regards to marriage, young women, even those who were educated, did not dare to question their parents' decision to the marriage, although generally Joly (1995) found there was a consensus to marry from Britain and not from Pakistan. Parents however would only consider a proposal in Pakistan as long as it was outside the immediate family in order to avoid disappointing a long list of relatives. Respondents felt that love marriages had less sustainability and that marrying outside of the biraderi caused conflict and divided families.

Anwar (1998) argues that Asian girls are less reluctant to marry from the Indian sub-continent when compared to their male British counterparts. This is interesting as it is a contradiction in Anwar's work since Anwar also argues that young women said they had more restrictions imposed on them and yet were still able to exercise their right to say No to marrying from the Indian sub-continent. Interestingly both parents and young people alike said they did not like the idea of marrying from the sub-continent.

Batabyal (2001) points out that the fundamental difference of arranged marriages and the western love marriage is that whilst arranged marriages are seen to be directed by parents and the community and the persons involved have very little control over anything, the western love marriage occurs with consent and direct control from the two parties involved. However the author does argue that in modern times the person seeking a match in an arranged marriage does have more involvement in the decision making process and even talks about alternative resources of searching for a possible marriage match i.e. in newspaper advertisements and joining marriage bureaus.

Brah (1996) found that Asian youngsters saw marriage as inevitable. A criticism of Brah is that the words arranged marriage and forced marriage are used interchangeably. Young people would sometimes feel obliged to marry a cousin in order to maintain the family structure. Whilst there is overlap, there is also an important distinction to be made between the approaches to marriage.

Coleman and Salt (1996) found that the British Mirpuri communities were more likely to marry their offspring to relatives in Mirpur, Pakistan because of the arranged marriage system, which operated in the extended family too. This reflects the importance put on male kinship and patriarchal society.

Ghuman (1994) found that marriage had differing significance for different generations. He argues that the first generation see marriage as bringing together the extended family, reinforcing and sustaining their ethnic identity where parents take control of who and



when a marriage takes place whilst for the second generation marriage was seen as a key area where young people themselves ought to take control and direct it. Where the two become confused there is a likelihood of intergenerational tension. Ghuman (1994) concludes:

“It is after all girls who have to accept the traditional role of a wife with its concomitant obligations of running a home, rearing kids and looking after the elderly, whereas men usually enjoy independence and dominance over their wives in the traditional set up” (Ghuman, 1994, p60).

For girls marrying someone from Pakistan was potentially problematic and could result in conflict between parents and the other person. Some young girls go so far as keeping extra clothes in the school locker for their ‘school’ identity and changed back into their home clothes for their ‘home identity’ (Ghuman, 1994).

### **3.10 Inter-generational conflict and identity**

Din (2001) found that inter-generational conflict and tension existed in the Mirpuri community in Bradford. Young women were more likely to rebel, against their parents, all be it in a secret covert manner. The Bradford Commission Report (1996) also identified intergenerational conflict. This was mainly because younger people are exposed to habits and cultures that their parents find alien or unacceptable. When younger people and their parents cannot reach a compromise there is a possibility that tensions run high.



### **3.11 Education and izzat**

Khan (1979) points out that education reflects status of the family so parents place considerable pressures for youngsters to succeed academically. Double standards existed in that girls were restricted more than boys because of the strong element of family honour. Raza (1993) explains that an educated Muslim woman is labelled a 'threat' since she is more likely to exercise her assertiveness and question patriarchy. Parents fear that education liberates a woman and may regard this as a backlash against the 'traditional' stereotype of the wife or daughter-in-law who is obedient and questions nothing. Some families will try and avoid sending their daughters to school altogether, by sending them to Pakistan for a long time and only letting them return when they are no longer in compulsory education. At such a young age it is difficult for the female not to surrender to these pressures and male authority strengthens 'patriarchal culture' which views women as an object.

### **3.12 Freedom**

Joly (1995) points out that boys are most likely to have more freedom to lead a 'double life' and at the end of the day will always come back to the family. Parents would often arrange marriage for them in order to control their behaviours. Joly's work is contradictory in that the young women interviewed who were married felt restricted by the parents decisions to marry them off and yet at the same time Joly points out they share a close relationship with their family. One would assume if the decision has indeed restricted them then they would more likely feel let down by the family and therefore would be less likely to remain 'close' with the family.

Ghuman (1994) found that Asian females were more likely than boys to demand more freedom and less control from their families. South Asian youngsters in Canada were more likely to take on cultural values and behaviours of that country than their British counterparts. The term 'bio-cultural' is used to refer to young people inco-operating both cultures.

Shaikh and Kelly (1989) studied 50 second-generation Muslims in Manchester and argue that British Muslim females were effectively combining British and Pakistani values and were able to use these to their advantage.

Shaw's (2000) study on Pakistanis in Oxford looked at second-generation Muslim females. Shaw argues that as well as there being stereotypes about women there is also a stereotype about young British Asians. Therefore it could be argued that to be a woman and British brings out a double-sided stereotype. Shaw argues that young women running away from home or inter-generational conflict are issues that are universally applicable to all people, and that these incidents are higher in Pakistan than in Britain. A major critique of Shaw's work is that she uses terms such as Pakistani and Asian interchangeably therefore causing confusion. Women face more pressures from the family and biraderi than men:

"The honour (*izzat*) of a family depends to a large extent on the behaviour of its women, especially its daughters... Purdah is more than a system of screening women from men, however, for it is also moral code that governs relationships between the sexes... the principles of purdah in Pakistan require boys and girls to be segregated from puberty onwards.." (Shaw, 2000, p163).

### 3.13 Islamaphobia

Hashim (1999) argues that Islam has become synonymous with oppressing women, isolating them and giving them no rights whatsoever. He argues that western feminists have failed to address the 'real' issues surrounding gender inequalities and Muslim men and women and that this has assisted in perpetuating a negative image of Muslim veiled women:

“In the West... the representation of Islam ...conjures up images of totalitarian states and irrational believers- violent, oppressive men and powerless, submissive women” (Hashim, 1999, p8).

“...The Q'uran provides rights for women which can immediately be drawn upon to improve women's circumstances. Those issues that women usually complain about, such as lack of freedom to make decisions for themselves, or the inability to earn an income can all be addressed by referring to the Q'uran” (Hashim, 1999, p9).

Kassam (1997) points out that almost every faction of society, their own society and that of the wider non-Asian society scrutinize Asian women. In essence their achievements are not recognized nor is their personal experiences, which are not as bleak as the media focus. Thus Asian women in Britain feel neglected and isolated and misunderstood.

Findley (2001) points out that the standard view of Islam in the West is disorientated even though:

“Islam is a peaceful, tolerant religion, yet people associate it with violence and intolerance” (Findley, 2001, p67).



During the 1980's and the early part of the 1990's the word Islamaphobia began to be used more frequently. Again it saw emergence in 2001 after the events of 9/11. It is a word first used in America:

“The word is not ideal, but is recognizably similar to ‘xenophobia’ or ‘europhobia’, and is a useful shorthand way of referring to dread or hatred of Islam.... To fear or dislike all or most Muslims...” (Raised in Britain- Islamaphobia report, February 1997, cited on p1 Conway, 1997).

The narrow view of Islam is one that defines it as:

“...Islam as violent and aggressive, firmly committed to barbaric terrorism.... And hostile to the non-Muslim world” (Conway, 1997,p7).

## **Summary**

Much of the previous research studies have often been too general and homogenised all Asians together and therefore have not taken into account differences not just between Asians but more importantly the differences within a particular group of Asians. The main issues addressed in this chapter have been patriarchy, identity as culture, identity as religion and identity as career and education aspirations. The next chapter discusses the methodology used for this qualitative study that seeks to explore the experiences of Mirpuri women in Bradford.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Methodology**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter explains and justifies the methodology that was adopted. The central research question is to see how British women of Mirpuri heritage identify themselves and how they form their identities. The research intends to explore the social, religious and cultural issues that are important to these women.

The issues related to religious identity and cultural identity can cause difficulties. The respondents may not want to reveal issues or talk about their experiences. However, it was anticipated that someone from their own religious and cultural background might break down the communication barriers. The researcher is herself a Muslim, able to speak in Mirpuri Punjabi, was brought up in Bradford and has several years of community development networks.

#### **4.2 How the data was gathered**

It is important to be clear about how the data was gathered. There are three methodological stages to this research study. Each stage uncovered important issues and themes emerged incrementally from each step of the research.

- Stage A: A 'pilot stage' using a questionnaire was used consisting of thirty-nine closed questions with ten respondents. Seven respondents were aged between sixteen and twenty-five and three were aged fifty years and above. Crucial

evidence came from the questionnaire confirming the need and scope of a research study focusing on a specific minority population.

- Stage B: The pilot questionnaire was followed up with semi-structured interviews. It was important to give the opportunity to give an individual voice to respondents. A 'pilot' semi-structured interview pro-forma was used with seven respondents. Detailed hand written notes were taken at the request of the respondent's preferences. Respondents were aged between seventeen and twenty-five years.
- Stage C: More interviews were undertaken again to provide an individual voice to respondents and also to address the question of validity through the consistency of themes. Twenty-nine women took part in this stage. Fifteen respondents were aged between sixteen and thirty-five and fourteen were aged forty-five and above.

The sample comprised thirteen women aged forty-five and above in a large focus group discussion which lasted around two hours; three small groups consisting of between three to five women aged sixteen to thirty-five; one was an interview with a pair of women and six were individual interviews with five aged 16-thirty-five and one aged forty-five and above. The focus groups were not pre-determined and took place by chance. The women who took part in the focus groups met regularly at the community centre and on that day had gathered more local women to come along and be involved in the research. The researcher took the opportunity of having so many

women together in one place at the same time. All the respondents were happy for the interview to be tape-recorded. These interviews provided crucial evidence, which supported the previous two stages and gave consistency.

### **4.3 The research proposal**

Kvale (1996) points out the research proposal is very important. It sets out the conceptual framework of the research question, method, design and is a useful tool. The current research study used triangulation to extract the best possible data. Patton (2002) goes as far as describing triangulation as the 'ideal' since:

“Triangulation strengthens a study by combining methods. This can mean using several methods or data, including using both quantitative and qualitative approaches” (Patton, 2002, p247).

Patton (2002) points out that triangulation adds validity to the results obtained, but can be costly in terms of time constraints. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1996) suggest that the term 'triangulation' describes the usage of more than one method:

“Than one form of data collection to test the same hypothesis” (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996, p204).

### **4.4 Qualitative and quantitative research methods**

There are various arguments for and against using research methods with the aim of obtaining data, which is either qualitative or quantitative. Blaxter et al (1996) suggest that quantitative research is:



“Research concerned with the collection and analysis of data in numeric form” thus giving “ a false sense of factual information” (Blaxter et al, 1996, p60).

May (1993) identifies four stages in the research process:

- The design and aim of research
- The actual collection of data
- The interpretation of the findings
- The use made of the research findings. By using the best-suited method we are able to test and then accept or verdict a hypothesis or theory and then conclusions can be made.

#### **4.5 Questionnaires**

Questionnaires are a popular research method. Questionnaires are not as simple as they might seem. It is not just about putting points on paper and formulating questions from these. Oppenheim (1992) argues:

“...A questionnaire is not simply a set of questions which have been casually jotted down without much thought...” (Oppenheim, 1992, p100).

A questionnaire can be used to facilitate data that has been identified, where another research method has been used. In order to achieve the best results from questionnaires the researcher must be quite clear about what he or she is hoping to gain out of the research. Precision and a great deal of thought are required when formulating and designing the questionnaire. Questionnaires can be personally distributed.

There was a need to clear up any misconceptions or suspicions some women had of the researcher in relation to why they were being asked to take part in this research. Interviewees wanted to know more about the researchers background, and how the research would be used. The researcher reassured the women that they would not be identified in the study and were free to withdraw at any time. Some of the older women in particular were confused about the role the researcher could play and a few asked whether the researcher could help them with other 'problems' they were having for example with benefits or housing concerns. The researcher explained she was there for the interview and unfortunately could not help in any other way. Interviewing someone can be difficult especially if the respondent's personal circumstances are sensitive. It was important at all times to remain professional.

The questionnaire method was used in stage A of the research, which was a pilot exercise to assess the research area. The idea behind this was to gain some quick facts from Pakistani Mirpuri women living in Bradford in relation to a wide and varied range of religious and cultural issues such as practicing or involvement in religious practices, language spoken in and outside of the home environment, intergenerational relationships, domestic violence and links with Pakistan. During stage A of this research the researcher used personal networks to distribute the questionnaire.

Oppenheim (1992) points out the advantages of using the personal distribution of the questionnaire is that there is less chance for it to be misplaced or completed and then not returned to the researcher. One of the disadvantages is that the issue of confidentiality can

be questioned, where respondents are handed the questionnaire in person and then return it directly to the researcher.

Henry (1990) points out that we live in a very complex society and therefore must take into consideration issues of 'problems' that people may have with completing questionnaires. This could be due to language and sensitivity of the research area or because of cultural or religious obligations prefer to have a specific gender talk to them. Even though they are were not being interviewed at this stage, women still preferred to 'talk' to another female. Questionnaires can include 'open' questions but usually depends on 'closed' questions. Usually researchers want to align 'hard' data and opt for closed questions, which ask for a 'yes' or 'no' response. In relation to this current research study these concepts were used throughout stage A, the pilot questionnaire.

Stage A of this research study aimed to gain some facts and figures about them. Therefore a questionnaire was used. The reasons for this, and the results, are explained later in this chapter. Other closed questions ask the responded to tick one or more responses, which had already been devised up for them. By using closed questions the researcher was able to analyse the data and make conclusions relatively easily. However where open questions are used, analysis can be more difficult. An open question allows the respondent to reply to a question by giving answers in one or more sentences. In this way open questions have the advantage over closed questions in that they give more information. However, because of complexity of the responses, the analysis of the data is often problematic, and on this basis, closed questions have the advantage. Questionnaires



can be circulated in a number of ways including by post, in person and electronically, depending largely on the nature of the research.

#### **4.6 Methodology used**

The research study started off with an exploratory exercise using a questionnaire. The aim of this was to ascertain some facts and figures about the target population for this research study. Henry (1990) suggests that this can identify areas of the research that need developing further.

It was crucial to ask people how worthwhile they saw the need for such a study. The researcher enlisted the help of siblings and their friends and relatives to assist in this exploratory stage. Their input was invaluable. The questionnaire was drafted and redrafted for content and language. Questions asked were very much 'closed' because facts were required at this stage. Closed questions also have the added advantage of being easier to analyse (May, 1993).

Oppenheim (1992) stresses the importance of piloting the questionnaire as:

“It is dangerous to assume. Therefore when in doubt and especially when not in doubt do a pilot run.” (Oppenheim, 1992, p48).

The questionnaire was designed and distributed to the respondents through friends of siblings and their relatives, mainly their mothers. Respondents were asked for verbal input (when the researcher was present) but as this could not always be guaranteed they were asked to write comments at the end of the questionnaire. In the end not only had the questionnaire fulfilled its objective of providing some key facts and figures about the

British Pakistani Mirpuri community but also the whole experience shaped the design of the next two stages of the research.

#### **4.7 Content of questionnaire**

Informal feedback from British Mirpuri women suggested that the questionnaire should not be too long as this could possibly lead to respondents becoming bored with completing it. Also they suggested that language used in the questionnaire should be clear and unambiguous. They were also asked about chronology of questions and the overall content. The questionnaire was designed with all these invaluable comments. The questionnaire was drafted and then re-drafted. In the end it contained thirty-nine questions occupying three sides of A4. This seemed enough at this stage, as it is clear that any more paper may have put off respondents. A clear statement on confidentiality was added at the beginning of the questionnaire.

(Appendix 1)

Questions 1-5 general questions on:

Question 1 = age

Question 2 = about the place of birth

Question 3 = years of residency in England

Question 4 = marital status

Question 5 = present occupation

Questions 6-7 were about Nationality and identity

Questions 8-14 were about religious observations

Questions 15-17 related to the issue of caste

Questions 18-22 were about marriage

Questions 23-25 related to language and cultural issues

Questions 26-29 related to Pakistan

Questions 30-32 were about qualifications

Questions 33-34 were about the Pakistani community and specific issues

Questions 35 –38 related to inter-generational relationships

Question 39 referred to media representation of Pakistani Mirpuri women.

None of the respondents who completed the questionnaire felt in any way patronised by the content or wording of the questions. The initial worry by the researcher about the length of the questionnaire were short lived since respondents were pleased that it only took a few minutes to complete the questionnaire even though there were 39 questions.

The researcher thought about asking all the sensitive questions at the very end but respondents felt that by doing so some respondents could possibly get bored with filling 'another questionnaire'. Bringing in sensitive questions sporadically would be better and interest would be maintained throughout.

A scaling system was used in the questionnaire. It was not in the sense of the traditional Likert scale, for example where respondents are given 5 responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Instead some responses had two options whilst others had more than two. So this was a much more flexible scale which allowed for yes and no responses to other responses like 'very important' to 'unsure'.

The current research study examines the important issues that shaped British Mirpuri women's personal identities and aspirations. The research would be touching on, and exploring in great detail, some very sensitive topics which some women may find difficult to talk about. To ask them to write this down could be seen as very problematic. It is sometimes easier to use language and body language to express ones opinions rather than to write them down on paper and finding the words to fit and construct sentences. The emphasis on the research is not about grammar, spelling or the construction of



sentences but about the feelings and experiences of Pakistani women. Questionnaires were considered as a starting point for this research but not as the only method to be used. Another point to consider is that of communication and language. Immigrant women may be less likely to speak and write in the English language so questionnaires formulated in the English language are unsuitable. Translating information is important in order to make the research more culturally sensitive. However, this does not always yield the desired results since some Pakistanis are unable to write, read or speak Urdu, or Punjabi and because Mirpuri Punjabi is a dialect that can be spoken but not written down.

The researcher deliberately asked questions around identity, male-female dynamics, immigration, and marriage as these were the issues that could potentially be developed into semi-structured interviews. These 'core' facts would be used as the basis for the collation of richer, more detailed and more in-depth material through the interviews.

Ten women completed the questionnaire. The age category reveals that seven were aged 16-25 and three were aged 50+. Differences in opinion emerged between the two groups, especially around the issues of marriage, divisions of 'caste', identity and the inter-generation relationships. The marked similarities in opinion between the two age groups were around the issues of religion, religious practice and male-female relationships. The sample included married, single older and younger Pakistani Mirpuri women.

The researcher chose not to assist in the completion of the questionnaire to ensure that the overall results would not be biased or contaminated in any way or form. The aim of the questionnaire was to develop some of the issues into semi-structured interviews. Respondents were actually given an open question at the end of the questionnaire to add any comments about the questionnaire, its content and their general thoughts about the issues covered in the questionnaire.

#### **4.8 Postal questionnaires**

Oppenheim (1992) points out that postal questionnaires can be used as part of a survey research. For this, the researcher must have knowledge of the relevant people or institutions where the questionnaire will be sent. Often, though organisations may have to be contacted over the phone and explained of the research and the questionnaire to follow, as this increases the chances of response and allows for the research to be more comprehensive. This was the case in the stage A of this research study.

Robson (1993) points out that although postal questionnaires can be relatively cheap, they are unreliable, especially where the researcher requires a quick reply. Postal questionnaires may also require stamped addressed envelopes and this can be costly especially since some responses will fail to materialize. The researcher used the same principles for stage C of the research where letters and publicity material was sent out to invite local women's centres to take part in the interviews. Although the response was limited, important lessons were learnt and these will be explained further on in this chapter.

#### 4.9 Semi-structured interviews

Silverman (1993) points out the main strengths of semi-structured interviews are their adaptability, allowing for a rich source of material to be attained. If applied accurately they allow for self-expression and people can talk freely and openly. There are various forms of interviews ranging from the interview that has structure to it – that is standardised content that is asked to all the respondents to interviews that are much more flexible and allow respondents to talk about issues other than those the researcher has identified. What each of these has in common is that:

“Respondents are encouraged to relate their experiences, to describe whatever events seem significant to them, to provide their own definitions of their situations and to reveal their opinions and attitudes as they see fit” (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996, p232).

Furthermore:

“The personal interview is a face-to-face, interpersonal role situation in which an interviewer asks respondents questions designed to elicit answers pertinent to the research hypotheses. The questions their wording and their sequence define the structure of the interview” (Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1996, p232).

The interview is regarded by many as ‘valid’ because:

“The interviewer has actually seen and talked to the person, has reported a written set of real respondents made at the time” (Oppenheim, 1992, p82).

Patton (2002) suggests that during an interview any ambiguity can be tackled head on and allows complex insights into the mind. In this study, the researcher made it clear at the



very beginning of the interview that the respondent should stop the interview at any point that is unclear to her.

Semi-structured interviews can be used as the only research method but also in conjunction with another method. For example, where questionnaires have been used in the first instance, hard data is identified and then in order to research into the key research questions, interviews can be used to develop the statistical data. Bell (1987) supports this:

“...Follow up ideas, probe responses and feelings, which the questionnaire can never do...” (Bell, 1987, p70).

This current research incorporated these principles. Stage A used a questionnaire and this was followed by stage B which used semi-structured interviews, to develop the ideas which came out of Stage A. Stage C used more interviews in order to ensure their were validity in the consistency of the themes. Cullingford and Morrisson, (1997) points out that consistency is important to ensure the research is reliable.

Hood et al (1999) suggest that semi-structured interviews can be applied to research that is sensitive in content, unlike the questionnaires. Questionnaires can give statistical information but interviews allow for these issues to be developed and understood beyond facts and figures. Interviewees may, sometimes, be reluctant to talk openly about their feelings, but this can often be overcome by building a trusting rapport between interviewer and interviewee. This is not always as simple as it sounds and this rapport may not be formed instantly. But where there are no problems then the semi-structured interviews can proceed relatively easily. They can take place in a variety of settings, but

it is worthwhile remembering that the setting should be at a mutually agreed location and one in which the interviewee is particularly at ease.

Bell (1987) points out that interviewees are more likely to engage in conversation in surroundings familiar to them, for example within their own homes or community organisations. For the current research study the respondents were interviewed in various different settings that were determined by respondents themselves. Venues included community centres, the respondent's home, the University and College. Respondents were able to control where the interview took place, which was important as this ensured they were comfortable with being interviewed.

McNeil (1990) points out that semi-structured interviews can be time-consuming. The researcher allowed for this and was flexible, since interviewees may only be able to participate outside the usual nine-to-five working day. Oakley (1979) suggests that semi-structured interviews are particularly useful for oral history research. This compliments the current research study, as it was important to find out from Pakistani Mirpuri immigrant women, their life-experiences of coming to the United Kingdom. Bell (1987) says that interesting and informative information is permissible from semi-structured interviews because of:

“...Conversation about a topic may be interesting and may produce useful insight into a problem, but it must be remembered that an interview is more than just interesting conversation...” (Bell, 1987, p72).

#### **4.10 Participant observation**

Cullingford and Morrisson (1997) points out that observing and being part of the population to be studied is important as this provides an insight into the life and minds of the people we wish to understand. Kvale (1996) suggest that participant observation is best suited in the 'natural' and familiar environmental surroundings, which the group under observation is used to. This may then lead to the interviewee divulging sensitive and important information that may otherwise not have been possible.

#### **4.11 Case studies**

Bell (1987) argues that case studies are an investigative technique that allows for the central pertinent factors to be identified and divulged into further. Important issues can be expanded on because:

“...It gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth... and that case studies can be conducted as a “... a means of identifying key issues, which merit further investigation...” (Bell, 1987, pi).

This is only permissible when persons are willing to give in as much detail as they can relate to the research. Problems are likely to result were the people' view the researcher with some 'suspicion' or their lack of understanding the purpose of the research. Usually this can be rectified with putting the emphasis on anonymity and confidentiality, and explain the research in detail in a way easily digestible.

The current study used the case study method to allow for a more detailed study of a particularly important issue so we are able to understand the Pakistani Mirpuri community better. Chapter 9 explores the findings through stage C relating to marriage.



A case study of how a typical marriage is celebrated and planned is presented to give an understanding of personal and social identities and to see how certain cultural practices have been 'imported' from Pakistan and practiced in the United Kingdom. Similarly Chapter 12 uses a case study to discuss the findings relating to dress from the data gathered in stage C.

#### **4.12 Research ethics**

May (1993) points out that research ethics refers to acceptable rules and regulations guarding confidentiality, legitimate and acceptable behaviours of researchers. Sapsford and Jupp (1996) point out that research ethics need to be considered at every stage of the research. Respondents must be made to feel at ease and comfortable with taking part in the research. Where they have concerns over anonymity then the researcher must address these. This is relevant to this current research because it is examining sensitive issues.

Denzin et al (1998) point out that traditionally research ethics refers to the:

“Ethical concerns have revolved around the topic of informed consent”, being honest with the respondent and protecting the respondent from harm and observing their right to privacy” (Denzin et al, 1998, p70).

Oppenheim (1992) points out that research ethics is important to research studies because:

“The respondent’s right to privacy and the right to refuse to answer certain questions; or to be interviewed at all should be respected” (Oppenheim, 1992, p83).

The research also found it necessary to reiterate confidentiality face to face distributing the questionnaire personally to make participants feel comfortable. The same message

was addressed before the interview commenced and after it had ended women almost always chatted to the researcher and thanked her for giving them the opportunity to talk. They said they felt valued and were happy to give their views. These are typical comments from some of the women:

‘Thank you for listening to us’

‘It’s good you want to talk to us’

‘I feel good talking to you. You haven’t come with ideas about us and that’s good’

‘there should be more people like you talking to us’

‘I really enjoyed taking part’

‘It’s good to talk in apni-zabaan with you’

#### **4.13 Piloting**

Sapsford and Jupp (1996) point out a pilot study plays a very key role in the research process as it allows for experimentation and then developing much more complex and research centred questions. A pilot or exploratory research is seen as pivotal for successful research. Oppenheim (1992) suggests piloting is an integral part of the research process because it allows for testing of research tools and for an opportunity to put things right if required:

“A poorly designed survey will fail to provide accurate answers to the questions under investigation; it will leave too many loopholes in the conclusions; it will permit little generalisation; it will produce much irrelevant information, thereby wasting case material and resources” (Oppenheim, 1992, p8).

Stages A and B were pilots using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews respectively. These pilots were important because they allowed:

- An assessment of the research potential
- to gain some facts and figures
- to develop and direct the research

Although these early stages are concerned with identifying the research conceptualisation, it is vital to:

"Pilot every question, every question sequence, every inventory, and every scale" in the study because the researcher should not take anything for granted (Oppenheim, 1992, p49).

The pilot stage helped to interrogate and in away scrutinise the research question closely. It helped the researcher to be aware of possible changes required in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview pro-forma.

#### **4.14 Gender and interviewing**

Oakley (1979) has suggested that although it is very important to develop a trust with the respondent so that the respondent feels comfortable and relaxed with the interviewer and therefore points out that women may feel at ease and comfortable if they interviewed by females and men would be equally at ease with male interviewers.

In the context of this current research, the researcher is female and of Mirpuri background. Having an understanding of the religious and cultural issues worked favourably for the researcher and respondents. This can create a stronger bond and understanding between the respondents and the interviewer. On the other extreme in some circumstances this may not be successful, for example where the interviews are



being interviewed from the very people they want to get away from i.e. an Asian woman working within social services because she does not wish to be located. The Pakistani Muslim community is closely knit and it is not uncommon to find out that information about families spreads quickly. Therefore women who may be attempting to flee from home may not wish to have any contact with other Pakistani women in case it gets back to their families.

#### **4.15 Analysing the data**

Once the data has been collected the researcher may be overwhelmed with the large quantity of information. Blaxter et al (1996, p184) identify five ways in which the information can be broken down and made easier to handle and digest. These are:

1. annotating,
2. summarising,
3. coding,
4. selecting
5. labelling

The Questionnaire was analysed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) because although it was not required for the small sample, it was considered a positive learning exercise. For the interviews (stages B and C) annotating, coding and summarising the transcripts manually was preferred. This ensured that interviews were being revisited time and time again therefore becoming more familiar with each interview

and respondent. This was the preferred option rather than using computerised packages such as Nudist.

The main reason for doing manual analyses was because the researcher wanted to make sure that the details were as clear as possible and the researcher could be sure of this if she was to go through each transcript separately and using a colour and number coded process, pick out the information and begin the process of drawing out themes. By continuously referring to transcripts the research became much more clear and the researcher was able to become more familiar with each transcript.

#### **4.16 Tape-recording the conversation**

Blaxter et al (1996) point out that ideally most researchers have a preference to tape record conversations with the respondents for accurate transcription and because it enables for the researchers attention not to be diverted away from the respondent as they are not taking constant notes. However tape-recording has its limits:

“Tape recording may, make respondents anxious, and less likely to reveal confidential information and also tapes take a long time to transcribe and analyse” (Blaxter et al, 1996, p154).

Detailed hand written notes had to be taken at the request of respondents. It had to ensure accuracy and reliability. This was time consuming but necessary and it was a lesson learnt for the next stage. It was important not to pressurise respondents into insisting that the interview had to be tape-recorded. It had to be their choice and they had to be comfortable even if it meant more work for the researcher. Incidentally all interviews

were tape recorded as part of stage C. Recording interviews ensures there is a record for and to explain the accuracy of the quotations and data.

#### **4.17 Oral histories**

For the current research study it was important that respondent give an historical account of their parents backgrounds so this included issues around early migration to the United Kingdom from Mirpur, Pakistan and also early patterns of settlement and employment of parents both in Mirpur and in the United Kingdom. This tracing was very important, as it would then give some baseline information relating to the family backgrounds of the respondents so in other words it provides the reader with an historical account of the community and population being studied.

#### **4.18 Stage B: The pilot semi-structured interviews**

The experience of stage A helped to design an interview schedule for the subsequent pilot stage. It was important to make sure that the right sort of language was used in the questions and again to ask for a 'group' of young women to voice their opinions. Some of these women had taken part in stage one consultations and others were new recruits. It was important to get the interview guide right and to be used. Patton (2002) supports this:

“To ensure that the same basic lines of inquiry are pursued with each person interviewed. The interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. Thus, the interviewer remains free to build conversation within a particular subject area, to word questions spontaneously, and to establish a conversational style but with the focus on a



particular subject that has been predetermined.... The guide helps make interviewing a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored” (Patton, 2002, p343).

The final question was an opportunity for respondents to ask the researcher anything or to give some feedback of their experience of being interviewed for this research study. It was typical for the researcher to say, “Well that’s my final question. Is there anything else you wish to add to what you have already said or do you have any questions for me?”. It was interesting to note that nearly every respondent added comments and questions. It was typical of respondents to make comments about the need for such research and that they hoped that their opinions would be taken on board and read by others since they felt isolated or neglected from positive research such as this. Patton (2002) supports this as it is:

“Important in formal interviews to provide an opportunity for the interviewee to have the final say” (Patton, 2002, p379).

Kvale (1996, p11) suggests that conversation through interviewing leads respondents to:

“.. Formulate in a dialogue their own conceptions of their lived world” (Kvale, 1996, p11).

#### **4.19 Informed consent**

Respondents were explained the nature of the purpose of this research study. It was important not to say too much and at the same time not to say too little. A balance had to be made so that respondents were not just saying what they thought the researcher wanted to hear. Kvale (1996) points out that researchers have to be careful not to contaminate the interview by giving out too much detail. Careful consideration and thought needs to be given to:

“How much information should be given and when...the specific purposes of a study are initially withheld in order to obtain the interviewees natural views and to avoid leading them to specific answers” (Kvale, 1996, p113).

#### **4.20 Asking sensitive questions**

Blaxter et al (1996) suggests researchers should be skilled in approaching sensitive questions very casually so as not to offend the respondents or make them feel in anyway uncomfortable. So questions around age, marital status and ethnic orientation may need to be asked with sensitivity and care. In this research the respondents were informed right at the very start of the interview that they could stop at any point and did not have to answer anything they felt they couldn't for whatever reason. Also all the respondents were told that by taking part they would not be named or identified. Oppenheim (1992) suggests that it is important to ensure respondents felt relaxed and comfortable and:

“Some may become upset because it (the interview) can conjure up memories” therefore the interviewer is left with the dilemma of whether to continue with the interview or to stop it”(Oppenheim, 1992, p84).

At the same time respondents were reassured that they could stop or withdraw from the interview at any stage or could refuse to answer any question. It was also made clear that respondents could stop and ask for any clarification of questions if they were not clear. All of this meant that interviews ran smoothly and without any hiccups. This information thus provided them with the opportunity to make an informed choice about whether they wanted to be part of this research or not. Interestingly none of the women actually turned down the chance of being interviewed although there were differences in opinion about tape recording the interview.



#### **4.21 The interviews schedule**

The interview schedule (Appendix 2) was organised under themes in 8 main questions:

**Question 1-** asked the respondents to tell the researcher a bit about themselves. This was in response to the feedback from the consultations with women in stage 1 and stage 2 of the research. This was an excellent starting point to open the interview. It was not too sensitive or precise. Instead the idea was that the respondent could give as much or as little detail about their age, occupation, marital status etc then these could be developed further. An important part here was also to look at some migratory experience particularly of parents or those respondents who were not born here.

**Question 2 -** asked respondents to talk about cultural habits and life at home. The researcher wanted to prompt for dress work, language spoken and male-female relationships.

By asking quite broad questions respondents were eased into more focused questions.

**Questions 3-4** asked respondents to talk about their studies in the past, present and future. This question was broad enough to include views on mixed sex schooling, religious schooling and aspirations. Respondents were also asked to talk about the role of their family in relation to education aspirations.

**Question 5-6** focused on employment and career aspirations. Respondents were asked to talk about their aspirations, their family's role in their aspirations and attitudes of community, dress worn at work and language spoken.

**Question 7** looked at marriage, respondent's own experience or future expectations and career aspirations

**Question 8** explored the respondent's involvement and views on Islam. This was an important question as it was much broader and looked at respondents talking about their views and that of their parents, how these are similar or different and how they deal with this. The interview schedule ended with respondents free to share any more thoughts or comments about the research.

Semi structured interviews with seven women, contacted through the social network, were carried out during September 2000. It was important to capture the experiences of Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford relating to issues including focusing on identity, family, education aspirations, career aims, cultural and religious observations and marriage. All the interviews were done on a one-to-one basis.



The researcher gained access to women because of the shared gender and sometimes age but also because of the same religious and ethnic origin. Respondents felt at ease because they felt comfortable and appreciated and these characteristics played a key role in ensuring that this method was successful and yielded rich material. It was clear right at the beginning of the interviews that respondents felt appreciated and understood:

“Its great that this research will show us in a more positive light because there’s too much negativity about Muslims and especially Mirpuris”

This was a typical reaction to being involved in the research. Patton (2002) also advocates a trusting rapport needs to be established between the researcher and the researched:

“A genuine interest in and caring about the perspectives of other people” (Patton, 2002, p341).

In the context of this research study this is typically illustrate when respondents were asked a question at one stage of the interview and latter on mentioned something similar and the researcher was able to identify this and suggest: “You mentioned that issue earlier on too, can you tell me more?”

Having completed the seven semi-structured interviews it was clear that there were some inconsistencies in terms of the results obtained in the exploratory exercise using the questionnaire and the stage using semi-structured interviews. For example these were greatest on issues such as arranged marriage, nationality and identity and career and education aspirations. One possible explanation could be that the questionnaire restricted the respondents expressing themselves, therefore leaving no room for explanation, where

as the semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to explain and describe their answers. The researcher became worried at this stage since this could have meant that the inconstancy in results invalidated the research.

In relation to inconsistencies in data, Patton (2002) points out, inconstancies should be treated as a triumph since:

“Understanding inconsistencies in findings across different kinds of data can be illuminative. Finding such inconsistencies ought not to be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study” (Patton, 2002, p248).

In terms of methodology in ethnographic research, Hakim (1987) points out that interview methods are the most effective and resourceful as this method since respondents are free to chat openly and may divulge information, which they may not have done otherwise.

#### **4.22 Stage C: Semi-structured interviews**

Stage C involved more interviews to give respondents more individual voices and also to confirm themes and consistency of the data. Community centres in Bradford were contacted by letter in August and September 2002. Eleven community centres in Bradford were contacted. None of them were religious organisations to avoid any religious stratification. The letter contained details of the research and how women of Mirpuri descent in Bradford could get involved. An A4 sized information flier was included for displaying at the centre and a return slip with a self-addressed stamped

envelope was included. After the deadline for replies had expired it was clear that responses were very low. Only one centre had replied.

The researcher followed each of the centres up my telephone contact. Again this was a long process since it was a case of leaving details and waiting for centre managers to get in touch. In the end two centres agreed for the researcher to come along and talk to the women. This involved more than one visit as potential respondents were approached quite randomly as and when one interview had been done. A group contacted the researcher after hearing about the research and asked for a workshop discussion to be organized at a local business centre for a small group of young women who expressed an interest in being involved.

A total of twenty-nine women were involved in these interviews. Fifteen of these are young women aged 16-35 and the other fourteen are older women aged forty-five and over. There were a mix of sizes of the group interviews these ranged from a large focus group consisting of thirteen older women; three groups of women consisting of 3 to 5 women; one pair interview with young women and six individual interviews. 5 of these were young women and one was an older woman.

It is interesting to note that the focus groups were done purely by coincidence and the researcher knew she should use such opportunities well. The women had already gathered at the community centre and the group leader had made extra effort getting more women than who usually attended the group to come along and have their voices heard.



Thirteen women aged forty and above came to the discussion that afternoon. The researcher wished to capture the voices in an environment where the respondents were relaxed and comfortable and it worked very well. It was important to ensure that every member of the group was involved in the discussion. One woman was very outspoken and it was important she did not deter other women from taking part so she was asked politely to allow other women in the group to get involved in the discussion.

