

## **Abstract**

*[A critical analysis of cantles (2001) community cohesion framework and its applicability to Bolton's diverse Asian community]*

The principal aim of this thesis is to explore and evaluate community understandings of Cantles (2001) community cohesion framework within a cross-section cohort of the Asian community residing in Bolton. It is anticipated that this will generate deeper insights and understandings of key phrases and words within Cantle's (2001) framework, something which is lacking in present studies. The central critique remains a report published by The Institute of Community Cohesion [iCoCo, 2007] reviewing the state of community cohesion in Bolton. The thesis elucidates the construction of 'meaning' being central to ensuring the government and Asian community view successes and failures of the community cohesion framework in the same light. It is felt that the methodology employed by the iCoCo [2007] Bolton review lacked this capacity due to sample composition and methodology. The reports methodology necessitated in-depth qualitative questions probing what words and phrases mean to participants. To this end a semi- structured qualitative methodology was employed after considering the practicalities and limitations of this report and by reviewing similar fieldwork undertaken in Oldham and Burnley. Thirty individuals who ethnically comprised the Asian community were asked ten open-ended questions, to illicit a deeper understanding of the meaning they ascribed to various words and phrases within cantle's (2001) community cohesion framework. Chapter one of the thesis will discuss the crisis of British identities and why the research is of topical interest. Chapter 2 will critically engage with communitarianism reviewing policy implications which led to the development of multiculturalism. The demise of this concept and the formulation of community cohesion amidst riots in 2001 will also be critically evaluated. National and international models of cohesion will be discussed and the limitations of the Bolton iCoCo [2007] study explored. Chapter 3 will outline the qualitative methodology that underpins this study and the various dynamics utilised to ensure representation and in-depth probing. Chapters 4 and 5 will analyse and discuss the data through the method of constant comparison and thematic analysis. The conclusion drawn is that at times there is interpretational variation between the Asian community and Cantle (2001) in term of lexis/Phraseologies. The study questions the plausibility of a single framework for cohesion, asserts whether there is a gap in knowledge around cultural sensitivities/Islamophobia. It recommends policy makers understand the dynamics, contributory factors and religio-ethnic dynamics of the Asian community before embarking on policy development. The study contributes to a wider discourse on the need for research-based policy formulation prior to engaging with minority communities. It will also give a unique understanding to the local council and religious/voluntary sector on ways they can deliver more focused and culturally sensitive services.

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to critically evaluate Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework and the extent to which it is applicable to marginalised elements of Bolton's Asian Community. Ted Cattle (2001) was appointed by the Government in 2001 to lead a review into the causes of riots in the Northern towns of Oldham, Rochdale and Burnley. Cattle's (2001) report identified gaps in Government multiculturalism policy which he concluded led to the entrenchment of different cultures and religions (Cattle, 2001). He asserted that ethnic and religious communities were living *parallel lives* (ibid). Cattle (2001) advocated a more inclusive policy (community cohesion) which favoured; positive interaction between ethnic/religious groups in the neighbourhood, workplace, school and more focus on value and respect (ibid). Cattle's recommendations were accepted by the Government and The Institute of Community Cohesion (2001) was set up to monitor levels of community cohesion across the country and share good practice.

This chapter will locate community cohesion discourse (a definition of the term will follow) within historical academic debates pertaining to immigration in the U.K. and the notion of British identity. The nature of historical British immigration in an ever-growing globalised world will be critically evaluated, and how this phenomenon has affected the tone, texture and fabric of British society. Issues around the lack of coherence amongst myriad British identities will be analysed, which will link into an explanation of the significance of the study. Finally a brief discussion will put the principle aims of this thesis and the methodology into perspective.

## **Introduction to the study**

The study was conceptualised as a research proposal submitted for funding by the author and Prof. Carole Truman to the Marriott Trust in June 2008. The trust was established using a legacy donated by John Marriott who joined The Bolton Le Moors Branch of The Rotary Club in 1978 as a founder member. The funding criteria stipulated that any research project undertaken should be of benefit to the Bolton population. Various strands were identified by The Trust for possible funding of which one was community cohesion.

The community cohesion strand was of particular interest to the author who is of Pakistani heritage and had previously completed an undergraduate degree in applied community studies, studying for this degree stimulated an interest in debates around multiculturalism and community cohesion. After conducting an in-depth review of the literature surrounding these concepts an Institute of Community Cohesion Report (iCoCo, 2007) became the foundation upon which the proposal was structured. There was a gap in knowledge associated with the methodology of the report which is being addressed in this thesis.

In particular the reports lack of qualitative interview-based fieldwork on the Asian community in Bolton was both apparent and surprising. The Asian community was at the fore of media attention due to terrorism and extremism issues for which reason Bolton has received funding from the *Preventing Violent Extremism* (iCoCo, 2007) initiative. Government policies that had been formulated to assist in the moderation of these communities were contested and controversial. In light of all these issues the author felt an in-depth semi-structured interview-based qualitative fieldwork should be undertaken to fill a gap in knowledge and research, which could adequately probe the constructs and perceptions members of the community understood from Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework. (refer to chapter 3 for further discussion around methodology).



The aims of this study can be explained on two levels. On a theoretical level the study will critically evaluate and analyse Cante's (2001) community cohesion framework, through a comprehensive and robust review of current and emerging literature in the field.

On a practical level, qualitative fieldwork will be undertaken with thirty members of the Asian community, with interviews lasting approximating thirty-five minutes which will allow for an in-depth qualitative exploration of the constructs and perceptions members of the community understand from Cante's (2001) community cohesion framework. The questions in this study seek to investigate meanings ascribed to concepts such as: community, sense of belonging, value, respect, advantage, and disadvantage.

It is hoped that the probing, qualitative nature of the study and its emphasis on *meaning* will be of extreme importance to policy makers and service delivery staff in the community and voluntary sector, who will be able to shape and focus projects, initiatives and resources for the better cohesiveness of ethnic minority communities. Further the study explores the question of coherence from the perspectives of those who would not traditionally be included within definitions of *British*. These perceptions and meanings will be compared with Cante's (2001) framework to assert the extent to which they corroborate. The extent of corroboration could contribute to the debate around coherence amongst British identities.

### **Contested Terminology and Issues**

Throughout the study the author refers to the British Government's community cohesion framework to mean the framework drawn up by Prof. Ted Cante (2001) and his team after the summer riots and ethnic tensions of the same year. Thus Cante's (2001) community cohesion framework and The Government's community cohesion framework are referring to the same framework. The framework stipulated that a cohesive community as being one where: [1] There

was a promotion for a common sense of belonging, [2] a promotion for Valuing diversity, [3] Tackling disadvantage and inequality, [4] promotion of interaction in the workplace, school and neighbourhood (Beecham, 2002, LGA, 2004:7).

This framework was later adopted by The Local Government Association as the definition for community cohesion and will thus be the definition of the British community cohesion framework in this study. The framework will also be utilised to analyse the extent to which participants and Cattle's (2001) interpretations corroborate (which will be discussed in chapter 6). This comparison will contribute to the dialogue around coherence amongst British identities mentioned earlier in this chapter.

However during the course of the study other terms are used which already feature in Government white papers and the broader academic debate; such as multiculturalism, community cohesion, social cohesion, multi-faith, inter-faith. It is important to understand that the terms have different definitions and meanings.

There has for this reason been a policy shift from multiculturalism, which was perceived as creating *parallel lives* to community cohesion which favours a more inclusive approach.

Although multiculturalism is a concept which has been discarded and perceived as defunct from a policy perspective by the government since 2001, the term still does feature in many current academic discourses and is used widely. It can be defined as:

A society which cherishes the diversity of and encourages a creative dialogue between its different cultures and their moral visions. Such a society not only respects its members' rights to their culture and increases their range of choices but also cultivates their powers of self-criticism, self-determination, imagination, intellectual and moral sympathy, and contributes to their development and well-being.

Lay individuals may view multiculturalism and the more recent term community cohesion as if they were synonymous, which is not the case.. Critics such as Ratcliffe (2007), for example argue that the term is not broad enough and the term social cohesion should be used instead:

Social cohesion is both broader and more inclusive than community cohesion. It effectively acknowledges the presence of intra- as well as inter-‘community’ divisions. Social cohesion is a situation where these internal divisions (based, for example, on age/generation, gender and socio-economic background) have also been addressed successfully.

Here, ‘success’ is judged by sustainable, lasting stability based on the firm foundation of achieved equality targets; Equality in this sense, therefore, is not confined to global comparisons between groups defined in terms of ethnicity and/or faith. It also involves a substantial narrowing of differentials between those from diverse social backgrounds within ethnic and faith groups. This implies that the integration/cohesion agenda needs to be set within a broader social policy agenda driven by a concern with universal human rights.

Ratcliffe, et al 2007:3

Throughout this study the term *Asian* will be utilised whilst describing the sample (refer to chapter 3 for an in-depth discussion around methodology) and this will specifically be referring to those individuals who are of Indian, Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage. The majority of the sample will consist of Muslim members, but the term *Muslim* will not be utilised in this study to refer to the sample. This is because religious identity and place of birth are perceived as two separate entities. Mosques and Muslim supplementary schools both in Bolton and across the United Kingdom have been at times founded on ethnicity rather than religion and ethnic tension between Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities is not uncommon (Naqshbandi, 2006a,2006b). The significance of

this typification and how it strives to strengthen the methodology and thesis will be discussed in later chapters (see Chapter 3 for a further discussion).

### **Immigration to Britain**

The context of the debates around British identity and community cohesion can be seen within the history of immigration to the U.K. Since the late eighteenth century Britain has welcomed European migrants who arrived for social, economical, and political reasons. The Irish migrants filled seasonal and unskilled labour shortages, and Jewish migrants arrived fleeing anti-Jewish pogroms in Eastern Europe (Layton-Henry, 1992, Pilkington, 2003).

The Immigrant Acts of (1962, 1946) allowed the arrival of fifty thousand immigrants from the Commonwealth on an annual basis to fill the labour shortage of one and a half million people. The contribution that these groups made to service industries and the much needed labour they provided have been acknowledged and well documented (Jones 1977, Miller, 1998, Geddes 2000, Hoing, 2001, Rumbaut & Gold, 2001) who have discussed the social, political, economic and cultural contributions these communities made to the host society.

Banton (1959) and Patterson (1963) explain that two main issues were always apparent when discussing immigration. Firstly, migrants from the Commonwealth would be a problem if they arrived in large numbers, secondly, *the strangeness* that these groups brought with them in terms of culture and practices could be viewed as incompatible to those of the host society. The latter it was argued could be eliminated through a process of integration or assimilation (ibid). Integration was defined as:

The process of inclusion of immigrants in the institutions and relationships of the host Society, where in culture and tradition can be preserved (within the limit of the law) and immigrants share the sense of belonging, which is framed primarily, at the level of the nation state.