### **Summary**

Triangulation was used to explore the current research, examining the personal identities and aspirations of Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford. The research began with Stage A, using the questionnaire; this was followed by stage B, using interviews and then stage C, using more interviews. The method used suited each stage and complemented each other and valuable lessons were learnt from each stage. Every effort was made to scrutinise the results, and be careful that they were gathered in a valid and reliable way.

## Chapter 5

### Findings from stage A: The pilot questionnaire

#### 5.1 Introduction

It was important to undertake a small-scale pilot exercise for two reasons:

1. It was necessary to assess the viability of such a research study, which focuses on a particular ethnic group within an ethnic group. The ethnic group in question is Pakistanis, but then further split to specifically look at Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford.
2. It was necessary to have some key information about the views and experiences of Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford on culturally and religiously related issues and their personal identities and aspirations.

A literature search was carried out initially and as mentioned in the literature review. The studies by Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990), Ghuman (1994), Modood et al (1994, 1997) and Brah (1996) are of particular importance to the current study. The questionnaire developed some of their ideas and a questionnaire consisting of thirty-nine closed ended questions was designed. The outline of the questionnaire is as follows:

Questions 1-5 related to general information:

Question 1 related to the age of the respondent

Question 2 about the place of birth

Question 3 about the number of years they had resided in England

Question 4 related to their marital status

Question 5 related about their present occupation

Questions 6-7 were about Nationality and identity

Questions 8-14 were about religious observations

Questions 15-17 related about caste

Question 18-22 related to marriage

Questions 23-25 related to language and cultural issues

Questions 26-29 related to Pakistan

Questions 30-32 were about qualifications

Questions 33-34 were about the Pakistani community and specific issues  
Question 35 –38 related about inter-generational relationships  
Question 39- referred to media representation of Pakistani Mirpuri women.

Most of the questions were single questions with simple Yes or No, Don't know response boxes that respondents could tick. Others questions included a second sub-question, again with varying scales of responses of Yes, No and Not Sure options. The methodology chapter explains the reasons for conducting this pilot and the questionnaire process fully.

The questionnaires were circulated through the social network, personal contact and 'snowballing' to ensure that a wide sample would be obtained. The researcher was aware that language barriers might be an issue for some first-generation women, so these women were personally approached and the purpose of the questionnaire was explained. To eliminate any biases, another female related to the respondent, who was able to understand English, was asked to fill in the questionnaire with the participant's answers. To obtain feedback for the next round of this survey, the respondents were asked to give their opinions on the contents of the questionnaire and its design and suggestions for further areas of study.

## **5.2 Findings and discussion of stage A**

Of the ten respondents, seven were second generation Pakistani Mirpuri women aged between sixteen and twenty-five, and three were first generation Pakistani Mirpuri women aged fifty years plus. Differences in opinion emerged between the generations, particularly around the issues of arranged marriage, divisions of caste, identity labelling,



and the relationship between first and second generation Pakistani Mirpuris. On the other hand there were similarities around this issues of Islam, religious practices and domestic violence. These will be explained further in this chapter.

### **5.2.1 Social-economic status**

In relation to present occupation status, for the second-generation group it was identified that three were students, three were in professional white-collar employment and only one was unemployed although she had a first degree. Some parents may encourage their children to do well in exams, go on to college or university and undertake studies, which reflect status prestige for the family. This further enhances the 'izzat' of the family within the immediate and wider social circle. All three first-generation women classed themselves as housewives. The traditional, cultural expected role has been transplanted from Mirpur to Britain and maintained over a number of years.

Two of the three first-generation women have been living in Britain between twenty-one and thirty years and one has been in Britain for more than thirty years. These women came to Britain during the 1960s and 1970s as dependents of their husbands at the time when immigration controls were being introduced and secondary migration was common (Husband, 1982, Layton-Henry, 1992). A possible reason was that not only had these women come as dependents but with the intention of settling long term and taking advantage of the opportunities available. The desire to return to Mirpur was not thought of initially or even in the equation in the short term. All the first generation women respondents however indicated that they would consider settling in Pakistan permanently.

Some authors have documented the early migratory experience, presenting a very negative image of the early migratory experiences of Pakistani in Britain. Dhaya's (1973) work into Pakistanis in Britain and Anwar's work (1979) help to develop our understanding of immigration. Khan (1976), Shaw (1988) and Bhabha and Shutter (1994) help our understanding of the position of Asian and Pakistani women upon coming to Britain.

### **5.2.2 Relationship to Pakistan**

There was a stark difference in opinion from the second-generation respondents as five indicated they would not consider living in Pakistan permanently and two suggested they were not sure. There are possible reasons for this. It could imply that the younger people prefer to visit Pakistan, meet the immediate extended family and the wider biraderi (kinship) for short periods of time rather than to completely uproot and live and settle permanently in Pakistan. Six of the respondents had made one or more visits to Pakistan in the last five years. Young people wish to observe and at least feel and live for a short period in the country from which their parents immigrated from and where the biraderi and immediate family members live.

In comparison, two second-generation women confirmed they had made one or more visits in the last five years to Pakistan. Only one indicated that no visits had been made. All respondents were asked whether the family or they themselves send money to relatives in Pakistan. All seven second-generation women indicated that this practice did exist as did all three of the first-generation women and this can be argued to be typical of

the majority of Pakistanis in Bradford. This suggests that there is a strong element of support and family ties either through choice or obligatory practice. It could also be that the families of those settled here are not so well off in Mirpur and therefore rely heavily on financial support. This is used perhaps to buy machinery to ease the burden of farming the land, to educate the children or for medical attention. All of the first and second-generation respondents affirmed that they themselves or their family owned land or had property in Pakistan. The financial support may be sent for relatives to maintain these belongings. The fact that visits are made to Pakistan, money is sent to relatives and the ownership of land and property by those settled in Bradford suggests that there is a very strong feeling to maintain some form of contact with the relatives, and the homes they left so many years ago.

### **5.2.3 Describing identity**

Respondents were given options to describe their identity as either Pakistani or British or both. Out of the second-generation all respondents considered themselves as having a British-Pakistani identity compared with all three from the first-generation who selected their identity as being Pakistani. The difference in opinion implies that young women born and brought up in Great Britain are growing up with different opinions and expectations compared with first generation women. Their schooling, education and interaction with mainstream British society offers them the opportunities to make the choices that the first-generation women have not had. This may suggest that there is a positive attitude towards dual nationalities, which reflect both the cultures the individual



is privileged to experience. Some very important issues were raised here and this opened up the possibilities to develop the research area on identity.

#### **5.2.4 Islam**

Respondents were given a few questions on Islam and religious practices. Both the first and second-generation respondents considered Islam as being very important to them and all considered themselves to be religious. This would indicate practising Islam through regular Namaaz and reciting the Q'uran regardless of whether it is in the home environment or in congregational prayers at the Mosque. It is interesting to note there are individual interpretations of being religious. Three respondents confirmed they read Namaaz sometimes, compared with three who verified they rarely read Namaaz and one indicated she did not read Namaaz at all. In comparison, two of the first generation women confirmed they read Namaaz sometimes and one reported she read Namaaz regularly.

The questionnaire included questions about the frequency of reading the holy Q'uran, and whilst four responded by confirming they read the Q'uran sometimes, three said they rarely read the Q'uran and interestingly all the first generation women confirmed they read the Q'uran just sometimes. It was also found that one of the second-generation women had performed Umra, compared with one first-generation woman. The remaining first and second-generation women had not performed Umra. None of the second-generation had performed Hajj compared with two first-generation women who had been

on the Hajj. This suggests that in both the generations, Islam is respected not always necessarily through regular Namaaz and reciting of the Q'uran.

Respondents were given options relating to practicing religion; if they read Namaaz at the Mosque or at home. Three of the second-generation indicated they did not go to the Mosque at all, and four indicated praying within their own home, compared with one who did go to Mosque but only during Jumma congregation. Two read at home. This pattern may exist because both males and females in Islam usually attend the mosque to recite the Q'uran and practice Namaaz, until the age of puberty, when the inter-mixing of the sexes is prohibited. Even before reaching this age Mosques will usually have the provisions to segregate the sexes.

Young people usually continue with their Islamic teachings in the privacy of their own homes at this age. Older women usually prefer to read at home, since unlike males they are not obliged to take part in congregational prayers at the mosque. Since more Mosques are providing separate washing and praying facilities for women, more women choose to perform the Jumma prayer in the local Mosque.

Although all respondents regarded themselves to be religious, there were contradictions between what is Islamic Law and what cultural practice was. This was particularly the case surrounding the issue of caste. All three of the first-generation considered the issue of caste as very important to them on an individual basis, compared six of the second-generation who considered the issue of caste as not important. The other thought it fairly important.

### 5.2.5 Caste

Respondents were requested to indicate the importance of caste for the family. There was clearly a difference in feeling from the seven second-generation who said that the issue of caste was very important to their families. Six did not consider it as being important to them but in contrast the three first-generation respondents indicated caste was important to them.

Centralizing the issue of caste is going against Islamic principles and therefore the issue has become legitimised through cultural confusion and not Islamic teaching. Again, the issue of izzat is at play since caste reflects the status of the family and wider biraderi. It is also clear from their responses that the younger women are detaching themselves from the issue of caste and moving away from the traditional attitudes towards the issue.

Interestingly, for all three first-generation women, their marriages were based on caste compatibility of their partners, as did the only married, second-generation women. To clarify this point, caste is a tricky issue for Muslims, since they do not wish to be seen to be taking on habits or behaviours that are deemed anti-Islamic. Caste is one of the issues that has derived from Hinduism. Islam forbids any mention of caste, let alone following such stratification, yet Pakistani Muslims are happy to promote themselves as Choudreys (landowners) and those who are peasant farmers do not go around telling people they are 'mochis' but their position is quite clear to the gentry. The complexity of this topic deserves fuller treatment and is addressed in the following chapters since it can affect issues such as marriage, relationships with family and education aspirations.



Because of the importance the family placed on caste, five confirmed that it was likely that their marriage partners would be chosen on the basis of caste compatibility and one was not sure. This would make it extremely difficult for the women to meet and contemplate marrying a person who is not related to the family or biraderi and is not of the same caste or social background. Inter-caste marriages are met with criticism and considered a shameful act and an assault on the family izzat.

### **5.2.6 Marriage**

Respondents were given options about their opinions on marriage and whether parents should have the ultimate decision of selecting the prospective partner. All seven of the second-generation, including the one who was married, clearly were not happy with partners being chosen at the discretion of parents alone. The response from the first-generation was the opposite of this, and all three first-generation women agreed with them. This shows that there is a shared opinion on this. The question was not about how respondents felt towards a marriage jointly arranged with parents and young people. This may have been the preferred option and this will be developed in stage B of the research.

There were questions relating to their opinion on marrying potential partners from Pakistan. All seven of the second-generation, including the young married respondent, said that there were problems with marrying partners living in Pakistan. There was some agreement to this pattern from the first generation since two respondents agreed with this and one did not agree. This indicates that younger women may object to arranged marriages for a number of reasons. For example they may not have met the prospective

partner before, or communication problems may be envisaged. The couple might be incompatible because each has grown up in different cultures and may not attach the same level of importance to certain issues like education, employment and having contact with males. Again, these themes on marriage aspirations were important issues to be further explored through interviews to gain a richer and illuminating picture of the Pakistani Mirpuri community in Bradford.

It would seem that the younger ones are apprehensive of marrying partners from Pakistan. Since many Mirpuri Pakistani families do continue to practise cross-continental marriages, it would seem that this might be expected of the younger women. It was interesting to identify that five were informed of the current immigration guidelines relating to marriage, as was one first-generation woman. This suggests that parents still continue with arranging marriages of their sons and daughters to the biraderi in Pakistan. Again, the complexity of this topic deserves fuller treatment and will be addressed in detail in further chapters.

### **5.2.7 Immigration system**

The questionnaire included questions about their own experience with the immigration system linked to marriage rules. Two of the first-generation women said they did not have any personal experience with the immigration system during their initial entry to England over thirty years ago. However one respondent confirmed she had experienced the immigration system. This could either be her own experience when she first came to England or it could be through the marriage of children. In comparison one second-

generation woman confirmed she had some experience of the immigration system, probably because she had married a partner from Pakistan. The remaining six had no experience of the immigration system.

### **5.2.8 Language issues**

Respondents were asked to comment about the main language they spoke at home. The entire second-generation woman spoke Mirpuri Punjabi. This was also the case for the first generation women. Respondents were then asked about the main language they spoke outside of the home to see if there were any difference in communication patterns. The first generation spoke the same language inside and outside of the home – Mirpuri. However the picture was very different for the second-generation. All seven spoke English outside the home. These two variables suggest that within the home, Mirpuri, a dialect of Urdu and Punjabi is spoken, probably to communicate with parents and older members of the family who are unable to speak English.

Parents might consider their children to be rude if they were to speak English within the household, particularly when guests or elders were present. English is most frequently used outside the home, in educational institutions, work place environments or when socializing with friends. It would be interesting to find out if English is the main language used to communicate with other Pakistani English speakers, or if Mirpuri is used in communication. This gives the framework of concern from which matters need to be explored using qualitative methods to yield a richer and illuminating picture. The complexity of the issue makes it necessary for fuller treatment later in this research study.



### **5.2.9 Education/qualifications**

Respondents were given options about the importance of qualifications and education on a personal level. It was found that the issue of education and qualifications was very important to the second generation since all seven indicated this. In comparison the issue was just as important to all the first-generation women. This is interesting since none of them had any qualifications.

This does not really indicate the importance of education that the first generation women expected of their children, since the question was geared specifically at the respondent's personal experience of education and employment. To try and gain some indication of this, respondents were asked if parents and young people had the same view in terms of the importance of education. The second-generation women felt sure that there was a shared concern from parents to encourage their young daughters and children to do well. In comparison all three first-generation women said that parents and children did not share an understanding of the importance of qualifications. Again, this prepared the framework for the issues to be explored deeper.

### **5.2.10 Gender issues**

Respondents were given options relating to the 'Pakistani community' in Bradford. This was seen as becoming more open about issues such as domestic violence. Four second-generation respondents suggested that Bradford was becoming more open, indicating that the community has acknowledged that there is a problem that needs to be addressed despite the stigma attached to it. In comparison three second-generation and one first-

generation woman agreed that Bradford was not open about the issue of domestic violence, suggesting it was keeping the subject behind closed doors.

Respondents were given some general question on the representation of Pakistani women in the British media. All respondents agreed that it was not a true representation of them or their lives.

### **5.2.11 Inter-generational relationships**

Some general questions were given around the issues of inter-generational and community relationships. The results showed that all seven second-generation respondents agreed that there were double standards at play in the 'Pakistani community'. Double standards referred to parents imposing stricter controls on the freedom of their daughters, and other females for that matter, and being less restrictive on boys. There was even agreement from the first generation respondents with two supporting this and one not sure. In addition, six confirmed that they thought that this was particularly the case for young women in Bradford, thus suggesting they have some experience of this and were not too happy with it. The first generation women were not too sure about this.

This would suggest that there is discontent between the generations and also between the genders. What women may want to do may find resistance from either the males in the family or from the wider community who may not wish for the young people to integrate with white society. All the younger women feel that the term 'westernised', did not describe respondents in the way they would describe themselves if they had to.

The majority of them were born and educated in England and have shared both Western and Pakistani cultures and yet they felt they were not westernised. All three first-generation women naturally did not consider themselves to be 'westernised'. This shared view is interesting as it shows the way in which young people are comfortable with themselves. Being westernised may be frowned upon by parents is because they believe those young Pakistanis who are 'westernised' have lost their true identity. For parents, being westernised is associated with drinking alcohol, dating and clubbing. Again, this area of inter-generational relationships needs to be explored in order for us to understand how the Pakistani Mirpuri community operates with regard to females.

All second-generation respondents agreed that young women did encounter a culture-crisis. This was further supported by two of the first-generation women. It was also felt by all seven second-generation respondents that Pakistani elders did not understand the views, experiences, attitudes and expectations of the young people in Bradford. Older women also echoed this view.

There were mixed views on the issue of young people understanding the views, experiences, attitudes and expectations of elders in Bradford, with all seven of the second-generation saying they did share an understanding with elders. In contrast, all three first-generation women said that there was no understanding from young people. This could possibly be linked to issues of marriage and control over young people's lives from elders, particularly male control over females. This important issue deserves to be developed fuller later in the discussion.



Finally, respondents were given options relating to women in Bradford; whether they were becoming more assertive reflecting empowerment and exercising their Islamic rights. The results showed that all respondents felt that this was the case. This would suggest that the women feel emancipated through education and employment which provides them with freedom and the ability to question cultural practices like forced arranged marriages and the issue of caste because they are more aware of their religious rights and have a strong religious identity as well as taking on cultural values which they don't mind as long as they have a say in the matters which may concern them.

All these matters and issues had the potential to be explored but not in this way because although a few valuable facts were being obtained, it required a more qualitative process in order to give the statistics a fuller and richer meaning. The need was for deeper material, which could illuminate these issues and develop the themes further.

### **Summary**

This is the first of the three stages in this research study exploring the personal identities and aspirations of Pakistani Mirpuri women. For this stage a questionnaire was used with the aim of gaining their opinions on a wide range of cultural and religious issues.

The findings indicate that younger women have different opinions about who they are from their parents. Their aspirations in term of education and careers are higher than their parents' expectations of them and indeed themselves. It is also clear that younger woman have a different lifestyle to their mothers, and take a positive perspective on having experience of both western and Pakistani values. They do not necessarily consider this as

threat to their Pakistani values, but as an enhancement to educational and employment aspirations. The identities of these women are being structured by the influence of families that can oppress and hinder the women from achieving aspirations.

The next chapter takes the research study deeper into the lives of females who are Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford. By giving an individual voice, the respondents were enabled to reveal their life experiences on issues including relationships with their family, identity, Islam and aspirations.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Findings from stage B: The pilot semi-structured interviews**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

It was important to ensure that these pilot interviews included a sample of Pakistani women based on characteristics such as age, marital status and socio-economic status. All respondents were aged between seventeen and twenty-five years and included respondents who were working, those who were studying and those married with children.

The data reveals that respondents were generally well educated. Three had completed Degree courses in the social sciences, law and management. It is interesting to note that all, except for respondent 5, was married, had qualifications and were working towards other qualifications. Incidentally Respondent five did say she wanted to study midwifery when she has more children and they are old enough to be at school.

Semi structured interviews with seven women, contacted through the social network were carried out during September 2000. Perspectives and experiences were obtained through discussing general matters focusing on the respondent's experiences of their family, education aspirations, career aims, cultural and religious observations and marriage. Themes of particular importance gradually began to emerge.

#### **6.2 Parent's migratory experiences**

It was important to establish migratory experiences of the respondent's family. This was in order to enable an idea of where the respondent was born and to establish the family's



origins; for the current research it was important for all respondents to have their origins in Mirpur, Pakistan.

Respondents talked about the hardships their parents had endured on arrival to Britain. A few respondents made their feelings clear about difficult times for their parents' and appreciated their parents' sacrifices such as leaving close family and friends in Mirpur. Dhaya (1974) found many Asian migrants experienced racism. An earlier study by Rose (1969) also found racism was endemic in British society towards migrants. The question remains whether the scars of past experiences has remained. Racism has evidence in most societies; in some it still is, and the religious divide is not restricted to any particular religion.

When Respondent 1 discussed her father's migratory experiences the tone in her voice and the manner in which she makes the following comment reveals an underlying feeling of empathy for her parents. She suggests her father endured racism and discrimination from his employers and also questions the stereotypical assumption that Asian migrants had a 'good deal' in terms of their employment. She also feels a sense of duty to ensure that her father's experiences are not forgotten. She suggests that her father ought to be respected and valued as a British citizen for his hardships of when he first arrived in the United Kingdom:

"My dad worked for years in textile mills in Bradford. He worked at Joseph Dawsons for years until he was ill. All this fuss from some of the white population of our parents coming over and scrubbing away British resources was a lot of crap you know. I saw my dad's wage slip recently and do you know how much his wage was? ..£54.00 for eighty hours a week. I mean can you

believe it? Our parents deserve recognition for their hard work and not just labelled as immigrants. It really frustrates me!”(R1).

As is well documented in previous research, respondents confirmed that a pattern where their fathers came to the United Kingdom first and then followed by their mothers had occurred:

“My dad came with my uncles (in the 1970s), to work in a factory then my mum and auntie and cousins came over later” (R5).

“My dad came in the 1960s and my mum came in about 1973” (R3).

“My dad came ages ago, around 27 years ago and my mum came here about 25 or 26 years ago” (R2).

“My dad came over first and then my mum came over with my auntie and uncle” (R6).

Many parents had very little in the way of a Pakistani education or qualifications. Bhatti (1999) found that males were more likely to have some education than their female counterparts. They came and worked in specific industries where cheap labour demands were the greatest:

“My dad worked in textile mills in Bradford” (R3).

“My dad worked in Keighley, in a factory making wool trousers” (R2)

“He (dad) worked for about 20 years in textiles in Keighley” (R4).

This was typical of many other respondents' parents too:

“My dad used to work in the clothing factories in Bradford and Keighley for a long time then he began to work on the buses” (R6).

With only one exception none of the other respondents said that their parents had some Pakistani education or education. They are also aware of the lack of qualifications brought into the country by their parents. This could be linked to their of the poor jobs they acquired:

“My dad had some qualifications from Pakistan. Not a degree or anything, just some basic qualifications but as for my mum she didn't have any qualifications” (R7).

Clearly, there was also a gender issue with regards to employment. It was unlikely to find a Pakistani woman in employment outside the house. Women were more likely to look after children and see to domestic chores. Some did engage in work such as sewing for their friends and family at a small cost:

“My mum has always been a housewife. She has never worked outside the house...she used to sew clothes” (R3).

“My dad works as a bus driver and my mum is a housewife” (R6).

Respondent 4 argued that the gender roles existed here and was similar to what she knew of gender roles in Pakistani villages:

“My mum used to look after the animals and that whilst dad used to work in the fields” (R4).

“My dad was left some land in various parts of Pakistan by my grandfather, so my dad used to rent the land out for ploughing. He also worked on our own land growing crops. My mum looked after the house, my grandparents and the cattle...my mum tells us of



how she and my auntie would go to the well to get water and how they cooked on an open fire!” (R5).

“In Pakistan it was mostly working in the fields” (R6).

Not only was employment a gender issue for the respondent’s parents but gender also affected education:

“I don’t think at that time many women were allowed to go to school and that because of the gender roles women had in Pakistan at that time” (R7). She goes on to clarify this in terms of what roles were expected of men and women:

“Well, women got married and stayed in the home and looked after the in-laws and did all the domestic duties whilst men went out and worked in the fields. Hardly any women must have gone to school because they couldn’t afford it or there was this idea that women’s role was to have babies and look after the house. Nothing more, just that” (R7).

It is interesting to note that respondent 7 kept slipping in to the past and using terms like ‘at that time’, which suggest that she was making specific periodical reference and distancing herself from them. When asked to relate what she thought of the present situation, she points out, changes in roles in villages and how she thinks that young women have more opportunities than her mother’s generation ever had:

“Well, I don’t know exact numbers but some of my cousins who live in rural parts go to college and that so maybe things are changing there” (R7).

She seems to be much more sure of the situation and lifestyles of young women in Britain since she herself has lived her life here and felt better equipped to comment:

“As for here, without a doubt women’s roles are different. I mean more young women are going to uni and getting professional jobs... I have seen Asian women in their 30s and 40s coming back to study so that shows that women now have more choice” (R7).

Several respondents cited their frustration and anger that their parents had had to endure racism from some of the white indigenous population. They are far more aware of their parents’ experience in a way that highlights the contrast with their own. This shows a shift in social attitudes that they take for granted. For their parents, the different lifestyles, including the atmosphere, the streets, the language and just simple things were so different to what they were used to and made it more difficult to adjust to their new ‘imposed’ environments.

Siddique (1993) found that Pakistani migrants had only come to Britain on a short-term temporary basis. Only when they ‘realised’ they wished to stay long-term, did they plan for their families to come over. Shaw (1988) found early Pakistani migrants experiences were typical in living nearby to work, living in small run down accommodation and often sharing with other migrants. Lewis (1994) found the majority of early migrants from Pakistan were uneducated peasant farmers. The earlier generation experienced isolation, leading to the possibility of a ghetto mentality:

“My mum tells us of how hard she found coming to Bradford and how different it was. I mean we are lucky because we know English so it makes it easier” (R6).

### 6.3 Education

Three respondents (R1, R3, R7) said they had completed degree courses in the social sciences, law and management. Respondent 2 was undertaking a GNVQ whilst respondent 4 was on Combined Sciences degree and respondents 5 and 6 were educated to A' Level and GCSE standard. Respondents were aged between 17 years and 25 years and this sample included young women who were working as well as studying and those who were single married or engaged to be married. The sample included those who had children of their own.

Respondent 4 talked about the importance of qualifications for young people given the fact that there is so much competition in the work industries. The importance of an education was also cited as way of challenging racism, which they feel their parents had experienced when they had arrived in the United Kingdom:

“My mum and dad went through so much racism and because they couldn't speak English, didn't know what they could do about it. But now if we have a degree it isn't going to solve all the problems but it puts you in a stronger position to achieve things and question things which are wrong” (R4).

Another point worth noting is that Respondent 7 argues that young women are gaining education now because of competition for good marriage partners:

“I think that lots of young women are choosing to go to uni, so they can get a good job and get a good match for marriage and parents also know that there is so much competition out there for suitable marriage partners that you stand a better chance if you have qualifications and a job” (R7).



Respondents talked about the joy of completing their degrees and graduating. There was the joy and happiness and relief on a personal level, with almost a hint that a huge burden had been lifted:

“It was a good feeling. I was really happy that it was over and I could get a job” (R1).

On a general level, the family shared in the achievements. It is worth noting that respondents suggested pressures were twofold in relation to studying. Not only did they feel the stresses of working hard towards the degree. They were pressurised to following in the footsteps of older siblings who had already succeeded academically:

“They (parents) were really proud. My dad just loved it to bits. My family was so keen to go to the graduation I had to get 6 extra tickets! It was a huge honour because my older brothers and sisters had also graduated so I think it was a wish come true for my mum and dad” (R1).

A daughter’s graduation brought a lot of izzat to the family:

“I think parents know that they need to be flexible in letting their sons and daughters get an education and a good job because it reflects the status of the family (R7).

There seemed to be extra pressures on young women who were either the first in the family to study at university or were cajoled into setting a good example to younger siblings. The pressures on young females who had older siblings either studying at university or who had graduated were clear:

“My sister’s at university doing a degree in psychology and another one is doing a nursery nursing qualification so I want to do well too” (R2).

## 6.4 Work

The data reveals that respondents were well educated and were working in jobs, which can be described as white collar. For example Respondent 1 said she worked in a Bank and was aspiring to remain there for some time and move up in the hierarchy, preferably to work at a management job. Respondent 3 said she worked at the Benefits Agency, advising the public on their rights to benefits. Whilst these two respondents had gained degrees (Respondent 3 had completed a Law degree and Respondent 1 had graduated with a business management degree), which helped or are being used in their working life, other respondents such as respondent 4 were working part-time in customer services whilst still studying at university for a combined Sciences degree. All respondents had an education and all were educated in Britain.

“I work as a loans officer and managers assistant at a bank” (R1)

Respondent 1 mentioned the behaviour of some of her work colleagues, which could be described as racist. It is interesting that the respondent does not use the words racism or discrimination, but what she describes is just that:

“Some of my work colleagues are really nice whilst others are difficult. The worst ones are those who have stereotypes of Asian girls, especially Pakistanis. They assume we are all forced into marriages and can't speak English and aren't allowed by our families and parents to do anything. We are not all like that and they need to know that most of us are strong, confident and educated” (R1).

She argues with anger and frustration at being typecast and secondly she actually acknowledges and accepts that there are those unfortunate females whose actions and behaviours are controlled by parents and are subjected to restrictions imposed on them.

So she is in a situation of wrestling with her own knowledge of the community and the remarks made by some of her work colleagues.

Respondents felt pleased with the jobs they were in or working towards and again hinted at having to satisfy their parents' criteria of what was acceptable work and what was not.

Respondent 1 uses the word 'respectable', which is an interesting choice of words to describe this and suggests that some career patterns are prescribed by parents as 'good':

"I have to admit I always liked this idea of working in a bank and my family were really thrilled because they saw it as a respectable job with status to it" (R1).

Respondents had clear aims as far as their career was concerned:

"I definitely want to stay with banking but at a more managerial position like a team leader. I have had some training but need some more experience of training people and being responsible for them" (R1).

Some respondents were undertaking courses to brush up on their skills and prepare them for promotion at work:

"...Even now I attend courses to brush up on skills and learn new skills. You need to- if you want to move up in the work ladder" (R1).

## **6.5 Future careers and educational goals**

Respondents were asked about their future career and educational aims and aspirations. It is interesting to note that although the women in this sample were largely well educated some did want to enhance their qualifications further. Some respondents had dilemmas



about this but did not rule out the opportunity of re-entering education. The intention was there:

I: Would you consider going back to study in the future:

“To be honest I’m in two minds about it. On the one hand I think I would like to go back to uni and maybe do a Masters degree in Management or business studies but then on the other hand I don’t like the idea of sitting in a classroom and seminars. If I do, which I probably will do. I’d do it full time and get it over with rather than spread it over two or three years part-time” (R1).

This suggests ‘western’ aspirations being given an extra ‘push’ because of izzat.

Respondent 3, confirmed her clear future education and career aspirations:

“Oh yes, I already have made enquiries to do a counselling course because I really want to work with Asian women dealing with domestic or any other form of violence or abuse. I have been thinking of doing a PhD, researching this issue. The only thing is I’d have to do it part-time and work too because of the high course fees. I’m the sort of person who would rather do something full-time and get it over with rather than spread it over 5-6 years but I will see” (R3).

Respondent 2 was combining studying a GNVQ and doing re-sits because of poor grades last time. Again her future career goals were clear; suggesting combining her work ambitions to explain the racism her parents had endured when they first arrived in the United Kingdom:

“I want to pass my GNVQ and then go to university. I want to stay local because it would be convenient and cheaper and do a degree in health studies and maybe specialize in diet and managing health. I want to work in health promotion and work with disadvantaged people and teach educate them about dealing with strokes, diabetics. Asian people are diagnosed later and by that time conditions like diabetes are advanced. Other communities like asylum seekers and disabled people don’t have enough services to

meet their needs so I would like to help them and make a difference to their life” (R2).

Similarly Respondent 4 was also very ambitious:

“I want to do well and achieve my goals. I think it is important to have goals as you have a direction and focus to work towards.... I wouldn't mind doing a Masters degree after this degree in Psychology and then work with children and their needs” (R4).

“After this degree I wouldn't mind doing a PGCE because I really want to do teaching” (R7).

## 6.6 Marriage

Respondents were asked to talk about their views on marriage. Out of the seven respondents, one (R5) said she was married and two (R6, R7) identified themselves as engaged. Interestingly, the respondent who identified as being married (R5) had married her British born cousin and the two respondents said they were engaged (R6, R7) to partners, again cousins, in Pakistan and Birmingham, respectively. This shows that the tradition of marrying cousins is still strong. This research shows that there is still a tradition of marrying between cousins from Pakistan and those who are British born.

The current research question is why is this the case and who makes the decision about marriage partners and is there a difference in opinion between the generations? Stage B of this research has shown that marriage is a very personal thing but that there are added pressures and constraints on Pakistani Mirpuri women because of the impact of izzat. Izzat is defined literally as respect and honour. The idea of 'forced' marriage is resented in this new climate, but the pressure to arrange remains.

Respondent 1 suggested she wishes to get married but not at the expense of a career. She feels she will be able to work and be married at the same time:

“There aren’t any plans for me to get married yet but I would like to get married..... but I wouldn’t like to give up my career all together.... Like I say I do want to get married” (R1).

Other respondents did see marriage as important, but probably giving it less priority than their parents. Interestingly all the respondents saw marriage as inevitable. This is interesting as it points out the importance of marriage in the Pakistani Mirpuri community and Pakistanis generally. Marriage was seen as an extension of their life and not a point at which the rest of their life ceased:

“I don’t think about marriage too much because I’ve got my studies to think about and anyway I don’t just want to get married and have babies and sit at home. For some girls that is enough but for me I want a career and first then get married and continue with work too” (R4).

Similarly Respondent 5 agreed:

“I don’t think marriage means the end of studies because I know many young women who get married and still continue with education or go out to work” (R5).

Respondent 5 suggests that she had wished she could have married later than she had done. She was twenty years old when she got married. This suggests that her parents had made that choice for her. Even now, she feels fortunate to have a ‘very happy’ marriage:

“.. I mean I thought I was too young to get married at 20 but now I know that was the right thing to do then because its hard to find a suitable matches when you get older” (R5)



Younger women commented on how their parents' attitude towards marriage was much more flexible than before. It is not clear at this stage why this is but it could be due to being 'forced' into being more open minded about marriage because their children were British born and had been exposed to a more liberal and open culture. She also slips into the past tense using the word 'were' that suggests that, it was the case then but now it is not. She feels that there has been an attitudinal change in her parents:

"My family were quite strict about getting within the family but now they are becoming a little bit more flexible. My mum and dads and especially my sisters have said that if there is anybody at work or in the biraderi then we should tell each other but so far there isn't anybody suitable" (R1).

This raises the question about whether this 'flexibility' is only there if the potential marriage partner is within the biraderi. This would not cause a stir or raised eyebrows with the biraderi members. Would this flexibility be extended to a marriage partner who is not of the biraderi? The family would have to face the consequences of this action, which can often be looked down upon. There are an increasing number of young Mirpuri girls who are marrying partners who are not within the biraderi, some even marrying English converts to Islam. It is clear that marrying someone from a different religion altogether, let alone from outside of the biraderi, can be a traumatising experience, one where pressures are great on both males and females involved and not just difficult for females. The extreme pressure and threats that Islam puts on those who wish to convert should also be borne in mind.

Izzat plays a front role in this but at the same time the pressures are great on both males and females not to marry from outside their own biraderi. Previous research has concentrated on hypocrisy on the community when young males are accepted if they marry from outside of the community or against their parents wishes, whereas young women are ostracised all together.

This research has shown that young women have more choice of whom they marry. Parents have been forced to accept this, even though it has come as a shock to them, since they were brought up not to question their parents' actions, behaviours and decisions. The tables have been turned, and they have had to deal with this. This suggests an attitudinal change that has been enforced upon parents and also a shift in power and authority from parents to young people. The key research question here is how this change has happened and what are the implications of this on both parents and young women.

Opinions on marriage varied, depending upon the 'type' of marriage in question. Although marriage is seen as a necessary part of life, the way in which this is done is up for question. It is clear that forced marriages are criticized by respondents and unacceptable:

"I hate all these stories about girls being forced into marriages. That is asking for trouble. I'm not against this idea of arranged marriage as long as the boy and girl are happy with it. But the thing is that some girls will get married because they feel under pressure to say yes" (R1).



Respondents were clear about what was deemed as practices acceptable to Islam and those that were more culturally than religiously based. They hinted that any topic on marriage needed to be treated cautiously and with sensitivity. It is clear that there is a level of misunderstandings about arranged and forced marriages. Those who have an arranged marriage, are automatically assumed to have been forced into the marriage:

“This whole concept of arranged marriage needs to be treated on carefully. Arranged marriages are not same as forced marriages and this is the myth that a lot of white people have of Asians. As far as I’m concerned, an arranged marriage is where the boy and girl have been consulted and both are happy with the arrangement. That is fine but when the marriage takes place out of pressure or because parents are using emotional blackmail to force a marriage, they are committing a sin and this is against what Islam teaches” (R3).

“There’s too much going on about arranged marriages and how this is bad practice. I think that there needs to be a greater understanding from everyone about this concept. It seems to just have an attachment to Asian and Pakistani people especially and people forget that arranged marriages are practices in other societies too. Arranged marriages are fine but forced marriages aren’t. That’s where problems occur” (R4).

Other respondents too mentioned that the ‘Asian’ style of marriage had gained too much negative publicity and that this had resulted in misconceptions from outsiders about them.

Whilst Respondent 4 agrees that forced marriages do unfortunately take place and clearly there was sympathy for girls in a forced marriage situation:

“ I feel sorry for them” (R1)

“I think arranged marriages can only work if parents don’t force the couple... I think arranged marriages are all right but only if the couple are happy with it. Some parents might think they are doing their duty by getting the boy and girl married without asking them first and that is really bad and against Islam” (R2).



“Well for me it has worked but for others it might not. It all depends on whether you want it or not” (R7).

They believe that things are changing and that individuals are responsible for their actions:

“..I really do think that things are changing. I mean I have a few cousins who have married their cousins with their parents consent so that’s a sign of the changing times. At least if you marry someone you choose and if things go wrong then you cant blame anyone else” (R1).

Respondents were asked about their views on marrying someone from Pakistan. The idea was to find out whether respondents would consider marrying from Pakistan and whether this was affected by the potential marriage being un-related to the biraderi. This is interesting as it will help not just to argue whether inter-continental marriages are still popular but also with the added dimension of whether this is affected by biraderi weddings or unrelated wedding parents i.e. someone who is not related by blood or kin, but is known to the family through friendship or recommended by other biraderi members. The community will usually put a tag on anyone, especially girls, for not having an arranged marriage and whilst the young women wanted to distance themselves from being part of ‘the community’ they did occasionally slip into the terms. This suggests a natural attachment to the community, as it has always been the case:

“In our community, if a girl doesn’t have an arranged marriage then she is looked down on an people just spread lies that she must have been dating the boy and then label her as a tart and that” (R2).

Views on marrying someone from Pakistan varied. Potential ‘problems’ such as ‘cultural difference’ like language and communication and attitudes were cited for not marrying

someone from Pakistan whilst at the same time acknowledging that each marriage and the people involved are individuals and should be treated on their own merits:

“I don’t like that idea much, I mean there are too much cultural differences. There are some nice people out there but you need more than that for a marriage to work. I don’t think I would like to marry anyone from Pakistan” (R1).

Respondent 5 mentioned knowing other young girls who would be marrying someone from Pakistan whom their parents had chosen for them but who were not happy with the situation:

“Some of my friends might have to go to Pakistan to get married and they aren’t looking forward to that one bit” (R5).

“Some girls and boys don’t want to get married to someone from Pakistan. They run a mile as soon as parents mention going to Pakistan to get married. I think it has more to do with thinking that people out there don’t understand young people here and they might have a problem with how our life here are so different to theirs. I mean here it normal to work and go out with friends but out there, some men would find it a problem her and seeing this” (R6).

Respondent 2 makes an very important point in that she argues that she would consider marrying someone from Pakistan who is a blood relative. This is quite different to much of the previous research that seems to make inter-continental marriages synonymous as those taking place between cousins only:

“It depends on the person. I mean you have to have things in common. I think sometimes parents think more about the fear of losing their family or breaking up with them if they don’t marry one of their sons from back in Pakistan. I’d consider marrying someone who wasn’t related to me from Pakistan as long as we shred common things such as speaking the same language and



having an education. I would rather do that than marry a cousin who I don't have anything in common with" (R2).

Respondent 2 gave an interesting defensive reaction to marriage:

"I'm only 17 and anyway I don't have any intention of getting married until I've been to university...I don't think my parents will force me to get married. Forcing people doesn't work. I mean I look around at my relatives and there are so many unhappy marriages" (R2).

Furthermore, she felt marriage was a very important step and that it was important to have financial security and a mature responsible attitude. Her reply is also revealing as she argues that once she is married she would like to live with her husband and not with her in-laws. This is quite illuminating since it shows a shift in the living patterns of young people once they are married and their preference to live and be accountable to themselves. This is quite different to traditions in Pakistan and with their parents experienced:

"I don't mind getting married but only when I'm about 25 years old at least then you have some job security and can buy or rent your own house instead of relying on your parents all your life" (R2).

"My dad married my mum at a young age. In those days you were about 10 and you were engaged and then by the time you were 16 you were married" (R4).

Some respondents cited parents as a source of support and indicated that they were sympathetic and understanding of marriage:

"My parents have said to me that I should be thinking of getting married but they will not force me into anything. They have given me support and given me support and have given me the choice of finding a suitable match or they will introduce me to some families they know" (R3).



More fascinating is that the parents of Respondent 3 had given her a time period in which she could seek out a suitable match and after that time was over, if she had not found a 'suitable' match, they would make recommendations to her. This shows shifting attitudes in her parents and the younger woman herself. The young woman did say she had met someone at her 'young Muslims' group. Young Muslim groups are usually set up by the young Muslims, to encourage religion and codes of behaviour and are common in universities. They are a place where Muslims and non-Muslims can come together and hold debates and discussions. They can be mixed sex meetings or just for men or women. In mixed sex groups there are separate seating areas for men and women.

For Respondent 3, the dilemma was clear. She did not want to be labelled as someone who had overstepped the boundaries of males and females mingling and did not want to be seen as someone who had selected this person because she had been seeing him without the knowledge of her parents. She also felt that her choice of prospective marriage partner shares with her parents' expectations. It is worth noting on the cultural compromise the woman showing, which is acceptable to her and her parents:

"I haven't told my parents about it yet...well they have been really supportive, but I don't want them to think that I have been dating this guy because I haven't. I think I share this openness with my parents and am very fortunate, so hopefully I will mention it to them in the next few weeks. My mum and dad gave me 3 months, which is fair enough really so hopefully they won't be disappointed" (R3).

Some respondents saw an arranged marriage as inevitable and something over which they had little control or say:

“As far as I’m concerned if I married outside of my parents choice I will be ruining the family’s reputation and also spoiling chances for my other sisters. Some of my friends are seeing guys at uni even though they know they wont be able to marry them, but to me its not worth the hassle of getting attached to someone then finding you wont be able to marry that person. I don’t think about marriage much, because I’ve got my studies to think about anyway” (R4).

Respondent 5 said she was ‘very happy’ in her arranged marriage. What she says in the following conversation shows that she happily went along with the expectations of her from her parents. The fact she didn’t say anything to her parents about the marriage suggests being comfortable with her parent’s choice and at the same time she had always known she would marry him because he was related to her. It is worth noting that it could have been a less happy experience had she not ‘liked’ the husband to be:

I: You said you were married. Was this an arranged marriage?

R5: Yes, I married my aunt’s son.

I: Did you have any say in the matter?

R5: Well, I kind of always knew I was I was growing up and at school that I would marry \*. I didn’t bother me because he’s a really nice person.

Respondent 7 was engaged to her close cousin in Birmingham. Again it was an arranged marriage initiated by her husband-to-be. Respondent 7 had grown up in Birmingham with her cousin and moved up to Bradford later. She approved of arranged marriages as long as both the couple were happy with the set up:

“I am really happy and can’t wait to get married – insha-allah, next year. We got engaged and he always comes up to see me. We are both happy” (R7).

Similarly Respondent 6 was engaged to her cousin from Pakistan:

“My uncles son” (R6).

Being married had brought with it many benefits for Respondent 5 who was not working at the time of the interview:

“ I’m really happy in an arranged marriage so for me personally it has been positive. I would say that if a boy and girl have been properly introduced to each other and get to know each other like in my case its Okay. I am against people getting forced or bribed into getting married for the parents’ sake. For me I feel much more independent then when I was at home. I mean I wasn’t forced into staying at home or anything but getting married has given me independence. I have started taking driving lessons; I go to he cinema with my husband and on holidays. I used to think that getting married would mean housework, full stop! But for me it’s the opposite” (R5).

Respondent 6 felt understandably nervous and a bit apprehensive at the thought of marrying her cousin from Pakistan in an arranged marriage. Her feelings were mixed with emotions. On the surface she seemed to be okay but the question is was she simply putting a brave face on as her way of dealing with the situation she found herself in?

“Well I feel a bit scared but okay” (R6).

## **6.7 The family**

Respondents identified that their family was supportive of them but that sometimes this was conditional and depended on what the support was needed for. Parents were more likely to support the young women if it meant that it was something they agreed with and would not have adverse implication or effects on their izzat:

I: Are your family supportive of you?



R5: Well it would depend. I mean they would support me if I wanted to go to study or work and that but if it was something like going out to parties or late at night then they wouldn't (laughs). They have been really supportive" (R5).

It is worth noting that contrary, to popular belief, the young women in this stage of the research felt that their parents were supportive of them, especially in education. Parents had to balance between being too strict or too liberal:

"Well my parents are supportive where work and education is concerned because they want all of us to do well and get good jobs. But as far as things like going out with friends in the evenings or at weekends is concerned or going on holiday and that then its no! I don't mind because I do have a lot of freedom anyway and that's fine for me. I couldn't stand it if they were too strict!" (R6).

Respondent 4 reveals many interesting points in her reply. Not only does she argue that parental support has spurred her on in her aspirations. She also notes that there is an element of competition between parents and other families. Therefore this reflection of izzat in turn spurs parents to 'allow' their daughters to go out and gain qualifications. She also makes an observation that young women are becoming career women and this is something 'new'. She suggests that parents have accepted that young people consider Britain to be their homes. Parents are driven by the hardships and experiences they endured in order to make the lives of their young easier. Parents had to show they were in control but at the same time did not want to be seen by young women as being too strict:

"My parents have really encouraged me to go to college and university and get qualifications and not just that but to actually go out and work with these qualifications. I think more and more Pakistani Mirpuri parents are encouraging their daughters to do well because they look around and everyone else is doing it. More

young women than ever are going to university and getting good jobs. They feel that they want to make our lives easier by getting on with our life's here because this is our home now. They never had these opportunities but we have and that's why parents sometimes get too over excited and put lots of pressure on us to be successful" (R4).

Respondent 7 felt very pleased at her relationship with her parents:

"They supported me through my education, when I was looking for work and now with my engagement" (R7).

"My family has been ace. They have given me real emotional support at really difficult times. I mean like when I was at college and doing my final year exams I was under o much stress revising that I was on the verge of leaving the course all together. My sisters sat with me and talked some sense into me. They persuaded me to carry on and I'm really grateful for that. Overall I think that my family gave me the support needed and without that kind of support it would have been so easy to give up" (R1).

Similarly Respondent 3 agreed that good parenting was important. Good parents were those who shared a close relationship with young women and were neither too strict nor too liberal:

"Yes without a doubt my parents have given me the support I needed, otherwise without their encouragement it wouldn't have been possible. I mean it would have been possible but it's nice to know that your parents share a sense of pride and interest in what you want to do and help achieve your aims a and goals" (R3).

Respondents appreciated their freedoms and were aware of other young women who were not so privileged. Defining support, meant parents accepting young women's choices and help them in their education and work aspirations:

"My parents are really supportive. They know they can trust me. I mean we don't do anything that is disrespectful. I know some girls



don't have that relationship with their parents so they can't even do basic things and that's where problems start and that's when some girls start doing things behind their parents' backs. These sort of people need to sit down and discuss things with each other and build a trusting and honest and open relationship with each other, that's important" (R1).

Respondent 3 suggests that she felt her parents were disappointed with her for not fulfilling her education. She suggests that further study was not her idea but her parents' and because she had decided not to continue with their directions, the support was taken away. Thus, she implies conditional parental support:

"I graduated in 1998 with a law degree. I then spent a few months doing a CPE but I found it quite difficult and it was a hassle so I left. I felt a bit of a failure at first and my parents weren't happy at all. But then I explained I already had a degree and would be able to get a good job. Now I'm considering doing a PhD because I feel I'm more mature and am ready for hard work!" (R3).

Respondent 4 had similar experiences and felt that parents could try and mould a young person into doing things, including studying, for their sakes, putting their own aspirations second. This was likely to cause all sorts of confusing feelings of guilt in case one failed their parents' high demands and expectations to those of feeling worthless:

"Yes I would say my family are supportive of me. Sometimes they can be too supportive and they encourage us so much that you feel pressure in case you can't deliver their dreams and hopes!" (R4).

## **6.8 Identity**

Respondents were asked to describe their identity. For the majority of respondents identity was not fixed on one attribute; rather there were several. Their identity was about their role in the family and their relationship with the family:



“My identity is made up of being a Muslim, my family as a sister, a daughter, wife and mother. My identity is made up of all the things which are important in my life” (R5).

Identity had personal connotations:

“Just who I am and what makes me that person so things like my religious believes, my family, my job and things like that make up my identity” (R6).

“Identity to me is all the characteristics that make me an individual, a member of society. Identity is about my personality inside and outside” (R3).

Respondents referred to cultural habits such as what they wore and said this was part of their identity. This is interesting since dress is just a superficial term, which needs to be explored beneath the surface:

“To me I interpret it as all the factors which make me who I am. Things like my family, my religion, my culture, clothing, music just everything about me which makes me an individual and member of society” (R1).

Respondents disagreed with the concept of ‘culture-crisis’ or ‘identity-crisis’ on the basis that they enjoyed more than one culture and respected their parental heritage but saw themselves as being young British Muslims who were of Pakistani Mirpuri heritage. They wished to own ‘multiple’ identities rather than one as they benefited from both cultures:

“Identity is exaggerated sometimes. People view identity as being conjured with problems yet that’s not true. I mean an example is everyone who is Asian and especially Pakistani must be going through an identity crisis or culture crisis because they are born here or they are new comers and everything is different. Identity is

complicated because people make it complicated. My identity is straightforward. It is me. Me as a British Muslim, as a mother, wife, daughter and sister” (R5).

“Well on a personal level identity means the way I see myself. For example I’m a British Muslim with Pakistani heritage. It’s about my religion, my family. Identity is everything in the bigger picture” (R2).

Respondents did not like to be labelled by society since clear definitions did not give justice to people who were exposed to more than on cultural identity:

“I would say my identity is as a British born Muslim of Pakistani heritage. People shouldn’t really be labelled because to me that’s where all the tensions between different religions and groups start but everyone is labelled. If I take one of these so-called labels away then I’m breaking my chain. This chain holds me together. My identity makes me the person I am. Its my uniqueness and my togetherness” (R4).

## **6.9 Islam**

All respondents mentioned that Islam was very important to them. Being a British Muslim was very personal:

“For me Islam is important. I know my weakness is that I don’t practice Islam like praying daily and I know where I need to improve. I need to know more about Islam because at the end of the day that knowledge and practice is going to save us and nothing else. We come into this world with nothing and we leave with nothing. We need to remember that all the time to stop us from losing focus or direction in life” (R5).

Respondents were able to distinguish bits of Islam that they followed more closely than others. When asked about whether the respondent considered herself to be religious,

Respondent 6 points out that although Islam is rule bound, they are deep and go beyond the surface:

“Yes and no. Yes that Islam is very important to me and my family, but no because I don’t read the Q’uran or read Namaaz regularly. I do fast during Ramzan, so I admit to my down falls. I think that lots of Muslims like young people from other religions say they are religious but then you ask them about how much they practice their religion and most of them will say they do when they don’t. I don’t think there is any point in lying. At least I’m being honest about it” (R6).

Respondent 3 mentioned the important daily role Islam played in her life. She sees Islam as having an outward persona for behaviour and habits. The problem arises where other Muslims may not see her as a good Muslim because she wears ‘English’ clothes yet she may pray five times a day but people may not see this. She may be labelled as not being religious by them:

“Islam is an important part of every Muslims life. It is more than just being spiritual. It is about both being spiritual and physically involved. Islam is about being at peace with yourself and with everyone else. Islam is about doing good deeds and living life according to Islamic values like caring, sharing, valuing life, parents and staying on the right path” (R3).

Similarly Respondent 1 mentioned she reads and importantly understands what she is reading in the Q’uran and used this knowledge as empowering herself so she was able to challenge her parents when they tried to enforce culture, which they interpreted as having religious significance to her:

“I question things more, with parents. In fact I challenge them more because I’m learning more about Islam through meeting other Muslims, books and actually reading and understanding the Q’uran. That’s important. I do need to read the Q’uran more regularly and read Namaaz more” (R1).



Certain situations made some respondents turn to Islam:

“Since my dad passed away I have become more actively involved with Islam. Without it I don’t think I could have coped with our loss. Until that point I don’t think I appreciated it or understood Islam and my life. For me this rediscovery has been one of the most beneficial things I have done. I’m glad and I’m always learning” (R1).

“Islam is very important to me. Islam is part of daily life. I strive to be a better Muslim. Being a Muslim means you practice it daily in everything you say and do. I am aspiring to that” (R2).

It is clear that some respondents felt that their parents were urging them to become more involved with Islam. This is not being disputed by the young women themselves and that is worth noting since it shows that young women and parents are in agreement of how important Islam is to the lives of Muslims. The area, which does cause tensions and conflict is where culture becomes infused with religion and where cultural interpretation is being used instead of religious interpretation:

“I used to read Namaaz at mosque when I was about 10 but then I left to read at home. My mum and dads always tell us all to seek more knowledge about Islam read Namaaz and the Q’uran because it is all this that Allah seeks from us not material things and people being people forget all that. Some of my friends are part of the ‘young Muslims’ so I go with them and we help each other learn more about Islam. One of the biggest sins for a Muslim is forgetting he Q’uran and Namaaz when you know it. That’s really bad” (R2).

“I would say I am religious in the spiritual and psychological way. In a practical way though I know I am a bit weaker for example I need to read the Q’uran and read Namaaz more regularly” (R4).

Religion was not just about inward feelings but also about the more outward characteristics. However as Respondent 4 argued and clearly pointed out outwardly expression such as the way one dresses or does not dress does not always portray the reality of how religious a person is. Image is taken by some Muslims to signify whether a person is a good practicing Muslim or not. She uses dress as an example, to illustrate her point:

“Some people associate being religious with the way you dress like wearing hijab. They think that wearing hijab makes you more religious and a Muslim than those who don’t wears hijab. That’s not true. I know people who don’t wear hijab and dress in a western modest style but who read Namaaz all the time. Then there are those girls who wear the full Nikaab or just hijab and observe Namaaz far less. It’s a private thing as well as a public thing but you have to be very careful not to typecast” (R4).

Respondents were seeking alternative channels of educating themselves about Islam because they were not satisfied with what their parents had taught them. This is revealing and shows that parents’ authority is being disputed. So therefore learning about Islam was a liberating experience for young women:

“I have learned more about Islam from friends than my parents. My parents have a tendency to preach culture rather than Islam in its true sense. It’s good because at least then you can challenge your parents and get them to see sense” (R7)

## **6.10 Changing lifestyles**

Respondents overwhelmingly felt that the lifestyles of Pakistani Mirpuri women had undergone change. Greater educational and career opportunities were cited as influences of this as well being brought up in British society. This is interesting as women feel that



you didn't necessarily have to be born here to have a different lifestyle, since many young women who are in their twenties and thirties now had come to Britain as babies with their mother and had since been educated here:

“I think it has to do with growing up in a Western society and also out schooling. I mean here we mostly have mixed schooling and in parents day and age that was no the case. Also young women are going out and socializing with friends and are aware of different cultures. I see more and more Pakistani Mirpuri women going into education and going into professional jobs and that's something totally different to what our mums generation went through” (R5).

Different generational expectations and aspirations were cited as to reasons why respondents felt that lifestyles were positively different for younger women living and being born or brought up in Britain:

“There are lots of differences such as our education, our language skills and also our expectations life. I think younger girls are much more ambitious and have different outlooks and aims in life. Its all part of growing up here and being exposed to lots of different people and cultures whereas with our parents they just had contact with people of their own background and culture and age” (R6).

Respondent 1 suggested that younger women were more likely than their parents to be in tune with religion and not culture. There is difference in the way that religion and culture are interpreted and this is one area which causes tensions between young Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford and their families who want to follow cultural practices and habits such as controlling a woman in terms of restricting her opportunities to study or work and even marriage. It is interesting to note her choice of words such as career, confident, challenge, opportunities and question suggests a very positive image of young British born Pakistani women, of Mirpuri origin. It suggests they have strong personal identities and are proud to be Muslim, Mirpuri, Pakistani and British:



“Younger Asian women and Pakistani women are in my opinion and experience more career minded than our parents’ generation. We have had so many opportunities our parents didn’t have so we can make a huge difference to our life. I think more young women are becoming confident and using this confidence to challenge anything which isn’t Islamic. Its because young people are becoming more aware of Islam where as our parents just went along with what elders told them and didn’t question anything at all. You just have to look around and see more and more change in the way Pakistanis talk, dress and day to day things like going to work and schools, colleges and universities” (R1).

There is a sense of appreciation from young Pakistani Mirpuri women towards their parents. This appreciation exists even though the younger women may not see eye to eye with their parents on some cultural practices and habits, which they see as un-Islamic. They understand they have been allowed privileges (which their parents did not have in Pakistan) such as education, freedom and work. They feel that they owe their opportunities to their parents who made many sacrifices to come to Britain. Perhaps the young women feel they need to repay their parents’ sacrifices by getting qualifications and a good job. The confusion arises when young people are not given any choices at all and that parents are too strict. Good parenting is key to ensuring any ambiguities between young women and their parents do not result in tensions:

“Definitely. Younger women have more opportunities because our parents have given us that chance. Our parents made so many sacrifices and I don’t think they get enough recognition from some English people. I really do think that younger generations like mine are more ambitious have more aspirations than our parents had, not because they didn’t have the brains but because their priorities were different and their childhood was different. Parents want their children these days to do well in education and have good jobs and then they can get a good marriage match for them. I definitely think that young women are doing more because of their choices. They are more empowered” (R3)

“Younger women definitely have a different lifestyle to their mums. I think they are more career minded and have different priorities. I mainly because the younger generation have been born or at least brought up here and have been educated and that’s made a real difference to our outlook” (R4).

### 6.11 Language and dress

Respondents were asked about what language they spoke at home and outside of the house, to see if there was any pattern of difference or similarity. Several respondents mentioned that they spoke Mirpuri Punjabi at home. It is interesting to note that respondents largely spoke in English with their siblings and Mirpuri Punjabi with parents and guests:

“English mainly, but less with my mum and dad. They prefer us to speak Mirpuri Punjabi at home, especially when we have guests. Its about showing respect really” (R2).

Interestingly, Respondent 2 cited ‘problems’ with communicating effectively in Mirpuri Punjabi, when people come to the house:

“Both English and Mirpuri Punjabi. I mean with my sisters and brothers its English, even with my parents. I don’t really like it when my mums not at home and guests arrive and they begin to ask lots of questions in Mirpuri Punjabi or Urdu. I panic, because parents think that ‘oh they speak more English than Mirpuri Punjabi’. I am more confidant speaking in English” (R1).

“At home, mainly Urdu although with my sisters its English” (R3).

Although English was spoken in the main outside the home as most respondents were either working or in education, sometimes it was a bonus that they had bilingual skills as



this was an important requirement in their jobs. This was the case with Respondent 3 who was working in the benefits sector:

“I speak both English and Mirpuri at home. English with my family even my mum and dads. When my dad takes me out for a driving lesson I make sure we speak in English otherwise I start making mistakes. I suppose given that my generation are born here we speak more English than Mirpuri Punjabi or at least equally!” (R6).

“I speak English outside with my friends. It’s funny because when we are together we speak English but always, always slip into Mirpuri Punjabi or Urdu. That shows just how comfortable we are. We have the skills and confidence to do that. Its not because we don’t know which language to speak but more to do with using our skills to the max!” (R4).

On the issue of dress, Respondent 3 was the only one to wear hijab and had been doing so for around 8 years. She wore her hijab with the traditional style of shalwar-kameez. The superficial issue here is dress but the deeper question is this is a personal acceptance of her identity as being a Muslim woman who respects her British values too:

“I didn’t always wear hijab but then I began attending Islamic meetings at college and learn more about Islam and ever since then I’ve worn hijab. For me hijab is a symbol of my identity as a British Muslim” (R3).

Respondent 3 specifies a particular style of shalwar-kammeez she prefers which suggests that fashions are changing and that shalwar-kammeez is being adapted to the society in which we live:

“Hijab and either trousers and cardigans and hijab or with shalwar-kammeez. I like the shorter kameezes and straight trousers” (R3)



Respondent 1 opted for a basic style of shalwar-kameez when at home. Whilst at work she wore more western styles. It is interesting to note the parental attitude change in her comment as it reveals that parents have again been 'forced' to accept that outside the home environment they are unable to control what the young woman wears whilst inside the house she wears shalwar-kameez:

“At home I choose to wear shalwar-kameez. Nothing flashy just plain and simple. Its just a preference thing.... For work I always wear skirts and trousers. My mum and dad didn't like the idea of us wearing trousers because they thought that was for boys and men only. They didn't mind skirts though but now they don't mind if its jeans or hipsters. Within reason of course but I have to say their attitude has changed and they are much more flexible” (R1).

A point worth noting is that all the other respondents used the term shalwar-kameez to describe the Asian style of dress. Only R2 used the word 'suthan-kurthi' which is the other alternative to shalwar-kameez. She also argues that the way young people dress is an issue where potential problems and tensions might arise. The difference in what is deemed as acceptable Islamically might differ between parents, young women and the birdaderi. Parents attitudes towards dress may be liberal where success in careers or education might depend hampered. They may be less liberal in their attitudes to wearing 'English' styles of clothes when young women wear at home:

“I always wear suthan-kurthi at home... I prefer to wear that and anyway I think its more respectful to wear that at home rather than jeans and shirts ...if people see a girl wearing skirts and trousers outside of the home they think its alright because you are working or going to college so its more acceptable than wearing it home for no reason” (R2).

Respondent 4 raises the issue of the Pakistani Mirpuri community being interfering. She suggests the biraderi can make life difficult for young women who wear styles of clothing, which they do not prove of. Their interfering and unhealthy interest can cause tensions between the liberal minded parents and their daughters because of the actions of biraderi members. Respondent 4 suggests that she does not seek approval of the way she dresses from anyone other than her own parents but that could be because her parents are being liberal with her. Had they not been then the situation could be the reverse:

“I’m comfortable with the way I dress. I wear what I want to and I don’t care what anyone else says. I think people are so busy talking about how other people’s daughters dress that they don’t look closer to home. As long as my parents are happy with me I don’t care what anyone else says. My parents don’t mind me dressing in skirts or trousers as long as they are modest and I’m happy with that” (R4).

“I wear shalwar-kameez. I really like the ‘churee pajama and kurtha’. I really love ‘jalee’ with shameez. I wear shalwar-kameez all the time” (R5).

“At home I wear shalwar-kameez and at work mainly skirts but also shalwar-kameez too. Anything I feel comfortable in. in the summer I love wearing shalwar-kameez to work then in the winter when its cold I prefer skirts” (R6).

“I wear shalwar-kameez outside and at home. I don’t wear English clothes not because I can’t but because I choose not to. My parents haven’t ever said you can’t wear trousers or skirts, its my choice, I find shalwar-kameez really comfortable and its even catching up in English and western fashions. Suddenly shalwar-kameez and thotees are fashionable” (R7).

There was appreciation from Respondent 6 about the dilemmas which force parents into taking actions which they see as best or appropriate but at the same time she argues that

greater understanding between the generations is the answer to avoiding conflict and taking away or lessening parental actions which seem too strict by the young women:

“I can understand some parents concerns about young people getting influenced or led astray but what it comes down to is trust, parents have to trust their children and young people have to trust their parents. That’s the best way. I mean lots of parents don’t like their daughters staying out late but that’s the same with all parents not just Pakistanis. You need flexibility on both sides” (R6).

### **Summary**

This chapter has discussed the findings from stage B. Seven interviews were conducted with young British Pakistanis of Mirpuri origin. These pilot interviews were undertaken because the pilot questionnaire had revealed many interesting points. Interviews were needed to give an individual voice to respondents in the light of the findings obtained in the first stage of the data collection for this empirical research study.

The main issues identified were the importance of family, changing lifestyles of young Pakistani Mirpuri women compared with that of their mothers, dress, identity, language, marriage and the early migratory experiences of respondents parents.



## **Chapter 7**

### **Findings from stage C: Education and qualifications**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

This chapter and the following chapters present the findings from stage C of this research. Twenty-nine women took part in this stage of the research; in focus groups, small groups, pairs and individually.

Once the views from the twenty-nine respondents had been collated and transcribed a manual coding system was used to draw out the main points of the data collected. Because the methodology used has yielded so much data there was a need to divide the information into different issues such as education and career aspirations, identity, Islam and cultural practices. Gradually themes on issues of parenting, identity, religion, culture and inter-generational relationships emerged from these points. It was important to divide the issues and then develop the themes. This had to be handled carefully and the data collected had to be scrutinized closely and critically.

The following chapters present the data analysis for the themes that emerged. The data presented are through interviews with twenty-nine women of Pakistani Mirpuri origin and primarily living in Bradford. The focus is on the relationship they have with Islam, the way in which they understand and practice Islam and the way in which this affects their identity, aspirations and their relationship with parents.

#### **7.2 Importance of education**

Previous research suggests that Pakistani youngsters are failing badly at school (Swann, 1985). The commonly held assumption is that Pakistani youngsters, especially girls, do

not want to achieve well at school and those who do want to are not allowed to because their family will not let them. However, it is clear from this study that these young women had high personal aspirations and expectations. The desire to do well in education and gain good results in exams and ultimately gain a good degree was considered by the majority of the respondents as important for their future.

They saw their aspirations as having long-term dividends and this was a significant theme, which ran through several of the interviews with the young women. Given the shared assumptions, the important questions are what motivates these young women? Why is education so important to them? How important is education to the family and why? The overall research question is whether young women attach the same importance to that of their parents to obtain a 'good' education and a 'good' job? These are all central points of research given that the popular image of Mirpuris in Bradford is that young British women do not have any say in their education and they do not want to perform well at schools and universities. The question is which culture predominates in their outlook, that of their inheritance or that of their future.

### **7.3 Schooling experiences**

Respondent 1 suggests that school is a social centre:

“(School) was good because it gave me an insight into educational life and I met loads of people” (R1).

This was typical of several other respondents:

“School days were good. You're young and if you put your head down you get good marks and enjoy the fun of being in school like making friends” (R2).

School provided a sense of collectiveness and this was part of the positive environment, an environment of different cultures:

“I enjoyed school because I had loads of friends and we all used to study together” (R3).

Typically, some respondents had a preference for specific subjects:

“I thought school was good. I used to like art subjects and just having fun with my friends” (R7.1)

A few respondents felt that other factors had dampened their schooling experience:

“I did my GCSE’s at school. I didn’t do that well, probably because I didn’t know if I was going to stay on or not. I got a B in Art so I was pleased because I enjoyed it. After that I left school and went on to 6<sup>th</sup> form at school to do NVQ” (R1).

The evidence shows that respondents enjoyed the concept of school not simply because they had to be there, but because they saw it as a place to socialise as well as to learn. Being at school was a channel of advancement for their futures. Significantly, none of the respondents actually mentioned that they enjoyed school because it was a form of escapism from their home life. Nevertheless they enjoyed the cultural interchange. Din (2001) found that young Mirpuri females went to school to try and escape from the tensions and restricting home life. The school gave them freedom to be away from their parents but also to behave in ways, which their parents may consider, deviating from traditions such as dressing, smoking and playing truant.

None of the older respondents in this research were employed. With the exception of a couple of women who had some experience in Pakistan, none had any sort of formal



education when they were younger. Although the older women had not had any education when they were young, they were in fact experiencing a transitional change as all of the older women, involved with this research were coming to the community centre to learn English as well as take part in a wide range of practical activities such as walking, healthy eating and finding out about community events. This is an important sign of a wider and more vital community life, which is revealed in the current study. The important question is why are the older women doing this now?

Previous research has suggested that Mirpuri females have low aspirations and underachieve at schools because there is a lack of family support and clashes over marriage arrangements. It is presumed that Pakistani parents are so strict on their daughters that they will do everything they can to prevent them going to school by taking drastic preventative measures such as withdrawing them from school in their early teenage years and then taking them abroad to Pakistan until they reach compulsory schooling leaving age.

Ghuman (1994), found that parents had a preference for single sex schooling but this was not necessarily related to religious schooling. Din (2001) found parents of Pakistani background preferred religious and single sex schooling in a bid to keep the sexes from intermingling. Din (2001) points out that young respondents in the research argued it was parents who made the decisions and not the young people themselves. Young Pakistani females were more likely to be at risk than their male counterparts. Earlier research, by Drury (1991), found that Sikh families were likely to support females in education aspirations. Some of the past research studies have homogenised Asians as one

group and often the term 'minority ethnic' has been used interchangeably. These terms do not account for differences or variables of race, religion, culture or ethnicity.

Modood et al (1997) point out that girls do not see educational qualifications as a positive or useful thing to have since their parents would arrange marriages for them soon. Marriage was viewed as imminent and inevitable. They felt they would be housewives and therefore did not see education as having any worth to them. The current study reveals the opposite in that the majority of respondents were able to continue with post 16 education because they had enjoyed their schooling experience. This is important as it shows that even though school education was compulsory and is legally enforced on people, when there is a choice they are keen to take this up and go on learning. They are making an informed decision, which is done through choice, and not because it has to be done. These women had found their schooling experiences enjoyable where socializing and making friends was important to them; they enjoyed catching up with friends and encouraging each other to do well. They also demonstrated that they took their academic work seriously.

The data shows that for the majority of respondents' education and achieving qualifications was a high priority in their lives. Respondent 2 has aspirations of becoming a teacher. There are several reasons she suggests for her choice of career. She indicates her own personal determination to pursue this career because she has the skills to do the job. She also likes being around children:

"I want to be an RE teacher. Not necessarily Islam, because you don't actually study to teach Islam, you specialize in one subject and I chose RE. But I think I would use aspects of it to teach Islam



on a personal level. I don't mind kids and they can be fun. It's a job where you don't repeat yourself. Everyday is a new day and plus it's a career most Asians don't mind their daughters going into" (Respondent 2).

Bhatti (1999) found that teaching was not considered a professional or high status job and none of her respondents expressed an interest in teaching. The current research suggests otherwise. Unlike Bhatti's study, this study found that many Mirpuri girls were happy to study beyond the compulsory age of schooling and had aspirations to teach.

The majority of older women in this research also shared similar sentiments of aspirations with many encouraging their children, including their daughters. This is interesting since the commonly held assumption is that parents do not wish to be involved in their children's education or work because they either see it as a waste of time or because they do not understand how the education system works (Swann, 1985). Halsey (1978) critiqued the Education Act of 1944 on the basis that it did not promote equal opportunity for all citizens irrespective of their race or ethnic origin and that the needs of immigrants and their children were inadequately catered for. Castles and Kosack (1985) pointed out that immigrant children were poorly treated in schools because they were 'problematic' and placed pressure on resources.

Verma and Pumfrey (1988) also mention ethnic minority experiences in education and the unfair practice of 'bussing', whereby ethnic minority children were taken to schools far from their homes to make sure there were no schools where there were 'too many' ethnic minority pupils. Morrison and McIntyre (1971) proposed that educational inequalities have two possible explanations-. These are referred to as 'individual factors' and 'institutional factors'. Individual factors are personal issues. For example Troyna



(1987) points out that these include ethnicity, education, language and access to resources such as computers. Institutional factors include racism, discrimination, attitudes of teachers and education service providers, and where the schools are located.

Brahet et al (1992) propose that because Asian families are larger than 'white' families, resources such as textbooks and computers may not be equally shared or affordable therefore impinging on the educational achievements of Asian children. This is the common assumption. However this current study found that many of the respondents cited having more than two siblings or children but education was a priority. There are alternative methods making study accessible including inter-net cafes and libraries improved resources.

Verma and Pumphrey (1988), assert that Asian people tend to live in smaller houses, which are overcrowded, and that this can impact upon the education and learning of children. Being overcrowded meant no room for private study. Muslim parents did not want their daughters to take part in extracurricular activities after school at ended. Hindu and Sikh parents were less strict.

Ghuman (1994) points out that girls were not encouraged by their parents to study and gain qualifications. On the other hand boys were. This is in contrast to this study which found that parents were generally supportive of their daughters being educated, even studying away from home should it be necessary. Other women expressed concern at not having gained qualifications when they were younger and some had even gone back to study now their children were growing up and at school.

A number of reasons could be responsible for this. The young women did not have the choice then about what to study or there was a lack of awareness on the part of their family and themselves about the importance of qualifications. This puts into question the priority that qualifications and employment had in their lives at that time. It is argued that parents who had come to England during the 1960's and 1970's in particular had different priorities at that time such as making sure they were able to work and sustain a regular income so they were able to assist their families in Pakistan and then start settling their immediate family including their wives and children here. Educating their children, particularly their daughters, were seen as secondary. The parents themselves had very little in the way of education themselves and were aware of this and the possible benefits of educating their children in the British Education system.

#### **7.4 Types of schooling.**

The research data reveals a mix of respondents who had gone to an all girls' school and those who had gone to a mixed sex school. Interestingly none of the respondents had attended a religious school. There were mixed views on their schooling experiences. Respondent 1 had attended an all girls school but felt that although it was 'OK' it did not prepare her effectively for her working life because she felt that the interaction of both sexes is important since everyday life revolves around this. It is interesting that she uses the word 'boring' to describe her experience of single sex schooling. This brings in to question what was boring about this. Did she miss the fact that she was not able to socialize with male peers? She also points out that separating boys from girls in schools

does not prepare one for the real working world where you may be required to work with people from other cultures and of the opposite sex:

“It was an all girls school and sometimes a bit boring. It’s better to have a mixed school- at the end of the day you aren’t going to work with women only are you?” (R1).

“I think you are most used to working in a mixed environment if you have been to a mixed sex school. Otherwise you’re not used to it and your not that comfortable” (R8.3).

Other respondents were quick to defend their single sex schooling, probably because of the stereotype that all girls that do attend an all girls school do so out of parental force and pressure rather than of own choice. There were cases in this study of young women mentioning that their parents had preferred them to attend single sex schooling and they were happy to go along with this and at the same time there were cases of young women themselves who said it was ultimately their preference to go to a single sex school:

“I went to an all girls school... it was my choice. I had other friends going there too. I thought it was Okay” (R7.2).

“I didn’t mind going to an all girls school” (R8.3),

Respondent 8.3 indicates the fact that she made the best of a situation in which she may not have had a choice in the matter.

The reasons why respondents cited their parents’ preference for single sex schooling was because of the reputation. The reputation of mixed schools was that of low expectations and achievements because of distractions such as boys. They hoped that single sex schooling would provide a safe environment from this. Single sex schools are selective.



The reputation of the school and the activities in which young people engaged in were not just confined to the school. It could have implications on the izzat of the family too. The reality though is that this is not always the case and this can lead to a culture where some young people who go to an all girls school think they are better academically and are more Islamic than those girls who go to a mix sexed school. The biraderi was likely to approve more of young girls who went to Islamic or single sex schooling as they were deemed not to be likely to behave inappropriately. Respondent 5, who went to a mixed school, made this her feelings of girls who go to single sex schooling clear:

“Girls who go to single sex schools do most things that are banned, like boys!” (R5).

“Parents usually make the decision that you will go to an all girls school and not get up to things” (R8.1).

Some respondents who themselves had gone to a single sex school were positive about their experiences there. However respondent 8.3 had attended a single sex school and although she enjoyed it, she felt it was quite isolating in that it did not prepare her adequately for working. Respondents were aware that mixing with people of different ages and from different racial and socio-economic backgrounds was important.

### **7.5 Reputation of the school**

The reputation of the school was important to both parents and young people. However it could be argued that for parents there was heightened significance. The young women who did attend single sex school found it a better learning atmosphere because boys were absent:

“It is a good choice if the school is good... a lot of girls prefer to go to a single sex school because they do better and don’t get the hassle from guys and they can speak freely “ (R8.1).