Bosswick & Heckman, 2006, integration of immigrants to the E.U:2

Whilst assimilation was understood to be a one-sided process in which immigrants and their descendants ceded their culture and adapted completely to the host society, Brubaker (2001).

These two concerns were to be brought to the fore as a series of tense interactions between different ethnic groups and the resident white populations were publicised.

In passing it could be argued that the vague policies adopted by the government coupled with the large numbers of government supported and unrestricted immigration would inevitably lead to civil unrest, and the blame for the resulting tension and conflict should be placed upon policy makers and government advisors to bear (ibid).

### **Civil unrest and Government responses**

The first visual signs of friction amongst the immigrant and resident population occurred in 1958 when riots broke out in Notting Hill, followed by Nottingham (Phillips and 1998; Rowe 1998), and Toxteth (Parekh, 2000). These riots were followed by unrest in Bristol, Brixton and Southall around 1980-1981 (Wallace and Joshua 1983; Solomos 2003; Ratcliffe 2004), Handsworth in 1986, Tottenham in the mid-1980s (Gifford 1986), and Bradford in 1995 (Bradford Commission 1996; Ratcliffe 1996).

The Government attempted to remedy the situation through legislation [*The Race Relations Act 1976, The Housing Discrimination Act 1995, The Religion or Belief Regulations 2003, The Education Act (amendment) 1997*] albeit with limited success.

It has been argued that there was an uncertainty and ambiguity around the coherence of British identities amongst the population because of boundaries around identities and culture becoming the subject of change and manipulation since the end of colonialism. (Werbner, 1989, Solmos, 2003). Even during this period perception of key vocabulary such as: *values, belonging, equality, community* and *respect* were being explored and debated to assert their coherence with national identities and values. The interpretation and perceptions of these key phrases are central to this thesis, and depicts the extent to which public policy and debates over the last few decades have failed to establish the answer to a simple statement: ‘What does it mean to be British?’ It is this simple statement which forms the core of significant, important and relative questions pertaining to the author’s research. More specifically the author seeks to explore through community cohesion vocabulary the different meanings and perspectives given to this statement from those members of society who would not traditionally be included within definitions of *British*, in part due to the diversity of cultural/religious practices.

Furthermore, Solmos (2003) and McGhee (2005) discuss that there was an ongoing debate about what the *acid test* for defining an individual as British would be.

### **A crisis of British Identities**

The debate around finding coherence between identities (i.e. religious, global, national, regional, cultural, political, social etc) was given impetus by Enoch Powell's (1968 in Brown, 1983) *rivers of blood* speech where he envisaged bloodshed and anarchy if immigrants were not deported. In testament to this feeling of anarchy The Joint Commission against Racism (JCAR) reported that year over 11,000 racial attacks to the Home office (ibid). Many of these sentiments pertaining to finding coherence between identities still resonate across local and national media today (Telegraph, 2009). Norman Tebbit another staunch critic of immigration advocated a *cricket test* which in crude terms meant that if immigrants were supporting England in test matches then they would be viewed as British, if not, then they would be perceived as not integrated. Tebbit (1989) was also a vocal critic of multiculturalism and went on to claim that 'most people in Britain did not want to live in a multicultural, multiracial, society, but it has been hoisted on them' (*Evening Standard*, 12<sup>th</sup> December, 1989). These were sentiments echoed by Nick Griffin (Griffin, 2009 in Jones, 2009) as he ridiculed the big *multicultural experiment* that had been 'forced upon the indigenous people of these Islands' (ibid), during his historical appearance on the BBC's question time program.

Furthermore Fenton (1999, 2003) whilst discussing the crisis of British identities elaborated how there was a push ever since the 1960s to re-invent an image of an island race which strived to paint a picture of identity in light of origin and cultural uniqueness. An age old debate about who belonged and who did not raged. The politics of British identities and national culture, Tebbit (1990 in Hall, 2002:40) insisted had become obscure and bruised on many levels. The European Union on the one hand imposed a Euro-legal continental culture; many English people felt that their linguistical English heritage was under attack with crude *Eurospeak* implemented. Words such as 'pig meat' and 'sheep meat' were ushered in place of Pork, lamb and mutton, which had been in widespread use.

Furthermore Tebbit (1990 in Hall, 2002:40) discussed how the British Currency was not spared from attack, far from being an adjective for excellent worth; it had now become deformed, devalued by being referred to as 'Green pounds', amidst a lexical avalanche of politically correct and conscious terms and phrases that had poured in from Brussels.

In contributing further to the complexities of coherence amongst British identities, Tebbit (1997 in Abrams, 1997) explained how the Labour Government's multiculturalism strategy would lead to the entrenchment of new forms of ethnic identity. He prophesied how this divisive policy would not hold just as a man cannot have two masters. He argued that nationality was more about culture than ethics and those youngsters born in this country should be taught that British history was their own or the youngsters would forever be foreigners in their own lands and the British kingdom would become synonymous with Yugoslavia (ibid).

The Labour Government sought to distance itself from such views, which was a policy approach that would be repeated time and time again during the next few decades. The government instead placed great emphasis on symbolism, patriotism and pride in British Values (Fetzer & Soper, 2007) in a drive for more unity. Robin Cook the then foreign secretary proclaimed 'Chicken Tikka Masala' as the national dish to symbolise how far Britain absorbed and adapted external influences (ibid) and how British identities (i.e. religious, global, national, regional, cultural, political, social etc) could remain coherent and compatible.

Kumar (2006) argued in comparing British and French identities that although the former was more successful in their imperial ventures than the latter, there is a stronger sense of nationhood and national consciousness amongst the French than the British. Kumar (2006) acknowledges the fact that the histories of both countries could have colored the outcomes of their respective sense of identities. Britain's identity was largely evolutionary and France's largely revolutionary (ibid).



What has come to light during this discussion is that British identity is in reality a myriad picture of different identities (i.e. global, European, ethnic, cultural, social, religious, etc) and the real debate around Britishness lay in finding coherence between these innumerable identities.

### **A revival in British Identities and Immigration discourse.**

The complications of finding coherence between these identities further became exacerbated and intensified in light of the bombing of the London Underground rail network by two British born educated Muslims in July 2005 (Lewis, 2007). This was in addition to previous attacks in the United States on the 11<sup>th</sup> of September and other European capitals such as Madrid and Turkey (ibid). These incidents have led to a revival and surge in immigration and integration discourse in the U.K. (Favell, 2001, Burnett, 2004, Bosswick & Heckmann, 2006). For many these divisive actions have led to some U.K. citizens attempting to forge their own identity on the basis of Anglo-saxon descent and further align themselves with the views of the British National Party which have gained a large enough political base to be given a slot on the British Broadcasting Corporations flagship political discussion show *Question Time* (Jones, 2009) to openly debate with the more mainstream political parties. Nick Griffin the BNP leader scorned the Labour Government as Norman Tebbit once did (see 1.4.), for ‘imposing a huge multiculturalism experiment on the British people’ and making the ‘indigenous white people feel like aborigines in their own land’ (Jones, 2009). He further advocated that the white population should have priority in jobs and welfare services. The party is of the opinion that the government has given preference to ethnic minority communities, specifically Muslims, the solution being to repatriate them to their country of origin. Wetherell (2007), Flint & Robinson (2008) challenge similar assumptions and argue that simplistic theories around inequalities of wealth and service provision are not solely to blame for ethnic tensions, but rather the matter is more complicated (ibid). They argue that more complicated issues such as housing segregation, unemployment, education

and social malaise (which will be discussed in Chapter 2) have all played a role in contributing to the ethnic tensions (ibid). There has been counter allegations of racism and discrimination by sections of the Muslim community who argue that Muslims are ‘treated like second class citizens in their own homes’, and there are separate harsher laws for Muslims living in the U.K. (Anjum Choudary 2010 in The Daily Telegraph, 2010).

In an attempt to bring coherence amongst innumerable British identities there has been a greater call for integration by the Labour Government for members of the Muslim community, with emphasis on adopting British values, and the legislature exploring the boundaries of freedoms that are granted to citizens (Telegraph, 2009).

In this context a number of initiatives can be perceived as a response to a failure in bringing coherence amongst various British identities, namely the banning of the Wotton Bassett procession organised by members of a radicalised Muslim group Islam4UK (Telegraph, 2010), the discussion by the UK Independence party of prohibition of the veil in the U.K, in tune with the prohibition in France (The Guardian, 2010) , the necessity to speak English for those arriving to the UK and understand British Culture (Guardian, 2007), the setting up of the forced marriages unit (Lancashirepost, 2009) , and The Preventing Violent Extremism fund to moderate extreme Muslim views (Nagshbandi, 2006b).

Furthermore non-political actors have also entered the arena, wishing to distance themselves from the largely racially orientated rhetoric of the British National Party. They seek to peacefully protest for the restoration of English heritage and culture which they feel has been left bruised and corroded. The English Defence League (EDL) was formed in 2009 due to frustration at the lack of any significant action against extremist behavior amongst certain groups within society. The EDL wish to reassert Britain’s English heritage, which they feel has been thwarted by efforts to ‘Islamicise Britain’, and a politically correct culture which bans nativity plays, flying the St. Georges flag and hot cross buns amongst other examples, for

fear of offending those of contradictory cultural practices (Englishdefenceleague.org.uk/2010). The League has seen phenomenal growth and membership, with marches taken place across major towns and cities in the United Kingdom, and a rally taking place in Bolton in March 2010, where 67 arrests were made by police authorities (ibid).

Many argue that the government has pursued a failed multiculturalism policy which has led to communities' ultimately leading *parallel lives* (Cantle, 2001), whilst community cohesion was further adopted as a more inclusive policy approach in light of the Bradford riots in 2001 (see Chapter 2 for an in-depth discussion).

The issues mentioned previously have focused mainly upon the ambiguities surrounding such as; *Britishness*, and *Englishness*, *British identity* and how the resident population constructs and perceive them. The importance of how meaning is constructed and how these terms are understood is of utmost importance to policy makers and the government in the struggle to bring about community coherence.

This analysis links in to one of the central aim of this thesis which seeks to understand the key perceptions and interpretations members of the Asian community ascribe to the community cohesion debate (An in-depth discussion around methodology will follow in Chapter 3, with analyses in Chapters 4 and 5).

The key contribution of the research will be to explore the question of coherence from the perspectives of those who would not traditionally be included within definitions of *British*, due to their religious/cultural practices. The case study is within the town of Bolton in Greater Manchester.

### **The Bolton context**

Bolton is situated in the Greater Manchester conurbation and is the one of the largest urban centers in the North West region, with a population of 264,800 (Census, 2001). The Borough covers an area of approximately 140 hectares and includes eight townships, the largest of which is Bolton itself (ibid). Many residents have been living in Bolton since the mid to late 1950s. In the mid to late 1950s and early 1960s non-white migrants or visible members of the minority communities were very small in number in England numbering around 5% of the population. According to Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council (2008) in terms of overall population in Bolton, there was an increase from 258,584 to 261,037 between 1991 and 2001. Over this period the white population declined from 238,366 (89%) and the black minority ethnic population grew from 20,389 to 28,671 (11%), the concentration of minority communities being in the areas around the town centre, particularly in the areas of Crompton, Haliwell, Rumworth and Great Lever (ibid).

Carrying out research in Bolton on the perceptions of members of the Asian community regarding Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework could serve as a tool to understand this community and contribute more focused and realistic policies to facilitate mutual integration and appreciation of different cultures and lifestyles.

This is particularly important in view of the studies which suggest that Bolton has a higher Black and Minority Ethnic population segregation factor than other parts of the United Kingdom (wood et al, 2006). The Isolation Ratio is an acknowledged measure of the degree to which different communities are spatially separated or 'segregated' in residential terms. The Isolation Ratio measures the probability of your neighbour being of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) origin if you are BME yourself, and the probability of your neighbour being BME if you are white (wood et al , 2006). Applied to the 2001 Census figures, the Isolation Ratio for Bolton

was 5.5. This means that a BME person living in Bolton is 5.5 times more likely to be living next door to someone who is BME. On this measure, Bolton would register as the 8<sup>th</sup> most segregated local authority area in England (ibid). The only areas more segregated are Bradford (5.6), Pendle (5.7), Blackburn (6.2), Rochdale (7.0), Hyndburn (7.7), Oldham (8.0) and Burnley (8.7).

In addition Bolton ranks 64 out of a total of 354 councils on the deprivation indices (ibid).

One of the criteria for receiving funding for the study was for the research to be of primary benefit to the Bolton population. From a geographical view-point, the number of settled ethnic minority communities, coupled with the ever increasing steady influx of immigrant communities to the borough will ensure that the findings of such a 'grass root' qualitative project will assist in focused policy and service-delivery responses by the council and its service providers to existing and future.

### **Timeline of Study**

The study began in September 2008, with a literature review being conducted throughout the course of the study to ensure that any recent publication or development in this field was cited in the review. The fieldwork took place between January and May 2009, with subsequent data analysis being completed at the end of September 2009. The writing of the study was completed during the end of August 2010.

This chapter has outlined why the study is of topical and historical interest. The Chapter rooted the thesis within academic debates pertaining to immigration and notions of British identity. The chapter has also charted the gradual emergence of various British identities that has gathered pace over the last forty years, with a critical analysis of the government's response. A discussion ensued on how this crisis has prevented the formulation of a rigid and coherent set of values and identities that all citizens can ascribe too. The next chapter will proceed to charter

this policy shift from various viewpoints, alongside engaging with other key terms within this field of study. It will also compare Cattle's (2001) framework with those of evolving frameworks and models in other countries. It will conclude with a brief discussion around how the literature has informed the formulation of interviewee questions.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The previous chapter shed light upon the crisis of coherence in British identities, gave a brief outline of the study to be undertaken, and outlined the context for the research and contested terminologies and issues.

This chapter will locate Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework within the historical New Labour philosophy of communitarianism. Through a critical analysis of prior government policies such as multiculturalism and concepts such as social cohesion it will deal with the competing definitions and interpretations of Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework. The chapter will critically evaluate the community cohesion framework with American and Canadian frameworks to assert its reliability and practicality. An international perspective will also be factored in with a conclusion based upon how the interview questions have been informed by the analysis of the literature.

### **Communitarianism**

The development of the community cohesion agenda is clearly rooted in the politics of communitarianism that emerged in the 1990s and was a key influence on the New Labour administration that took office in 1997. This new wave of communitarian thinking bought in to the pessimism being expressed by various urban theorists about the dissolution of the 'social glue' that had bound society together, in the context of social and economic change (Castells, 1997; Fukuyama, 1999). To communitarians, both Right and Left were to blame for this social malaise. The libertarian solutions of the right had eroded social responsibility and valued aspects of community life and reciprocity (Forrest & Kearns, 2000; Bell, 1993). The Left was blamed for its centralising tendency involving the shift of powers away from local communities towards centralised bureaucracies, and for promoting welfare policies that undermined key institutions and social ties in civil society, including the family (Finlayson, 2003). In response, the new politics of communitarianism sought to rebalance the emphasis in contemporary politics,

away from the individual- who needed to recognise a responsibility for promoting the well-being of friends, relatives and others within the various communities to which they belonged-and thereby towards the interests of society (Etzioni, 1995, Giddens, 1999). Community emerged as central to this political project, for two reasons; firstly, normal human relations required cooperation and secondly, communitarianism asserts that it is only through cooperative participation in community discourses that social cohesion can be secured (Burns et al, 1994, Dixton et al, 2005).

This communitarianism philosophy of government not being able to engineer a genuinely multicultural society without popular participation (Greener, 2002) seemed to discredit previous social policies that had been formulated. There was an inherent belief that previous policy approaches had cemented the cultural and physical barriers created originally by structural and individual racism (Solomos, 2003). In this context, a wider discourse on *Britishness* could be seen as part of larger attempts by the New Labour government to create *cooler* and more complex/hybrid forms of identity that can replace *hot* forms of ethnic/religious identification (Hall, 2000 in Hesse, 2000, McGhee,2005).

More recently, the outcome of *The Lyons Inquiry* (2006:16) in to local government can be perceived as an example of the type of policy response *communitarian* philosophy sought to achieve. The inquiry advocated a, ‘Wider role for local government as the voice of a whole community and as an agent of place’. This *place-shaping* role was defined as ‘the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well-being of a community and its citizens’, (Lyon, 2007:36).

The policy was formulated as ‘The Place-Shaping Statutory Guidance to the Local Government and Public involvement in Health Act (2007)’ and it would ensure that Local Councils were involved in:



Building and shaping local identity; representing the community; maintaining the cohesiveness of the community; Understanding local needs and preferences and making sure that the right services are provided to local people; and working with other bodies to respond to complex challenges.

Lyon, 2006:38

In addition *Communitarian* philosophy influenced the Public service reform agendas (DCLG, 2006, DCLG, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c) which entailed reducing top-down regulation and inspection. Instead they advocated greater pressure from citizens and customers to drive service improvement and modernisation, an idea termed ‘voice and choice’ (Blake, 2008:21). This policy enabled community groups to prioritise the mix of services in their neighborhoods through a local user forum or a youth parliament. The policy also encouraged local service providers to reach out to the ‘disadvantaged, marginalised and socially excluded’, and recognised the challenges associated with rapid population change and ‘super-diversity’ (Blake, 2008:28). The wider ramification of this policy allows individuals to engage directly with service providers to tailor the service to fit their circumstances, e.g. through direct payment schemes in social care, choice-based lettings or personalisation via connexions advisors for young people (Lowndes et al, 2006).

Furthermore Yarnit (2006) mentions how similar legislation aimed to encourage parents to play an active role in schools through school councils which would sit alongside the existing governing bodies. In terms of youth involvement, the *ten year youth strategy* (DCSF, 2007) required councils to actively engage with young people about their needs and issues. Research carried out by Thomas (2003,2004,2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c,2007d) around the impact of community cohesion on shaping youth work policy in general, and research carried out by Thomas (2005:2) particularly in Oldham, of youth workers experiences of community cohesion, revealed an overall support for this concept. Many youth workers felt that more ‘direct interaction’ would be needed amongst ethnic

minority and white youngsters, and more ‘safe places’ and locations were needed for youngsters to actively engage with other cultures, ‘without feeling that their own culture was being threatened’ (ibid).

Yarnit (2006:14) explains how government departments are required by public service agreement 15 (PSA, 15):

To address the disadvantages that individuals experience because of their; gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, and by PSA 21 to build more ‘cohesive, empowered and active communities

Yarnit, 2006:16

### **Shaping a Framework for Cattle’s (2001) Community Cohesion Framework.**

The term *community cohesion* was coined and subsequently rose to prominence after a report by Ted Cattle examining the causes of violent disturbances in the Northern towns of England; primarily Bradford, Oldham and Burnley within the April to June timeframe of 2001 (Cattle, 2001). The Cattle report (2001) concluded that the main reason for the instability in these towns and cities was a lack of *positive interaction* amongst their diverse populations. Cattle (2001) attacked the policy of multiculturalism as creating a scenario where citizens were living *parallel lives* (an in-depth discussion of which will follow in this chapter). Critics such as Gilchrist (2004) have pointed out that the cause of the disturbances were not that simplistic and economic inequality amongst other things was a contributing factor.

Robinson (2005) argues that community cohesion policy should have been formulated as far back as other violent disturbances such as the Brixton riots in 1985, and a comparative policy analysis of the Brixton riots and the disturbances in 2001 by Thomas (2003:1) reveal that unlike the Brixton riots, the government chose *not* to focus on the actual events and their triggers, but rather portrayed the 2001 disturbances as ‘an accident waiting to happen’ and ‘symptomatic of deeper-lying problems existing across the UK’s ‘multicultural’ towns and cities’.

Bagguley & Hussein (2003:12) further exemplify how this critique went further, and the government suggested that the policy approaches of the past twenty years had encouraged and privileged separate *ethnic* identities, focusing on notions of *equality* for different ethnic/religious groups whilst profoundly neglecting the need to promote respect and *good relations* between those different groups.

These comments about *positive interaction* expressed by Cattle (2001) were echoed in a general report produced by Denham (2001) and specific reports produced by Clarke (2001) (reviewing the disturbances in Burnley), Ritchie (2001) (examining the violence in Oldham) and Ouseley (2001) (reviewing the situation in Bradford).

A *snapshot* of the parallel lives (created by multiculturalism) being lived by many citizens across these boroughs can be understood by the comments made by a citizen of Oldham contributing to the Cattle (2001) report:

When I leave this meeting with you I will go home and not see another white face until I come back here next week

Cattle, 2001:9

In 2002 The Local Government Association [LGA] issued guidance on *Community cohesion* for councils, defining the framework for *community cohesion* to encompass five domains: firstly, common values and civic culture; secondly, social order and control; thirdly, social solidarity and reduction in wealth disparities; fourthly, social networks and social capital and fifth, place attachment and identity (Beecham, 2002:22).