Similarly respondent 8.2 reiterates the selection of school:

“If the school is of a good standard then that’s fine. I felt more comfortable in an all girl school” (R8.2).

## **7.6 Qualifications and jobs**

When asked about if there were any specific careers they thought were most appealing for Muslim Pakistani women of Mirpuri descent it is clear that the respondents were geared to professional and jobs which have been described as ‘white collar’. This research reveals that young women are experiencing a huge shift in work careers and aspirations especially when compared with what the majority of their parents’ backgrounds. For the young women, finding work in areas including law, accountancy and dentistry were important. Most respondents had high career aspirations and saw education as advancement:

“I’ve finished a 1<sup>st</sup> year of my accountancy degree... hopefully I’ll get a good job afterwards.. It is the next nearest profession to law I considered had a lot of status and professionalism to it.. When I get my degree I don’t just want to sit down with it, I actually want to work with it” (R4.2).

“I’ve always wanted to do something in the medical field” (R4.3)

For some respondents there was a clear awareness that the job market was very competitive and therefore they were willing to venture into new territories where being Asian and female would be advantageous. They were aware that there might be a greater

sense of recognition if she is embarking on a career where there is scarcity of suitable qualified people that comes from their family and the biraderi as well as from employers:

“I thought I’d do accountancy because no-one in the Asian community has really heard of it and there’s hardly any Asian girls doing it. It’s good to do something different” (R4.2).

“It opens doors for you if there is a demand for you... I want to help Asian people with my work.. That’s important because they don’t have equal access for whatever reason” (R4.3).

It is clear that the majority of respondents were working part-time in areas of employment which were not specifically connected to their eventual career aspirations i.e. for example Respondent 4.2 worked part-time as a sales assistant but wanted to have a career on accountancy.

Similarly Respondent 10 had already completed a degree in the Social Sciences and worked for Inland Revenue. It can be argued that this is because by working they were able to provide a working reference for future employment, build their confidence and learn skills which although not linked directly to their chosen field would be recognised i.e. interaction with people and working in a team. These skills can be applied to virtually every aspect of working life. Far from trying to avoid certain areas of employment, which have along history of being labelled as those only entered by white, middleclass and male, these young women in this research wanted to succeed in them i.e. overcoming restrictions. They were excited about the prospect of breaking the norm and the expectations that others might of them. Instead they enjoyed the challenge and demands professional jobs would have.



## **7.7 Izzat and education**

Having a British education and a British Degree has many advantages and one of the most important one was the izzat (honour and status) that this gave both to the immediate family and the extended biraderi (family kinship/network):

“Education is important. The biraderi looks up to the family, where boy and girls are educated with degrees and good jobs” (R12).

“Yes, that’s true. Izzat is really important to Muslims. It has to be preserved and maintained all the times. In a new environment where there are so many different values and cultures it can be difficult but not impossible you know” (R10).

This research evidence shows that although the majority of older women themselves had no formal education or qualifications they saw the importance of qualifications for their children, in terms of obtaining good job and a good marriage partner. They saw learning as worthwhile, giving a sense of personal wisdom and intelligence:

“Education is knowledge!” (R9.4)

“It’s (education) become a priority for parents now to educate their sons and even daughters now but not at that time (R10).

## **7.8 Parenting and education**

The research evidence show that parents do think it is important to give their girls the same educational opportunities as boys, even to the extent of studying and working abroad. For instance, an older respondent argued that they felt being in education gave young people a sense of well-being and would groom them into being good citizens, hardworking and respected. They feel that education would keep their minds busy and keep them away from unacceptable behaviours such as committing crime. Parents agreed

that good parenting was about not being too liberal or being too strict. Young people needed to know that their parents would support them in realising their aspirations:

“My kids and lots of others have worked for an education, and why shouldn’t they if they want to?” (R9.6)

The research evidence revealed that parents whose children, especially the girls, had a good education were more respected in the community than those parents whose children were not as well educated or in respectable lines of employment. It also had implications on other people’s perceptions of ‘good parenting’. Those whose children were educated are more likely to be labelled by the biraderi as good’ parents and those whose children are not educated are considered to be of ‘poor parents’.

The push for parents to encourage and sometimes even over encourage their daughters and sons to do well in education and go into respectful jobs is driven by the need and desire to be seen and accepted by the community and family biraderi as good parents. There is a sense amongst parents to constantly seek approval from the biraderi over personal matters such as marriage of young people and their education. The education of sons and daughters has huge implications on the family izzat. This is clear in what Respondent 9.6 went on to say:

“My children were brought up with discipline and love and were told about the benefits of having a good education. Ma-sh-allah, the older one has an MA in Art and Design, the second also has a degree. The parents who are complaining are those who haven’t instilled discipline and integrity into their children. The parents sit at home and relax and don’t get involved with their children’s education. So what if you haven’t an education yourself isn’t that even more reason for you to get involved with your children’s education” (R9.6).



Respondent 9.6 makes interesting comments. She reveals the complexity of being more than just an ordinary parent and this applies across other cultures and societies. She points out that to being a parent is more than a label. It is about being active parent and one who is interested in their children's well being. Her response is filled with frustration and anger to parents who fail their children when they do not take active measure to take an interest in their education.

Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) point out that parents want their children to do well as long as what they do does not have negative connotations on the family izzat. Parent's actions can sometimes be perceived by young people and people outside the community as being too dominating and restrictive. Parents themselves believe they are acting in the best interest of their children and that of their family name:

“We live in a community which puts a lot of emphasis on izzat, girls, boys and good education and standards. Our children are just part of the wider picture. If our kids do something bad, then we as parents think about how are we going to be able to show our face in the community? That is why we have to bring up our children with love and discipline. Discipline has different meanings in different cultures and should be accepted” (R9.8).

It is interesting to note that like several of the other older respondents, they are of the opinion that parents felt that they had been unfairly represented in the media as being too demanding, menacing and self-centred, not taking an interest or caring about their children's needs. The parents see themselves differently. They see their role as much more positive and one which has principles and values which all parents have but which because of the cultures in which people live in are conveyed and exercised in different ways but with the same underlying principles.



Similarly, the image of marriages as downtrodden and oppressive is contested by not just the older women in this research but also by the younger women. This goes against the commonly held assumption in previous research, which suggests that young women and young people in general are against arranged marriages.

Modood et al (1994), Ghuman (1995) and Brah (1996), all identified mixed views on arranged marriages from the perspective of young Asians. This current study found that arranged marriages are important to young Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford, on the grounds that it is with their agreement.

The older respondents in this current study argued that responsible parents were those who took their roles seriously. Parents needed to play a positive role in supporting and facilitating their children's education. Those who do not take an interest will suffer the negative consequences. Parental roles were clearly defined by the older women:

“Parents need to take the responsibility if children stray. They don't give the children quality time. They don't ask them what are you doing and where are you going? Those (young people) who aren't educated are those whose parents haven't taken an interest. Parents need to go to parents evening and play an active role with the teachers and the schools. If a child is doing wrong some parents don't tell the children off because as long as they aren't doing it to their own property and it's someone else's they send out a message that it is okay. Those parents who bring them (children) with love and discipline and have standards will succeed” (R9.6)

The quotation from Respondent 9.6 is interesting for several reasons. It is worth noting the different phrases she uses. She uses for example 'quality time' and 'interest' which suggests parents should spend meaningful time with youngsters, which is productive, and a shared importance for each other. She also suggests that 'bad parents' are those with

laissez-faire values. She also points out a dark side to izzat, which is selfish and status oriented but using it to cover one's back. She also uses the phrase 'love and discipline', suggesting they are closely related. That suggests that love is conditional depending on showing respect and izzat again to elders.

All this analysis of parenting could come from any intelligent people in any culture. They are not the product of narrow-minded control. Good parenting is cross-cultural and can therefore be applied to all parents. This research evidence shows that some parents are aware of parents from other cultures that are more outward in the role they take in their children's education.

The following quotation goes back to the whole issue of competitiveness and status between families in the quest for more izzat:

“Look at Indian families...they have discipline and take an interest in their children's education and that is why they achieve good marks and go to university and are successful” (R9.6)

Parents can be severely reprimanded as has been the cases recently where their children do not attend school. This has necessitated an evaluation of attitudes and expectations on the part of immigrant parents. It is argued that this is a modification of the attitudes and behaviours that parents had experienced in Pakistan and which could not simply be carried over and relocated in the same way here. These attitudes and behaviours have had to be changed and made more adaptable to the social requirements of the new environment.

## **7.9 Future educational aspirations**

The majority of younger respondents in the current study identified themselves as students either part-time or full-time. They were doing Degree courses and clearly regarded education and qualifications as being important to them. Were these aspirations the result of decisions made by them or a decision prescribed by their family? This current study found that the majority of students had actually made a conscious decision to study locally because of the benefit this had. Studying at a local institution enabled them to commute and spend time at home with their families and although not mentioned directly it was cheaper to stay at home since rent and food bills are avoided.

## **7.10 Where to study**

The research evidence also found that the majority of respondents did have a say as to where to study and what to study especially, when it came to university education. The choice of whether to study close to home or further away was determined by other factors in life; in one case, her young children. She suggests feeling more comfortable if she studied locally to fit in with her children routines of school and her own working life:

“I wanted to stay local because of the children and then I thought that this course sounded okay in the prospectus so I went for it”  
(R10).

The majority of respondents pointed out they had made the decision jointly with their parents of where to study. However, there were a few cases where the decisions were dictated by parents themselves and worked within satisfying the biraderi expectations. This suggests that families themselves are sophisticated but there is still a sense of tribal interference:



“Looking back my dad said we could study but he wanted us to stay local...but his brother said it wasn't the done thing” (R1).

Respondent 9.1 makes interesting comments since she suggests that a dark side to having extended family is they interfere into other peoples business and suggests this is due to not wanting their izzat being taken over by other people. Therefore izzat creates competition, status and money and on the other hand izzat is used to keep independent women under control:

“Some parents are Okay with their daughters but it is family who put ideas in their heads like. Oh if you educate her she will become too independent ... now look at them they can't even look at us because their daughters are educated” (R9.1).

This makes it clear that hypocrisy existed within the biraderi where one rule was there for one family and another for their own. It is worth noting here that respondent 9.1 agreed with several other respondents that education was a learning process and she goes on to suggest that some members of the biraderi may see an educated girl as being too independent. Perhaps suggesting she would not take notice of her parents, not respecting her parents by doing what she wanted. Some parents therefore fear education. However, it is not necessary educated girls that may deviate from their family:

“Some girls have left home and they weren't even educated” (R9.1).

If one member does something which is regarded as 'good' i.e. a young woman trains to be a doctor or lawyer then the whole biraderi can enjoy the labelling of 'she is from that biraderi' and when the opposite happens i.e. a young woman is forced to leave a violent marriage for instance, then the whole biraderi is given a negative labelling.

## 7.11 Family

There were cases in this current research of parents taking young girls out of school, acting against her wishes because the family had moved out to Pakistan for a long period. This evidence reveals that some young women, whilst accepting their parental decision, do not so lightly. It is clear that the young women who did discuss this in their interview felt that they were too young at the time to make their own decisions and so simply went with the flow. With hindsight they would have liked to have stayed on and completed their school education. Thus suggesting the complexities of contexts that can arise and give an insight into their selfhood. Respondent 8.3 points out her own feelings and choices about her parents and education aspirations:

“I went to school and did all right in my GCSE’s...but I don’t know I wasn’t interested at the time. Even though I’ve got a sister and she’s been to university and done a degree and that but that was because she was interested and I wasn’t, but then after school I did a YTS course and then did NVQ in Business Admin (R8.3).

Similarly Respondent 8.1 talked of her regrets of not working hard at school and conjures up memories of her personal journey and taking on responsibility for the choices she made then and now:

“I feel a bit embarrassed because I didn’t do that well when I used to go to school. I didn’t even go and collect my results...I don’t know but I wasn’t really bothered with school at that time. It was a mistake though because I should have stayed on and do well” (R8.1).

A few respondents said they felt they had not performed well at school because they were unsure about their future educational aspirations. They feel that this was the case because their parents had the ultimate final decision about their future, thus showing the powerful control that some parents have over young people. However, the current study found that



most young people felt their parents had assisted them positively and any decisions over study and career aspirations were made jointly.

### **7.12 Marriage**

Marriage was mentioned by a minority of respondents as having interfered with their education plans:

“I wasn’t sure I wanted to stay on... I was quite young and I was getting married and I felt I had enough going on in my life” (R7.1)

Interestingly, the majority of older respondents who had very little in the way of formal education themselves were in agreement that young women as well as young men should be educated. They felt that this was important so females could also exercise their religious rights to work and education. In many Pakistani villages it is not common for women to work outside the home or village. In large cities such as Karachi and Islamabad, families are more cosmopolitan and there are more opportunities for women to work and study. Overall, the divide between men and women working and the roles they are expected to play by society suggests issues of ancient traditions of the ‘bread-winner’ as being male and the homemaker as females.

In this research, though, older women felt positively about educating young women, but at the same time many had fears about external factors that could affect young women and the izzat of the young women and the family. Older women wanted young women to go to well-reputed colleges and universities and undertake courses that will have long-term benefits for the family and young women themselves:

“With a good reputation like teaching, looking after children, fashion. A woman is a good judge of what is acceptable and what



isn't. A woman can do well and lead a comfortable life if she has her own money and it (working) is a form of discipline otherwise she would end up like me wandering what to do and how to spend the day because there isn't any structure" (R6).

She feels that working and education brings with it financial and self benefits as well as raising the izzat of the family in the biraderi:

"They (parents) encouraged us because they felt it was important for us to have some security and because it strengthens the izzat of the family" (R1).

These respondents found their parents to be eager and keen to be involved with their children's education with some saying their parents attended parent's evenings and asked about their education on a daily basis. Several respondents cited encouraging parents and siblings. Respondent 2 illuminates many of these themes:

"They're all educated (respondents brothers). It was a bit of extra pressure but I wouldn't change it... I think a girl needs education to read and research and have a good knowledge of Islam to pass on to children. Both parents need to do this, not just the mother. I would have studied away from home but Bradford has a good record of teaching degrees. A few years ago, that (females studying away from home) was unheard of but more and more girls are studying away from home. That's good as long as you don't step outside of the limits" (R2).

She suggests that she studies because of pressure through izzat and status from the wider biraderi and points out the potential for training for parenting and shared responsibilities of childcare on parents. She also hints she is aware of local social trends and balancing western and Asian values.

### 7.13 Older women's views on education

Although none of the older women in this sample had any formal education, they were clearly supportive of young women these days having the opportunity to have one. Respondent 6, in particular regretted not having had the opportunity to attend school when she was growing up in Pakistan. Thus she points out themes of context and personal 'choices' equating to letting things be:

"I didn't have the chance to have an education and all my life I've felt a longing and felt something was missing from my life. To this day I have that regret of why I didn't study...I will say that girls should be encouraged to study.. Let her do well at school and go on to study. Both parents need to play an equal role" (R6).

It is interesting that the majority of respondents agreed that studying and working was important. The younger generation is more adaptable to the British culture. They seemed to think that just to study was not enough. The qualifications they gained had to be used and not wasted. There is therefore a huge relationship between studies to gain qualifications to work. Working had many advantages to it including gaining valuable skills and a working reference:

"It's a working reference and that's what employers look for" (R4.1).

Typically, other advantageous were also identified:

"I'm working part-time and its good.. I'm really independent. It's a job, just part-time evenings but the moneys good. I don't have to rely on anybody. I don't need to ask for money... there's a lot of job satisfaction and financially" (R2)

Respondent 7.2 was unemployed but had worked before, working added flexibility to her day. She was one of the few respondents who cited working gave her freedom to be out

of the house. However this indicates she was not satisfied completely with her working life and felt she needed more. That could simply mean just seeing more than the house walls. Sometimes striking the balance could be quite difficult but the pros outweighed the cons:

“Working gives you money, responsibility and freedom to be out of the house. You do more than just looking after children. Working is hard but its good. Its something different” (R7.2).

This shows that these women are mature enough to want to work and have their independence. In most Pakistani Muslim households young women are encouraged to work but not necessarily to pay towards household expenses. Parents feel they are doing something wrong if they ask young women to contribute to the household expenditure, but given the present climate of expense some young women, without even being asked will contribute towards living with their parents. It is interesting therefore to note, that if parents are aware of this, then what would they gain out of encouraging their daughter to work if they are not directly benefiting?

Similarly. Respondent 4.3. was studying full-time and worked part-time hours until recently. She found it difficult to concentrate on both things so her family insisted that she stopped working for the time being and concentrate on her studies. She was very thankful of their consideration to her and unlike Respondent 2 didn't mind relying on her parents for financial support:

“Mum and dad just say spend time on your studies. If you need money just take it from us'. That's good because then I'm focused on my studies and not distracted by going to work, its okay if you



can strike that balance. I'll work eventually so I might as well take it easy now and concentrate on my studies" (R4.3).

"I used to work in \* at the weekend but not anymore now I'm back at uni. I need the time to study" (R4.1).

One of the key finding in this research is that the majority of respondents viewed education as a key and important issue. Education enabled people to be confident, build for the future and was a powerful influence. An education person is able to fend for herself in situations of uncertainty:

"I want to be attached and at the end of the day if I find myself on my own, I've still got four years of good education" (R2).

#### **7.14 Summary: key findings**

In relation to the issue of education the research evidence revealed that the majority of respondents had gone to mixed sex schools but several had also gone to single sex schools. None of the Respondents had attended Islamic School.

Respondents who had gone to an all girls' school were quick to mention that although their parents had suggested they attend an all girls' school they were not forced into to it. The older women in the sample argued that sending a girl to a religious school or an all girls' school did not mean that she was at a less risk of mixing with boys. They felt that they needed to show their youngsters they trusted them and that way they would be less likely to engage in undesirable activities inside the school.

There were good points and bad points to single sex education. Some of the younger respondents mentioned that single sex schooling was a good experience for them. For

example Respondent 8.3 (stage C) thought she was able to study because there was a better learning atmosphere and no distractions. Again she said she attended through choice and was not forced. On the other hand Respondent 1 (stage C) felt her parents had made the choice on her behalf and that she did not feel she was prepared for the working world where she had to deal with males as well as females.

Parents wanted a school with a good reputation and a good rate of qualifications for their daughters. For some parents this meant a single sex school and for others it was a mixed sex school.

Generally though Respondents had found school to be an enjoyable experience, which was exciting, where they were able to socialize, share their interests, gossip and at the same time learn. The research evidence showed that even the few young women who had left school early with little qualifications went back to enhance their qualifications. This demonstrates the importance of education and qualification to these women.

The research evidence showed that young women and their families had high education and career aspirations. They were more likely to stay on either in 6<sup>th</sup> Form at school or college and then go on to university. They were likely to undertake professional areas of work such as law, teaching and medicine. A good example of this is Respondent 1 (stage B) who had a degree and worked in a supervisory role in the Banking sector. She wished to aspire to a more senior management role. Respondent 3 (stage B) similarly had achieved a degree in Law and were working as adviser to legal firms, law centres and the

benefits sector. What is interesting is that the majority of respondents were happy to move up the hierarchy in one place rather than apply to other organizations for promotion.

Another issue that came from the research evidence is that the majority of young women were working either in full-time work or were working part-time in addition to being full-time students. The main reasons for working whilst studying included building a working reference which would help in future job applications, to gain valuable skills and experience and for financial reasons. However, one interesting point is that they stressed they were working to support themselves and not to earn the money and contribute to the family up-keep. By supporting themselves they were able to unburden their parents and this was important to them.

Education was considered important for several reasons. Respondent 4 (stage A) used her qualifications to challenge racism and stereotypes of British Pakistani Mirpuri women. Respondents 12 and 10 (stage C) saw education and qualifications as increasing the izzat of the individual and the family. Respondent 7 (stage B) used education and qualifications in order to gain the best marriage match. Parents saw education as important as they assumed that if young people were busy getting an education they were more likely to get good jobs and have responsibility thus distracting them from engaging in improper behaviours. The majority of parents wished to share in their children's achievements and the Degree ceremony was a time for the whole family to celebrate.



The majority of young women who were studying were doing so at local universities. Reasons for this included personal preference, the preference of parents, the choice of degree course and economical reasons. It is worth noting that young women stressed their own choice to study locally and not because they had been forced or restricted by their families to do so. Although at the same time young women had mentioned that their parents and sometimes-older siblings had all been involved in discussing the course to study and where to study.

In terms of parenting in relation to education, the research evidence shows that the behaviour of young women in public domains influenced whether the label of 'good parents' or 'bad parents' was attached to their parents. Where young people did well in education, gained good jobs and behaved appropriately, their parent was credited with goodness. Linked to this is the assumption that all younger siblings would inevitably follow in the footsteps of older siblings to do well in education, thus being the eldest had many pressures to set a good example but also being younger came with its pressures of fulfilling wishes and aspirations that one may not feel ready for.

Having a good education was also important to the lives of young women so they were able to gain a sort of independence which they could resort to if say for example their marriage failed. In some ways they would be self-sufficient. A good example is Respondent 2 (stage C) who made several references to having a good education as something to 'fall back on' 'just in case'.

These women demonstrate a commitment to the circumstances in which they find themselves. They use an opportunity that was denied to their ancestors. They are not held back by old-fashioned notions of the status of women. This does not mean that they do not think of their inheritance. On the contrary, they see this as something to be appreciated and used; appreciated because of the encouragement, for whatever reason, and used because they are exploring new areas.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Findings from stage C: Identity**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

The women who took part in stage C, explored the issue of identity and nationality and what these concepts mean to them. This is at the heart of the thesis because it helps us to understand these women and their life experiences in relation to their family, the Mirpuri community and living in Britain.

#### **8.2 Personal identities**

Respondents felt this was quite a complex issue and very few actually gave a simple one-word answer to any question. They felt they should explain their answers. This gives an indication of the complexity of the minds and lives of these respondents. Many respondents revealed what could be described as a multiple of identities, which included their religious and cultural identification, as well as a whole range of other interesting issues such as their marital status and their role in the family. It suggested a multiple and collective identity as well as a personal one:

“I’d say I’m young, independent, Pakistani and Muslim” (R1)

Respondent 1 suggests at first her simple identification with age, her parental origins and then her religion. It is worth noting the order of her criteria that may not necessarily indicate the importance of issues creating her identity. She also sees herself as confident and self-asserting as she also adds she is ‘independent’ which suggests she feels empowered and content with her identity. As well as her identity being influenced by her



parental Pakistani origins she goes on further to describe her British identity and uses her birth status or place of birth to describe who she is. Judging by the tone and the manner in which this statement was made it is clear that R1 feels frustrated that her identity is being prescribed to her by politicians yet she suggests that identity is personal and influenced by many determinates, not just ethnicity or nationality.

Many respondents described their identity in terms of their religious affiliation and their parental country and region of origin and this is interesting as it reveals that Pakistani women of Mirpuri origin are asserting more than one identity and are proud of their multiple identities. It should be noted she has called herself Pakistani and that she considers Britain to be her home. The tone with which she asserts this suggests a modern young woman. This tells us that she has several personal characteristics of her identity thus giving anew edge to the concept of multiple or a dual identity:

“I was born here (Britain) so I consider this (Britain) to be my home...no matter what the politicians say!” (R1).

It is worth noting the richness of complexity against simple labels. They were conscious of this, more so because they are a minority. In previous research it has been suggested that it is the majority who are unaware of ‘colour’ or difference.

### **8.3 Identity and nationality**

Identity has all kinds of levels. It includes attempts to make people aspire to Nationalism. One example of this is the ‘cricket test’, which was prompted by Norman Tebbit. Tebbit argued that young British Asians should show their allegiance to Britain by supporting

the English Cricket team whenever they played against Pakistan or India. Tebbitt argued that it is not possible to be British and at the same time support the Pakistani or Indian cricket teams.

His comments enraged many British Muslims who felt patronised by his assertions. Other non-Muslims claimed that Muslims were playing the 'race card' for no apparent reason. Cook and Hudson (1993) point out that Tebbitt's remarks were unfair and did not portray a true image of non-white British people and instead hatred of a minority group were being fuelled unnecessarily. All the respondents in this current study demonstrated they had different characteristics that they considered as important to their identity. This gives a new edge to the concept of identity and being exposed to more than one culture.

Basit (1997a) found that identity is a complex and sensitive issue. Society usually labels people according to its own values and customs. Previous research has suggested that adolescence is a particularly vulnerable time when young people are trying to 'work out' who they are. Kroger (1989) argues that young people want to 'own' their identity and it is very important to them. Erikson (1968) found that young people who are going through the physical changes in their bodies also have to 'juggle' their psychological demons. This confusion can result in 'identity conflict' and young people can become disaffected.

Tizard and Phoenix (2002) studied one hundred and twenty African and African-Caribbean young people and found that the colour of skin determined how they labelled themselves. They preferred labels such as 'coloured', or 'brown' rather than 'black' because they felt this had negative connotations associated with slavery. Bhavani and

Phoenix (1994) carried out research with thirty-two Asian women in East London and found that they felt their identity was stronger if the 'community' accepted them. This meant their own 'Asian' community and the wider 'white community'.

Bhatti (1978) argues that Muslims have 'special' needs and therefore a specific 'identity'. They are more likely to segregate themselves from mainstream society in the quest for having their own identity. This current study has found that Pakistani Mirpuri women do not see themselves as having 'special needs' and feel that by wearing the hijab for example does not make them any more a Muslim or any less a British person. They see it as amalgamating both their religious identity and their British identity. The evidence suggests they do not wish to be segregated and the majority of females in this research were working and in education, which suggests they are involved in important British institutions.

Respondent 2 suggest some Muslims are forced to conceal their religious identity out of fear of repercussions following the atrocities of 9/11. Therefore their religious identity is threatened by racist thinking from non-Muslims and in fact it is threatened too by Muslims who terrorise people in the name of Islam. All Muslims are then labelled as terrorists. For some ostensibly believing Muslims terrorism or the 'Jihad' is even taken as justified. It is worth noting that this girl is staking her claim to being a young British Muslim of Pakistani Mirpuri origin, her claim to multiple identities; to being Muslim but being tolerant:

"Some people don't like saying (they are) Muslim, out of fear since there's so much anti-Islamic feelings even before September



11<sup>th</sup>. I'm Mirpuri and proud of it. Mirpur is a nice place, there are lots of people building houses so that tells you something. I prefer people knowing me as a Muslim, I'm Pakistani too" (R2).

This young respondent clearly feels proud of her parental origins but gives her priority to being a Muslim. It is interesting that she does not even mention her British identity seeing as though she has been born and brought up in Britain as many of the other respondents have used their place of birth to describe their identity. This could suggest she feels at ease with her British identity and simply does not state the obvious. At the same time she talks about her parental origins as attributes of her Pakistaniness

Some respondents used an amalgamation of what they felt was their religious identity with their country of birth. Very few used the word 'English' in any way and instead used the word 'British'. They were amalgamating nationality with religion and not just nationality but of course British is a nationality, whereas English is not. For these respondents there is recognition of the official line of Nationality and also the personal origins and places attachments. For example more people are likely to say they are English, Welsh or Scottish but abroad they say they are British. These sentiments are similar to that shared by Respondent 8.3:

"I would say I'm Muslim, but I've been born and brought up in England. I'm a British-Muslim" (R8.3).

"I'm British-Muslim. I mean we (young people) were born and brought up here and it's the only country we know" (8.2) again she feels her religious identity as important as her country of birth.

"I'm British- Muslim. If people asked my ethnic origin, I wouldn't say Pakistani" (R4.1)

This is interesting as she is promoting her religion and country of birth but feels that she doesn't need to use the word Pakistani, probably as she feels that her Muslim identity is more important.

Nationality and citizenship have largely been based on a succession of immigration and nationality Acts, especially those after the Second World War. It is that period which is especially of significance when understanding Pakistanis or South Asians in Britain (Brown and Foot, 1994). Nationality has different connotations when tensions depending on the period and social climate that South Asians came to Britain.

It is important to make the distinction that immigration controls on the one hand were implemented to assert a sense of belonging to Britain and at the other had to divide families and create inequalities. Powerful politicians promoted the need to control 'foreigners' by calling for stricter immigration control which could ultimately not just control who comes into the country but also place pressures on people already in Britain. Enoch Powell expressed his concerns of the threat to British and English values from foreign and alien cultures and religions. The infamous 'river of blood' speech given by Powell in 1968 claimed that unless the numbers of Asians was curbed there was a threat of Britain's becoming second-class citizens in their own homes (Fryer, 1984).

Fryer (1984) argues that such debates opened up a legitimate grounding for the rise of the Far Right. Racist murders increased and so did race hate related crime. Waddington (1992) asserts that the 1960s gave rise to increased activities of the notorious Ku-Klux-

Klan movement and the 'teddy boy' cultures that quite blatantly carried out their mission of terrorising Asians. This was a reminder to them of being 'in the wrong place'.

Skellington (1992) and Layton-Henry (1992) assert that comments made in public by politicians such as Margaret Thatcher exacerbated racism and gave the power to the far right to promote an assumed legitimate campaign. Hiro (1991) has argued that immigration and nationality control cannot be detached from institutionalised racism, because of their racist and discriminatory nature. This is supported by Sachdeva (1993).

"My home is England, but I always refer to Pakistan as 'back home', but that's because my parents say 'back home' because to them that's more (important), they were born there and new that first" (R4.1).

She feels an attachment to her parental country of origin because her own parents were born in Pakistan and although she feels it is a distance part of her identity she still feel it is important to her as she is respecting her parental background. She further argues that identity is influence by the country of birth. Younger women in particular used the term 'back home' in the context of their cultural and parental heritage and did not use it in the context of describing their long-term residency in Pakistan.

The term 'back home' when talking about Pakistan but not seeing this as a country where they believed there long-term residency was. Instead it was more seen as somewhere they appreciated because their parents were from there like many of their extended families too. The majority of respondents felt that Pakistan was a country to which they had origins but the idea of living there long term was practically inconceivable and instead



they saw it as a place where they went to visit family or marry. It was seen as a place for an extended holiday not a place where they could set up home:

“We (young women) say ‘back home’ and you attach yourself to their place even though this (Britain) is our home. I’ve been born and brought up here. It’s culture. I consider myself to be British-Pakistani” (R2).

It is interesting that earlier on in her interview Respondent 2 kept reiterating her Muslim or religious identity as well as being British and of Pakistani Mirpuri origin, but then she goes on to say she considers herself to be British-Pakistani, therefore taking away the religious element and instead comparing like with like and in this case nationality with another nationality.

Modood et al (1997) found that young Asian people see themselves as British and not Pakistani. Din (2001) found that young Pakistani males and females in Bradford saw themselves as British and not Pakistani. Din (2001) further asserts that young people did not use hyphenated or multiple identities. This qualitative study has found the opposite. Pakistani Mirpuri females do associate themselves with both Pakistani and British cultures and values and see themselves as being Muslims who are British and of Pakistani Mirpuri heritage. The research evidence suggests they value this.

Respondent 4.3 feels that her identity is influenced by her parental heritage too and although she respects and appreciates these she feels that identity has evolved over the years so whilst parental heritage is important so too is the fact she is a Muslim who was born and brought up in Britain:

“I think we’ve (young women) got our own lives now but we’ve got some of their (parents) ideas absorbed into us. You do think about Pakistan but we don’t say ‘our home, though we say ‘back home’ (R4.3).

She feels that Pakistan is not their home, not where they belong. She feels England is her home and that this where she belongs. This research evidence shows that the respondents are keen to show off their multiple identities because to them identity is very personal and it is these personal characteristics, which make up their identity. Another young woman described herself as being:

“An average British-Muslim girl trying to have a good life with my husband and family” (R5).

It is worth noting she uses the word ‘average’ in her description suggesting she feels that she’s typical of many other British Muslim girls who are just like her.

#### **8.4 Identity of parents**

Younger women were asked to comment on how they felt their parents would describe their own identity. It is interesting as this question yielded some interesting and personal data:

“I think both (mum and dad) have strong ties to Pakistan.... they’d probably say Pakistani but then again they settled here and all of us (brothers and sisters) were born here so they might say British. That’s a tricky one” (R1).

It is clear that respondent 1 feels rather insecure and unsure of what her parents might describe their own identity as. She feels that other factors and not just the fact that her parents were born in Pakistan could influence their answer. She uses the words ‘strong ties’ to describe their personal connection and attachment to Pakistan, through family,

parents and place of birth. Similarly other respondents too felt that this was determined by their parents' birthplace:

“Pakistani, because they were born there, they grew up there”  
(R4.1 and R4.2).

This is interesting as this is an extension of their idea of partially describing their own identity in terms of their birthplace. One of the key and significant revelations was that although the majority of younger respondents described their identity in terms of religion, none made any reference to religious identity as far as their parents were concerned. However, the majority of younger women prioritised their British identity first and then their Pakistani, but more importantly the general consensus was that their religious identity, when mentioned, took priority over their British identity. When one nationality rather than their religious identification was mentioned, this usually referred to their place of birth. Since the majority of younger respondents were born in Britain they mentioned their British identity first.

Din (2001) found that older Pakistanis in Bradford were less likely to refer to Britain as 'home' and considered themselves to be Pakistani even though they used all the benefits of being British. They still considered Britain to be an immoral or 'kaffar' society. Hypocrisy prevailed in their assertions.

Stophes-Roe and Cochran's study (1990) argue that there was a gender gap that resulted in Asian males more than females being assimilated with British cultures and habits. Asian males were more like their English counterparts whereas Asian women were way behind in terms of dress, language and aspirations. Asian women dressed in traditional



Asian styles whereas men wore western styles of clothing as opposed to traditional Asian dress styles for men such as 'thambee-kurtha'. Men were likely to have English friends and mix with them in social gatherings but Asian women were not. This current study has found that older women feel very British indeed and at the same time are able to retain their Pakistaniness in terms of clothing they wear, language spoken and social activities.

Ghuman (1999) argues that Pakistanis consider themselves as British and their investment in business and property in Britain by them demonstrates this. However, Ghuman does not consider that the same can be applied to more Pakistanis in Britain who are investing money in land and property in affluent areas of Pakistan. They usually rent it out to people and only ever live in it when they visit Pakistan.

Although this qualitative empirical research has not explored the experiences of British males of Pakistani Mirpuri origin, it clearly demonstrates repeatedly that women, especially young Pakistani Mirpuri women, consider themselves British, Muslim and Pakistani. They have multiple identities that complement each other. The majority of older women in this study identified with being British, Muslim and Pakistani, similar sentiments to the younger women. This was interesting as previous research studies assume that older Pakistanis will say they are Pakistani and not British. Modood (1997) and Stophes-Roe and Cochrane also suggest this.

Other respondents felt surer of how their parents would describe their own identity. Though some respondent used an amalgamation of 2 nationalities, they prioritised the

Pakistani element over the British, thus implying a shift on emphasis in the later generation:

“For my parents it’s Pakistani-British” (R2).

In contrast to the views of the younger women on how they thought their parents would describe their identities, many of the older women saw Britain as their home but many still wanted to be buried in Pakistan when they died. Most of the women felt they wanted this, as although they had lived in Britain for most of their lives, the fact was that they had been born and raised in Pakistan and married there too and felt a strong bond and affection to Pakistan. They wanted to be laid to rest in Pakistan as a sign of their past although they appreciated their lives in Britain. However, on the issue of burial it is clear that some younger respondents found it difficult to understand why someone would want to be buried in Pakistan when their sons and daughters and grandchildren were in Britain:

“One lady passed away near us recently and I was having a conversation with my parents about it. I said ‘why are they (the lady’s family) taking the body to be buried in Pakistan? All her kids are here’”. (R4.2).

It is clear in the tone she says this, that R4.2 feels uncomfortable at this thought. Other young women also agreed and the data reveals that many of them do talk to their parents about the issue of where they want to be buried. This shows they respect the fact that parents have a choice and that choice ought to be acknowledged:

“Young people are aware their parents may wish to be buried ‘back home’. We ask parents where they want to be buried and they always say ‘ what ever is convenient for you” (R4.3).

Parents feel their death may inconvenience their children and families since there is attend within the Muslim community for large number of family to fly out with the dead person's body to Pakistan. This is very expensive. Sometime this is done out of choice but maybe forced upon them because of past obligations and the need to do so often exceeds the practicality or affordability. However, whilst many younger women respected their parent's last wishes, there was some contention from other siblings who felt that it was better for parents to be buried close by so they could visit their graves and respect them:

“My brother says he isn't going to bury my mum in Pakistan. I say to him ‘ it's her last wish so you have to do it for her” (R4.1).

This shows that the overall decision will be left up to the male sibling although the female sibling also comes across as being assertive too.

Respondent 5 mentioned that her parents were in eager anticipation of retiring to Pakistan once their responsibilities as parents had been fulfilled. This included the marriage of their sons and daughters. This must be very distressing to the young- to have their parents yearning to be elsewhere:

“My parents keep saying ‘all of you (sons and daughters) get married so we can go back to Pakistan’. It sounds strange because we'll all be here (in Britain) and they (parents) want to go back there (to Pakistan). I suppose it's their home. All their families and roots are there. I don't think I would live there permanently. I'd say this (Britain) is where I've been born and brought up but that links to Pakistan are important to me. They (links) trace back our traditions and cultural of ancestors” (R5).

Therefore this respondent feels that she is being respectful of her parents by acknowledging their choices of where they eventually want to live and their rationale for



this. She also feels a bond with Pakistan; because of her parents and appreciates this as she herself married her husband from there. She feels this bond is necessary to maintain historical and ancestral links and the fact that marriages such as hers are still taking place help sustain this. This is significant as it shows that the whole aspect of links to Pakistan, even though short-term, is still there.