### **The Limitations of multiculturalism**

Multiculturalism (as discussed previously) was a policy approach which led to the entrenchment of different cultures and religions (Malik, 2001, Cattle, 2001). This entrenchment according to some critics has proved *disastrous* (Civitas, 2005:28) leading to many discourses on the failure of *multiculturalism*, a *multicultural*

*paradox* (McDonald, 2007:3) which have all contributed to the subsequent formulation of community cohesion policies in sight of the limitations and barriers these policies had created. Civitas, (2005), Philips, (2005), Malik , (2001) all argue that the term *multiculturalism* be discarded and replaced with *integration*. Earlier research on cultural engagement in Leicester by Asaf et al (2003:4) concluded that the term *Interculturalism* be used. Whilst Conway (2009) discusses how British identity has become obscure since the inception of community cohesion and thus he rebukes both concepts. Modood (2007) prefers to see community cohesion as a *civic-rebalancing of multiculturalism* (Modood, 2007:34) rather than its demise, whilst Parekh (2001), Gutman (2003) and Cooper (2008) feel that the concept be rethought.

Back (2009:8) argues that it is not the idea of multiculturalism that has died, but the idea of society itself as many white citizens feel that the ‘sacrifice of their community at the altar of Multiculturalism’ is divisive. Back (2009:9) is not convinced that banking social capital in to the ‘country account’ will be able to cure the dilemma Britain faces in terms of ethnic relations. He believes that the discourse of community cohesion, ‘control, manage, cohere, contain’ which is evident in government publications, alludes to government intentions towards diversity. His critique focuses on ‘the scramble for river-side views and hilltop mansions’ for the white middle classes, segregating themselves in ‘gated communities’ whilst the rest of the population has to battle with diversity and difference. Back (2009:10) refers to this as a ‘huge hypocrisy in our democracy’.

Gilroy (2009), explores an international multi-cultural perspective and points towards a new *corporate multiculturalism* with the export of American racial technologies around the world through the medium of popular culture. This, he argues had led to population instability in many western countries. His critique engages with America as a *cultural* power and how this quality of America in shaping western countries domestic racial policies is muted in policy discourse.

In light of all the critiques of multiculturalism, Cattle (2005) explains that a failed multiculturalism policy has left Britain in the same social situation as the 1960s as levels of hate, distrust and anxiety amongst various communities are at a parallel today. He further argues that the British government should learn lessons from its immigrant past. These lessons include the need to attend to the psychological and social needs of its diverse communities, to develop clear awareness of and commitment to meaningful change, to provide a realistic level of local resources to reduce competing demands upon them (ibid). There is also a requirement for clear leadership, in which programmes are mainstreamed rather than left to poorly resourced voluntary organizations (ibid). Malik (2002) sums up the problem of multicultural policy as:

Entrenching the divisions created by racism, but made cross-cultural interaction more difficult by encouraging people to assert their cultural differences. In areas where there was both a sharp division between Asian and white communities, and where both communities suffered disproportionately from unemployment and social deprivation, the two groups began to view these problems through the lens of cultural and racial differences, blaming each other for their respective problems encouraging people to assert their cultural differences. The inevitable result was the riots of 2001 in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford.

Malik, 2002:18

It can also be argued that now amidst riots and disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford the government is trying to impose set rules for the restoration of 'public order' under the guise of community cohesion which are debates explored by Flint & Robinson (2008).

### **Contextualizing competing Terms: Social Cohesion**

Although the government had formulated a community cohesion framework taking account of various differentials, there is no universal agreement on a *model* for community cohesion. Looking at European Union policy for a definition of *community cohesion* the only link that can be found is the commitment of the Council of Europe in 1998 as it adopted Recommendation 1355 on ‘Fighting against social exclusion and strengthening social cohesion in Europe’ (Council Of Europe, 2007:77). Social cohesion is defined in integrationist terms – social and economic – in order to reduce the risk of social and political disruption (Council of Europe, 2000, Halpern, 2005). This is not the same definition as the community cohesion model seeks to establish, i.e. cohesiveness around race and faith. This incompatibility between definitions has led Ratcliffe et al (2007) to argue that the term social cohesion is more befitting than community cohesion (see chapter 1 for a brief discussion.)

Cantle (2005) further explains how the terms *community cohesion* and *social cohesion* differ. He insists that the former deals with race and faith and is used to underline the necessity to develop shared values across ethnic division as a response to community conflict and social unrest (ibid). Furthermore Cantle (2005) shows how the latter does not emphasise the divisions based on ethnicity and faith. For this reason one cannot look towards Europe for a similar model of community cohesion as E.U. policy is more concerned with social cohesion, i.e. to reduce the risk of social and political disruption on the continent and the implications this has on member states. Hence there is a need for The United Kingdom to formulate a unique community cohesion framework, rather than adopting the E.U. Social cohesion policy.

### **Social Capital: the sociological root of community cohesion**

In connecting community cohesion to other key areas in this field of study Gilchrist (2004) points out that the main ideas on community cohesion had initially been developed by American sociologists to study the effects of economic changes on the role of social networks and shared norms within specific populations. They concerned themselves with the impact that changes in patterns of employment and poverty had on social order and the quality of *ties* between residents (ibid). American sociological research soon concluded that a whole spectrum of issues would have to be considered such as civic engagement, political equality, trust, tolerance, education, employment and a whole range of access to services issues would need to be confronted in order to build a cohesive community. Sociologists such as Putnam & Feldstein (2001, 2004) incorporated these dimensions in to their research in to the state of American community ties from 1950 to the present day which showed a progressive decline in community life & civic participation amongst other issues whilst opening up a debate in American society on the value of *community*. Putnam's (2001) model of community cohesion is primarily built around the concept of 'social capital' which theorises that:

Social networks can increase productivity just as a screwdriver (physical capital) or college education (human capital) increase productivity in the same manner social contacts affects the productivity of groups and individuals.

Putnam, 2001:19

The social capital model also concerns itself with how communities show solidarity, tolerance and trust amongst themselves alongside how many individuals engage with political, civic and religious organisations. However this idea of social capital does have critics such as Bourdieu (1986) who points out how strong internal connections are a key contributor in practically reproducing inequality. For instance, when people gain access to powerful positions through

the direct and indirect employment of social connections, these connections and opportunities are prevalent in today's society. Ellis (1995) discusses for example, how the majority of senior posts within the government and associated agencies are predominantly given to students from elite institutions such as The University of Oxford, Cambridge and affiliated colleges. He argues that '*The old boys' network*' is more active within the judiciary, civil service and parliament, with the judiciary having 64% of senior Judges from either Oxford or Cambridge University (ibid).

One of the variations amongst the American and British frameworks of achieving cohesion, (an in-depth discussion of the terms will follow in this chapter) lie in what Putnam (2001:68) calls *bonding* and *bridging* Capital. *Bonding* Capital constitutes a sort of sociological superglue which creates strong in-group loyalty, which at times could lead to strong out-group antagonisms, as is the case of the Nazi party or the Klu Klux Klan or the British National Party. *Bridging* capital allows different communities and groups to form relationships much like the work of an interfaith council. The American framework for cohesion champions the *bridging* capital approach as opposed to the *bonding* capital measure. British sociologists Forrest & Kearns (2000) have made an attempt at differentiating between *bonding* and *bridging* capital in earlier work on *social cohesion*. The British model for community cohesion fails to make a distinction between the types and merely alludes to a 'High degree of social interaction within communities and families', leaving a vague area around the sort of capital (*Bonding or Bridging*) that should be pursued (Beecham, 2002:87) which will be discussed further in chapter 3)



**Competing definitions and interpretations of Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework in comparison to American and Canadian cohesion frameworks.**

In America the concept of *cohesion* or *social capital* is more focused on achieving *productivity*. This is because there is a homogenous American identity which citizens aspire to, something which is arguably lacking in the United Kingdom (see Chapter 1 for an in-depth discussion on a crisis of British identities), hence the need to reinforce *Citizenship*. On the other hand American society does not have a multiculturalism policy which *entrenches* cultural identity both in the public and private domain as is the case in the United Kingdom (a critical analysis of which was undertaken in earlier in this chapter)

In addition the American framework need not focus on 'public order' as religion and cultural identity operate along the 'public spaces, private places' analogy with a unified code of practice which governs America's public sphere.

In the United Kingdom the community cohesion framework, far from seeking economic productivity (as the American framework seeks to), aims to reinforce citizenship and public order (Gilchrist, 2004). It can be argued that the reason for such disparity in the American and British frameworks is that the community cohesion agenda only surfaced in the United kingdom amidst the disturbances and riots that ensued in the northern towns, hence why the community cohesion framework aims to firstly ensure *citizenship*; as the first domain of community cohesion envisages, 'Common aims and objectives, common moral principles and codes of behavior, support for political institutions and participations in politics' (Beecham, 2002:22).

The second aim of the community cohesion model in the United Kingdom seems to be *public order*; which can be understood from the third domain of community cohesion as it tries to achieve ‘Absence of general conflict and threats to the existing order. Absence of incivility, effective informal social control’ (Beecham, 2002:22).

In comparison to the British framework of community cohesion, the Canadian framework for community cohesion aims to achieve cohesion at the level of society (Brown, 2001) with cohesion being achieved over a process of time. This is achieved through the sharing of a sense of community identity and purpose rooted in respect for diversity and a sense of common good, supported by democratic institutions and processes. The Canadian social network (1999) defines [the concept of cohesion] as:

The on-going process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity within Canada. Based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity amongst all Canadians.

Social cohesion network, 1999:4

Canadians perceive cohesion as a response to globalisation, which has resulted in economic restructuring. This restructuring has created the conditions for increased population mobility and diversity, persistent unemployment, new forms of exclusion in the age of information technology and disenchantment with democratic politics (Toye, 2007).

A core principal of the Canadian framework for cohesion is that:

Social cohesion derives basically from equality in the distribution of the very social outcomes (health results, security, economic well-being, and education) that it contributes to. If society fails to distribute its social outcomes equitably, social cohesion will deteriorate as a result.

Bernard, 1999:22

The Canadian framework for cohesion prides itself as a tool to achieving ‘social prosperity’ much as the American framework prides itself on achieving a high level of ‘social capital’. The British community cohesion framework is in deep contrast to this as the economic benefits of cohesion are not its ‘priority area’ more so citizenship and social order.

A brief outline of the focus that each framework has is given below:

<b>Canadian framework</b>	<b>American framework</b>	<b>British framework</b>
Focus on ‘ <i>Social prosperity</i> ’: communities to achieve higher level of health, education, employment & standard of living.	Focus on ‘ <i>Social capital</i> ’:Community links will increase productivity subsequently allowing the economy to grow.	Focus on ‘ <i>Social order</i> ’: communities will understand their rights and the rights of others through their citizenship & maintain social & civic order.

To further emphasise the point of economic prosperity, as a result of cohesion, Jenson (2001) shows how communities in Canada which show a high level of cohesion have better health than those with low levels. In addition cities with stronger civic communities in Canada have a lower infant mortality rate.

Communities in Canada which have a high level of income inequality and diminished cohesion have higher level of crime and violence and higher mortality rate (ibid). Jenson (2001) further advocates the level of society social cohesion has a powerful effect on health which transcends that available from individual social relationships.

In promoting the economic benefits that cohesion can bring to communities across Canada Jenson (2001) cites the Council of The European Union (Council of Europe, 2007) joint report on social protection and social inclusion noting that:

While strong economic and employment growth is a precondition for the sustainability of social programs, progress in achieving higher levels of social cohesion is, together with effective education and training systems, a key factor in promoting economic growth.

Council of Europe.2007:43

### **Competing definitions and interpretations within Cantle's (2001) community cohesion framework.**

The limitations and competing interpretations within the British framework of community cohesion are many, one being the reconciliation of cultural/religious differences. All five domains of the community cohesion framework share the overarching similarity of commonality and positive interaction between various groups within society. Research carried out by Furbey et al (2006), Billings & Holden's (2008) has shown how dialogue and interfaith work can bolster ethnic minority cohesion (as is the case in Burnley and the *Building Bridges* initiative) and Jayaweera & Choudary (2008) have documented the positive interfaith work

in Bradford. Yet Forrest & Kearns (2000) argue and more recently sociologist Tariq Modood (1997, 2005, 2007) outline the impossibility to build what the first domain of community cohesion terms; ‘Common aims and objectives, common moral principles and codes of behavior, support for political institutions and participations in politics’ (Beecham, 2002:22). This is because many communities have contradictory cultural values, beliefs, practices and politics. How can members of the Hindu community and the Muslim communities (for example) share commonality when their respective belief systems are at complete odds with each other? The former worships a range of idols whilst the latter believes only in one creator and deems associating any deity with God as heresy. In respect of cultural practices, Muslims usually sacrifice cows on the festival of Eid-ul-adha whilst Hindu’s revere the cow and elevate it to the level of a god alongside being vegetarian and thus detest any attempt at desecrating the sanctity of this animal. With regards to codes of behaviour, the dress code for Muslims and Hindus and approaches to the institution of marriage, celebrating life and mourning death are all extremely different. These are comparisons discussed by Holden(2009).

In the same context an Atheist community (where a community happens to believe in scientific theory cancelling out any notion of god and a Christian community (who believe in Christ as the saviour) would be totally at odds with each other to establish any ground for communality. Cantle (2009) expands on this thesis by adding:

Whilst diversity of culture is generally seen as bringing new, interesting and enriching experiences, there is more ambivalence about diversity of religion, which may be seen as creating more challenge in areas that still have a sacred and sacrosanct basis. This is understandable in the sense that faith is a ‘zero sum game’ and fundamental beliefs are, by definition, irreconcilable.

Cantle, 2009:5

Perhaps interfaith work could be seen as a solution to this problem. This is evident from the work of faith groups to develop co-existence models and frameworks with dialogue and exchange at the cultural level and mutual respect at the faith level (DCLG, 2008). It can be further argued that many times interfaith work is a dialogue between two ministers of religion rather than two communities and many a time a small talk followed by a dinner cannot serve to help strengthen community relations (Billings & Holden, 2008). Hussein (2009) views the cultural/religious discourse of community cohesion as mainly utilising Islam as a proxy around which faith debates in general occur, further arguing that most of the religious/cultural issues in recent years have involved Muslim communities.

Furthermore the community cohesion framework mentions, 'reduction in wealth disparities' (Beecham, 2002:49) but the economic side of the community cohesion debate seems to have been sidelined in many discourses. Laurence & Heath (2008) mention that it is widely acknowledged that towns where there are multiple indicators of deprivation also have a low level of community cohesion and those communities which have a low level of deprivation enjoy high levels of cohesion. In the case of the Northern towns & cities involved in the riots of 2001, Oldham ranked 42 in the government's indices of deprivation out of a total of 354 councils. Burnley ranked 31 and Bradford ranked 52 (ibid).

Clearly these towns & Cities were all in the top 100 most deprived authorities in the United Kingdom as of 2007 (DCLG, 2007c). In unemployment terms Oldham ranked 49, Burnley ranked 113 and Bradford ranked 6 out of a total of 354 councils. Income scales across the three authorities echoed the same pattern with Oldham ranking 39, Burnley ranking 113 and Bradford ranking 4 out of a total of 354 councils (ibid). It is important to note here that Bradford was the centre for most of the violence that occurred in 2001 and it is also the area which has the highest deprivation amongst the townships of Burnley and Oldham. In light of these facts a link between deprivation and lack of cohesion can to some extent be established to credit Laurence & Heath's (2008) theory.

From a Marxist perspective it could be argued that wealth disparity is an inherent quality of capitalist societies. This problem cannot be remedied until the *Proletariat* control the means of production, and the violent protests and disruptions that occurred were the *Proletariat* demanding change through violent revolution. This thesis is given impetus by the fact that the gap between richer and poorer citizens in the United Kingdom has been growing with the richest 10% earning nine times more income than the poorest 10% (The Guardian, 2008).

Powers (2001) argues that the government itself has undermined the community cohesion agenda by entrenching ethnic minority groups against each other over competing for 'scarce' funding for projects and programmes in ethnically diverse communities. Furthermore distrust, hate and manipulation have become common in order to secure funding and project extension opportunities.

The Fifth domain of the British community cohesion framework as developed by Cattle (2001) attaches great importance to 'place and identity' for communities. Kundnani (2001, 2007) & Kalra (2002) perceive this as hypocritical of the government as many of the towns and cities which had a high level of residential segregation had only their respective councils to blame.

Racist segregationist policies were pursued by Oldham local authority, (for example), which, in the early 1990s had been found guilty of pursuing segregationist housing policies. A report examining Bradford's housing policy suggests the increasing racial segregation in the city was partly a result of the so-called 'white flight' caused by estate agents exploiting the fears of white residents to increase sales (Ratcliffe et al 2001:41). Furthermore a knock-on effect of such segregationist policies was the formation of 'segregated' schools with many districts in Bradford and Oldham having 100 percent populations of just one ethnic group (Conway, 2009). In other areas where catchments should have produced mixed intakes, the mechanism of parental choice allowed white parents to send their children to majority-white schools further away. The resulting situation was one in which mutual distrust and fear was allowed to fester and

prevail, creating insular and inward focused communities who perceived difference and cultural diversity as a threat (ibid).

Indeed a recent community cohesion report commissioned in Blackburn (iCoCo, 2009) highlighted the issues around the towns' high levels of segregation and how the issue of race was 'taboo' (iCoCo, 2009:81). This has subsequently led to 'no go' ethnically insulated areas and in some situations evidence of 'white flight' (ibid).

The second domain of the British community cohesion framework highlights 'tolerance and respect for differences' (Beecham, 2002:45), but Johnson (2008) believes that the government has undermined its framework for community cohesion by failing to teach children about each other's culture. There has been a failed attempt at communicating *Asian* culture in particular to students who have not been given an appreciation of Asian life but have been presented with a 'hackneyed formula of samosas and saris' (Johnson, 2008:34). The government's citizenship programme can also be branded as demonising Asian and African students and at times segregationist as there are sizeable topics teaching students about the 'The East Indian Tea Company', 'The British Empire in India', 'The Scramble for Africa' and 'Slavery' which have overtones of Britain's imperial past. These are all sensitive and controversial topics which students from ethnic communities resident in Britain could find offensive and derogatory.

In addition Darlow et al (2005) have expressed how the criminalisation of Asian youth involved in the 2001 rioting is inconsistent with the governments 'social capital' and cohesion building initiatives. They argue how there can be a legitimate discourse on valuing and utilising the energy and ambition of our youth when many of them who were involved in the riots were given severe and lengthy jail terms. In total 191 people were given custodial sentences totaling more than 510 years for their part in the riots and disturbances that took place in 2001. These were the harshest and most widespread sentences given for public disorder since the Second World War. The sentences psychologically rendered these youth unfit



for society and further flamed the ideology of violence and protest amongst sections of ethnic communities who maintain that they are treated like ‘foreigners in their own lands’ (Darlow et al, 2005:24). According to them many of the protesters dispute that it was only the ‘coloured’ rioters that were treated in such a detestable manner whilst many white youths were ignored or given lighter sentences. Branching out in to race and ethnicity discourse, Gilroy (2009) does not feel that the experience of migrant communities is the same as it was fifty years ago and that the issues faced by new generations differ greatly from those faced by their parents. He explains how these issues of fairness are usually exemplified, being twice as burdensome on the new generation. This is because the new generations are nurtured in classrooms and by public services in an atmosphere of mutual respect and equality (ibid). This government engineered environment, Gilroy (2009) maintains is soon dispelled by the hostile surroundings of the real world, which have racist and prejudice overtones.

Bodi (2002:19) explains the ‘harshness’ of the sentences and documents that: Istifar Iqbal was given an eleven months jail sentence for picking up, but not throwing, two stones; Asam Latif was handed a four years nine months jail term for *lobbing* six stones; Mohammed Akram, was given five years for hurling various *missiles*; Mohammed Munir, was given four years and nine months for throwing two stones; and Ashraf Husain, was handed four years for throwing three stones. (ibid).

Bodi (2002) further elaborates this harshness by contrasting these sentences to Belfast, where the stakes are much higher due to the Northern Ireland disputes.

A first offence of riot in Belfast and the surrounding towns and cities would land an individual a fine; a second offence of riot would incur a heavier fine or a suspended sentence. According to staff at the Belfast Telegraph:

If the judge was making an example out of you, you'd probably get 30 days for throwing a petrol bomb, what makes their (convicted rioters) punishments harder to swallow is that most of the convicted have no history of criminality.

Bodi, 2002:22

### **An International Perspective**

Whilst the concept of community cohesion has been discussed in light of American and Canadian frameworks, similar attempts at cohesion are emerging at an international level. Elements of similar practice are to be found in the work of inter-ethnic conflicts in other countries. An attempt to build mutual confidence and trust between rival communities in India, for example, has led to pioneering work. Varshney (2002) discusses the work being done in Bhiwandi, a town just outside Bombay. Bhiwandi has been segregated into Muslim and Hindu areas and was infamous for riots and conflicts between the two communities in the 1970s and 1980s. In 1988, however, a new police chief decided to tackle the conflict in a different way and argued:

That instead of fighting fires when they broke out, it was better for the police to bring Hindus and Muslims together to create mutual understanding. The aim was to set up durable structures of peace. If the Hindus and Muslims could meet each other often enough and discuss common problems, a reservoir of communication and perhaps trust would be created

Varshney, 2002:293

Despite the riots in Bombay and elsewhere after that time, the peace in Bhiwandi endured. Varshney (2002) is also able to provide similar examples of successful interventions in Northern Ireland, South Africa, the former Yugoslavia and the United States.