### **8.5 Relationship with Pakistan**

Bhatti (1999) found that there are still close ties with Pakistan through marriages, regular visits and by sending money and keeping in touch by telephone. It can be argued that keeping in touch with relatives in Pakistan has been made easier and cheaper with a growing market of 'cheap' phone packages and 'phone cards'. People in Pakistan have been 'caught' up in the mobile phone age too, with almost every villager having access to one.

Interestingly, when most young women spoke about their relationship with Pakistan, it is clear that although Pakistan was important in their lives, because of parental origins and their family links, their life was not pre-occupied with this. Pakistan was seen as a 'second' home or a place to go for holidays. By saying 'second home', Respondent 8.2 feels that her main base is here in England, therefore prioritising where she feels she fits in:

“(England) is our home. We’ve spent all our time here. We think of England as our home and Pakistan as our second home. I just see Pakistan as a place to visit...England is our home. For our parents it’s different because they came here when they were older but we have been born here so we’ve been here longer and this is all we know” (R8.2).

Furthermore, respondents referred to England as ‘my country’ therefore emphasizing a strong allegiance to England, for many of whom, England was their birthplace. It is clear from Respondent 8.1 that she is clear that England is ‘her country’ but she is frustrated at not being accepted by White society because of her cultural and religious differences. She refers to racism as being an area where she feels this frustration most and feels that this is unnecessary, even though she considers herself to be a British Muslim. She feels that her identity and her sense of belonging are being dictated by politics. Note the slang used for yes, is typically English ladette type:

“Yeah, you just visit Pakistan, but England is my country. What really upsets me is when I see racism and that the National Front saying ‘get out!’ This is my home so why should I?” (R8.1).

She clearly feels angry and by emphasis ‘is’ in her last sentence she suggest by the tone of her voice that England is not just her home but her country and this is significant as it shows she is eager to part of her Muslim and Pakistani heritage as well as appreciating her British values. This is further supported by Respondent 7.2 who feels she has benefited positively from having experience both western and her Pakistani roots:

“I’m British and Pakistani at the same time. I was born in Britain...I speak English and Punjabi. I’ve got the best of both worlds really. I have experience of the British culture and our own culture” (R7.2).

This is interesting as Respondent 7.2 appreciates both cultures but refers to the Pakistani culture as her ‘own’ culture and therefore feels she has strong ties with her ancestral links. She also shows that the two cultures are different but also inter-twined too. It is worth commenting that she suggests a balanced experience of ‘both cultures’ rather than being schizophrenic.

For younger respondents who were parents themselves, it was important for them to ensure that their children were aware of their Pakistani origins, as this was one way of keeping family ties going. The important question is whose interest is this in; is it for the best intentions of British people of Pakistani Mirpuri origin or is it for the parents' benefits? This could mean that parents aspired for these ties with family and the biraderi to be maintained and for their children to be aware of this making it easier if they were to be married to someone from Pakistan or is it simply so that young people have first hand experience of their Pakistani Mirpuri roots for example through visiting relatives.

It is interesting that Respondent 10 argues she is 'not ashamed' of her Pakistani origins as she feels that if she was in denial of these she would not want to pass them on to her children. Interestingly she is making the decision assuming her young children will share her views and sentiments when they grow up:

"I consider myself to be a British-Muslim. I was brought up here. I'm proud of my Pakistani origins and not ashamed at all. It's important for me that my children have that link with Pakistan, that's our history" (R10).

She feels it is her past, she also feels that this past history is the basis for her children's future too. Therefore the majority of respondents felt their identity was based on a mixture of cultural and religious heritages "which we are born with" (R11).

The research evidence shows that Pakistani Mirpuri women have a strong sense of who they are. Like young people in other cultures and societies they may 'rebel' or 'argue'



with their parents because they want more 'freedom'. Some of the previous research has suggested they are dissatisfied and disaffected because they have a 'culture-crisis'.

This research evidence shows that young women feel they have a strong identity, which is influenced by many issues including their age, marital status, their place of birth and their parents and their jobs. Their identities are not fixed and they are largely enjoying being able to have the privilege of having more than one identity. Again this goes back to the point made earlier on, that their identities are balanced and not schizophrenic. This current research evidence portrays a very different picture to that mentioned of Pakistanis in earlier research. Taylor (1967), pointed out that Asian immigrant children were labelled as the 'half-way generation' because of the assumed disillusion and confusions of coming into a new culture and environment. They were deemed as depressed and because of their 'special' religious needs they were alienating themselves from mainstream society.

Some previous research suggests that Pakistanis make regular and frequent visits to Pakistan for various reasons including marriages, deaths, to visit friends and relatives or to take an extended holiday (Stephens-Roe and Cochrane, 1990, Ghuman, 1994, Modood et al, 1997).

In contrast to young women's perceptions of how their parents would describe their own identity, the majority of older women interviewed in this research defined their long term identity in terms of their residency in Britain, so whereas the young women felt that

because they were born in England, they were British, the older women felt that been though they were not born in Britain, the fact that they had lived here for much of their lives was enough to say:

“We live here (England), so we are British” (R9.2).

“Islam, makes it clear that wherever you live, take that as being your home. Therefore we older generation) are British because we live here and have spent so much of our life here. We are Pakistani too, there is no doubt, but that is secondary” (R9.6).

Respondent 9.6 does not wish to deny her Pakistani origins and her experiences, but feels that whilst she is living in England she is British. Again this goes back to the point made earlier that even with the Scots, Welsh or English, when they are abroad they refer to being British and only here, do they prefer to stipulate being Welsh, English or Scottish. Respondent 9.6 shares these sentiments. By starting off with using her Islamic perspective, she indicates that it is more important to live as a British-Muslim so she is able to balance her religious identity with her British experience.

Only one respondent (R9.5) from the older women argued that she was Pakistani and not British. In fact she was in denial of having any British values and justified this in terms of her bad experiences upon coming to England and because she held a Pakistani passport. She was met with a barrage of criticism from other women for what they describes her ‘narrow minded and negative opinions of the White people’ and several women echoed and responded by arguing with her. Resentment like prejudice can come from insecurity and defensiveness:

“We live in Britain, so we are British. Pakistan is our past and England is our future because it our kids future” (R9.9).

This is very significant as it shows that respondents feel that future generations are more likely to settle in England and have little contact with Pakistan. These parents felt that they, as parents, were responsible for the link that their children had with Pakistan at the moment, but then as generations pass away so will the link with Pakistan.

Similarly respondent 9.1, also an elderly lady argued her view that there should be no room for intolerance or unacceptance, as it was more important to create unity in residency through her faith in Islam:

“Both countries (England and Pakistan) are important to me. At the end of the day, it doesn’t matter where we live because we are Muslims” (R9.1).

She suggests she feels a sense of wasting time over contemplating which identity if any is more of a priority and which is secondary. She feels that time is precious and instead of wasting up energy on this debate it is more important to unite and live in harmony with each other because she feels at the end of the day:

“We will die and go to our graves” (R9.1).

These debates will not benefit the dead person or prepare them for the afterlife. Instead they wanted to live a ‘good’ Islamic life. Several other older women, in the group including Respondent 9.8 echoed this view:

“Pakistan is important because that’s where our roots are. We have lived here (in England) and in Pakistan for so long and have been successful. So what if there have been some ‘problems’ along the way. That is Allah’s will but what I’m saying is that we shouldn’t be saying ‘I’m this and I’m that. We are all Muslims” (R9.8).



Although respondent 9.8 is proud of her Pakistani heritage and ancestral links she is also not denying her British experience. She also in her response makes it clear that although she is living in Pakistan she also returns to Pakistan on visits and also keeps up the relationship with regular contact with family, she feels that that people are quick to blame society for their misgivings, when she in fact argues that in her opinion it is the way Allah has prescribed destiny. Very few respondents actually put Pakistan as their prime identity, unlike Respondent 9.4:

“First it is Pakistan then it is England” (R9.4).

However interestingly, the majority of respondents did say that both identities were important to them, but they felt that Britain was their home. This was also revealed in the fact the majority of respondents were unsure of where their last resting-place ought to be.

With the exception of Respondent 9,5 who argued:

“We are all from Pakistan and that’s where I want to be buried.  
That is my homeland” (R9.5).

There was a difference between considering Britain their home, being British but feeling their final resting place was in the country where they were born and brought up. Thus there is a difference between ‘home’ and ‘identity’. The majority of respondents argued that their children’s wishes and what ever Allah had planned for them would determine this:

“Our children say ‘where do you want to be buried?’ this is about  
‘mitye thi mut’ and whatever Allah intends” (R9.2).

## Summary

The majority of respondents in this research argued that having a dual or multiple identities did not cause any problems. They had collective identities. In fact most respondents suggested that they benefited hugely from having being exposed to 'Asian' and 'English' cultures. It is worth noting very few respondents used the word 'English' and chose words such as 'British' or 'Western' more readily. Similarly Respondents chose Mirpuri or Pakistani as opposed to 'Asian' thus suggesting they are differentiating from other 'Asian' groups:

The general consensus was that multiple identities facilitates the lives of Pakistani Mirpuri women, especially young women. Being proud of their backgrounds was very important to respondents. Interestingly Respondent 10 uses the word 'coconut' to describe one's outward identity with the inward identity- that is being brown on the outside and white on the inside. The fact is that the sense of strong personal identity depends on the recognition of all the factors that are inherited rather than denying them. An acceptance of inheritance is a major fact in personal self worth. What matters is inward. Appearances matter but are secondary.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Findings from stage C: Marriage**

#### **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines the findings on the issue of marriage. The issue is important because of the cultural implications and the image of marriages amongst Pakistanis generally. Nine younger respondents (stage C) were married or engaged to be married at the time of the study whilst the older women were married or had been married and were now widowed.

#### **9.2 Importance of marriage**

Several themes with reference to marriage came out of this research. These include the overall consensus that arranged marriages were much better and more successful than their reputation would make one believe. Several respondents had mentioned that their marriages were out of choice but were initially instigated by parents. They mentioned choice in the context that their parents had consulted with them and they had given their consent to the marriage. This implies that arranged marriages are not as simple as a 'blind date'.

What is revealing is that many of the older respondents acknowledged and accepted the fact that young people can often be placed under a great deal of pressure to marry someone they do not want to but whom parents want them to marry. This is an important point, as parents are owning up to the fact that pressures on forcing someone to marry are wrong and un-Islamic but that they do happen. This acknowledgement is a huge step into



understanding the tensions that can emerge between parents and young people and an important sign of the development of Islam in the contemporary world.

Although this research only focuses on women, it is argued and accepted that males also come under pressures to marry against their wishes. Hypocrisy is prevalent in attitudes of some parents in that they are quick to judge other parent's actions but will not scrutinise their own behaviours and attitudes:

“You hear parents talking about whose divorced or someone who beats his wife and other parents sit there and say ‘they shouldn’t have forced them into the marriage in the first place but then when it comes to the crunch they don’t actually follow their own advice’” (R2).

Forced marriages were met with negativity, arranged marriages were much more favourable by young women. Forced marriages were those considered to have taken place vehemently against the wishes of one or both of the marriage partners. Forced marriages usually take place where parents have used emotional blackmail on the youngsters involved and they give in to parental demands. Arranged marriages are those which have the full consent of the youngsters and are done in accordance with Islamic Sharia Law. Sharia Law demands that the couple are happy and consent to the marriage. Whilst there were mixed views on ‘love marriages’, Respondent 2 felt this was because these had western connotations to them i.e. boy meets girl and a physical relationship begins:

“I don’t agree with love marriages unless they are done in the Islamic way, that is courting shouldn’t be there without the consent of parents” (R1)

The vast majority of respondents were happy to accept an arranged marriage but only if they had a say in the matter. Respondents were clear about what they meant by the different terms of marriage and this categorisation and classification is interesting:

“I think there are 3 categories of marriage. 1. forced - that’s where the boy and girl don’t want to get married yet parents force them physically or emotionally and put pressure on the couple. They do it in the end to out everyone up and once they’re married they find it hard to get on. 2 - arranged marriage is where you marry your cousin and 3 - you see someone and tell your parents and they arrange it” (R2).

This quotation also shows that this young respondent has the idea that arranged marriages are synonymous with marrying cousins and the wider biraderi. The later option, option 3 could also imply a love marriage. This suggests that young people and parents are experiencing not only a shift or change in attitudes but also a more equal balancing of power. Parents have to meet half way with their children. This is something that is new to many parents since in their own childhood and teenage years the relationship with their parents might have been one where rules were stricter. This is worth noting since this research reveals that young people, whilst rebelling against their parental cultural interpretation of Islam, are willing to take on cultural behaviours which they see as self-benefiting and at the same time have the power to reject behaviours which do not meet with their needs or those they do not agree with.

The research evidence suggests that as long as young women have a say in the parental choice of marriage partner they are happy. Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) assert arranged marriages were considered as the ‘norm’ amongst their respondents and that a marriage was the ‘natural’ course in growing up. It was inevitable, regardless of whether

one wanted to get married or not. Ghuman (1994) supports these findings. Most respondents said they trusted their parent's judgement when it came to selecting a marriage partner:

“My dad arranged it all so I had no worries. I knew his choice would be right. I wasn't worried or anything. I definitely had a choice and it wasn't forced....I said yes because I knew my family wouldn't do anything that is bad for me. .. I was happy with it and so were my parents. It was completely my choice” (R5).

Respondent 3 feels 'lucky' that she is happy to comply with her parent's choice, thus suggesting that the situation could have been reversed if she disagreed with the match. She further suggests that her parents made the choice and she merely agreed. She also suggests that her father controlled the situation and she just went with the flow because she had complete trust in him.

This can either suggest a close relationship with her father and her family or on the other hand suggest something much deeper and sinister, such as compliance due to fear of going against the parent's wishes. She also suggests contrasting views to that of Respondent 5 and chooses much more personal and self-directed words to describe her experiences of marriage. She suggests a sense of suspicion and uncertainty of her parent's choice of marriage partner. She feels fortunate that her family's decision was good. Her experience is a positive one since she is in a happy marriage, but it is important to point out what if the parental 'choice' of marriage suitor is wrong and incompatible?

“I'm lucky that my family made the right choice for me” (R3).



### **9.3 Marrying from Pakistan**

Ghuman (1994) and Modood et al (1997) found that Pakistani parents would consider marrying their sons or daughters to relatives in Pakistan, in order to maintain links and ties with the family there. Parents would not consider marrying their sons or daughters to non-relatives in Pakistan.

This is interesting but the question remains why this is the case? Is it simply because they do not want to disappoint relatives and to avoid breaking up biraderi or is it because they fear that if the marriage breaks down then the repercussions would be huge. They do not want to take the risk of this happening. Anwar (1998) found that marrying someone from Pakistan was unthinkable by many young Muslims for various practical and religious reasons. Issues relating to language and communication problems are well documented (Brah 1992, Mirza, 1992). There was the idea that people should be in love with each other before the marriage and not just hope that this will happen afterwards (Modood et al, 1997, Anwar 1998, Bhatti 1999). This current study has demonstrated a different picture. Several of the respondents who were unmarried did not think that marrying a cousin or non-cousin from Pakistan was a bad idea.

They thought this sort of marriage carried with it the same odds of success or failure as marrying someone from England or anywhere else in the world. They were realistic in their aspirations. Respondents made some references to domestic violence and patriarchy. Some respondents mentioned how they knew of other female relatives that did not have the freedom they wanted, not even in simple things such as going to relatives houses, to shops or in terms of how they dress or who they speak to. They talked about men taking

control of the young women's lives and how this was unjust. They were very much against the ideas of oppression and patriarchy (Mirza, 1992).

Brah (1985) found young Asians did not reject arranged marriages; they rejected parents forcing them into a marriage, which they did not want. Brah (1985) found that parents were against forcing young people into a marriage because of the consequences such as divorce. Stophes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) found that young people were 'happy' with arranged marriages but only if they were consulted first. Din (2001) points out that young people wanted to marry someone from Britain and not Pakistan.

They have a huge problem where parents feel they do not have to consult young women and make the decisions on their behalf. The problem and area of difference is with arranged marriage and forced marriage. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of young women who were married had gone through an arranged marriage. Just two younger women had married partners of their own choice. This had by no means been an easy journey for them.

This study argues that although young people do want to get married and it is not a practice that they consider to be outdated. They have a stereotyped view of the 'west' and marriage ideas. The term West is used in relation to White English people. This is a point that is important elsewhere in the discussions too:

“Western people think that marriage is an outdated practice and I disagree” (R4.3).

#### 9.4 The role of parents in marriages

Whilst young women know that Muslims, males or females, have an equal say in marriage, some parents would rather have things done on their terms. The young consider this to be a cultural misinterpretation of Islam whereas they believe themselves to have a much closer Islamic understanding. The issue is not about marriage but about control and power. Parents want to control their children's behaviour through marriage. Parents feel young people who are more educated about Islam and their rights are challenging their authority.

Respondents mentioned how the topic of marriage would be brought up at family gatherings and this was one of the most important of parental duties even though it may not be high on the list of priorities for young girls:

“When you're 18 or so other people start looking for your rishta and they start coming for you” (R4.2).

Respondents discussed marrying partners from Pakistan. Some respondents disagreed with marrying partners from Pakistan. The reasons given were largely around the incompatibility of two people who are born and brought up in two very different societies, especially if the partner is from a village, thus they are recognising their own culture:

“You need that understanding otherwise you'll hit problems...sometimes the couple might have problems with communication.” (R2).



Compatibility and a common grounding were cited as important factors to be born in mind when parents choose a potential partner from Pakistan. It is worth noting a 'new' modern upward attitude to educational aspirations and suitable marriage matches:

“It’s wrong if one person is educated here and then goes to marry an uneducated cousin from Pakistan” (R10).

There is acceptance and acknowledgement that this should apply not just to an educated British girl going to Pakistan but also a male in the same situation:

“Boy or girl its wrong” (R10).

Other respondents felt that marrying from Pakistan has been labelled negatively and felt that each marriage had to be treated on its own merits. Therefore it is not fair to disregard a marriage to a person from Pakistan based on stereotypes. She points out that there are some people in Pakistani who are more cosmopolitan than Pakistani Muslims in Britain. This could be in relation to their attitudes towards marriage, females and fashion. She feels there is a stereotyped image of Pakistani men as being unable to integrate into British society but she feels this is wrong and could apply to anyone from anywhere in the world:

“You could have concerns when you marry people from here or anywhere in the world. They are up to date from there too. Professional and educated people” (R5).

Respondent 7.2 chose to break up an engagement that her parents her family had organised for her to a British born cousin, in favour of marrying her cousin in Pakistan whom she knew:

“I was supposed to go through a marriage to someone in the family in Birmingham but I cancelled that...how was I supposed to spend the rest of my life with this person and I felt I couldn’t. so I got

married to my cousin from Pakistan myself. It was better for me”  
(R7.2).

Anwar (1998) found young ‘Asians’ did not wish to marry someone from Pakistan. Interestingly, their parents also agreed with this. He found that young girls were more likely not to want to marry from Pakistan. Whilst there are very few statistics on how many women are forced to marry partners from abroad, awareness of the issue is growing within the Home Office, who have commissioned work on this area. It is interesting that they have appointed a young girl who herself was put in this unfortunate position by her parents to work with them and raise this sensitive issue. In Bradford, the police have their own community officer who deals with this.

What is surprising is that this research uncovers the fact that those young women, who were not yet married, wanted to get married as soon as possible. The vast majority were willing to marry someone their parents approved of, but only if they were given the choice of having the ultimate say in the matter.

Parents were against the idea of forced marriage for their children. A forced marriage was where one or both of the couple did not want or consent to the marriage. Parents enforced their decision on them regardless. By enforcing the marriage there was every possibility it ending in divorce or ‘talaq’. Talaq is one only permitted if it the only option to the couple. The penalties of taking talaq lightly or easily are very strict. Marriage breakdowns and divorce are extremely sensitive in all cultures and societies.

Respondents were clear about why parents might not want to listen to young people about their preferred marriage partners. This was specifically geared at ensuring the biraderi network is sustained: Respondent 2 was aware of some of the tactics that older members of the family in particular may deploy in order to try and persuade young women to marry someone they had chosen. Emotional blackmail was practiced by elders in the hope that youngsters will agree if only to show respect for the elders as this is important in Pakistani:

“My granddad even tried to convince me to say yes to that lad and he kept saying I’d let him and my family down by saying no and that it wasn’t too late to say yes.” (R2).

Again hypocrisy was there:

“They call themselves Muslims but then it’s not right and it’s not Islamic to force your children into marriages with someone they don’t want to” (R8.1).

Respondent’s favoured arranged marriages but only if they were done with the full consent of the boy and girl:

“I agree to arrange marriages but only, if like mine, they are done on an Islamic way. I think that all Muslims should have an arranged marriage. Sometimes they do go wrong but that can be avoided if parents suggest someone and then the boy and girl have a say in the matter and agree to it if they feel they are suitable and compatible” (R10).

## **9.5 The ‘ideal’ partner**

Respondents had clear ideas about the sort of person they wanted to marry. Typically, they had preferences for an educated person who was understanding and shared a similar



outlook to life. This is important as they are seeking a person who is on the same intellectual level as themselves and share common interests:

“Someone who’s educated. I don’t want a dipstick i.e. those who hang out on streets, they think they are studs but they’re just stupid. Someone who isn’t sexist... looks are a bonus” (R2).

It is worth noting the slang Respondent 2 uses to describe characteristics that would put her off potential marriage partner. Describing a person's characteristics with the word ‘dipstick’ indicates the person is immature, unreasonable, has poor looks, and is average or below average, possibly uneducated but also someone who is educated but trapped in a time warp or a ‘nerd’. It is common to see older Muslim men with beards but now there is also an indication that many younger Muslim males sport beards. This has religious significance and it is considered ‘sunnat’ for men to keep a beard. Respondent 2 was aware of this cultural immersion and this was one attribute she wished a potential husband to have assurances:

“Clean shaven would be good but now I think that if he had a short beard that would be Okay. There are lots of benefits and rewards for a Muslim man keeping a beard (R2).

## **9.6 Forced marriages**

Some respondents made reference to the pressure that parents faced in their biraderi, especially to keep family members happy and content even if this meant sacrificing the happiness of the young people involved. Some respondents made reference to friends or family or people they knew or had heard of, going through a marriage that was against their wishes:

“I know a girl whose going to Pakistan and she’s gonna marry a guy even though she doesn’t want to, for the sake of the family” (R2).

She was sympathetic and angry by this situation and it is worth noting the fine line she suggests in her argument:

“I hate it when that happens” (R2).

Similarly Respondent 8.2 acknowledged that this unfortunate practice of forced marriages does occur but that does not make it right or condonable. She give the impression she is pragmatic in what she says, she suggests as a matter of fact, pragmatically, that arranged marriages in her personal opinion are not correct and they are more likely to end in disaster. She also demonstrates a contradiction in what she says, so even though she doesn’t agree with the practice of arranged marriages, she still states how she ‘always knew she was going to have an arranged marriage’. She further suggests that her parents make decisions on marriage without consulting with their children and sometimes this results in the couple concerned divorcing. She suggests a clash of attitudes in terms of what her personal ideals would be and the realistic and pragmatic situation she is in.

“..I mean it does happen and that’s really sad. Some girls get forced and they’re not even asked their opinion. Their parents don’t even ask them if they want to get married to that person and that’s when you get problems” (R8.2).

Again there is the distinction between a consensual marriage and one that is parentally enforced on them. A breakdown in communication and parental-children relationships was cited as one of the biggest problems and causes of forced marriage:

“Parents should co-operate with the kids and work with them. They should sit down with the kids and ask them and discuss things” (R8.2).

Additionally marriages went ahead to protect the honour or izzat of the family:

“Some girls and boys go through a marriage for the sake of the family izzat and then are unhappy for the rest of time...communicating without being embarrassed is so important otherwise parents just make decisions without consulting their sons and especially daughters” (R3).

Note the acknowledgment that males also experience forced marriage pressure and not just females. Some respondents said they talked about marriage aspirations with other female members of the immediate family:

“I talk to my mum about it, sisters and brothers quite openly but not with dad. I joke with my dad a lot but not chat about marriage” (R4.1).

She cites having ‘too much respect’ for her dad to talk about such a thing. Similarly respondent 4.4 aired this issue of the respect for fathers:

“That’s not to say we’re not close with our dads, but it’s more about respect and not saying things which might be embarrassing to them” (R4.4).

Other respondents were quick to defend this and argued that this was applicable to their white counterparts:

“Even white girls don’t talk about certain things to their dads” (R4.1).



## 9.7 Parental control

Younger respondents felt that the behaviour of their parents was 'backwards' and not tolerant of young people questioning them. Parents resented the fact that their authority was being questioned and scrutinized by younger people. Respondent 8.2 uses the word 'genuine' to understand and support parental concerns about young peoples' actions and behaviours as being well founded. She makes the distinction that females are more likely than males to have restrictions on them. She also implies that izzat lies with females and parents are aware that unless they restrict females they may do something that endangers or impinges on the izzat of them. This suggests the biraderi will watch and comment on the family:

"I think parents have a genuine fear about their daughters and I think its all to do with their backgrounds, the way they were brought up and what they were taught by their parents... they follow traditions they carry these even stronger with their daughters these days" (R8.2).

Some parents felt that their power to control, would be eroded and their authority questioned if they asked for the opinion of young people, especially females:

"Some parents think they're not strict enough if they sit down and do this" (R8.2).

"I think there are some forced marriages but more arranged marriages but we don't hear about these stories. People are quick to talk about forced marriages and then make it out as if the whole Pakistani community do that and that gives a bad name and image" (R8.3).

The traditional 'Pakistani family' was undergoing change:

"As kids grow up and its time to get married. That's when families break up because relatives say 'oh they didn't do rishta from

here...my chacha is naraaz with us because my family said no to him, you know for his son” (R4.2).

On the other hand Respondent 10, who herself had gone a happy arranged marriage argued in favour of the arranged marriage system and its intention of keeping the family linkage and was even contemplating keeping the tradition going with her children but only if suitable matches in terms of education and age were found:

“I as a parent would only consider marriage in the family subject to the suitability of partners. I think it is important to keep this family based marriage system going otherwise all the history will be lost” (R10).

Respondents believed that the intention behind an arranged marriage was clear:

“They (parents) try to keep it (family links) through marriage and sometimes marriages break down” (R4.3).

Other respondents agreed:

“Yes and then that breaks up the family and so its worse than it begins with” (R4.1).

Sometimes young women had different expectations of a potential marriage suitor and young women thinking that marrying a close cousin was a bit uncomfortable for them whilst for their parents it was not a problem. This goes back to showing that some parents are still holding on to their own marital experiences:

“ He was nice but I thought he’s too closely related so I probably thought I would never marry him” (R5).

Her parent’s choice of close marital partner is reflective of the way they too were closely related to each other prior to getting married:

“The way my dads' related to my mum is that my mum's married her auntie's son” (R5).

The majority of respondents were married or engaged or expected to marry a close relative either in Britain or in Pakistan:

“He's my aunts son” (R7.1).

“He's my aunties son. My dad's sister's son. He's from Pakistan” (R5).

“My uncle's son” (R3).

For respondent 10, it was naturally expected and inevitable that she would marry her close relative:

“I always knew I was going to marry my cousin” (R10).

For respondent 7.1 had married her cousin from Britain and has 1 young child. Although she claims her parents arranged her marriage with her consent, she was against arranged marriages. She was more towards a love marriage i.e. having the choice to date someone, unrelated or related and then marry. Her ideas of dating and getting to know people are westernised. In some ways she has a sense of regret of not having the opportunity to marry someone she had met, dated and then married:

“Arranged marriages I don't think work out. Like I say I always knew I was going to marry him from day one but like my sister has married someone she doesn't even know from Birmingham. After a year she got divorced because she liked someone else and the first one was forced to marry her and we didn't know them at first so I wouldn't go for an arranged marriage. I'd go for a love marriage where you can go out with people and marry them” (R7.1).



## 9.8 Impact of marriage

For some respondents, their lives had changed for the better by getting married. They liked the idea of marriage but the important question is whether all girls may secretly like the idea of marriage too?

“Married life has enhanced my life. Its like my life has more structure and meaning to it. I know where I'm going and I've got goals set whereas before, I was close to my parents I still knew something was missing. Now that I'm married, it's brought me closer to them ..I'm much more secure” (R5).

For R7.1 getting married had a positive impact on her life like having her daughter. She felt that the extra commitment had curtailed her life in other ways and she feels she misses out on things like meeting with friends and socialising. She also indicates that now she is married she has to be more responsible as she is a wife as well as a mother. It is worth noting her personal sense of identity and independence. She feels she has to be accountable to her in-laws as traditional guidelines on respecting elders and in-laws still hold strong:

“Sometimes I think if I was single life would be better because you don't have the same freedom now as you do when you are single, you don't have to listen to people. You can do more things when you are single” (R7.1).

Although separation and divorce are frowned upon, some respondents did acknowledge that even if someone had a love marriage or an arranged marriage, problems could occur leading to marriage breakdown:

“Sometimes they (marriages) do go wrong” (R10).

When a young woman refuses to marry someone her parents have chosen she is ostracised and isolated from the family and community:

“I broke off the arrangements and it made me sort of an outsider with some people” (R7.2).

Basit (1997) points out that arranged marriages are favoured by the young respondents in her study because she suggests that all Muslim parents are caring and will not go against the wishes of their children. This is rather naïve because it is far too idealistic and does not give any room for debate about the often torrid relationship between parents and their children. Din (2001) found that inter-generational tensions were high amongst Mirpuri elders and young people. Although the study looked at the experiences of young people aged 14-16 in Bradford it found that tensions were there more generally and not just confined to his school pupils.

## 9.9 Caste

The issue of caste is very complex and is even more sensitive where marriage is concerned. Some respondents were unsure and uneasy about the concepts of biraderi and caste and questioned this:

“What is biraderi? I mean I can see what the extended family means but we’re not supposed to believe in caste are we? That confuses me” (R4.2).

“Caste IS biraderi. They’re too close to being separated” (R4.4).

Some attempts were made to distinguish the two concepts:

“Caste is Baines, Ghujar, Jhat and biraderi is family” (R4.4).

Caste was linked to ancestors and what their professional occupations were whereas biraderi was the entire link in the family:

“I think it’s about what your ancestors did way back then like Mystri, and that” (R4.1).

The difference in meaning were different between some respondents and what their parents believed:

“My parents might be Baines but I’m not. I’m simply a Muslim” (R4.1).

#### **9.10 Case study- marriage- The Mirpuri way**

Slowly, particular themes emerged from the respondents’ views on marriage. One of the major significant findings from the data revealed illuminating experiences of the women in this research. It shows they are against forced marriages but that arranged marriages are acceptable because here the couple will have consented to the marriage. This case study demonstrates how marriages are performed in Pakistani Mirpuri communities and how the customs and ceremonies are celebrated in the UK and in Mirpur, Pakistan. The issue of caste has been discussed here and is one of the major areas where potential inter-generational and gender tensions related to marriage arise (Din, 2001).

The very interesting point highlighted in this research is that young women will consider marrying someone from Pakistan, if they approved of the match. That is crucial since previous research has indicated otherwise, in that young people do not wish to marry someone from Pakistan. The other illuminating factor is that the parents in this research study all agree that forced marriages are not condonable and are un-Islamic and whilst



this supports previous research, this research study also identifies that parents' wish to consult actively with their children to ensure that the correct choice of marriage partner is made. One of the main reasons is that parents are aware that there is a shift in generational attitudes of marriage and linkage to the birdaderi in Pakistan. Whilst loyalties to family are maintained, the older generation wish to marry their children outside the immediate family equation in order to keep the peace and prevent family break ups.

In order to understand the importance of marriage amongst Pakistani Mirpuris it is important to understand the basic principles behind the scenes of such a marriage. This case study is applicable to arranged marriages and love marriages and even forced marriages since the customs and ceremonies are all the same. It is useful to have a framework that helps us understand the Pakistani Mirpuri community more. This case study on marriage offers an insight into the traditions and customs in typical Pakistani Mirpuri wedding preparations.

Whilst it used to be customary in many parts of Pakistan for marriage matches to be made as soon as the baby was born, times have changed. For example, if there were two sisters and one give birth to a boy, then the parents used to say 'if you give birth to a daughter, then she will marry our son'. So this transaction of marriage is made early on. It is assumed that the young people, as they grow up, will accept the marriage. To assume this is indeed naive.

Wedding ceremonies can last for weeks with large financial bills. Inter-cousin and cross-continental marriages are still happening. It is common for a young woman who had been brought up and born in England to marry a cousin or member of the biraderi from Pakistan. This is usually done in the name of the izzat of the family and feel it is a natural expectation of them.

Lavish clothes for the bride and groom can cost a fortune on their own. Parents often give their daughters 'tumma' (gold jewellery) as a gift and the amount in weight (thola) and the grooms' family usually matches cost. These range from nath (nose piece), jummar (hair piece), tikka (worn in the centre of the hair and resting on the forehead), ganna (necklace), murkee (earings), kajrey (heavy bracelets), banga (bracelets), panj angla (five ringed, heavily decorated bracelet worn on the back of the hand) and shappa (rings). The families will usually get together and discuss what each will give to the bride.

It is common then for the bride to be and her mother to go along to the local jewellery shop and order the jewellery. Other sisters and the groom's family may also join in. Usually, because of the expense involved, more than one trip is paid and the family will shop around for the best deal, as it is common to barter at the shops. Shopkeepers can be quite accommodating and the family leave with a 'good deal' being done. As with most marriages, there is a lot of excitement and an atmosphere of happiness is always apparent. The situation may not be the same in the case where the marriage is being planned against the wishes of one or both the couple involved. Usually, in these circumstances the bride will not show much interest in what is going on, she cant be 'bothered' to get

involved with all the trips to the Asian clothes shops, the jewellery shops or with choosing wedding cards, venues or anything like that.

It has become customary to have wedding receptions (valimas) or the engagement ceremony (nikha) being performed at lavish and expensive restraints. In Pakistan huge wedding halls have been built to accommodate weddings. Families will travel from afar to ensure that reservations are made. The men usually take control of the costs and arrangements. The girls will have her own 'circle of close friends to help her prepare for the wedding. Usually these will be school friends, neighbours and so on. These are her 'brides maids'. The groom to be will also have his own circle of male friends to help him prepare for marriage. These are his 'best men'.

What precedes the grand finale of the valima are several ceremonies including menthi-mania (henna ceremony). The family of the boy will spend weeks and gathering together and reciting old folk songs. Food is prepared and eaten, the house, is decorated with lighting, balloons and other pieces. The trend for setting off fireworks to mark the beginning of the wedding and the ending of the wedding are all part of the celebrations. This is the trend for both city and village weddings in Pakistan and this practice has been transplanted in Britain, although met with some opposition from both white and other Asians including Pakistanis. Weddings and the way weddings are performed are very much about identity. The idea is that the more extravagant the wedding is, the more 'izzat' the family has. This suggests the families will try and please the biraderi at the expense of their own means.



Some families are known to have decorated the entire house if not the main living area of the house before the wedding ceremonies. This is interesting as it shows that they want to 'look good' in the eyes of the biraderi. It is common for biraderi members to comment on the interior décor of the house.

The bride's family in particular will have spent ages buying gifts for her and the groom's immediate family. It is been known that the brides family will have brought so much furniture and electrical equipment which as just been 'sat' there and not used. So presently there is a trend for families to get together and present the bride and groom with a cheque that they can use for a deposit on a house or to spend as they wish. Some families do this out of choice whilst others will do it out of pressure to please the groom's family and the biraderi. There is therefore a huge element of preserving one's izzat in the biraderi.

Families know that other relatives and members of the biraderi, especially the females are likely to make comments and talk about what the bride's family have given her. As mentioned earlier weddings are about identity and therefore it is imperative for families to marry within the same biraderi or 'caste' for example Raja's, Choudrey's and lesser castes are based on the profession of the ancestry of the family i.e. landowners are Choudrey's and Raja's whereas Mochis and Mahjars are landless often poorer people. Parents will do their very best to ensure that marriages from a lower class does not take place. However it is interesting to note that although very few empirical data is valuable, some traditional families have allowed for their daughters and sons to marry outside if the

caste desired. Again the problem here is that there are not enough statistics to indicate the accurate numbers. Marriages to non-Muslims are another issue worth considering.

No matter how orthodox the family is, it is frowned upon when a young man or woman marry outside their own religious group. For young men, though, as long as their marriage partner has converted to Islam it is more acceptable than if a young girl was to do the same. It is ironic that some Muslim parents would rather accept an English girl who has converted to Islam than anyone from another religious background.

The traditional colours of the wedding dress for the bride used to be red. The garment was a shalwar-kameez, but now both here in Britain and in Pakistan, because of the vast choice available, colours have changed and the style too, with brides opting to wear lenga or saris instead. Brides will wear anything from maroon to blue. Usually, depending on how expensive the lenga (wedding garment) is, the garment is heavy with embroidery and sequins. The garment is made up of the long skirt, a short top (which can either be short sleeved, sleeveless or long sleeved) and the dubbata (large headscarf). Again depending on the cost of the garment, the dubbata is heavy and weighted with embroidery and sequins.

It is known that some families will travel all the way to Pakistan, to purchase the lenga and other garments and gifts because of the low costs there. This says a lot about making the statement of family unity and collectiveness similar to having shared identities. It is interesting to note that the different currencies means different things for people living in

Britain and those in Mirpur Pakistan. For example when someone from Britain buys a dress for 2,000 rupees, that is the equivalent to around £40.00, it can be viewed as snapping a bargain, where those in Pakistan will think that this is a bit steep. A family can live off 2,000 Rupees for a couple of weeks in Pakistan and usually this can be reflective of a months salary in some parts.