Further examples of tackling even the most deep-seated division between communities by fundamentally changing attitudes can be found elsewhere. Taylor (2004) outlines how in west Jerusalem a project that commenced in the Nisui School has reached into the wider communities. It uses the folklore and traditions of Jewish and Arab families to bind together the two groups. It does not attempt to resolve the conflict, but does attempt to break down the barriers between the communities who are sometimes fearful and often ignorant of the 'other' (ibid). The project aims to challenge the stereotypes portrayed on both Israeli and Arab television and appeared to have had some success in developing positive interaction. It is also possible that some similarities are evident between the community cohesion agenda and the work being developed under the banner of 'peace, forgiveness and reconciliation' in South Africa, Rwanda and elsewhere (Adato, 2005).

There have also been discussions around adding to or omitting aspects from the framework for community cohesion. Theorists such as (Bonney, 2003:2) and Clements (2009:26) feel that the current framework is 'minimalist' and suggest a more demanding vision, drawing upon Anglican tradition to 'put another's interest before your own, where you care for one another' (ibid).

Bodi (2002) has preferred to see the traditional approach to racial unrest in the form of a special programme of resources directed at the disaffected communities and has rejected the label *community cohesion* altogether.

Many organisations have argued that the community cohesion framework must go beyond 'mere tolerance and also beyond the concept of, 'a community of communities', to a 'deeply held and lived sense of human oneness' (Leith, 2002:46). They also argue that the communitarian concept of 'diversity within unity' should be elaborated as 'diversity without unity is division; unity without diversity is uniformity' and that both extremes should be avoided (ibid).

**How the interview questions have been informed by the analysis of the literature.**

The literature review has highlighted the many competing definitions and interpretations of Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework. The literature review has shown how ambiguous and controversial terms can be. It has also shown how understandings and perceptions can differ widely when discussing community cohesion and British identities (see Chapter 1. For an in-depth discussion of this term), the literature review has expounded the need to have a set of robust, reliable questions which give the participants a chance to clearly articulate how they interpret key terms such as ; *community, value, respect, positive, negative experiences, interaction, mixing.*

For this reason the ten questions that have been formulated for interviewing participants' have taken in to consideration the complexities discussed in the literature review (an in-depth analysis will follow of the nature of the questions and general methodological approach in Chapter 3.4.).

In addition the discussion Chapter (6) will seek to understand the extent to which participant interpretations corroborate with that of Cattle's (2001) definitions of these vocabularies within the community cohesion framework, thus seeking to understand how cohesive British identities are. The ten questions which will be asked are:

- [1] What does a *community* mean to you?
- [2] Would you say that you are part of a *community*? Explain your view.
- [3] What does a *common sense of belonging* mean to you?
- [4] What do you think is the best way to *create a common sense of belonging* and bring your community together?
- [5] In your opinion how do you think people can *value* and *respect* each other?

[6] Do you think you are treated fairly when you go to the job centre, hospital, school, housing office or when using any other council service? Talk about your positive or negative experiences.

[7] How do you think the council should tackle *unfairness & difficulties* that are faced by different communities when they are using council services?

[8] In your community do you *mix* with people of a different colour, Religion, Ethnicity, background to yours? If yes was it a ‘*good*’ or ‘*bad*’ experience, If no, what do you think prevents people coming together?

[9] Do you think your area is a place where *different* communities get on *well*? Could you explain?

[10] Do you think the FOUR main points of Community cohesion are enough to bring different communities together?

There is a gap in knowledge and understanding when applying the British community cohesion model to Bolton’s diverse Asian community. Like many other areas in Great Britain, new communities are settling in Bolton. The Metropolitan Borough Council estimates around 2500 people have come from at least 18 different countries including Eastern Europe, of whom some 1500 have come as refugees from Africa, as well as a significant Somalian population influx (BASEM, 2007) (See also Chapter 1 for discussion on Bolton’s ethnically diverse composition and statistics pertaining to the Isolation ratio).

The preceding chapter will therefore attempt to clearly outline the gap in knowledge and understanding this thesis seeks to address. This gap in knowledge and understanding will be outlined with reference to a recent study carried out in Bolton (iCoCo, 2007). In outlining this gap the preceding chapter will also formulate a consistent qualitative methodology that seeks to fill this gap and would elicit a deeper understanding of the meanings and perceptions members of the Asian community attribute to key vocabulary within Cantle’s (2001) community cohesion framework.

### CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter located Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework within New Labour's philosophy of communitarianism. It critically analysed prior government policies such as multiculturalism and concepts such as social cohesion. It dealt with the competing definitions and interpretations of Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework. It evaluated the community cohesion framework with American and Canadian frameworks to assert its reliability and practicality. The previous chapter closed with an international perspective on community cohesion initiatives and briefly discussed how the interview questions had been informed by the analysis of the literature. An argument was developed from the analysis within the chapter which showed how easily interpretations and definitions can differ and remain wide open to meaning when discussing community cohesion. The literature review indicated the need for a focused and robust set of interview questions to be drawn up for the research to achieve its objectives.

This chapter sets out the methodological approach I have developed for the purpose of exploring meanings and experiences of community cohesion amongst certain sectors of the Asian community in Bolton. In order to develop a viable methodology for my research, I will begin with an analysis of a recent study in to the state of community cohesion in Bolton (iCoCo, 2007). The methodological limitations within the iCoCo study (2007) will be explored and used to inform my own methodology which will seek to fill a gap in knowledge and understanding pertaining to the interpretations and definitions members of the Asian community ascribe to vocabulary in the community cohesion framework. In addition, I will draw upon methodological issues which arose in two similar community cohesion studies in Burnley (Clarke, 2001) and Oldham (Ritchie, 2001). The chapter will discuss ethical issues and reflexivity with a conclusion based upon the method of data analysis that will be utilised to analyse the data. The themes of *value*, *respect*, *community* and *common sense of belonging* are key areas for my research and so

in developing my methodology, I need to ensure that these terms can be fully explored and interrogated.

### **Methodological issues in iCoCo (2007) Bolton Report**

The Institute of Community cohesion (iCoCo, 2007) undertook research into Bolton Council's community cohesion vision. The study was timely and extremely important in part because Bolton Council was shortlisted by the government as one of seventy areas in the U.K. which were in need of 'support to improve the capacity of local communities to resist violent extremism' (idea.gov.uk, 2008). In the same manner Bolton Council had been approved by The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to receive funding through the Preventing Violent Extremism (PVE) Pathfinder Delivery Fund to help tackle violent extremism. The Council in turn set up The Bolton Community Cohesion Project [BCCP] in partnership with local voluntary sector and faith groups. In this respect, a comprehensive study of the state of community cohesion in Bolton would review the work that had been undertaken and gauge the scope of achievements or deficiencies (ibid).

The Institute of Community cohesion employed for this study a methodology which comprehensively reviewed key Council policy documentation; conducted 145 one-to-one interviews with key personnel across a wide range of organisations-including the Council, local strategic partnerships, Police, NHS, Voluntary, community & faith sector groups-the purpose of which was to establish what they saw as the key issues and how well current cohesion activities were working and priorities alongside mapping for the future (iCoCo, 2007:6)

In addition iCoCo (2007) facilitated over 30 focus groups involving some 542 participants drawn from community and faith groups, resident associations, young people's organisations, FE students and school pupils. The purpose of the focus groups were to establish the views of ordinary residents on the state of

Community relations in their localities and more widely their assessment of what was being done and key issues for the future. The interviews and focus groups involved representatives from all of Bolton's main communities including: White, Indian, Pakistani, Somalian, African Caribbean and emerging communities. Seventeen Standardised Questions were asked at both one-to-one interviews and focus groups with responses written down or recorded (ibid).

The creation of a robust sample from the population when conducting research is of extreme importance. Stevens et al (2001:53), explains how there are two distinct categories of sampling. The first category is that of Probability sampling under which strict conditions for sampling are specified such as: simple random sampling (where the researcher draws people at random from a known population), Systematic sampling (selecting every nth case within a known population), Stratified sampling (sampling within specified groups of the population), Cluster sampling (surveying whole clusters of the population sampled at random). Within probability sampling, it is possible to make generalisations about the wider population from which the sample is drawn.

The second category of sampling Stevens et al (2001) terms non-probability sampling and specifies methods such as: Convenience sampling (sampling those most accessible to the researcher); Voluntary sampling (the sample is self selected); Quota sampling (convenience sampling within specified groups of the population), Purposive sampling (handpicking interesting or 'typical' cases), Dimensional sampling (multidimensional quota sampling); Snowball sampling (building up a sample through informants) (ibid).

The method adopted by the iCoCo (2007) for both focus groups and one-to-one interviews could be seen as convenience sampling whereby a proportion of members from diverse organisations were selected. Convenience sampling can be considered as biased as it is not generalisable to the wider population (Stevens et al, 2001). In this instance iCoCo's (2007) focus groups were derived from 32 organisations' across Bolton, yet the group size from each organisation could be



seen as disproportionate relative to the population as a whole. The Black African Caribbean community in Bolton (for example) totals 1,607 (Census, 2001) but iCoCo (2007) chose to interview 10 members of the Black African Caribbean community. The validity of such research in relation to this community is questionable as ensuring the right age, gender & class being represented in a sample of 10 is a difficult task. The Asian community in Bolton totals 23,644 (Census, 2001) but a mixed sample of 108 individuals from four organisations (Bolton Council of Mosques, BREC, Crompton and Halliwell Pakistani & Indian Women's group & Noor-ul- Islam Mosque) can be seen as unrepresentative especially in terms of religious representation. In addition the Hindu community could be seen as underrepresented in the study in relation to their size (5232) (Census, 2001).

In addition it could be argued that just as iCoCo (2007) had utilised the Bolton Council of Mosques as a gatekeeper to the Muslim community, the Hindu forum of Bolton should have been consulted as gatekeeper for the Hindu community. In terms of geographical location the Asian sample could be further criticised as being unrepresentative as the Asian community are scattered across various wards in Bolton.

There are also issues relating to the use of standardised questions which were used by iCoCo (2007) for both focus groups and one-on-one interviews in Bolton., Silverman's (2000) discussion on the three concepts of interviewing and assessing interview data are vital to mention before any critical analysis can ensue.