The gifts for the bride and groom and the immediate family are known as the 'bari'. These are displayed publicly for the family to see. Usually this is of interest to female members only. Some families will go to a lot of trouble in decorating a small bedroom with mannequins, dressed in the groom and brides clothing, the bed decorated with flowers, and all the gifts and clothing items placed perfectly for everyone to see. This set up resembles something which at best can be described as a 'show room' and something which as specifically been staged for the biraderi and guests to see. Again, this all is based on keeping up appearances and the izzat of the family.

The ceremonies used to take place at the parental home of the bride and groom but there is now a trend to book local facilities such as a community centre to hold the ceremony. Time varies but these take place in the early evening and last up to 4 or 5 hours. It is customary for the guests to leave a sum of money as a 'wedding present' to the couple. This is known as 'nenthra'. For biraderi and wider guests this is usually around £10.00 per household with closer members giving anything up to £50-£100.00 pounds. A register is kept and the details of everyone giving is recorded along with the amount. This is



important to the family, since they believe that this will be returned when a member of the giving family marries.

Usually the wedding takes place over two days, either on a weekend or less commonly within the working day week. The Pakistani Authorities go through sporadic periods of imposing restrictions on lavish wedding ceremonies for fear that people can abuse the system by making outrageous demands on the bride's family. This again goes against Islamic teachings of modesty. If the wedding is in different cities then the families will pay for coaches to transport guests to and from the wedding. Families will meet at the groom's house since it is customary for the groom to travel to the bride's house first and engage in fun with the family and then travel to the hall with the bride in suite. The first meeting of the bride and groom is usually at the wedding hall when both will have travelled separately to the hall and meet outside.

The couple are showered with flowers and confetti and enter the wedding hall to applause and great excitement. The hall is busy with loud music blaring, and guests usually arrive even before the bride and groom come in. The hall is decorated with a 'stage' or seating area where the bride and groom will be seated in full show of the guests. Presents will often be placed on the table along with specially designed backdrops. Some families will go to professional business and pay them huge amounts of money to be responsible for the stage, and table decorations. There is a growing business market specialising in all aspects of wedding arrangements. They deal with everything from flowers, menthi (henna painting) for the bride to food and filming the day. Asian bridal fairs, showing off

trends in wedding outfit styles are now common in places such as Bradford. Usually the seating arrangements keep men and women apart either by being seated in separate halls or the hall being separated by curtains. However some families opt to mix the two sexes. This only happens rarely.

Families split the cost of the wedding with the bride's family being responsible on the first day and the grooms on the following day. Food is varied and some families will follow the trend of making sure that a varied menu is offered. This can run into thousands of pounds for the food only. Food consists of at least two meat curries, one vegetable curry, sweet rice, savoury rice with meat, chapattis or naan, salads, raiatas, chicken tikkas, kebabs and plenty of fizzy drinks. Careful planning goes into enlisting the help of family members to act as 'waiters;' and 'waitresses' for the guest.

Given that hundreds of guests are invited it is no surprise that careful planning needs to be in place. The bride and groom hardly speak to each other, as it is customary for the bride to 'act' shy. Guests view anything else as 'inappropriate' behaviour. This is less restrictive for the couple if they know each other well and have met each other several times. It is becoming trendier to invite close relatives such as elderly grandparents and aunts and uncles of the bride and groom from Pakistan to attend the wedding. Other relatives in Pakistan will make do with a wedding film, which is circulated widely. The wedding film begins with a religious verse and then followed by the names of the bride and groom and their families. The entire wedding film can last up to 6 hours.

There is a growing trend for the couple to go on 'honeymoon' although this is very rarely called that. It is often said that the couple have gone on holiday usually a week or so after the wedding since the celebrations continue even after the formal wedding ceremonies and valima are over. Thus they are taking on 'traits' often associated with 'English' weddings, thus they are catching on from the prevailing culture.

For those who are forced into marriage, the picture can be much more different. There is no air of excitement from the couple concerned, but their families will put on a 'show' for the birdaderi and follow all the traditions and customs mentioned. There have been a cases reported about young girls running away from home in order to avoid being forced into a marriage by their parents. The problem is that these cases are sometimes over reported and often the whole community is labelled with the same heading i.e. that of oppressing young women's rights and yet this is not always the case.

Young women who choose the route of going against their parents wishes and marrying someone their parents disapprove of have many obstacles to face. They are ostracized from the family, many have to leave home and live in hiding, constantly in fear of their lives. Tragically, some youngsters will be found and are killed by family members. These are known as so called 'honour killings'. This is a sensitive and complex issue. Killing someone for he sake of the family honour or izzat happens rarely and when it does happen it demonstrates the rather sinister side of the biraderi and izzat.



## Summary

The empirical evidence suggests marriage is important to the respondents. Some parents still hold on to traditional practices of marriage and have tried to tackle the issue of controlling who their children marry. An enforced marriage is a cause of tension and conflict with parents who do not allow young people to have a say in the marriage. This research evidence shows that young people are trying with success to have a huge say in the marriage. They are using their knowledge of Islam to 'educate' parents about what Islam says about marriage and that what their parents are practicing is cultural.

The issue of caste is particularly sensitive in relation to marriage, however this study has suggested that attitudes towards caste and marriage are now changing. Parents believe that the West is a 'kaffar' and immoral society, which threatens their power and control as younger generations are becoming more vocal and are challenging their cultural views. This is an area of tension on the part of parents. The tension is, however, less apparent in the younger generations who demonstrate a tactful and careful blend of the appreciation of marriage, and the sense of having family support, with the spirit of independence and personal choice.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Findings from stage C: Inter-generational relationships**

#### **10.1 Introduction**

The respondents who took part in stage C interviews talked about their identity in terms of family life and what they did outside the home. These are important issues as they allow us to have an insight into the personal identities of women and their experiences inside and outside the home.

#### **10.2 Life at home**

One of the major findings of this study suggests that young Pakistani Mirpuri females enjoy the home experience. This is different from previous research. There is nothing negative between home and public life, and no sense of two separate senses of identity.

The younger respondents were asked to discuss what life was like at home. Generally and most significantly all the respondents enjoyed being at home. Ghuman (1994) argued that Asian females were more likely than their male counterparts to demand or wish for more freedom inside the home, thus causing tensions and conflict with parents who did not respond to their wishes. Stophes-Roe and Cochran (1990) also suggest that young Asians do not enjoy life at home because their parents restrict their behaviours. Kassam (1997) also found that Asian women were 'moulded' and nurtured by parents prescribed roles and rules of codes of behaviour in the home, presenting a rather negative image of being at home and struggling with their own aspirations and wishes. The question here is whether this means a dislike of the home or is it about adolescent rebellion?

The current study demonstrates that being at home in the main was viewed as a positive experience and not a negative ones from the perspective of younger women. They enjoyed spending time with their family. This usually meant their husbands if they were married, children or brothers and sisters and parents. Home means something different if it is the parents. Younger respondents rarely mentioned they enjoyed being at home and spending time with other relatives like aunts and uncles etc. However one respondent whose family shared their house with other uncles did say she enjoyed spending time with her uncles and their families. This might depend on the question of who shares the house. All the respondents lived with their partners if they were married, children or in-laws. None of the respondents lived on their own. This shows that marriage was the only way of setting up home outside of their own immediate family. Most respondents lived with their family:

“I live with my parents and my new sister-in-law whose recently come from Pakistan.... Life is a lot easier at home now because my sister-in-law has taken over doing a lot of the housework. She's really good and nice. I do help out still but maybe less than before which means I can concentrate on my degree and spend more time in the library” (3).

This suggests that daughter-in-laws take over domestic chores from other females in the house. However it is interesting that this daughter-in-law had recently come from Pakistan and therefore it cannot be assumed that only girls from Pakistan would take over and engage in more housework chores. All of the respondents who were British born and who were married also undertook housework. Ghuman (1994) found that Muslim parents were most likely to socialise their sons and daughters into ‘male’ and ‘female’ socially constructed roles. Girls would be taught the roles of domesticity and boys about the need



to work and earn money. Childcare duties were left to women and even young females and very young sisters. Perhaps this is why so many parents put pressures on young girls to acquire cooking and etiquette skills that will be of use when they eventually do marry:

“You know what I got told today? My parents said ‘puthar, learn to cook properly’. I said I CAN cook. It’s not my problem. I don’t mind it really. Everyone needs to cook” (R 4.4)

In most cases the respondent was one of several brothers and sisters:

“I live with three older brothers and one younger sister and sister-in-law” (R 4.2)

“I’m one of eight. We’re two brothers and the rest sisters. Again there’s loads to do but I do like being at home” (R 4.1)

Most respondents lead very busy lives combining work, studies and family responsibilities and therefore valued the time at home with close family. They were part of a big family:

“Life for me is busy but it’s like there’s always someone in the kitchen, serving and people around. We have lots of family over” (R 4.1)

“I love being at home and around my parents, brothers and sisters” (R4.2)

Spending time with the family didn’t have to mean going out but more seeing each other, communicating and generally “just chillin with the family, watching telly” (R4.1). Quality time did not have to be expensive. Having “loads to do” was not viewed as being negative. Generally respondents described being busy because of several activities going on simultaneously i.e. people coming and going, brothers and sisters coming and going, cooking:

“I don’t mean that loads going on in a bad way, just that one brother going out, another comes in, I go out and someone else comes in and that sort of thing” (R 4.2).

Respondent 1 described how she managed to combine several activities together:

“Well I work part-time... other days I do aerobics at the gym and at home. At weekends I go to the cinema with friends or my husband. I have a busy week and have lots to do but that includes work, children, housework and socializing. ... I really enjoy sewing...gardening... at weekends I go to the cinema with friends. Usually we watch English films but if there’s an Asian film then we watch that” (R1).

This suggests that young women are leading a social life that their mothers most likely did not do or more to the point have the choice or opportunities to do so. Spending time with your partner in an open place like the cinema is another concept that might not have been so blatantly obvious or ‘paraded’ in the days of their mothers.

Most of those who were married actually lived with their husbands and not with their in-laws. This shows that young women and young people in general are moving away from the traditional structure of the extended family and opting through exercising choice for economic/employment reasons to live in smaller family units. This is not exactly the same as the western concept of the nuclear family. Interestingly, Respondent 5 had recently got married from Pakistan and was currently residing with her parents. The couple were however actively looking for their own home. There is a strong acceptance of still living with parents. Respondent 5, valued time spent with her family and although life was busy and hectic:

“I’ve got two sisters and three brothers younger than me. They’re all students. I don’t feel left out and I’m always helping them out

with coursework. It's nice to pass on your knowledge... it's hectic for me but that's the best way to be. I like it. Always people around and that" (R 5).

The word 'hectic' had different connotations for respondents. Whilst for some respondents hectic had positive attachments, in that respondents were always doing something and therefore not bored, for others it was a description of the chaos around them such as children and interfering mother in laws.

Respondent 8.1 describes her home life and her independence through not living with her in-laws. The tone of her voice and her body language suggests a sense of relief that she does not have her husbands parents living with her and so has a greater sense of independence from them:

"I live with my husband and family. No in-laws! (Laughs). It gives me so much independence and structure. I feel fulfilled now. This is one way in which our generation is so different to that of our parents. They could live together and share one house with other families but try that now. It's hell!" (R8.1).

Others saw their family life as giving them structure, independence and security. Living with your own children and family only brought with it responsibilities and powers to make decisions and make mistakes. Young girls who marry from Pakistan, as this sample suggests did in fact remain with their own families until they moved out to their own home, whereas if they had married from here the chances are they would have to live with their in-laws for a longer period of time before moving out. Khan (1979) found that Pakistani Mirpuri households in Pakistan were free of tensions and conflict and the domestic duties of males and females were clearly defined. Khan argues these principles



were transported to Britain with Pakistani migrants and a similar family structure was established. Khan (1979) assumes that Pakistani elders intervene when there are tensions in the household and felt this was their duty rather than interference.

There was some conflict in the mother and daughter-in-law relationship:

“I live with my husband and my in-laws. Life at home is all right. It’s just that when I’m doing my course and that you can’t leave your kids there because she doesn’t like it. . If I leave the kids with my husband because she believes that women look after children and not men. I think it’s because she’s lived like that and that’s what she knows best” (R 8.3)

Living independently or at least in a separate house to your mother-in-law was better for most of the married respondents. This gave the women more independent lifestyles and less interference from anyone else:

“I don’t mind having family around because that’s important but it’s so different when you live together with your husband. It helps a marriage I think. Your mistakes are your mistakes and no one interferes unless they see or hear it. So that’s good” (R 8.2).

Respondent 10 shared her house with her younger sister and her family. This is interesting, as this is reflective of early migratory patterns when two or even three close related families would live in one house. For respondent 10 this was very a supportive environment as household tasks and childcare could be shared:

“If it wasn’t for her support and my husbands then there is no way I could have done the degree” (R10).

Respondent 10 had a very busy life and appreciated her sister’s help and support and firmly believes that without she would not have been able to work full-time, be another,

wife and part-time student all at the same time. Here she describes very emotionally a typical day in her life before she graduated:

“It was hard. I make no secrets about that. I started work at 7.30 am to 5 pm over 3 days because that’s what my contracted hours were and then I was at university from 6 pm to 9 pm. I was out of the house for nearly 14 hours a time. I used to come home and the kids would be asleep. Then I’d spend time essay writing. Despite all these pressures of study my husband was very supportive. I have a very strong minded and supportive husband. In fact he’s too encouraging! My sister lives with us with her husband and she’s got her own children too so I felt ‘guilty’ for leaving my children with her whilst I was studying” (R 10).

### 10.3 Gender and domesticity

Respondents were asked about who did what in the household. Although the majority of respondents said that the females had responsibility for household jobs, there was no indication to suggest that this was a source of conflict:

“Does your husband chip in with the housework? (N)

“No not at all. I mean he’s taken the children to the clinic today because he knew I was having you over. He’s good with the children. I do all the housework but I don’t mind that. I mean it’s not the done thing for him to do the housework but he does work hard and we have a good standard of living” (R 1).

This suggests that housework responsibilities are socially constructed based on gender. Ironically, it is interesting that this respondent leads an extremely busy lifestyle herself but she still felt she had sole responsibility of the household tasks.

Older women had been brought up with the concept of housework is women’s work. This understanding is usually passed down to their daughters. The younger women appreciate



this but are not simply following their parental instructions and expectations of their roles.

#### **10.4 Language issues**

The majority of the respondents felt that some young people were struggling to keep up their cultural traits such as communicating in Mirpuri Punjabi or Urdu. The majority agreed that young Pakistani people were keen to learn about their roots and did consider Urdu and Mirpuri Punjabi as their first language. Ghuman (1994) found that young Asians prefer to talk in English with their siblings and in their appropriate parental 'native' language with their parents and other elders. Modood et al (1997) found that there was a communication problem between the elders and young people because elders were not efficient in written forms of their language and young people found it difficult to 'talk' in their parental native languages and instead preferred English.

However with coming generations, felt that English would inevitably become a first language and Mirpur Punjabi and Urdu a second language:

“I speak Mirpuri and English and read and write Urdu, but my children mainly speak English. It's inevitable that young people will lose their mother tongue no matter what language they speak but that doesn't mean that they are in anyway less Islamic. It's one of the consequences of living here (England)” (R10).

She feels that this is one of the sacrifices that parents who once came here, as immigrants have to tolerate and accept. Respondents generally feel that maintaining Urdu or Mirpuri Punjabi was deemed important because it was just one link to their parental origins and they felt the 'need' to be able to understand and speak these languages or their children would lose their grand-parental identity. This fear heightened this 'need'. It is worth



noting how several of the younger Respondents in this research used the odd 'Asian' word or terminology interchangeably. Respondents were at ease with this and did not think anything 'odd' but saw it part of the 'natural' communication. This was accepted as the 'norm' and in the interviews, which were conducted in pairs or small groups other respondents also picked up this and identified with it.

This shows the flexibility in term soft communication among many young women in Bradford. The older women also had this trait although to a lesser extend. Some older women used English words such as 'Degree', 'English', 'British', 'Happy' 'trouble' when talking. This is an interesting point and worth noting as it suggests that older women are able to use their mother tongue, which in this case was Mirpuri Punjabi or Urdu and use some English words interchangeably which makes them similar to the younger women in the research but with the opposite effects.

“Parents speak apni-zaban (our native language) and that's true we (young people) should be able to speak it. Young people speak more English than apni-zaban (native language)” (R4.3).

She feels that young people are communicating in English more than Urdu or Mirpuri Punjabi. This is significant as it shows that she feels that their external-family environments such as education are influencing young people and employment, worth noting from Respondent 4.3 is that she slips into Mirpuri. When she refers to apni-zaban and then back to English, and this highlights her views on successfully communicating in two languages, sometimes done without realising it. Generally the majority of respondents in this research did believe that a stronger identity which brought together

both their parental linkage identity and that of young people being born and brought up in Britain had developed:

“The younger generations are tending to move away from the culture that’s been passed down and a new ‘own’ culture has been created” (R11).

She is pointing out that collective identities have been created through cultural hybridism. She feels that young British women, with Pakistani Mirpuri origins, are taking ‘ownership’ of their lifestyles and are living much more overt lives, which reflect their identities i.e. through their dress, language and so on. She feels that these young women, whilst respecting the western cultures, are not compromising their own religious needs and fulfilments and, whilst being individual, are integrating well into mainstream society.

All respondents were asked about what they did in their spare time, for example their hobbies and interests. It is clear that all respondents, irrespective of age or marital status, had specific interests in their lives. For younger women spare time activity included socializing in the home and outside of the home with friends and close family, going to the cinema either with friends, siblings or their partner and interestingly the majority also took a lot of time to educate themselves on Islam. This was done either had social groups, religious groups with friends or family and reading religious texts.

### **10.5 The older generation and ‘spare-time’ activities**

Interestingly, and contrary to the stereotype that older Pakistani Muslim women do not want to engage in social activities and are stuck in the indoors all day, this research revealed that older women valued being involved in social events organized by the local



community centre. They enjoyed going on trips together and just meeting up and chatting and learning English at classes at the centre. They enjoyed and accessed these facilities and opportunities because they felt they were culturally appropriate to their needs and felt comfortable with their surroundings and the workers at the centre.

The older women, in particular, felt they benefited from socializing and spending time on doing things like learning English and meeting workers from other organisations who came in and spoke about their work. What respondents did and the time they had in which to do these depended on a range of influencing factors such as childcare, employment, domestic chores, and being students. Nonetheless, the majority led very busy lives but still found that little bit of time to pursue interests. Respondent 1 is a young mother to her two young children and lives with her husband. She feels she has many roles to fulfil such as mother, employee, wife, daughter and daughter-in-law but still finds time, which is sometimes difficult to take part in leisure activities such as aerobics and sewing. It is interesting that she, like several other younger respondents, used the word 'hectic' to describe her daily life.

### **10.6 Young women and their activities**

For respondent 1 this meant that she was busy all the time and sometimes found her other responsibilities did not give her enough time to spend time on her self. This is typical of the lives of all young career minded women who are trying to balance a career with family life. Generally respondents pointed out doing standard things such as housework and seeing to the children if they had any. It is clear from the illuminating quote from Respondent 1 there is the mixture of standard issues and other more personal choice



based activities such as sport and leisure activities. This indicates a mixture of cultural activities:

“I work part time (Mondays-Wednesdays) and other days I do aerobics at the gym and at home. At weekends I go to the cinema with friends or my husband. Usually we watch English films but if there’s an Asian film on then we watch that. Recently we went to watch ‘much sey dosti karey-gey’ but watched ‘guru’ instead. I have a busy week and have lots to do but that includes work, children, housework and socialising. I really enjoy sewing ..and I like gardening” (R1).

This is also quite revealing, as Respondent 1 shows that she goes out with her husband and therefore socialising is not just with friends but more family orientated too. Respondent 1 also reveals in this quote that her husband does not restrict her from going out with friends for dinners or to the cinema. This is quite a liberating and supporting attitude, which not all husbands or partners, no matter which culture they are from always promote.

### **10.7 Freedom**

Basit (1997) argued that Asian girls demanded more freedom than they had at the present time. Similarly Ghuman (1997) points out that Asian girls did not have the same level of freedom given by the parents and elders to boys. Brah (1992) and Mirza (1992) found that parents feared giving too much freedom to their daughters in case of them being corrupted and led astray by western people. Din (2001) found females wanted more freedom than they had. Some respondents had concealed habits and behaviours, away from their families. Hennink, Diamond and Cooper (1999) found females from Sikh and Muslim families were likely to have less freedom than their Hindu counterparts.

Most young respondents did feel that they had all the freedom they wanted. They used the word 'freedom' in the context of being able to do things such as education, employment and going out with friends and to town without pressures from parents. Interestingly all the younger respondents mentioned that they wanted to spend lots of time with their parents and siblings too, which reveals that they feel comfortable with their home situations. What is significant is that the majority did not want any more 'freedom' than they had. Those respondents who had either younger or older male siblings felt that they had the same degree of freedom as them.

It is interesting that several did mention that although this was the case, they felt that their parents were more likely to ask them more questions about where they were going and who with, when compared to their male siblings. Although some respondents found this quite tedious and frustrating, the majority view was that this was to do more with parental protection for their safety and well being rather than controlling their behaviours and habits. This shows that parents and young people do trust each other and that is why they have this degree of flexibility. 'Enough' was used in the context of not being restricted by parental control when they aspired to study, work, dress and their friendships. As long as they were able to do all these activities they were happy with the level of freedom they had.

Respondent 2 was the only female sibling in her family. She had 7 brothers, several were older than she was and some younger. In her experience she felt that her parents did not treat her any more or any less than her male siblings. She put this down to the fact that she shared a close relationship with her parents and because she always questioned their intentions with her knowledge and awareness of Islam and not culture. It is clear in the

manner and tone of her voice that she feels very passionately about her family and she appreciates all the freedom she has. It is worth noting the myth versus the reality of freedom to the respondents.

Ghuman (1997) argues that 'Asian' youngsters will have less freedom than their 'white' counterparts. The important point here is that there are different cultural meanings of 'freedom' and that what is deemed as 'freedom' in one culture like the Pakistani culture may not be considered as 'freedom' in another culture. Freedom is not simply 'laissez-faire'. It is a sense of personal worth and choice rather than the rejection of any restraint:

"I've always had freedom as equal to my brothers and I've never abused it (R2).

Respondent 2 uses the word abuse in the context of not mistreating or insulting her parents' trust in her. Respondent 2 further argues that even if she did have the time to stay out late, as her brothers often did she would not want to. It seems that freedom certainly does have different connotations to different people. She uses the words 'if I did have the choice' which suggest that she doesn't so but it also shows that she doesn't seem to be at all disaffected by not having this choice. She feels she is lucky as she already has so much freedom:

"I already have it (freedom). I mean if I did have the choice of coming in late I wouldn't want to come in late because first of all most of my friends wouldn't be out late and secondly I just wouldn't have the time to go out. I'm so busy. I mean I work in the evenings and I work quite late" (R2).



It is worth noting that Respondent 2 makes it clear that she does have the freedom to stay out late, but that is for work purposes and not staying out late for socialising and meeting friends. Therefore suggesting the confines accepted to her parents.

Interestingly, several respondents did acknowledge that some Pakistani Muslim girls were not lucky enough to have as much freedom as they wanted. These respondent did also argue this is typical of young girls from other cultures too and use the word 'restrictions' on their habits and behaviours from parents as taking away the desired level of freedom and they know what this means:

“Even Chinese and white girls have restrictions” (R4.3).

Other respondents agreed that they freedom depended on their relationship with their parents and siblings, as older brothers were just as likely as their fathers to impose their rules on habits and behaviours:

“It's true that some Pakistani girls don't have the freedom they want. That can cause problems between them and their parents. Parents have a right to be restricting but if girls show they are okay and don't cross the Islamic codes then parents will be less restrictive” (R4.1).

Respondent 4.1 points out that parents do have legitimate rights over young people, and feels it is their duty to protect and know of their children are doing. Again this is typical of all parents no matter what their cultural backgrounds. She also argues that if young women can prove to their parents they are alright' i.e. they are not abusing their freedom or if they can prove to their parents that they have a strong relationship with Islam, then parents are less likely to be as controlling. Incidentally Respondent 4.1 herself practiced

purdah and feels she has a good relationship with her parents because she is informed about her Islamic rights, through her own education of Islam rather than just taking on what her parents are telling her.

They feel that their understanding is more religiously based but they feel that their parents have cultural understandings of what can be defined as acceptable freedom. Respondent 11 states this clearly in her statement where interestingly she reinforces the main theme which has emerged out of this research which is that parents have a cultural understanding of Islam rather than a religious understanding and uses that to justify their actions. It is useful to sum up the generational distinctions about culture and religion:

“The older generations tended to rely on culture more than religion and it affected them more. Now it’s changed. Young people do consider both, (religion and culture) but give religion more priority i.e. in dress (culture) and religion (namaaz)” (R11).

What is interesting is that again several respondents felt that parents had a right to impose some restrictions but only if those were for reasons of safety and protection. She makes a distinction to support why her parents may place extra restrictions on her:

“I agree that parents have more restrictions on girls. It’s not about not trusting me, more like protecting me” (R4.2).

Respondent 4.3 supports this assertion:

“It’s like walking home at night. No parents want their daughter to do this. So when brothers or dads come and pick us up from college and that, other people (outsiders) say ‘oh they (Asian parents) don’t give their daughters freedom’” (R4.3).

Respondent 4.3 comes across as being frustrated with this negative conclusion of what she sees as positive parental actions and she feels as though she herself has experienced this for herself. Again this contrasts with the stereotype of the West.

### **10.8 Defining freedom**

Respondents defined freedom in many ways. Freedom is a process of exploration, experimenting and very individualistic. Respondents had their own version or definition of what freedom was for them. The quotation from Respondent 2 is revealing. She notes the difficulties of definition of freedom; it is not to do anything you want because others have their freedom too:

Freedom is “being able to do something without having to answer to others i.e. not looking for the go ahead, like from parents and that. I mean to me it’s okay.. Because it’s like I don’t stay out late so I don’t know what it feels like so I don’t miss it and that’s okay.. I have so much freedom anyway. ... Freedom is freedom at the end of the day .. and I so have more than I want “ (R2).

To her, on a personal level freedom means not being accountable to anyone not even parents and therefore doing things the way you want to when you want to. On the one hand she is arguing that she is aware of her Islamic rights and Islamic teachings and that includes respecting elders and especially parents but here she is saying she doesn’t want to ‘answer to them’. But that is probably because she has ‘so much freedom’ anyway and feels she already has proved herself to her parents and they approve of her. Thus suggesting that freedom is not linked to parents being ‘laissez-faire’.



Interestingly another young woman also defined freedom as not having to be accountable to 'people' for your actions and behaviours. Again it is clear from her statement that she feels she had more opportunity to do things before marriage, but since marriage and motherhood that has had to change. She feels that this extra responsibility as wife, daughter in law and mother has taken away some of the freedom she had and that is most likely because she feels there are increased expectations of her now. She makes the distinction between being single and being married, thus suggesting she did not enjoy the same freedoms since being married compared to when she was single. This is the case for many women in other cultures and societies:

“Sometimes I think if I were single, life would be better because don't have the same freedom now (being married) as you do when you are single and you don't have to listen to people” (R7.1).

She is quick to justify that she does have freedom but in a different way than when she was single and she feels that what she defines as freedom may not be what others would define as freedom for them. She also points out that freedom is not necessarily about going out and doing things outside the home place. Freedom can be achieved in the home as in her case. She argues that definitions of freedom are based upon individuals' perceptions, ideas and lifestyles. She gives her very personal heartfelt opinion, based on her own journey of experiences. Again here we see how the definition of what constitutes 'freedom' varies considerably between individuals and cultures:

“I do get to do things but it's mainly at home but like it that way. I wouldn't say that's a bad thing. That's freedom to me. It might not be to others but it is to me” (R7.1)

The majority of young women agreed that although they themselves did not feel in anyway isolated from their white counterparts at work or in educational establishments, they were labelled as being oppressed and restricted in terms of what they could do and couldn't do. This control over them was seen as coming from parents who didn't want their daughters to engage in what other cultures viewed as freedom or the perceived stereotype. Sometimes this frustration of being typecast came across clearly in the tone of respondent's voices:

“Just because we don't drink alcohol and go to clubs and that, people from outside the community see it as restrictions bur that's not our culture and there's nothing wrong with that. Wearing shalwar-kameez doesn't mean you're restricted and wearing western clothes doesn't make you any more free or worse either. It's about you as a person” (R4.3).

She ends her statement by arguing that young women are keen to embrace aspects of other cultures but as long as they do not impact negatively upon their own culture and Islamic believes. She feels that sometimes-young women may be pressurized to take on or engage in cultural practices, which go against her own, just to fit in that environment. However she feels that if young women are aware of their own culture and religion then their characters are stronger and they are able not to give in to temptation just for the sake of fitting in and being accepted as part of the work or educational cultural ethos.

For the older women, the general consensus was that they had more freedom to do things than they had in Pakistan because they have more facilities and services here, which cater for their cultural and religious needs. They do not have to be escorted by a male

chaperone when they are outside of home whereas they would have to if they were in Mirpur.

The majority of the older women felt that if parents displayed good traits themselves in terms of the way they behaved and conducted themselves then young people would pick up on these. They felt that this even more important since more and younger women in particular are exercising their basic Islamic rights to freedom. Parents felt that young people would be less likely to rebel and seek freedom outside the confines of what is acceptable Islamically if they had an open relationship with parents:

“It’s all about trust and if children abuse that trust what can you do” (R9.2).

This respondent feels that trust is a two-way concept and that unless that is there problems do arise. She picks up on the misuse of trust by young people i.e. having the freedom to study and work and using it for other purposes like dating and socializing.

Respondent 9.10 echoes this view:

“When my daughter was in education she would tell me about girls who wore shalwar-kameez at home and left with this on and then wore short skirts outside in secret and had boyfriends” (R9.10).

Parents were forced in to a situation of trust even when they were aware that other factors extremely could have detrimental influences on their young children.



## **Summary**

The evidence suggests there are different concepts of freedom. There are concepts of views on other people's ideas of freedom for instance in terms of leisure, and those on a more personal cultural level. Younger respondents felt that this freedom has been influenced by their appreciation of all cultures and being born and brought up in Britain, but also with having their own individual beliefs and culture.

Cultural freedom is not the same as religious freedom, just as freedom itself, in terms of rights and responsibilities is a complex notion. Sometimes cultural norms can be more restricting than religious ones.

## **Chapter 11**

### **Findings from stage C: Islam**

#### **11.1 Introduction**

The respondents in stage C were asked about their views of Islam. This was an important issue because it was crucial to try and locate Islam in their daily life, to see if there was any evidence that religion is being used as a symbol of their personal and religious identities and to identify how Mirpuri women are involved with Islam.

#### **11.2 The perception and image of Islam in the 'West'**

Conway (1997) and Hashim (1999) point out that the standard views of Islam in the 'West' that has gained momentum over the years and more particularly since September 11th, is often blurred and clichéd. It is worth noting that the term 'West' or 'Westernisation' has been typically associated with democratic countries where the population are 'white' and whose technology, fashions and standards of living are high. It is also worth pointing out that when the 'English' talk about the West, it is often associated with democracy, equal rights for all, Christianity and being civilised and sharing common grounds with influential countries including America.

Hashim (1999) refers to misconceptions of Islam amongst Westerners. Esposito (1999) refers to barbaric acts of incidents such as the book burning incidents in places such as Bradford during the controversy surrounding the Satanic Verses in the 1980s. Findley (2001) explores Western ideologies about Islam resulting in Islamophobia particularly following Muslims in America. Conway (1997) examined Islamophobia generally and

the attachment of fanaticism with Islam. Ansari (2005) points out that Muslims are viewed as infidels by those who do not understand them.

Islam is seen as an oppressive religion where women's rights do not exist (Esposito, 1999). In contrast men are believed to have the ultimate power and control on all aspects of life, even to the extent of controlling Muslim women and dictating what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviours to them. Islam is viewed as old-fashioned, stuck in history and is therefore not applicable to the modern world.

Islam is seen as being alien, in that it is a religion imported from other countries and is so extreme in that it combines strong and rigid cultural aspects which are not open to question or flexibility, unless of course you are male. Abu Hamza is an example of a minority group of Muslims who promote evil and terrorism under the guise of Islam. The Majority of British Muslims are peaceful and law abiding citizens. Islam is perceived as being anti-everybody else and is seen as promoting ill feelings towards any other cultures that they regard as 'kuffar' (non-Muslims) and other religions, seen as infidels.

Islam has become stereotyped. The younger respondents in this research show clearly that Islam is very important in their daily lives and more interestingly this importance is due to the fact that they believe that Islam is modern, up-to-date and flexible, which goes against the clichéd standard viewpoint of Islam. Thus, they regard themselves as being English, cosmopolitan, modern and not living in the past. Younger Muslim women of Pakistani Mirpuri origin have a different understanding of Islam, which is in contrast to their parents' understanding based on the customs and teachings of culture. The evidence



reveals that younger women argued that this is cultural interpretation of Islam, on the part of parents, and the core religious understanding on the part of young women, has created a situation where young women are questioning what their parents are saying. This youthful independence is using religion as the way forward, just as the non-conformists in the Reformation against the Catholic Church were. Therefore it is significant to argue that these young Muslim women of Pakistani Mirpuri origin have their own identity and are using Islam as the basis upon which these multiple identities are developing.

In relation to religion, it is immediately clear that Islam is important to all twenty-nine respondents, irrespective of age or socio-economic background. The important question is why? This research has found that the rebellion by the young respondents is not against Islamism but against culture, tradition and the parents who practice these rigidly. This research as also found that young women are rebelling against the popular image that westerners have of them. Previous research such as Modood et al (1997) found that religious affiliation is particularly high for South Asians and that hardly any would say they had no religion affiliation. White people would increasingly say they had no affiliation or did not practice any particular religion.

Like all religions, Islam is based upon the core principles of love, peace, unity and harmony and morality based on spirituality. However recent events such as what happened in the America on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, have tarnished the peaceful principles of Islam and instead terms such as fanaticism and fundamentalism have become synonymies in a climate heightened anti-Islamic feelings and promoting fear. All twenty-

nine respondents see Islam in terms of the core principles and not the Islam, which has fuelled terror in the hearts of many people.

This type of Islam is taken on by a minority of people, young men in particular. The majority of Respondents believed this was a distorted view of Islam and they had no sympathy for fundamentalists. The majority of Muslims see themselves as peaceful people but this is often forgotten. Muslims are typecast and this brings some anger and frustration in the voices and statement made by young women themselves. So what we see is a rebellion from young women against the stereotypical image the West has of them. This is a complex issue but one such has to deal with. It is complex because for those who do have a religious belief, no matter what that belief is, it is very personal and sensitive. It is worth remembering that the fundamentalists in the Southern States of America are not held to be typical of all Christians, yet Muslims are being labelled as terrorists on a general level. There is little distinction made between the minority fanatics and the peaceful majority.

It is also worth pointing out that Islam is a particularly practical, rule based, behavioural religion. There are set times for prayer for example, a set number of days for fasting in which there are strict adherences to times of opening and closing the fast, obligations to abstain from specific behaviours generally on matter of sex and relationships, but which are particularly reinforced and practiced around specific times such as fasting when there are strict codes of obligations around eating, drinking and abstaining from conjugal relationships.

### 11.3 Practicing Islam

Islam is fairly distinct as a religion for it is rule based and therefore susceptible to bigotry. This, like other characteristics, can apply to virtually all religions at some point of their development. Islam has a distinct phase to go through and some would argue this is similar to what Christianity had to undergo in its earlier stages. At the same time there are also flexibility in these rules that are more lenient for those who are too young, too old, pregnant or menstruating or people on medication. Many people may fit these criteria and still fast because they feel they are duty bound, or others will not fast but will take extra times to read the Q'uran and make extra 'nafl' prayers in addition to the obligatory prayers.

Modood et al (1997) found that attendance at mosques is particularly obvious during special times such as fasting, Eid, and when someone has died. Again Modood et al found that Muslims were most likely to attend places of worship on a regular basis than any other group.

It is worth noting that men, unless they are physically unable to go to mosque, must pray in congregation with other men at the mosque. There is extra 'suaab' (blessings) for this. At the same time it is also worth pointing out that those who do not attend regularly at mosque will be labelled by other regular attendees as being less religious. Some Muslim men may feel they are forced into going to the mosque for fear of criticism from the local community. Women are not under obligation to go to mosque to say prayers, but if separate facilities are available then they have every right to be there. Again the same



could apply to women whom do not pray in mosques as being labelled or seen by those women who do go to the mosque as being less religious.

Sermons are very common and the religious teacher or 'imaam' will lead the congregation. The major criticism of imaams is that they are out of touch with real life issues and because of gender and language issues very few are able to reach out to and understand young British Muslims particularly women. For many young people and older people, although they are able to recite the holy Q'uran, because it is in Arabic, very few actually understand what the meaning is of what they are reciting. This is crucial as this is one possible explanation of what some Muslim parents still claim they are acting in the interest of Islam and not culture when they are doing certain things like not allowing their daughter freedom to study and pursue careers or arranging marriages with little or no consent of the parties involved. Young people who are able to read and write in English are more likely then to be ware of what they are reciting by reading translated copies of the Q'uran in the English language and also by reading more widely.

The general consensus amongst all respondents was that there was a big difference and a need to acknowledge that one needed to be involved in all aspects of Islamic teachings. This ranged from loving your parents, showing respect to elders, helping the poor and needy to practicing Namaaz prayers daily, reciting the Q'uran in Arabic, and more importantly understanding what your are reciting. This is interesting because children as young as seven or eight recite the Q'uran, usually at mosque, but also at home, but do not

understand it except in translation. The same can be said for older people including parents. There are two traditions: rules and interpretation.