### **Interviewing techniques.**

Silverman (2000) explains that the first approach to interviewing and interview data is that of *positivism* which implies interview data giving us access to facts about the world. The primary issue is to generate data which is valid and reliable, independently of the research setting. The main ways to achieve this are through the random selection of the interview sample and the administration of

standardised questions which can be readily tabulated (ibid). The second approach to interviewing and interview data is that of *Emotionalism*, which stipulate interviews being essentially, about ascertaining facts or beliefs out there in the world but this group theorises eliciting authentic accounts of subjective experience. Emotionalists believe that interviewers should try to:

Formulate questions and provide an atmosphere conducive to open and undistorted communication

Holstein & Gulbrium, 1997:116

For this reason the emotionalist position remains that of unstructured, open-ended interviews (ibid). Finally, *constructionism* advocates interviewers and interviewees as always actively engaged in constructing meaning. Rather than treat this as standing in the way of accurate depictions of ‘facts’ or ‘experiences’, how meaning is mutually constructed becomes the researcher’s topic. Because of this, research interviews are not treated as specially privileged and other interviews such as professional-client interviews are treated with equal interest; the interviews are treated as topics rather than a research resource. The focus remains more on how interviewees construct narratives of events and people and the turn-by-turn construction of meaning (ibid).

In light of Silverman’s (2000) explanation of the three approaches to interviews and interview data, the standardised questions formulated by iCoCo (2007) could be seen to comply with the *positivist* position. With the questions being of a closed nature, such as;

“If there was one thing which you could change tomorrow about the way the organization deals with community cohesion, what would it be?” (iCoCo, 2007), “Is there any extremism in Bolton?”, “What is the one important thing that has been introduced in to the council that you think has led to the improvement for delivering community cohesion to customers?”, “List three things you think the

council does well in relation to community cohesion?”, “List three things the council need to improve on or do better in relation to community cohesion” (ibid).

In contrast, open-ended questions were also asked such as; “What do you understand to be the council’s goals in relation to community cohesion?”, “Do you think the council has a vision on community cohesion?” and “What do you think are the key opportunities for community cohesion in the future for the council and its stakeholders?” (ibid).

Although such standardised questions do attempt to review the situation of community cohesion and responses could readily be tabulated, it can be argued that first of all a more emotionalist approach could have been adopted in designing questions that would allow individuals to fully express themselves.

Another method that could have been adopted is that of utilizing standardised questions for one-to-one interviews and to consult creatively with the focus groups. Arguably the focus groups would not have the in-depth working knowledge of community cohesion that would be held by heads of Departments at Bolton council and Heads of voluntary and community organisations.

An example of creative consultation is the work that was undertaken in Burnley, (the methodology of which will be analysed in due course). The youth arts partnership organised graffiti boards so that youngsters could anonymously leave their comments about the state of ethnic relations in the community. Art-based workshops were also set up to achieve similar ends (Clarke, 2001).

When focusing on the one-to-one in-depth interviews, it is surprising to see that an unusually large number of interviews took place with members of Bolton Council, when in reality the majority of interviews should have taken place with heads of voluntary and community organisations and ordinary members of the public.

In conclusion, certain elements of the methodology adopted by iCoCo (2007) study were weak as a result of the under representation of members of various ethnic communities, the focus of questions, and methods of consultation.

### **Alternative methodological approaches to studying community cohesion**

#### **The Burnley study (2001)**

A large piece of social research was undertaken following the riots in Burnley (2001) and a task force was set up to determine the roots of the disturbances and the state of community relations.

The method of triangulation was adopted by the Taskforce which Bell (1993) describes as:

Referring to the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings. Since much social research is founded on the use of a single research method and as such may suffer from limitations associated with that method or from the specific application of it, triangulation offers the prospect of enhanced confidence.

Bell, 1993:78

Firstly a questionnaire was sent out to 45,000 Burnley households in the borough (Clarke, 2001) and 4534 replies were received. Closed questions were asked with phrased answers to be circled indicating the level of agreement, i.e. 'very important', 'Would help', 'would make no difference', 'and would make it worse' (ibid). Such methods of data collection are fixed, value-free and easily tabulated (Bell, 1993). One of the major problems with sending out surveys is the rate of response. In this scenario the 4534 respondents constituted 92% white members and of this group 44% were middle aged (between 45-64). This posed a dilemma

for the Taskforce as they appreciated the experiences and comments of the white community but more importantly wanted to hear from Asian communities who were had a significantly large proportion of their ethnic community involved in the riots and disturbances. It could be argued at this point that the Burnley Taskforce might have anticipated the low level response to the questionnaires as many individuals treat council questionnaires as 'junk mail' and do not attach importance to it. In addition many heads of households from amongst the Asian community cannot historically speak English nor have English on a level to comprehend the questionnaire. This is shown in many regional studies that analyse the housing, education, socio-economic trends of the northwest BME population. The NWRA (2004:21) report highlighted that Bangladeshi and Pakistani adults have an illiteracy rate relatively higher than members of other communities in the Northwest of England.

In retort to the low response rate from amongst the Asian community the Taskforce employed qualitative methods using creating focus groups across the areas most affected by the disturbances. In total 10 such meetings were organised with a total of 240 members of the public attending. This method seems effective in that the majority of attendees at the meetings were from the Asian community and the areas which were most affected by riots were concurrently densely populated by members of the Asian community. The sample which the Burnley Taskforce was trying to gather was therefore easily drawn by arranging to have meetings in the areas of Burnley most affected by riots. It can be argued that even if over 70% of the 240 members attending the 10 focus groups were from the Asian community it is still not an adequate sample. This is because Burnley's total Asian community is just over 6,500 (Census, 2001). The Burnley Taskforce also encouraged e-mail and letter contributions and over 240 letters and emails were received and analysed.

Berelson (1952) explains the different approaches that quantitative and qualitative researchers take in the analysis of such texts. The former analyses written material

in a manner which will produce reliable evidence about a large sample, their preferred method being ‘content analysis’ in which researchers establish a set of categories and then count the number of instances that fall into each category. The crucial requirement is that the categories are sufficiently precise to enable different coders to arrive at the same results when the same body of material [i.e. newspapers, letters] is examined (ibid). In qualitative research Denzin & Lincoln (1994) explain, small numbers of texts and documents may be analysed for a very different purpose. The aim is to understand the participants’ categories and to see how these are pursued in concrete activities like telling stories, assembling files or describing ‘family life’ (ibid). The theoretical orientation of many qualitative researchers means that they are more concerned with the processes through which texts depict ‘reality’ than with whether such texts contain true or false statements as Atkinson & Coffey (1997) explain:

In paying due attention to such materials, however, one must be quite clear about what they can and cannot be used for. They are ‘social facts’ in that they are produced, shared and used in socially organized ways. They are not, however transparent representations of organizational routines, decision-making processes, or professional diagnoses. They construct particular kinds of representations with their own conventions

Atkinson & Coffey, 1997:33

As with the questionnaires the main respondents from emails and letters were elderly White residents, which resonates the point that this method of input although effective for white residents seemed ineffective for members of the Asian community possibly due to the high level of illiteracy amongst heads of households who arrived in Britain in their teenage years so were not able to learn the English language to such a competent level (highlighted previously by the NWRA, 2004 report). Another issue with employing email as a tool to gather views is the assumption that the majority of residents are computer literate or have access to email. Once more the white residents of Burnley were the highest

respondents due to high levels of computer literacy in this community, whilst the low level of email response from amongst the Asian community could mean that there is a low level of computer literacy or little or no access to email at all.

The Burnley Taskforce also set up a website to raise awareness of their work which was visited over 700 times during a two month period. The taskforce employed the use of questionnaires to gather the views of young people and were distributed across schools, youth centers and recreation centers. Although the response rate for the youth questionnaire has not been mentioned in the Report, the effectiveness of the questionnaire method is debatable as a tool to gather information from young people. This point is important to make especially when four of Burnley's 16 wards, are within the worst 20% in England and 6 out of 8 school in Burnley achieved well below the National average for English (Clarke, 2001).

The method employed by The Burnley Youth Arts Partnership could have been more widely adopted by the taskforce. The Partnership organised graffiti boards on which young people could write their comments anonymously and organised art-based workshops to gather young people's views. Such a creative method of collating young people's views would yield greater results.

Overall, the multiple methods employed by The Burnley Taskforce were to some degree effective in collating information on the disturbances and the way forward. The combination of a quantitative questionnaire based method alongside qualitative focus groups was particularly successful and shows how a change of approach in methods can bring hard to reach communities in to the research process.

### **The Oldham study (2001)**

Ritchie (2001) undertook research in to the state of community relations in Oldham. The methods employed were at variance to those employed in Bolton and Burnley. A qualitative approach was used and a drop-in-centre was leased in the Spindles shopping complex in the town centre where people were encouraged to email, phone and fax in their views alongside visiting the shop for a one-to-one interview. In total 915 people registered their views (ibid), the ethnicities of the which were as follows; White 77.38%, Black-Caribbean 0.33%, Black-African 0%, Kashmiri 2.73%, Irish 0.33%, Indian 0.22%, Pakistani 6.89%, Bangladeshi 2.40%, Chinese 0, Unknown 8.09% [Preferred to remain anonymous], other 1.64% (ibid).

The idea of leasing a drop-in-centre is controversial as firstly collating information from a representative sample of the Oldham population would prove difficult as the majority of the sample would derive from residents shopping in the spindles shopping complex, this in itself would narrow the diversity of the sample. Although in relation to the overall ethnic composition of Oldham which constitutes; White British 84.4%, Pakistani 6.3%, Bangladeshi 4.5% (Census, 2001) the sample obtained was fairly representative. It can however be argued, that to obtain the representative gender, class and social stratification could have proved difficult. A more effective method of consultation could have been to conduct focus groups in the Wards of Oldham which were the hotspots for community tension (similar to the focus groups held in Burnley).

The Oldham panel also consulted with 87 organisations to gather and collate their views alongside faith leaders. 200 youngsters also participated in consultation with panel members and a community facilitator. Although the input of youngsters was vital to the Review, more creative methods could have been employed (such as the Burnley Arts Project) as the total young population of Oldham stood at 54,700 (Census, 2001) with around 16% being in the 11-18 age range.



Overall the method employed by Ritchie (2001) was effective in that a representative sample of Oldham's population was consulted but the validity of the data can be called in to question at gender, Class and social stratification have not been represented in the sample. In addition if a more creative method was used to engage young people's views this could have resulted in better consultation with young people.

### **Learning from the Methods employed by The Oldham, Burnley and Bolton studies.**

During the course of evaluating the effectiveness of the three pieces of social research in Bolton, Burnley & Oldham, it can be seen that there is a clear need to formulate a detailed and comprehensive methodology in order to gain maximum benefit from the research conducted. The methodologies employed by the studies conducted in Oldham, Burnley and Bolton had their respective strengths and weaknesses, and these have been considered by the author. In order to formulate an effective methodology which will be able to assess the community cohesion framework and the meanings members of the Asian community ascribe vocabulary within the framework it is imperative to take the strengths and weaknesses in to account.