All respondents were asked whether they had actually performed the Hajj or Umra. An interesting observation here was that although the younger respondents came across as being more in tune with their Islamic duties, none had actually performed Hajj or Umra. However, young women explained that they wanted to be mentally and physically ready to perform both or one of these holy acts and live life according to Islamic teachings. This shows they are aware of their duties as Muslims but are also aware that these are not just acts but are much more stronger and long-term life turning and structuring events.

Several older women had performed one or both of these holy pilgrimages. It is worth noting that young women can actually be seen as preparing themselves for Hajj or Umra, since they are reciting and understanding the Q'uran, learning about Islam, saying their prayers and so on. The intention to go on Hajj or Umra was there from all respondents and the words 'in-sha-allah' were used and that added more emphasis, and a religious element to this intention. 'In-sha-allah' literally defines as meaning 'god willing' or with the 'will of Allah':

“I read Namaaz and Q'uran. I haven't been to Hajj or Umra yet but in-sha-allah I hope to next year” (R6).

#### **11.4 Religion versus culture**

It is obvious that many respondents felt a strong feeling of antagonism and opposition to parental interpretations of Islam. The quotation below from Respondent 2 clearly shows that there is frustration and conflicting feelings, because it is clearly personal. This also



indicates that she is assertive and confident enough to question her parents because of this frustration. She defines 'culture' as parental control on young people's habits and behaviours in order to protect the izzat of the family. She sees this as a symbolic distinction whereby she compares it to her own much more liberal values based on Islamic interpretation and not cultural interpretation. It is interesting that she slips into the past of her parents and feels in control and secure because of her own religious perspective and understanding.

Respondent 2 is typical of many of the younger respondents in this research, who are going through the throws of constructing her identity and asserting herself by being much more informed about Islam. Her justifications are based upon a religious base versus the parental cultural based justifications. Her knowledge and awareness of Islam help her immensely and this once gain goes back to the core of the thesis:

"My personal opinion is that they both have a cultural understanding.. that really annoys me... I use the Islamic perspective, but actually when I do, they (parents) get scared when I talk about Islam because they see that I'm different to what they (parents) were and that makes them feel really insecure because they know I have an Islamically based justification and not a culturally based one, I won't take any stick for nothing. I respect my parents. I really do but I don't take stick for nothing" (R2).

Her definition of cultural understanding is that her parents misinterpret religion, which she sees as factual, with their own upbringing and values passed on to them through their parents, friends and the biraderi. She also expresses taking on and challenging her parents by using her arguments, which she believes are based on religious justification and not cultural definition. She suggests that she shows consideration for her parents but is not



afraid to question them and makes her views clear. This is interesting as she is turning upside down the idea that showing respect to elders' means you do not answer them back. Respondent 2 is making her position clear by suggesting that she is able to love and respect her parents and at the same time she wishes for mutual respect from her parents too and if that means her challenging their views then so be it.

The research re-iterates the significance between the idea of 'ought to' and what is actually being done. Unless explained this statement could be misread. What is interesting here is that this young woman justifies her faith in Islam by practicing prayers and may be feeling that unless a woman outwardly displays Islam, by wearing hijab for example, people will assume that she does not practice her prayers and so is observed to be less involved with Islam than someone who does observe hijab.

She argues that this is a misconception. The tone and the way she makes this statement clearly indicates some frustration with people's misconceptions of non-hijab wearing Muslim girls. And she is absolutely right about the intention of saying prayers and actually carrying these out as Allah rewards these. She observes hijab whilst praying but not at other times, but is aware that Islamically she ought to. This shows that some young women and young people generally will choose elements of their faith which they practice outwardly whilst others are done more covertly. Islam is important for personal reasons; it is about the inward belief as opposed to outwards forms of obedience to the imams for example. But there are, in all religions, two sides; a statement to other people and a relationship to God (private).

Respondent 4.1 is typical of the other young respondents in this research, in that it is clear that they felt antagonism due to the conflicting opinions with parental views and actions which they believed to be based on culture and not religious values. It is interesting that she like many of the other respondents use the word 'argue' in the context of parents not willing to listen and take notice of young people when they are confronted by them.

It is an interesting choice of words especially since other words such as 'justify' or 'explain' were not used. The word 'argues' is usually associated with heated disputes, taking a strong and firm stance on something and feelings of agitation. In this context it is obvious that parents like to be in control of situations and be the decision-makers and when their position is threatened. Younger respondents as well as the older ones felt that some elders would be feeling quite threatened by younger generations because they were questioning their authority and their beliefs and values and not merely accepting them lightly:

“When you try and argue that culture is nothing to do with Islam, they (parents) don't understand” (R4.1).

Interestingly by using the word 'try' suggests that young people do not always find this simple and therefore strive and persevere with making sure that their views are heard and understood by parents.

In the following statement, respondent 4.4 clearly suggests that feelings of disappointment can run high amongst both parents and young people because young people are becoming much more aware of Islam and are questioning their parents'

actions and interpretations which they believe are culturally based. It is interesting that Respondent 4.4 uses the term 'culture-crisis' to differentiate between parents' and young peoples' actions and views and opinions. These differences can be so strong and lead to unpleasant situations. She uses the word 'authentic' to describe Islam as peaceful and pure, linking it to the historical context of the development of Islam and how it still has this authenticity in modern society:

“The more you get into Islam, the more you have a culture-crisis with your parents, because they're interpretation of Islam is different to what authentic Islam teaches us” (R4.4).

Therefore suggesting that there could be tensions between parents and young people on issues of marriage, education and work because parents largely, according to these respondents, follow culture and that is their own interpretations of what a young female should and ought to do.

Respondents do not use the concept of inter-generational conflict but respondents are in fact describing and talking about situations and inter-generational conflict as well as culture-crisis. It can be said that respondents are suggesting that the conflicting views on culture are based on generational difference therefore creating a situation of 'inter-generational cultural conflict'.

This again goes back to the core of the thesis, which argues that young women are more aware of Islam in a strictly religious sense than their parents. They follow Islam because they see it as a modern and flexible religion and this bond and involvement means that they are able to question parents and have 'power' to control situations. The younger



women in this study such as Respondent 2 and Respondent 10 made it perfectly clear they were able to understand Islam more than their parents because they were able to learn and inform themselves better. Being able to speak and understand the English language made this learning more interesting, valuable and worthwhile for them. Parents were more likely to take the word of their own parents, who learnt from their forefathers and so on. Wahhab (1989) also suggest the lack of understanding between imams and their congregation.

Lewis (1994), Pardesh and Shaw (1994) and Bhatti (1999) similarly identified the decreasing numbers of young British-Muslims attending mosque, not simply because they don't want to be there, but more because they feel they would not gain anything from the imaam who most likely was unable to converse in English and who did not understand the needs of young British Muslims.

For all respondents in this research Islam played a key role in their daily lives. Pardesh and Shaw (1994) found that traditional cultural and religious values are being eroded over the decades amongst British-Asians. This research has found that certain Islamic practices and values are stronger amongst young British-Muslims women of Mirpuri origin than ever before. It is embedded in everything they did. This was not control but more a structure with flexibility. It is embedded in everything they did. Islam was not just important during holy months such as Ramzan or on Fridays. Islam was there with them on a daily basis. Respondent 5 highlights this below because for her, her existence lies within her practising and understanding of Islam. However this does not mean it dictates her every day life but that it facilities her daily life positively.

Similarly Respondent 6 who suggested she had a real motivation for Islam, as it was part of her collective identity, echoed this view:

“Islam is really important without a doubt. Without Islam I would be lost” (R6).

That fact that R6 uses the word ‘really important’ indicates that she adds emphasis on the importance to her on personal level. The fact she uses the word ‘lost’ to describe her possible fear of losing control over her behaviour if she did not have a strong belief in Islam. She cannot begin to imagine not having an Islamic structure in her daily life.

Respondent 9.8 Felt at ease within the knowledge she had Islam in her and this helped her cope with situations because "Islam has an answer to everything". 'True Muslims' can refer to Muslims who practice and understand Islam in the harmonious and peaceful interpretation. She uses the word ‘everything’ to possibly explain Islamic teachings to showing respect for elders, codes of Islamic behaviour, marriage and difficult situations such as coping with death and illnesses. This meant that all respondents saw their relationship with Islam as more than just a fragmented or passing phase. However it is worth noting the extent to which observing these beliefs goes and the extent to which these are questioned.

Respondent 10 chose the word ‘iman’ to describe her personal relationship with Islam. The word ‘iman’ was possibly used rather than ‘faith’, which is a direct translation of it, as it shows Islamic importance and strength. Iman is the word used to describe a true believer. Iman brings together physical and mental spirituality and is based on the

strength of ones faith. The fact that R10 uses it shows that this was her heartfelt account of what Islam meant to her in her life.

It is interesting that older women also agreed that young people, not just young females were becoming much more closely affiliated with Islam.

“I think more and more young people are practicing Islam” (R9.8).

It is clear in the way that she says this that she does truly believe that in her eyes there is great triumph of tradition. It is more than just an assumption for her. The fact that she uses the word ‘practicing’ adds strength to her argument and shows these respondents faith in Islam in a practical way and not just being involved from a distance. It shows that she believes young people are more practicing their faith outwardly and that this developing at a quick pace.

The important question here is to what extent is this faith a defensive social move or a personal one? All respondents agreed that Islam had become the focal point of young peoples’ lifestyles, therefore indicating that perhaps this was not so obvious before but as they mature and learn from parents, friends and others, their awareness of who they are is heightened and they seek more knowledge on Islam and that knowledge is what makes them want to be more closely bonded with Islam. This reveals the complexity created by personal belief versus cultural and prescriptive absorption.

“Islam is my basis for living” (R5).

Respondent 9.6 agrees:



“Young people are realising that Islam is most important than anything else”.

By using the word ‘realizing’, the respondent indicates that their awareness is increased and perhaps it is like a ‘wake up call’ for them. They are suggesting they had an inward calling, which made them become conscious of what they needed to do and be more Muslim. Using the words ‘most important’ could also suggest that Islam and its teachings are priority and ‘anything else’ is secondary.

So why is Islam so important to these young women? It is clear from the data collected, that young people tend to want to find out more about Islam and its teachings because they consider it to be the building blocks on which their futures will be decided. The respondents believed that Islam offered much in terms of personal development and has answers and explanations for everything, just as others religions do but here it makes an identity that you either deny or accept.

Each religion, be it Christianity, Sikhism or Islam, brings with it interpretations of events and history and that is what makes them unique. The respondents in this study argued that Islam fulfils the gaps of questions and uncertainty and by not just basing it upon what their parents or textbooks teach them, they can learn more through research and heightened curiosity. The younger women felt they were making more informed choices about their faith in Islam and their lifestyles and it is with this knowledge that they are able to question parents.

Women are not under obligations to attend mosque for prayers whereas men are. It is worth noting that women can choose to pray in the mosque but some mosques do not have separate facilities for women. Men are the gatekeepers to the mosque and will have the power to decide who can and who cannot come into the mosque (Doi, 1989, Modood et al, 1997). It is also worth pointing out that mosques can attract a specific congregation depending on the geographical area in which it is located and also the committee who is responsible for funding and sustaining the mosque.

There are increasing numbers of mosques for Muslims in Bradford depending on the caste and religious sect Muslims belong to. For example Sunni Muslims will have a specific mosque, Shias another and Whabis another. Within this there may be class divide in that Mochis may go to a particular mosque, Choudreys to another (Lewis 1994). These stratifications and segregations are commonplace in a religion that forbids stratification and promotes equality.

This is made clear during the Hajj when everyone is dressed in one dress code for men and one for women. There is no room for stratification. Every man and women, regardless of age, caste, colour or creed is the same. This is the oneness promoted by Islam but at the same time it is so contradictory to the culture, which has caused so many factions within Islam thus making it distorted. This is an important issue which shows that older generations follow culture rather than what Islam promotes. Practicing Islam in a practical way, as stated by Respondent 9.8, is clearly demonstrated during Friday prayers, when young people will leave work for an hour to go to the local mosque to pray in congregation or for females to go home and say their prayers and return to work, or

even take time out and pray in the office. When the holy month of Ramadan approaches, there is great excitement and waiting and once fasting begins, more prayers are said. Thraavee prayers are said in mosques and by females at home and Muslims feel a stronger bond with Islam and at any other time of the year.

### **11.5 Reverting back to Islam**

Islam is more overtly practiced during times of celebration and sadness and this is true of other religions too. For example, when there is a death people will come together, young and old, male and female to pay their last respects. Young people will be saddened by the occasion and think even more about Islam and what the teachings are and that dying is the only certainty once you are born. The ‘reality’ of life often becomes more important during such sad times when we are reminded we are human. Praying with other Muslims was cited by some of the respondents as being important:

“During Ramzan you just have to look at every mosque and home here and in Pakistan and young people are reading Q’uran and Thraavee and Namaaz. Wherever you go everyone’s fasting” (R9.2).

Concepts of collectiveness, oneness and unity are brought out through this spiritual time. The same could also be said about other religions such as Christianity and Catholics at Christmas and Hindus during Holi.

Not all respondents observed all the daily prayers (Fajar, Zuhr, Asar, Magrib and Isha). A few ‘practiced’ daily prayers regularly. Whilst some respondents read Q’uran regularly, others did but not on a regular basis. What is interesting is that all respondents did



consider Islam to be important to them even though they followed some aspects more strictly than others did. This could be because of lack of provisions at places of work or study to say prayers or because it was the way that praying could fit into the busy lifestyles of respondents. The gradation of faith was that the 'oughts' or intentions reign supreme! The quotation below illuminates this clearly:

“I read Q’uran fairly regularly but I hardly read Namaaz. I feel bad because I know I should be doing it and I will. It’s the only way young children will learn about who they are. I keep Rozey though, apart from those you have to miss out and then I know I should make these up but I don’t and that makes me feel bad”  
(R1).

It is clear from the tone said and the words used that Respondent 1 feels guilty and upset by not praying or saying prayers regularly and that she clearly wants to take positive steps to rectify the situation. It is interesting that she is aware of where her faults lie and understands what is Islamically expected of her and is keen to develop Islamically. She will not only be doing it for herself but also for the sake of her children. She believes that she would be setting a better example if she herself practiced Islam more as her children are growing up they can watch and learn from her so in a way she wants to be a good role model for them.

Respondent 5 sees Islam as very important in her daily life but however she is aware that she ought to do more in order for it to benefit her after death. It is clear that Respondents do believe that Allah will reward their good deeds. This is referred to as 'deen-duniya' (R5). She uses the word 'deen-duniya' when otherwise speaking in English, which

therefore adds emphasis to its importance than if, it was just said in the English translation:

“I try and pray regularly when I’m not on my period... I try and fast too...fasting and saying Namaaz regularly are important because together they give you so much physically, mentally and spiritually and also prepares you for the future when you die- you know deen-duniya” (R5)

“I try and read Namaaz regularly, I’m trying and I’m doing my best to get there. I listen to loads of cassettes with religious sayings etc and read loads of religious books. It’s like an education. A really interesting study and you learn amazing and interesting things. Facts!” (R2).

It is clear that Respondent 2 is intending to develop herself more as she repeats the words ‘I’m trying’, which suggests that she is looking at ways to improve herself. She refers to this seeking knowledge as ‘an education’, which indicates she believes she is on a learning curve. She is thoroughly enjoying finding out more and more and believes that what she is learning facts that she believes are accurate, reliable and based on Islam and not cultural interpretations. She has a need to satisfy her curiosity of who and what she is and her frustration towards certain cultural practices, which she finds restrictive of her identity.

Similarly Respondent 5 found she wanted to seek more knowledge of Islam and again saw it as a positive learning process. It is clear from what she says that seeking awareness of Islam also runs in the family. With other members also being actively involved with learning more about Islam, it is also clear that informal groups where women come together and discuss issues and socialize are one way of learning about Islam:

“My brother goes to Jammah and goes to Islamic speeches in Dewsbury. There are also conferences that he goes to. On Sundays at 4-5 p.m. I go to my auntie’s house where a few of us talk about issues, like women and Islam” (R5).

With this knowledge and education young women are much more equipped to question cultural practices which many of their parents still confuse with religious teachings and this once again goes back to the core theme of this thesis.

Respondent 7.2 clearly shows in what she says that she wants to practice Islam more structurally, and has the intention to do so but finds that other activities such as children and household tasks make it difficult for her. In the tone and manner Respondent 7.2 says this, it is evident that she meant it and felt upset, as she was not fulfilling her Islamic beliefs as actively as she wants to therefore re-iterating the theme of ‘ought to’ and intention compared with her current involvement and it is worth noting the astringency of guilt:

“I only read Jumma Namaaz, It’s a lousy excuse but I don’t get the time. I should make time and I will. I do fast but then when I miss them because of my periods.. but I try” (R7.2).

## 11.6 Culture-crisis

It is interesting that a few respondents made reference to specific cultural habits and made the connection that people could mistake these for young people experiencing a culture-crisis:

“I haven’t ever faced a culture-crisis I don’t think I ever will. That’s because I know exactly where I stand, what my religion is, the boundaries, not restrictions, as some people think, but boundaries that keep you from doing wrong” (R5).



For example reference was made to the styles of clothes she or others wore and also the main language spoken at home. Respondents were keen to argue and make it clear that speaking English rather than Mirpuri Punjabi or Urdu at home or by dressing in what could be described as westernised influenced styles in clothing, did not amount to young people experiencing a culture crisis. It is clear that the feedback on this area was again of a very personal nature.

“I can’t say I’ve really had a culture-crisis. I mean I’m sure everyone questions things but I wouldn’t say I’ve had a culture-crisis, it’s like the stuff about wearing shalwar-kameez. I mean I’ve always worn it and only wore trousers and that at school, but I’m alright with it” (R7.1)

It is also significant to note that some respondents did comment on having confused feelings and wanting to find out more about themselves, their cultural and religious heritages. Once again respondents are keen to state that these feelings of confusion are typical of all young people trying to handle the physical and psychological dilemmas of growing up, primarily during their teenage years, usually only for a short period of time. Respondent 10 for example is typical of the few respondents who admitted to experiencing confusions, which did not necessarily have to come under the umbrella of ‘culture-crisis’. Respondent 10 argues:

“When I was a teenager I questioned who I was and I kept asking my parents, my parents have been good parents but sometimes lacked knowledge of Islam so I started exploring for myself. I looked at Islam and that’s when I found that first and foremost I am a Muslim” (R10).

Here, respondent 10 is sending out messages of the respect that she has for her parents but slips into their lack of skills around passing on Islam to the children. Again she is

suggesting issues of good parenting and parenting within the parameters of cultural interpretation of religious teachings and values. And it is clear that this young woman was persistent in her quest to find out about who she was because she refers to the words 'I kept asking' which shows that she probably had to persevere to get reaction or a response from her parents to her questioning.

It is also significant to note that this young lady is typical of all the other respondents in that by studying and exploring Islam they have been able to construct a strong identity, usually combining two or more identities and successfully living multiple identities. This goes back to the core of this thesis and further strengthens the argument that more and more young women of Pakistani Mirpuri origin are practicing Islam because it is flexible and adaptable to the modern world and that it brings with it the spiritual strength of having answers to every day life dilemmas and situations. It is because Islam embraces "closeness through Islamic value" has the answers to, 'birth and death' and provides 'emotional and physical support and strong practical support", why so many young people are observing and practicing peaceful Islam (R10). Islam offers the young women self-fulfilment, self-satisfaction and contentment.

Respondent 7.2 again clearly shows how she once lived a life which was not within the guidelines of Islamic teachings, and that peer-group pressures had influenced her to live like that. Whether this was done in concealment from her family is unclear.



It was most likely that it was as she makes some reference to her parents' expectations of her and her own expectations. She does refer to her situations and her behaviours arising as a result of being too young and too inexperienced to balance western influences with her parents' more traditional expectations. However again she states that had she known more about Islam at that stage of her life, then she would not have got 'caught up in the traffic', (R7.2). However, once she started to explore Islam and become aware of its core principles she re-discovered her self and her faith. This again shows that Islam and the re-discovery of Islam for some young people is a life changing positive experience in the way of self-control.

Respondent 7.2 suggests many themes in her illuminating quotation below. She points out differentiations between the older generation and the younger people, she points out the differentiating styles and ways of thinking and behaving according to being exposed to different cultural values and shares with me her personal journey and struggles with her life situations at the time.

"I mean we're born in this country and we're brought up in this country and we have to respect where our parents come from, their cultures, values and religion. There's too much peer pressure because you're brought up in a certain way and you see things around you and think... I mean you get caught up in the traffic. It's very hard because I've been there. You don't think what you're doing is wrong at the time and afterwards you regret it. You know you have to be a certain way there are so much pressures from outside that you can't ignore it. You try not to make sense of it because you deny it. I lost my way....but I'm happy being who I am now" (R7.2).

It is clear from Respondent 7.2 that she was experiencing many feelings all at the same time, being happy behaving as she was, living a separate life in front of her parents and



family and another one outside, feelings of denial and guilt for doing things disapproved of and so forth, clearly there were frustrations and feelings of not being in control of her life, but regained that control and much more since re-discovering Islam.

### **11.7 Parenting**

Parenting was another theme that was identified from the rich data collected. All respondents agreed that parents had many duties and one of the main ones was to ensure that their children, right from a young age, should be clear that they are Muslims. They are not just the children of Pakistani parents, with their origins in Mirpur, but they are Muslims living in another country. Interestingly, all respondents agreed that people who are born Muslims can sometimes feel they don't have to try as hard to actively practice Islam, when in fact being a Muslim meant far more than simply being born a Muslim.

Respondent 6 like many of the other parents, both young and old defined 'good parents' as those who take their responsibilities seriously in terms of marriage, educating their children about Islam and assisting and supporting them in education and career:

“I have tried to pass this (Islamic teachings) on to my children and their children. It is the responsibility of good parents to do so”  
(R6).

She not only sees her own adult children as her responsibility but also her grandchildren too. This is interesting as it shows that religious teaching, just like cultural values, are passed on generation-to-generation and that there is a continuum in the learning process. Furthermore, these values are not just passed on and quickly forgotten about and never

revisited, they are in fact taken seriously because of fear of the dire repercussions such as the fear that cultural, family and religious values may fizzle out with coming generations so parents need to take their roles seriously in order to maintain their traditions and religious values. It is an old fashioned establishment secure in its own values but which is experiencing modern stress from their adolescents:

“Parents need the time to sit with children and explain things to them about Islam then young people have the right values” (R9.6).

Good parents were those who shared a strong loving relationship with their sons and daughters. On the other hand ‘bad parents’ were those who forced their opinions and behaviours on young people, particularly their girls. Bad parents did not share an open relationship with their sons and daughters and made self-elected decisions on areas such as marriage and observed and practiced culture under the guise of religion. This frustration of such parents is illuminated in the following quote, from a young mother:

“I get concerned about parents and young people who get culture and religion mixed up” (R10).

Religion and culture are inter-twined by parents and children, since children will learn from their parents and if their parents get the two confused then this will be learned and practiced by young children. Several parents felt that it helped that they themselves were involved in Islam through praying, reciting the Q’uran and understanding Islam and not just cultural observations. Surprisingly and worth noting is that several respondents felt frustration that there were some parents who did not involve themselves in the lives of their young children and left the responsibilities to teachers at school and at mosque to

deal with passing on Islam. The following quotation, from an elderly parent of now adult sons and daughter is illuminating as it highlights her multiple responsibilities, of being a 'good parent', a mother and a mentor for her children:

“If I didn't know why I practice my namaaz, read the Q'uran and keep rozey and if I didn't send my children to mosque and take responsibility for my own teachings to them how can I expect them (children) to know they are Muslims? (R9.9).

The research found that some parents were not in tune about Islam and therefore this affected the way in which other parents and young people viewed them:

“If parents could use Islam to explain why there are guidelines.. young people would not overstep the mark” (R9.8).

This is interesting as it suggests that parents need to be educated about Islam themselves so they can explain to young people what Islamic teachings are. It is also clear that this respondent agrees with the majority of others that parents can use Islam as a way of controlling the habits and behaviours of their young people, not because it is based on personal or cultural interest but because that is what Islam states.

The majority of respondents agreed that bad parents did exist and that these parents typecast all Pakistani Muslim parents but especially those from Mirpur because of the pre-conceived ideas of their apparent backwardness. One young woman, who was not married, argued quite vigorously that she despised parents who promoted culture more than religion, usually to justify their un-Islamic actions or decisions. Respondent 11 points out the issue of infusions of culture and religion and this being the major cause of



tensions between the different generations. She also suggests parents use culture as a weapon against controlling young peoples behaviours and habits, whereas young people pay less attention to this and look to religion more:

“Sometimes culture dictates our day-today life more than religion because the two become ambivalent (by parents). This is where we (young women) find-d it hard to identify with parents, as they regard culture more and it becomes their priority. They (parents) rely on it more” (R11).

It is interesting that she uses the word dictate in the context of culture and not religions because dictate is often associated with negatives such as a dictatorship i.e. forceful implementation of ideas. She suggests therefore that by using this word she feels negatively about culture and more positively about Islam. This is revealing as it suggests that young women like her view Islam much more positively as they believe passionately about it coming from Allah and that it is modern, flexible and adaptable to their lives whilst they believe culture to be manipulative and man-made.

### **11.8 The ‘revival’ of Islam**

The evidence also suggests that it is clear from all respondents that there as been a ‘revival’ of Islam amongst younger generations over the last few years. One of the main reasons identified by respondents resulting in this revival is that young people are becoming much more empowered in learning and seeking knowledge about themselves and about Islam rather than just taking their parents teachings on board:

“I think we (young people) think more about Islam and less about culture because we have been brought up here (UK). Whereas with parents it’s the opposite” (R8.2).

She suggests therefore that being born in the United Kingdom means that she has been able to learn about Islamic teachings and this could also mean that she believes that her parents and the majority of the older parents who are now in their 50s were born in Pakistan and had more of an old cultural understanding of things. This is quite revealing since Pakistan is a Muslim state where, you would expect people to follow and promote religion and not culture. This young woman is suggesting the opposite and suggests that living in a different culture and country means that people will want to have a much stronger bond with Islam and their country of birth. The evidence shows that young people do have very different thoughts, views and loves compared with their parents.

This quotation from respondent 10 reveals several reasons that according to her have helped to revive and nourish Islam more. She is making links with the growth of Islam amongst young men and women, and also makes the link with observing purdah in line with religious observations. She also points out her observation of trends amongst young men to keep a beard and young females wearing the hijab. She also adds being accepted by others such as employers and suggests tolerance and awareness amongst others about Islam and its obligations to followers. She suggests a greater degree of self-confidence from younger women who believe they are cosmopolitan, modern and who value their Pakistani and English values:

“I think there’s been a revival of purdah and Islam in the last few years especially in the young people... you just have to look around and see so many young Muslim girls wearing hijab and young men with beards. So many white women are turning to Islam and this (laughs) is supposedly a religion, which oppresses women. Islam gives women rights, respect and protection and that’s why it has revitalized. Also I think that some employers are good at providing facilities for praying and accept purdah” (R10).



It is clear that Respondent 10 feels that if young women observe and practice purdah then they have a bond and attachment to Islam. She does not give any room for flexibility here, as she is suggesting that those who do not observe or practice purdah are not in fact fulfilling their Islamic duties. She feels that being a Muslim woman gives her security and certainty in terms of her personal identity, which makes her part of the wider biraderi. She questions the stereotypical imager of Islam. Yet she points out the contradiction in such stereotype as non-Muslims are converting to Islam. For her on a personal level, Islam has all the qualities she needs to feel secure. She uses words such as 'women's rights', 'protection' and 'respect' to show how Islam works for her.

She is appreciative and acknowledges that other agencies such as some employers, do in fact allow for religious observation at the work place and that according to her allows more and more young people to actively take part in their daily Islamic duties. Similarly respondent 7.2 states that she now practices Islam much more than she has ever done before. It is clear by her tone and body language that she feels both guilt and embarrassment at not practicing Islam when she was younger, but since then she has 'gone back to Islam' and follows and practices Islam more like saying prayers and so forth.

Respondent 7.2 points out her rebellion during her teenage years, which is typical of many young people from other cultures too. However, now that her life has changed for the better according to her, in terms of being happily married and a mother, she feels she has 'gone back to Islam' but at the same time she acknowledges that she wasn't very much into Islam in the first place, so this suggests that she now follows Islam the way the



Q'uran and the Hadith teaches her. Her main reason for this is that she finds that Islam gives her a focus and structure to her daily life and she finds this both comfortable and self-fulfilling:

“I've gone back to Islam. That gives me direction” (R7.2).

The majority of respondents, whether young or old, used word such as 'stronger' and 'independence' when talking about Islam. The following quotation from respondent 5 is significant as she finds that being a young Muslim who practices religion as opposed to culture is very positive in her life. She suggested that Islam gives her more independence, confidence and self-belief than her mother ever had because she follows and observes Islam, whereas her mother and her family observed culture. This implies that this particular culture is oppressive and restrictive whilst religion is the opposite. She uses the word 'boundaries', in the context of guidelines in the confines of what she ought to and ought not to be doing in terms of Islamic teachings.

### **Summary**

The research evidence suggests Islam is important to all respondents irrespective of age or socio-economic status. The interesting point here is that whilst some respondents were aware of the guidelines of practicing Islam they found it easier to follow some observances more than others. This was particularly true when it came to reading Namaaz. Being at work or in educational establishments often made it difficult for respondents to practice Namaaz. Where facilities for washing and reading were available, it was more likely to encourage practicing Islam more.

The research evidence suggests young women are more in tune with Islam than their parents. Tensions arise with parents when parents practice culture under the guise of religion and when young women are challenging their parents by asserting their own knowledge of religion and not culture. The translation of a religion from one cultural context to another has had a supervising effect. The religious beliefs and interest have not been eroded or denied. On the contrary, they are revived. As the same time this renewed sense of religion is a symbol of personal choice, a self-assertion of difference from the ancient past. By 'culture' the young women think of all their parents' tribal inheritances. In order to feel at home in their new world they find their own inherited religion priceless.

The distinction between traditional cultural ties and religion is important. It might at first seem unusual to discover that the concept of 'Englishness' and 'Britishness' can be associated with anything other than Christianity. And yes, these young people are identifying themselves as distinctively more at 'home' in this country whilst using their own religious affiliation as a symbol of change, of renewal, and of the future. It should also be apparent that these women associate extreme fundamentalism with the past, with cultural influences, and see all forms of terrorism as against the principles of religion.

## Chapter 12

### Findings from stage C: Dress

#### 12.1 Introduction

The respondents who took part in stage C talked about dress as a symbol of their identity. It was important to discuss the issue of dress and relate it to their religious, cultural and personal identities. All dress, is symbolic of a cultural identity, sometimes used to conform and sometimes to confront.

#### 12.2 Hijab and non-hijab wearers

The majority of the young women wore hijab although this varied in the way it was worn. The concept of hijab is used to describe a headscarf, which is worn tightly around the head, covering the forehead, the ears and the shoulders. Sometimes the shoulders are not covered by the headscarf. Wearing hijab was very important and symbolic of these women's affiliation to Islam as one of their crucial symbols of identity. They defined multiple identities as an amalgamation of the British, Asian, Pakistani and religious values they have experienced. It was not seen as making a negative statement to others but a symbolism of who they are. This quotation from Respondent 3 was typical of the majority of hijab wearers in this study:

“For me it represents who I am and what I stand for. It says out loudly this girl is a young British-Muslim. I'm proud to wear it”  
(R3).

It is worth noting that except for 2 older respondents none of the others wore hijab in the form of the headscarf. Younger respondents did, with some wearing the jalbaab, but none



of the older women did so. Their hijab was a chiffon scarf, which covered their heads. We see that hijab is worn in different ways, all of which are permissible in Islam. It is clear that younger women are taking hijab in the more Islamically approved form and this goes back once again to the core of this thesis in that younger women are much more aware of Islamic interpretations and their duties as young Muslims.

Interestingly the hijab was worn out of choice and not enforced upon them by family, although some respondents did make reference to knowing of other young women who were forced to wear hijab by their families. This is a complex issue in relation to identity as it demonstrates a sense of ownership of being British and at the same time having their own religious values and beliefs. Wearing hijab and observing Islam brings with it plenty of personal satisfaction as well as bringing izzat to the family. None of the respondents wore 'nikab' that is covering their entire body and face, with only the eyes showing. Interestingly all respondents irrespective of whether they wore hijab or the dubatta did not necessarily feel they were more religious or less religious than those who wore the full nikab or hijab itself. Young respondents did however wear the 'jalbaab' and scarf, in pastel and light shades and not black cloth. The black jalbaab and nikab is the only style we see in the news on television, in documentaries and in photographs, thus this is the widely accepted style of hijab and nikab.

The literature review identified many studies that have been done on hijab but which do not specifically focus on Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford. For example Franks (2000) explored veiling amongst 'white' women in Britain and compared this to

experiences of women in the Middle East. She found that veiling allowed women to access and enter into male dominated territories. Veiling was linked with Asian women and not white women. Even then white women were not looked at with suspicion of they wore the veil, when Asian women were.

Hamel (2002) explored wearing hijab in France and specifically French schools. There were mixed views on this ban ranging from very angry French Muslims who insisted this was an infringement of their Muslim-French identity to others who suggested this ban was acceptable. This instigated debates as far as Britain since Muslims here felt the same fate awaited their children in British schools. Secor (2002) explored veiling in Turkey and found that dress codes had a particular emphasis on the social class of the wearer. People who wore the veil were regarded as working class.

There are levels of observing purdah and veiling is one of them. There are also different levels in observing veiling, from the modest headscarf to the more elaborate and distinguishable nikab:

“I don’t want to wear nikab. I think that’s too extreme” (R4.1).

Young people have different and varied views and choices surrounding hijab. Hijab literally means – to preserve oneself by covering up. It is worth interrogating this concept of ‘covering up’. Being dressed modestly and in a way that does not attract the attention of on-looker, particularly from males, is important in Islamic law. Defining ‘dressing modestly’ is difficult as there are likely to be different variations according to religious

sect, age and gender. The rationale behind 'covering up' is important to understand as it begs the question 'what is suitable covering up and for whose benefit is this? Is it that males are demanding that females cover up and dress according to their rules or is it something that young women are controlling themselves. Covering up against males also suggests that the erotic is a real presence.

Respondent 4.1, who herself wore hijab and jalbaab, that covering up depended on the level that one wished to go for. She uses the word extreme to refer to this form of hijab as being exaggerated, stringent and excessive, perhaps even taking hijab too far. It is also clear that this is a very personal statement and that she also without a doubt had a choice in wearing hijab. But it must also be noted that the cultural insensitivity of certain dress codes can be seen as offensive.

It is interesting that few of the respondents did mention that hijab added to the izzat of the family, possibly because it is against the alternative perception of the family as being sloppy and over-integrated into British cultures. More referred to wearing hijab for reasons of preserving self-identification.

From what Respondent 3 says, it is clear that wearing hijab is something which brings her confidence, makes her assertive and represents her multiple identities, not just being British or Pakistani but being a young British-Muslim. She adds strength to her identity by encompassing nationality with religion, rather than nationality. She says that wearing hijab was her decision as she emphasises the words 'I decided ', thus it was not enforced



upon her and that she was at a stage of her life where she knew she could wear hijab and behave in a way which does not in anyway damage the importance and honour, sacredness and honour attached to it, thus showing how important it is to her to wear hijab for the right reasons, such as her increasing awareness of Islam.

This strengthens the core of this thesis in that young people are in tune with Islam because it is seen as modern, flexible and adaptable. It is clear that Respondent 3 like many of the other young respondents were happy to be 'different' but not in a way which ostracized them from mainstream society because they recognize the fact that they are part of the indigenous British population but also want the freedom to be able to represent their Pakistani Muslim origins. Hijab symbolizes her identities and her heritage and adds value to who she is. She suggests having choices and hijab was very personal in her personal journey of self-discovery. She also suggests that if people 'accuse' you of something, you don't hide behind the hijab but you assert it to work for you:

"I've worn hijab for about seven years now. It was something I decided upon. I felt the time was right for me...for me it represents who I am and what I stand for. It says out loudly this girl is a young British-Muslim. I'm proud to wear it. I think when you look around more young girls are wearing hijab and that's a clear message from young people saying we are also proud of being Muslim" (R3).

Anwar (1998) found that Asian parents had a preference to their children wearing traditional 'shalwar-kameez' rather than 'western or 'English' clothing. Ghuman (1994) found that parents would allow selective wearing of 'English' clothes for work and outside of the home but not when they were at home. Doi (1989) also found that parents

had a code of dressing styles with 'morality' rather than clothing which could tarnish the izzat of the family.

When hijab is ordered by parents it is largely due to cultural reasons and that of preserving the family izzat it could be argued a symbol of parental control over young people if enforced i.e. marking a boundary. Within families there are differences about why and how hijab is worn. When hijab is worn by force then there is no room for questioning their parents. For all the respondents, who wore hijab in this research, the fact that wearing hijab was a personal choice, they were able to question and stand up to their parents, cultural habits and values. This again goes back to the core of the thesis:

"I wear hijab out of personal choice and started wearing it in Pakistan. My cousins here (in Bradford) do the full works, the black lot. Islam doesn't say you have to wear just black, that's another cultural thing...anyway I wear it out of choice but some of my cousins have been told by their parents they have to wear it. them girls can't question anything, it's that way and that's that...and it's culture again, they're (cousins) are taught culture, they're not really empowered.." (R2).

It is worth noting the language Respondent 2 uses to describe the hijab 'the full works'. The black lot', indicating cynicism. She suggests this is a very complex issue because it causes confusion and for wearers and non-wearers of the hijab. It is interesting to note the complexity and confusion attached. She also talks about imbalance of power in some Pakistani Mirpuri families and some women being forced to accept instructions from parents even if they disagree with it vehemently. She suggests that young people are moulded into accepting cultural practices as the norm and these are unquestionable. It is interesting that respondent 2 started wearing hijab whilst on a visit to Pakistan but this is



misleading as it suggests that everyone in Pakistan wears hijab. It can be quite a revelation and an eye-opening unexpected surprise to people in Pakistan when a young British girl arrives in Pakistan wearing hijab.

The expectation is that young people here in Britain who do not wear hijab are not religious because they are being brought up and experiencing a non-Muslim environment and therefore are taking on Western values. The word 'empowered' is used to describe assertiveness and confidence and the ability to question parental control over the habits and cultural behaviours of young people, especially young girls. Empowerment is a liberating, strong and very positive force for young people and that is the context in which Respondent 2 uses the word. It substantiates her argument, thus the choice of dress constitutes a personal decision, not a marker of criticism of others.

Hijab was not just worn with the shalwar-kameez but also with loose western' clothing.

"I'm quite religious and do read my prayers regularly. I don't wear hijab but I don't think you have to wear hijab to do prayers. It's the intention that is more important. I know its in Islam to cover your head" (R8.3).

### **12.3 Fashion versus morality**

It is worth noting that the older women wore shalwar-kameez in what can be described as a traditional style. The younger women however mainly wore shalwar-kameez, which combined both traditional with modern styles. This was reflected in the material (usually satin/silk effect and chiffon or lace effect tops) and the way the outfit had been sewn



(usually bootleg trousers with short kameezes. The majority wore hijab and a few observed the jalbaab when they left the house environment.

The general consensus amongst all respondents was that young Muslim women, regardless of where their origins were, ought to observe an Islamically appropriate dress style. Respondents felt that this included loosely fitted shalwar-kameez. Very few actually mentioned that all Muslim women ought to cover their heads with hijab. This is significant as they are assuming that as long as the outfit was not revealing and preserved modesty then that would be enough in term of fulfilling Islamic dress codes. This therefore suggesting that respondents were fulfilling their parents expectations and keeping them happy by dressing in a way they approved of whilst still having the flexibility of having their own influence in the dress style.

Respondents felt they were successfully combining eastern with western styles in a way, which was approved Islamically and by their parents. It is worth noting the slang language used 'at the end of the day' which suggests that no matter what something's are unchangeable. Respondents did mention that there were boundaries of what they thought was acceptable levels of being 'westernised' and taking the concept too far:

“(I don't) particularly approve of girls who wear virtually nothing because at the end of the day you're still a Muslim and shouldn't dress like that” (R2).

Respondent 2 shows her dissatisfaction of young women who wear clothing styles, which reveal too much of the body than is desired in Islam. She does not draw a line at not wearing western style clothing at all by saying:

“You can wear trousers and still observe Islamic dress codes. Having your head covered is important because according to Allah that’s a sign of a ‘believing Muslim woman’. We’re taught culture and old wives tails about why we should cover our heads. It’s about modesty and respect. Allah watches you so you shouldn’t wear things that show your proper shape and that” (R2).

She suggests that her dress style is influenced by her awareness of Islam rather than cultural interpretations of dress. Mixed messages are given to young people from parents and that some are ‘hear say’ and conjured up by people and this is often passed down generationally. She shows that she is not happy to just listen to what is being said to her by parents and others but that she has does it because of religious expectations of her. To her she is making a clear statement to everyone that she is a Muslim woman and the fact that she uses the phrase ‘believing Muslim woman” adds emphasis to her character and her identity of being a young Muslim woman living in Britain.

It was significant to find that younger many younger women observed purdah much more than their mothers did. This could insinuate that older woman are married and are not the focal attraction of young men, but young women observe purdah because of the nature of society and modesty, it is more acceptable to parents and to their own self-image. Some girls though are forced to wear hijab by parents for reasons of preserving the family izzat:

“I wear the jilbaab when I’m out but my mum doesn’t so again that sends a message that the younger generation are in a way following Islam, not in a different or accurate way, because Islam is so flexible but I suppose in a more overt way and aren’t scared about what society make of it” (R3).



This respondent makes a clear personal statement and suggests that she herself may have been subject to stares and comments from people about the way she chooses to dress and her clear message of being a young Muslim woman.

Younger girls made it clear that they wore hijab because it took away male attention. There were respondents who mentioned that they were not feel comfortable when men are looking at them even though they were dressed in hijab. This suggests that some young women still felt vulnerable to the prospect of unwanted male attention. However, all respondents agreed that they felt that younger women chose to wear shalwar-kameez because:

“Young people feel more comfortable wearing shalwar-kameez because fashions change all the time and they feel and look better”  
(R8.2).

An emerging theme was that many respondents spoke about their frustration and anger towards girls who wore the hijab for the ‘wrong reasons’. So the hijab was a passport to secretly engage in behaviours that was unacceptable in Islam. Respondents made reference to females they knew, who wore the hijab. Their parents were pleased at this and they allowed their daughter to stay out later at night and did not question them as much as they had done when she had not worn the hijab. On the other hand several respondents also echoed their frustration towards parents who forcibly enforced hijab on their young women for reasons of letting the family izzat but used their justification under the guise of religion and not their own cultural interpretation and mental control. This could unpick cultural practices e.g. wrong reasons for doing the right thing.



Younger respondents mentioned that they aspired to practicing Islam more at work and at educational establishments but barriers such as inadequate washing facilities to perform wuzu or lack of a clean area in which to pray were mentioned frequently. However, even then respondents said they did not feel that their religious faith was compromised as they felt that employers did welcome them wearing hijab.

Overwhelmingly the younger respondents who wore hijab were either students or in paid employment. These younger women argued they were free to practice hijab the way they wanted to, especially in educational establishments. A few respondents mentioned one educational establishment in particular, which they felt welcomed them and allowed them to practice hijab and their faith actively. This included wearing hijab and having access to a purpose designated prayer and washing area and designated slots for religious speeches and groups to meet. Both younger and older respondents felt that this was a positive sign as it facilitated faith and being involved in practicing Islam and that access to these facilities encourages and promotes religious awareness amongst not just Muslims but other faiths too:

“I think \* university has very good prayer facilities and loads of young people use it. That’s a good sign, it shows that Islam is strong in young people regardless of what others think” (R4.2).

Interestingly Respondent 10, a hijab wearing younger woman, practiced purdah because she saw it as a facilitator and a public statement of her Muslim identity. She wanted to be British but also a Muslim together. She wore the hijab as she felt it represented her British-Muslim identity best. She wanted other people including other Muslims to see her

Muslim identity. Other respondents made reference to particular religious sayings from the hadith or Q'uran to justify this element of self-faith declaration.

The main finding with reference to hijab was the high numbers of young women who did wear it. Even more revealing and surprising are that all those that did, did so out of their own personal choice. There was no pressure from parents to wear the hijab. However once the respondent had made this choice, parents did encourage them to continue to observe this and not to take it off. This is a huge commitment from young women, particularly since there is so much negative attention about women who wear hijab.

The hijab is seen as only been worn by women who are forced into it, women who have no rights of self-expression, have huge pressures from families to conform to a rigid set of rules and values which are seen as backwards and outdated. Another key finding with reference to the hijab is that by wearing hijab respondents felt comfortable, confident and complete as this was part of their religious identity and one that also made them British citizens too. Not only were they British, but British-Muslims.

Respondent 10 had encountered racism at work, not just because she wore hijab but also because her work colleagues demanded to know her identity making her feel that her identity was being questioned because of the way she chose to dress. Here she describes one such occasion:

“The other day at work they decided to put the St George’s flag on my VDU screen and asked who my allegiance was to?” (R10).

This is interesting since the same question of culture is asked i.e. 'are you what you wear?' as if it were either Britain or Islam.

#### **12.4 Dress and schooling- Case study**

On the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2004 the case of a young British Muslim schoolgirl made national headlines. Shabeena Begum aged fifteen was dismissed from her school for wearing 'Muslim dress' at her school. The BBC News reported:

"School ban on religious dress upheld in high court" therefore Shabeena Begum aged 15 has lost her right to wear Muslim dress at school. She says, "She is being denied her right to education". Her family says "this doesn't help to integrate Muslims into British society. Her family is very disappointed. Shabeena argues she has genuine and sincerely held religious beliefs and has the right to manifest her these religious rights". Her case was denied as the judge said "It would be a health and safety risk but more specifically it could cause divisions between Muslims i.e. those wearing jilbaab would be perceived as 'better' Muslims than those wearing headscarves and those who wear no headscarves" i.e. between each other"

At her school the hilbaab (headscarf only) is an optional item of uniform. Uniforms are a symbol of schools and their status and give a sense of collectiveness and equality to all students. Other schools in the area have jilbaab as an option. Her solicitor said that this decision had implications on other Muslim parents, as they now need to think more carefully and closely at which school to place their children. This applies to work places



too. Solicitor argues that the shalwar-kameez is worn by a number of faiths so this is an interpretation of dress codes. By wearing the jilbaab we are able to differentiate between Muslims and non-Muslims.

### **Summary**

The evidence suggests that dress is symbolic of deeper meaning. It can be national assertion of a style of life and a membership of a class, like wearing pin-stropped suits, or it can be the assertion of such difference that others notice, like 'mohican' hairstyles. Dress, is used by these young women as a mark of personal significance. They wish to assert their own faith, just as an orthodox Jew or a priest would do. This assertion is one that gives them their personal strength and is defined against rather than by, their parents and the biraderi. The question is whether dress is worn to displace criticism or attract it. Dress is not a superficial matter but an assertion of a particular identity and meaning.

## Chapter 13

### Findings and discussion

#### 13.1 Summary of previous research

This research study has identified that most previous research has suggested that identity is a blurred issue and they young Asians who are exposed to two or more cultures will inevitably experience a 'culture-crisis'. It is seen as natural and normal process of growing up. The women in this research demonstrate they are proud to have multiple and adaptive roles where they are able to assert their own unique heritage by ignoring racism and questioning their parents demands.

1. Pakistani women have been marginalized by previous research, which has generally documented why and how they came to England but very little about anything else. It could be that research has been sparse because academics may have wondered whether it is worth carrying out the research because they did not know enough about the population or because they are a particularly difficult group to access. The idea that men are their gatekeepers may not have helped either. There is a shift in attitude and a shift in lifestyles. More women are born in Britain and being educated here. They have different aspirations to their parents; they are vocal, pro-active and independent. They have a greater responsibility at home and many will take on the roles of sons with their parents.
2. Most previous research studies have homogenized Asians under one heading. They have failed to account for huge differences in terms of religious, cultural,

class, gender, caste, language and geography. The label of 'Black' or 'immigrant' and even 'Asian' are outdated. This research has clearly defined boundaries between the categories thus making it rich and specific.

3. It is important to remember that previous research studies have often been marred with presenting a rather bleak and grey portrayal of the lives of Pakistani women. They are often cited as being oppressed by men, having no worth in the Pakistani community, being forced into marriages and having no intelligence. This research reveals the rather sinister side to being a Pakistani Mirpuri woman but at the same time it demonstrates many positive issues to being a Pakistani Mirpuri women living in Bradford. This is so important and it is equally important to know the views of a 'community', which has previously been scrutinized and typecast negatively.
4. Most previous research has typified Pakistanis with being Muslims, and has not accounted for differences such as being a Sikh or Christian from Pakistan or sect differences, or the differences between cultural inheritance and belief.
5. In the main, previous research makes references to a 'Pakistani Community'. The question they fail to a large extent to address is what is the 'Pakistani community'? They generally accept that men are the leaders and women are oppressed followers. They fail to recognise that the Mirpuri population is a



minority community within a minority community in England and issues of biraderi and caste are important. The perceptions of Mirpuris are rather negative.

6. Much of the previous studies on racism have been about different races and intolerance but little is known about levels of racism within different Muslim sects for example or geographical locations, for example the relationships between Mirpuris and people living in Karachi or Islamabad. Urdu speakers may look down upon Mirpuri Punjabi speakers. Racism is cultural prejudices and complicated.
7. Previous research about the experiences of Pakistani women has usually sidelined Pakistani women. Instead men have been used to represent the views of females. This was the case with the Bradford Commission Report (1996), (Din, 2001). Pakistani women are even further insulated and their abilities to engage constructively in research have been restricted because of the difficulty of access, which the researcher overcame in the current study.
8. Previous research has often looked at religion and culture as one entity as opposed to separate entities. These are highly emotive issues that have been heightened in the present climate since tragic worldwide events have rendered British Muslim women vulnerable.

### 13.2 Key issues from the study

This qualitative empirical study has identified a number of key themes and issues, which emerged gradually from the rich data collection. These include:

1. The research has demonstrated that there is no one definition of what a Pakistani community is. It is naïve to assume one community exists. There are many differences such as caste, class, religious, cultural and gender issues that need to be understood and acknowledged. The term ‘Pakistani Community’ is a myth and an umbrella label under which there are several ‘communities’ which share cultural and religious, linguistic, class and caste.
2. The research has shown that there is no one clear definition of what a Pakistani woman is. Again as with difficulties in defining the ‘Pakistani Community’ the same applies to defining a ‘Pakistani woman. Pakistani Mirpuri women in Bradford share many similarities but also differences with their counterparts say from Islamabad and other large cities and towns in Pakistan.
3. The research study has demonstrated that Mirpuri women in Bradford have a newfound level of confidence that they are using in their home situations and outside of the home in their working and education lives.
4. The research has identified that although the immediate family plays a key role in the lives of young Pakistani Mirpuri women, there is a shift in emphasis over the

relationship with the wider extended family and the biraderi. Young women will have a distant relationship with the biraderi and attend functions when necessary, but their contact is limited at other times. This is certainly a difference between them and the relationship their parents will have with the biraderi. What we are seeing is a generational change in attitudes towards the biraderi.

5. Another major finding of the research study is that although the younger women attach a lower importance to the biraderi they are still aware of the control the biraderi can have on the activities of the females and the sinister side to the biraderi system which can scrutinize the izzat of the family and females whenever it chooses to do so. The biraderi has become fragmented; as result of young people not sustain it through marriage ties for example. Recent cases of 'honour killings' of a number of young Pakistani women in Bradford and in Pakistan add to the sinister and dark side to the biraderi.
6. Another significant and major finding of the research is that young women at a level never previously suspected of are challenging parental authority. This demonstrates a shift in the power and decision making that parents and young women now have. Young British Pakistani Mirpuri women are not willing to succumb to the orders that parents are giving them instead they are using their newfound confidence to say what they want to and behave in a way which is acceptable to both parents and themselves.



7. The research has also identified that younger British Pakistani Mirpuri women are more in tune with Islam and their Islamic rights. They use this to challenge their parents. They believe their parents follow culture rather than religion. Young women are using various channels to re-discover themselves and educate themselves and then importantly they are educating their parents about what Islam say are the rights and wrongs of parenting. Young women are using Islam to benefit themselves and to provide an identity which encompasses the religious aspect but also various cultural attributes and behaviours from their parents which they are only following because it they work in their favour.
  
8. Another major finding is that young women have very high education and career aspirations. Many are at University or have gone into professional areas of work including medicine, management, law and health. It is important to mention that older Pakistani Mirpuri women also voiced how important qualifications were. The older women in this research study were themselves experiencing a shift in their lifestyles in that they were taking on ESOL classes, a form of education which made them understand even more how valuable education a and qualifications are.
  
9. Another major finding in this research was that although some respondents mentioned they had experienced tensions between their parents and their values which often restricted their freedom, the majority had said they were happy with having as much freedom as they needed. They were able to socialize with female

friends freely, work freely and even go away on trips without parents being present. Young women did not talk about having to have concealed identities to the extent that previous research has suggested. The same generalization could apply to their White counterparts.

10. Previous studies have assumed that being exposed to two or more cultures causes some tensions and conflicts between dissatisfied young people and their families. This research has demonstrated that the majority of women, irrespective of their age will have a good strong identity that amalgamates British and Pakistani values with Islamic values. A couple of young people did rebel as they were growing up but interestingly since re-discovering Islam they have returned to Islam and now practiced Islam more. They were able to hold a British-Pakistani-Muslim identity well.

11. They had complex views on the majority culture. Just as they were stereotypes they were brought up to stereotype the 'kaffar' society. The research demonstrates a dual attitude which is changing, i.e. more tolerant, as well as more comfortable with their own 'difference'.

### **13.3 Bringing together the key findings**

The key message from the evidence is that these women see it pleasurable to have multiple and adaptive roles, by asserting their own unique heritage and at the same time choosing to ignore racism and the desire by parents to impose strict rules on them:

## Identity

- The majority of respondents believed that the whole issue of identity was a complex one not because it caused them confusion or a 'crisis of cultures' but because society and politics make it tricky for 'others' to accept minority cultures. So whilst the data of this research data showed that the majority of women irrespective of their ages believed they were British-Muslims of Pakistani Mirpuri heritage. They believed that Britain is their home, even for those who were not born here but had lived here for most of their lives. They enjoy being British in terms of their exposure to British foods, language, their social friends and their aspirations. There is a shift in attitude in terms of sending money to family in Pakistan. Although young people felt it was important to support the immediate family, such as elderly grandparents, the majority thought it was not important to send money on a regular basis. There are gradually loosening their ties.
- The majority of respondents explained their identities with multiple definitions. Therefore there is no one fixed definition. The data shows that the majority of respondents thought that identity was very personal because they used personal characteristics such as religion, the birthplace of their parents and their own birthplace. Some respondents also used their marital status and their personal relationship as mothers, daughters and wives to explain their identity. A good example Respondents 5, 10 and 1



were married and used their relationship as mother, wife and daughter in their identity.

- This research evidence shows that although a vast majority of this sample felt they were British-Muslims they felt dissatisfied at not being accepted as a result of politics and worldwide events that focused on them. For example Respondents 10, 2 and 8.1 were clearly angry at events such as 9/11, which they condemned for being un-Islamic. They felt their identities had been under threat from a minority of 'white' people who used this opportunity to promote racism and harassment, as a reaction to the intolerance of the terrorists.
- The majority of respondents felt content at being British-Muslims with a Pakistani heritage. The relationship that young women in particular had with their heritage was fragmented when compared to the one their parents had. Pakistan was seen as a short-term holiday destination and for sporadic visits to close elderly relatives. It was not a place where they envisaged living long term. Although a few respondents such as Respondents 2 and 4.3 used the term 'back home' they mean this in the context of their parental ties and respect for their parents. As far as the majority are concerned England is their home. It is worth noting that with the exception of a couple, none of the Respondents used the term 'English' to define

their identity instead the term 'British' was used. Nevertheless the young women did not feel 'fragmented' in terms of their own identity.

- The majority of the younger women in this study believed that their parents would consider themselves Pakistani. This research evidence demonstrates that this was not so simple. The vast majority of older women saw themselves as being British but at the same time felt that Pakistan was important to them too. It is worth noting that the majority of older women, although they considered themselves to be British, wished to be buried in Pakistan because that is where they were born and where their parents were buried.
- Although some young women had some confusion as they were growing up, the confusion was not because of being exposed to British and Pakistani cultures but rather because of their relationship with parents who were using culture to restrict the behaviours of young people. Young women cannot understand why parents are using cultural practices under the guise of Islam. The problem is with parents who are still holding on strongly to traditional practices and attitudes.
- Young women are not willing to compromise their identities and instead of experiencing a 'culture-crisis' with British and Pakistani cultures they have experienced tensions between parental cultural practices and their

own understanding of Islam and culture. This is important since the vast majority of older women in this sample also made it clear that there needed to be improved relationships between parents and their youngsters, a relationship built on mutual trust. They are as clear as the younger generation that the links with Pakistan will gradually be eroded with time and the coming generations who are British born.

There is clearly ownership of their British and Muslim identity as several respondents including Respondents 8.1, 4.3. 8.2 and 2 use the term 'my country' in relation to Britain and not Pakistan. They believe they are British-Muslims i.e. being British now includes several religions and not just Catholic, Protestants and Jews but Sikhs, Hindus and Buddhists.

## **Marriage**

- The majority of respondents were in favour of arranged marriages. A major finding was that parents were looking at other sources of acquiring possible marriage proposals other than their immediate family or biraderi. This is significant as it demonstrates that the biraderi is becoming fragmented and that whilst loyalties to the family are strong amongst the older generations there is a shift in emphasis. The older women in this research study have argued how forced marriages are anti-Islamic and are clear of the possible consequences such behaviour can result in. The majority of respondents irrespective of age acknowledged the hypocrisy that prevailed in the Pakistani



Mirpuri communities. They were aware that some parents would say one thing and do another.

- This research has show that as long as young women have a say in the marriage they are happy with parental choices. This respect has also shown that young women will not just sit idly by and accept what their parents say to them. Respondent 5 and respondent 10 had married cousins from Pakistan. The families suggested their marriages but both were given the opportunity to meet and agree to the marriage if they felt satisfied. Most respondents trusted their parent's judgment over selecting a marriage partner.

#### **Freedom/life at home**

- The majority of respondents valued the 'freedom' they had since they were aware that some girls were not as lucky as them. A major finding is that the young women 'enjoyed' spending time at home doing things such as studying, cooking and socializing with friends and their immediate family. A major finding was that housework was not just chores done by females young or old who came from Pakistan but were also very much part of daily life for British born Pakistani females. The majority of respondents observed household chores without tensions with parents or with their male siblings. In fact Respondent 2 (stage C) was able to delegate domestic chores to her older and younger brothers.

- Many of the respondents lead very busy lives, which included studying either part-time or full-time and working as well as being parents to young children. Respondent 1 and Respondent 10 (stage C) are examples of young working mums. None of the respondents in this research study lived on their own. The married respondents were more likely to be living with their husband and children and not with the in-laws. Living with in-laws was likely to cause tensions as mentioned by Respondent 8.3 (stage C). This is one possible reason as why the biraderi were becoming fragmented.
- Young women used their 'free time' to socialize with friends, going to the cinema, to the gym and many were part of community groups. The older women were also very active and were part of the community groups that undertook a wide and varied range of indoor and outdoor activities. Several of the older women worked with local police and council bodies in a voluntary capacity for community cohesion and breaking down public disorder.
- Some respondents found that parents would ask them where they had been more than they would ask their male siblings. The majority saw this as precautionary and not simply as parental control. The major finding was that young people felt they had enough freedom. Freedom to them was about being able to do things like go to college, go to shops, and socialize with friends. Many respondents did not mention going out to clubs and to pubs, as they did not see this as part of their identity. Young women did not wish to

'abuse' the trust their parents had given them to have this level of freedom. With the exception of Respondent 7.1 (stage C) getting married was not seen as restricting a woman's freedom, rather it was about more responsibility and a change in role from being a sister and daughter to being a wife and daughter-in-law.

- The izzat of the parents was reflected by the behaviours of their children. Good parenting and families were those whose children were well behaved, were doing well at university and had good jobs. It was also about observing Islam. The older women felt that parents had been forced into giving their daughters more freedom because if they didn't then young women were likely to rebel and that needs to be avoided at all cost.

### **Islam**

- The evidence shows that the majority of young people argue that the behaviours of parents suggest they are following cultural norms and not Islam even though they claim not to be. That is the area of concern to young women who wish to follow Islam and not culture.
- Some aspects of Islam were followed more closely than others. For example the majority of respondents said they fasted during the month of Ramzan. During Ramzan, they prayed more regularly and were more 'religious' in terms of observing the codes of behaviour during fasting times. The majority



of respondents said they prayed, but only frequently. This was mainly due to constraints at work and studies which made it difficult to pray. Many respondents observed the 'kiza' aspect, which meant they were able to say the prayers they had missed when they were at home.

- Many younger respondents argued they were dissatisfied with the infusion of culture with Islam. They argued that certain behaviours and values such as forced marriages and parental decision making were culturally based and not religious. Some argued parents did not know enough about Islam and were following only what their parents had told them. They seemed to think that parents have slowly eroded Islamic values in order to keep control over women and children. There is clearly a huge issue of difference between the generations and what is interesting is that the overwhelming majority of older women in this research study agreed that parents needed to reflect on Islam rather than culture to avoid tensions with younger generations.
- The signs of young women being more in tune with Islamic observances are clear. Younger women were more likely than older women to cover their head with tighter fitting headscarves than mothers. They are also more likely to wear jalbaab more than older women. This is interesting since one would expect the reverse.

- Some of the respondents who did not practice Islam ‘enough’ were aware of their fallbacks and the intention to improve themselves were clear. For older women the pilgrimage to Hajj and umbra were inevitable. The research found that young women respected their parents but they were not willing to stand by and observe hypocrisy or cultural control upon them, especially where parents used it under the guise of Islam. The younger women challenged their parents with their newfound confidence of Islam, which they gained through alternative means and not just from their parents. This shows that younger women are making informed choices and more importantly the major finding is they are educating their parents about Islam. This is illuminating given that one would expect it to be the other way round.

### **Language and dress**

- The majority of respondents did feel that speaking Mirpuri Punjabi or Urdu was important as it was part of their parental heritage and also it was the way in which the majority communicated with their parents and other older relatives. The majority did think that Mirpuri-Punjabi or Urdu was their mother-tongue language; the majority did argue that increasingly English was taking over. It is worth pointing out that several respondents when talking in English would often break into ‘apana’ language and use the odd word or phrase in Mirpuri Punjabi or Urdu. This was a ‘natural’ course of conversation with other Mirpuri-Pakistani and no one batted an eyelid when it happened. The older women shared this communication process but the other way around. Some of the older respondents

used the odd 'angrasee' (English) word in their Mirpuri-Punjabi or Urdu conversation.

- Several of the younger women wore hijab and others also wore the jalbaab. None of the women though wore the nikab. The respondents who wore hijab did so out of personal choice and had not been forced into it by their families. However, some of the respondents did mention they were aware of other young girls who had the hijab enforced upon them by their families. The young women in this study found the hijab to be empowering and liberating and a symbol of their identity as Muslim women. Some of the women wore the hijab with western style clothing including jeans and blouses that demonstrated a visible symbol of their western and Islamic identities.
- Although young women who observed the hijab did so out of choice, some did mention the fact that their families had more 'izzat' because they were 'covering up'. Whilst the young girls maintain they are not observing hijab for acceptance from the biraderi, the question remains about the hold of the biraderi upon individuals and individual families within it.
- A few respondents had experienced racism from wider society particularly following the atrocities of 9/11 but none had felt the need to discard their hijab. At times of uncertainty their affiliation to Islam became stronger but so did their ownership of their British identity. They want to be seen as young British Muslims of Pakistani Mirpuri descent. Young women in particular felt content



with wearing hijab at work and argued that this shows that they are part of British society, are working for English employers and are satisfied that wearing hijab does not place them at a disadvantage.

## **Chapter 14**

### **Conclusion**

This research study has developed incrementally. The initial idea of the study was to look at the domestic relationship between young women with their families and in particular male-female power dynamics. However the results of the pilot interview stage helped to modify the course of the research towards realising that the research area was wider and more complex than had initially been anticipated.

This research study began with a pilot stage which using a questionnaire. This pilot stage was conducted with feedback from young women aged sixteen to twenty-five since it was aimed at them and with women aged fifty and above. Ten people aged sixteen to twenty-five and fifty plus completed the questionnaire. The feedback given by the 'evaluators' and 'testers' was invaluable and it is with that feedback and the lessons learnt that directed the rest of the research. From the questionnaire the research evidence suggests there are generational differences in opinions in terms of marriage, caste, identity and the relationships between the older and younger generations. The similarities occurred in terms of religion and religious observances. These are all big issues surrounding what it is to be a Pakistani Mirpuri woman living in Bradford.

It was important to build upon the findings of the pilot questionnaire stage with a method that would enable a closer look at some of the main issues raised in the questionnaire. Thus a pilot semi-structured interview stage followed because it was important to give the statistical findings that came out of the pilot questionnaire an individual voice. One

way of giving them a voice was through talking face to face, in detail. A detailed pro-forma was designed again with the valuable input of some young Mirpuri Muslim women in Bradford. Seven young British women aged sixteen to twenty-five took part in the interviews. Respondents came from a range of ages and backgrounds. The interviews were exploratory and questions were asked under eight themes. These had been directed by the questions in the pilot questionnaire stage. At the request of the respondents, none of the interviews were tape-recorded instead detailed notes were made. This helped to ease the respondent and interviews ran without complications.

A manual coding system was used to explore the data gathered through the seven interviews. Certain themes came out clearly from the data gathered around marriage, education and career aspirations and identity. It was clear that there were stark differences in terms of identity, marriage and education and career aspirations and relationships with parents. Again these were huge issues and the complexity of them necessitated further interviews with more Pakistani Mirpuri women to be undertaken.

To ensure reliability and validity the researcher decided to undertake the next stage of the research, which was to follow up some of the key areas where similarities and differences occurred. The initial pro-forma was used in the final stage with twenty-nine Pakistani Muslims of Mirpuri descent. All interviews were tape-recorded and this time the opinions of older women were included. Some of the interviews were conducted in Mirpuri-Punjabi and Urdu depending on the preference of the older women, whereas all the interviews with younger women were in English. The interviews lasted between forty-



five minutes to one hour and took place at places suitable with the respondents. This included the local community centre and their homes. It is important to note that at all stages respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality ethics were adhered to at all times.

It was important to be able to interrogate the research questionnaire closely 'what are the important issues that shape the British Mirpuri women's personal identities?' There were layers such as identities being personal, of being a woman, of being British and being a Muslim.

The research evidence is multifaceted, rich and coherent. It has demonstrated the complexities of young women lives by giving them a rare opportunity to voice a positive and 'real' perspective of their lives. In the past much of the research on them has been largely negative, based on racism and discrimination, on being oppressed and living with difficult parents. There are labels attached when looking from the outside. They have been seen to have no brains and no rights what so ever in their families or in the wider biraderi.

This research has demonstrated that young and older women of Mirpuri descent are strong, confident and proud to be British-Muslims of Pakistani Mirpuri descent. Thus, identity is a sign of maturity. They are taking ownership of their identities and their lives by using Islam and challenging their parents. The women in this research have demonstrated that the majority of them believe they have a strong personal identity. Their

identities are made up of many important attributes including religion, culture, their family, their careers, education and their exposure to living in Britain. It was interesting to find that the older women in this research also gave the same level of importance to having an education and career to the younger women and the majority were supportive of giving young Pakistani Mirpuri girls rights to have an education and career.

Quotations have been used to give the reader a greater insight into the lives of these women. These young women want to be taken as seriously as their White British counterparts. They want to be spoken to directly and not through self-elected males who think they are representing the views of women. Thus, they feel unrepresented. It is clear that young women are growing in confidence and many have the power to steer their own destinies in terms of marriage, education and career aspirations. The relationship with the biraderi is different to that their parents share with it. Younger people are not as involved with the biraderi to the level their parents were and therefore are leading more self-centred lifestyles. However it is important to remember that many of the women in this research were aware that the biraderi can still control the behaviours of females and that izzat was still a prevailing factor for them.

Young women in the research argued that their parents followed dated cultural practices. Culture was defined as customs and traditions and a way of life. Young women saw culture as oppressive, if young people are not allowed to question their parents about issues such as marriage, education and work. These are typical of social tensions, for example concerning the family and school. However, younger women also argued they

were in a position to challenge their parents on issues such as forced and arranged marriages, going to college or university and following a certain career because they were able to explore Islam through other channels. They were self-sufficient and were not relying on parents' interpretations. They found this extremely empowering whilst parents felt threatened by this newfound confidence.

Young women want to be British-Muslims of Mirpuri Pakistani decent and take on values of both cultures and will take on certain cultural traits from their parents but only if it is in their interests. They are not willing to put up with parental interpretations of Islam any longer. Being able to do this shows that British-Muslim women of Pakistani Mirpuri descent are sharing in the decision-making process and are taking ownership of their lives and their identities as British and Muslim and being of Pakistani Mirpuri heritage. They take pleasure in having multiple, adaptive roles through their assertion of their own unique heritage and through ignoring racism.



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**Appendix 1**  
**Ref: PSQ:**  
**Questionnaire**

**All the information you provide is confidential**

1. To which age group do you belong?

16–25 years 1[ ] 50+ years 2[ ] [ ]

2. Were you born in: Pakistan 1[ ] England 2[ ]

(If born in England please go on to question 4, for those answering Pakistan go on to question 3) [ ]

3. How many years approximately have you lived in England?

Less than 10 years 1[ ] 11-20 years 2[ ] 21- 30 years 3[ ]  
More than 30 years 4[ ] [ ]

4. How would you describe your marital status?

Single 1[ ] Married 2[ ] Divorced 3[ ] Separated 4[ ] Fiancée 5[ ] Other 6[ ]  
[ ]

5. What is your present occupation?

Student 1[ ] Professional/white collar 2[ ] Housewife 3[ ] Self employed 4[ ]  
Family business 5[ ] Manual work 6[ ] Homework 7[ ] Unemployed 8[ ] [ ]

6. How would you describe your Nationality?

Pakistani 1[ ] British 2[ ] [ ]

7. Which one of these descriptions would you also use to describe yourself?

Pakistani/British 1[ ] British/Pakistani 2[ ] None 3[ ] [ ]

8. Is Islam important to you? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] [ ]

9. Do you think you are religious? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] [ ]

10. Do you read Namaaz? Regularly 1[ ] Sometimes 2[ ] Rarely 3[ ]  
Not at all 4[ ] [ ]

11. Do you read the Qu'ran? Regularly 1[ ] Sometimes 2[ ] Rarely 3[ ]  
Not at all 4[ ] [ ]

12. Have you done Umra? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] [ ]

13. Have you done Hajj? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] [ ]

14. Do you go to the Mosque to read Namaaz: Regularly 1[ ] Sometimes 2[ ]  
Just Jumma prayer 3[ ] Not at all 4[ ] I read at home 5[ ] [ ]

15. How important is the issue of 'caste' to you?  
Very important 1[ ] Fairly important 2[ ] Not important 3[ ] Unsure 4[ ] [ ]

16. How important is the issue of 'caste' to your family?  
Very important 1[ ] Fairly important 2[ ] Not important 3[ ] Unsure 4[ ] [ ]

Please answer either 17a or 17b

17a. Was the issue of caste taken into consideration when you married?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

17b. Will the issue of caste be taken into consideration when you marry?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

18. Do you think parents exclusively should choose their sons or daughters prospective marriage partner? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

19. Do you think arranged marriages are 'good'?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

20. Do you think that there are 'problems' with marrying potential partners who are living in Pakistan? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

21. Do you have personal experience of the immigration procedures concerned with marriage and entry of partners from Pakistan? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] [ ]

22. Are you aware of the present guidelines on marriage?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

23. Which language do you **mainly** speak at home? (Please tick one box only)  
English 1[ ] Urdu 2[ ] Punjabi 3[ ] Mirpuri 4[ ]  
[ ]

24. Which language do you **mainly** speak outside of the home? (Please tick one box only)  
English 1[ ] Urdu 2[ ] Punjabi 3[ ] Mirpuri 4[ ] [ ]

25. Would you consider yourself to be 'Westernised'?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

26. In the last 5 years have you made any visits to Pakistan? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] [ ]

27. Does your family own any property or land in Pakistan? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] [ ]



28. Do you or your family send money to relatives in Pakistan? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] [ ]

29. Would you consider living in Pakistan permanently?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

30. Are qualifications & education important to you?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

31. Do you think parents and young people today attach the same value to qualifications and a 'good' education? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

32. What is the highest academic qualification you have achieved ?  
GCSEs 1[ ] A' levels 2[ ] B/Tec Qualification(s) 3[ ] First Degree 4 [ ]  
Postgraduate Degree 5 [ ] Qualifications from Pakistan 6[ ] None 7[ ] [ ]

33. Do you think the Pakistani/Mirpuri community in Bradford is becoming more 'open' about the issues of domestic violence, forced arranged marriages, and related matters?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

34. Do you think that there are 'double standards' in terms of what men and women can do within the Pakistani /Mirpuri family? Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

35. Do you think Pakistani/Mirpuri elders understand the values and attitudes of the young people particularly females in Bradford?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Sometimes 3[ ] Not Sure 4[ ] [ ]

36. Do you think young Pakistanis/Mirpuris understand the values and attitudes of elders in Bradford?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Sometimes 3[ ] Not Sure 4[ ] [ ]

37. Do you think there is such a thing as young Pakistani people experiencing a conflict of two cultures - British and Pakistani cultures?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

38. Do you think that Pakistani/ Mirpuri women in Bradford are becoming more 'assertive'?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Not Sure 3[ ] [ ]

39. Do you think that the media portrays Asian women as generally being culturally oppressed, dominated by men and passive?  
Yes 1[ ] No 2[ ] Sometimes 3[ ] Not Sure 4[ ] [ ]

**Thank you for completing the questionnaire. Please use the space on the back of this page to add any comments.**

**Appendix 2**  
**Interview schedule**

**All the information supplied will be treated in strict confidence**

1. Tell me a bit about yourself
  - Prompt for respondents age, occupation, level of education, marital status and migratory experiences of parents and own.
  
2. Tell me a bit about what your life at home?
  - Prompt for language spoken in the home, dress worn, female-male relations.
  
3. Tell me about your studies
  - Prompt for past qualifications, those presently being studied for and future hopes, where gained – mixed sex schooling, university, college, Islamic schooling.
  
4. How easy is it to study?
  - Prompt into economical reasons, parental and sibling influence, wider family.
  
5. Are you working at the moment?
  - Prompt into kind of job, directed by whom, job satisfaction and future career goals, dress worn at work, working relationship with colleagues
  
6. Are you able to work? If not why not?
  - Prompt for attitudes of the family towards women working, communities attitude to women working.
  
7. Tell me about your views on marriage
  - Prompt into views of arranged marriage, marriage to partners in Pakistan, respondent's own experience of marriage, immigration system.
  
8. Are you particularly involved in religion?
  - Prompt into reading of Namaaz, the Q'uran, practicing Ramzan, religious festivals.