### **Developing an Appropriate Methodology to Address my research questions**

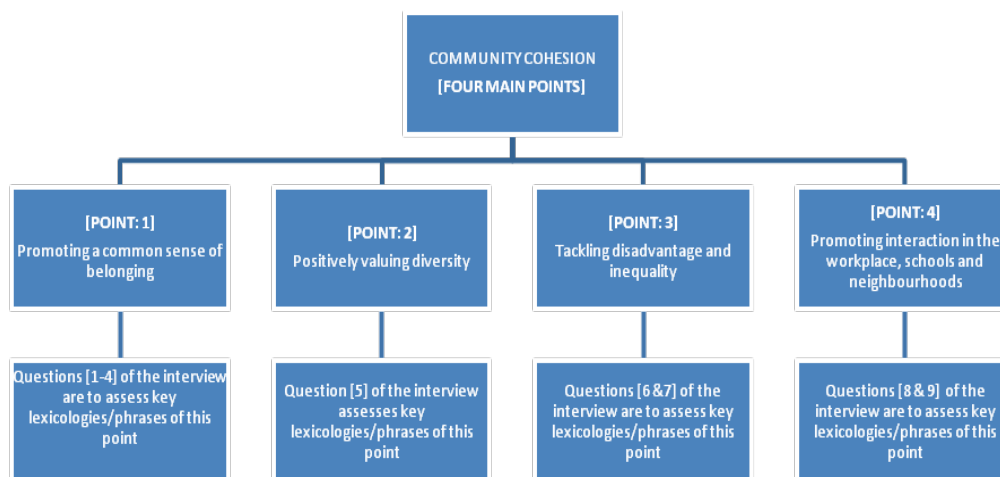
For the purpose of my study the questions that were prepared were to gauge a deeper understanding of meanings members of the Asian community to vocabulary within Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework. These questions could have been adapted so that they could be utilised in a focus group setting. However, the reason why this methodology was not employed relates to issues around power dynamics.

Morgan (1997) explains how the researcher should be exquisitely aware of power dynamics and be able to facilitate well-these crucial skills. In addition focus groups could stray in to dead-end irrelevant conversations, which cause time loss.

The facilitator has less control over the group; in the interest of keeping conversation flowing and thus focus groups can become hard to manage (ibid). Morgan (1997) also explains how focus group analysis is difficult because the researcher needs to be constantly aware of the context within participants spoke, whilst logistical problems may arise from the need to manage a conversation while getting good data.

In the Asian community women are culturally more silent and discreet than men. For this reason having a focus group could have meant group discussion being dominated by males. In addition many of the female participants find it culturally unacceptable to sit with males, thus a mixed - gender focus group would cause problems as many females would not be prepared to participate or be unable to participate fully.

For the purpose of the authors study, questionnaires and surveys were deemed inappropriate because this method added little value for examining complex social relationships or intricate patterns of interaction. The purpose of the research project is to illicit a deeper understanding of the meaning participants give to key words and phrases within the community cohesion framework. For this reason qualitative interviews were deemed appropriate because they would allow the interviewer to probe beneath the surface, requesting clarification and expansion on responses, understanding the meanings, exploring opinions and experiences of interviewees. This deeper level of engagement would not be possible through questionnaires and surveys. In addition the ten questions which are to be asked to participants have been specifically formulated to ensure that key vocabulary are explored across the four main points of the community cohesion framework, as outlined by the illustration below overleaf:



**QUESTION [10] OF THE INTERVIEW AIM TO ASSESS THE OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE VOCABULARY OF THE COMMUNITY COHESION FRAMEWORK.**

### **Nature of research questions**

The ten questions which the author set out to ask each of the participants during qualitative interviews focused on gauging a deeper understanding of the meanings members of the Asian community ascribe to key vocabulary within this framework. The discussion in Chapter 1 around a crisis of coherence in British identities served as a catalyst for formulating questions that would elicit a deeper understanding of interviewees' interpretations of the vocabulary within Cante's (2001) Community cohesion framework. In addition the literature review (see Chapter 2 for further discussion) has shown how open Cante's (2001) community cohesion framework is to competing definitions and interpretations. There are many words and phrases which feature within Cante's (2001) community cohesion framework such as: *community*, *common sense of belonging*, *value*, *respect*, *difficulty*, *unfairness*, *getting on* and *mix*. It is the probing and unpacking of these words and phrases by the participants that the questions are concerned with and formulated for. It is therefore important to utilise methods which can meet the aims that have been stated in Chapter 1. Furthermore in addressing this crisis of coherence in British identities (see Chapter 1 for a discussion on this term) participant's perceptions and understandings of the vocabulary within the

community cohesion framework will be compared (see Chapter 6) to Cattle's (2001) to assert the extent to which they corroborate.

### **Analysis**

In writing up a qualitative methodology we need to recognise: The contested theoretical underpinnings of methodologies, the contingent nature of the data chosen and the likely non-random character of the cases studied (Silverman, 2000). It is an often mentioned fact that qualitative researchers can work fruitfully with very small bodies of data that have not been randomly assembled. One important point to remember in a qualitative methodology is to explain how we can still generalise from an analysis of such a small body of data.

In this regard the research questions are aimed at eliciting a deeper response from the participants. For this reason the questions are mostly open-ended in nature:

*'What does a 'common sense of belonging' mean to you? In your opinion how do you think people can 'value and respect' each other? In your community do you mix with people of a different colour, Religion, Ethnicity, background to yours?'*

In addition phrases such as *'explain your view, talk about your negative or positive experience, If yes was it a 'good' or 'bad' experience, If no, what do you think prevents people coming together?'*, will ensure that participant's answers are probed in detail. This approach can be viewed as complying with *emotionalist* and *constructionalist* views of qualitative data. In the case of the former it is argued that interviews are more about ascertaining facts or beliefs out there in the world, and this position stipulates interviewers should try to ask questions in an atmosphere which allows open and factual communication. (Holstein & Gulbriun, 1997)

The latter, *Constructionism* advocates that interviewers and interviewees are always actively engaged in constructing meaning, rather than treat this as standing in the way of accurate depictions of 'facts' or 'experiences', how meaning is mutually constructed becomes the researcher's topic. Because of this, research

interviews are not treated as specially privileged and other interviews such as professional-client interviews are treated with equal interest; the interviews are treated as topics rather than a research resource. The focus remains more on how interviewees construct narratives of events and people and the turn-by-turn construction of meaning (ibid).

Because the author is seeking to engage participants to ascertain the meanings they ascribe to certain keywords and phrases within the community cohesion framework, it was felt that adopting such a structure for the questions would yield the best results.

### **An effective methodology for the author's study**

My earlier evaluation of the three methodologies (of the Bolton, Burnley and Oldham study) concluded that a semi-structured interview approach should be chosen. For this small scale study interviewing thirty unemployed members of the Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi community was advocated. The sample would consist partly of males and females half of which were over the age of thirty and half of which were under the age of thirty. The interviewees were recruited with assistance from the Bolton Council of Mosques, with interviews taking place at the organisation or at the participant's residence (see Appendix A: Access agreement). The participants would be shown a brief presentation (see Appendix B: Presentation) (approximately 5-10 minutes) about community cohesion and would be asked ten questions, with the interview lasting around thirty-five minutes.

In order to try and fill a gap in research methodology, The Asian community was chosen for interview because the violent disruptions of 2001 were in communities which were of this ethnic composition. A deeper understanding of the meaning this community ascribes to key vocabulary within the community cohesion framework is ideal, in order for the government and other agencies to formulate more effective policies and project delivery. This is in contrast to the approach

taken by the iCoCo Bolton (2007) report which interviewed community leaders and heads of Council departments. Subsequently the Asian community is a key stakeholder in community cohesion discourse because many of the reports (Ouseley 2001, Ritchie 2001, Denham 2001, Cattle 2001, and Clarke 2001) have highlighted areas where members of the Asian community *live parallel lives*, an issue which many believe might be a catalyst for fueling extreme ideologies. In this context, the Asian community in Bolton is also a priority group for the government as many segments can be influenced by violent extremist ideology for which reason Bolton has received funding from the 'Preventing Violent Extremism' initiative (as discussed previously in chapter 3).

In addition the reports highlighted how members of the Asian community traditionally live in enclaves with little or no contact with other ethnicities or races (ibid),

In order to keep a gender balance in the study; fifteen males and fifteen females were chosen from the Indian, Pakistani & Bangladeshi communities [which make up the Asian composition in Bolton]. The reason for inclusion of Asian females in this study is that the female voice is unheard in many Asian communities, yet the majority of times women can contribute from a wholly different angle on cohesion debates. Many Asian women for example (fully veiled), are responsible for dropping off and picking up children from school this aspect is vital from a community cohesion perspective as their perceptions and interpretations of the interaction they have with other cultures and groups on this journey is invaluable for the study. This gender grouping will be further stratified by age and divided along the age categories of over thirty and under thirty to ensure age representation.

The word *Asian* is to be utilised rather than *Muslim* when describing the sample, although the sample is to consist of Muslim members. This is because religious identity and place of birth are perceived as two separate entities within the Muslim community. Many Mosques and Muslim supplementary schools both in Bolton

and across the United Kingdom have been founded on ethnicity rather than religion and ethnic tension between Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities is common (Nagshbandi, 2006a, 2006b).

Thirty members of the Asian community will be chosen as it is a convenience sample for this small scale study and the analysis of data within the time frame is realistic. Unemployed members of the community will be chosen because levels of community cohesion could inextricably be linked with deprivation (DCLG statistics.gov, 2007). Government statistics also show that those areas which have a high level of deprivation tend to have a low level of community cohesion (ibid). This was outlined by the ranking of Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in the government's deprivation indices as severely deprived and the subsequent riots that occurred in those towns could be seen as a foundation for this thesis. This debate has been explored by Simpson (2007), who goes on to argue that more affluent communities tend to enjoy high levels of community cohesion. For this reason unemployed members of the Asian community could be seen to offer clearer perceptions and interpretations of vocabulary within Cantle's (2001) community cohesion framework.

Referring back to the ICoCo (2007) review of community cohesion, the interviewing of middle-class affluent council managers and directors of community organisations, it could be argued, had limitations. This is because these participants could have spoken from their own experiences of community cohesion living in affluent areas of the borough. This is a phenomenon termed *gated communities* and explored by Blandly (2006) . The assistance received in the recruitment of the sample is vital for swift recruitment of participants because of time restraints. Recruiting thirty members of the Asian community which met the criteria of the study (i.e. male, female, over the age of thirty, under the age of thirty, unemployed, Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi) would have been extremely difficult for the author, given that the time and resources were viable for a small

scale stud. Advertising and utilising other channels of media would not have been feasible.

The option of interviewing participants at their residence is important for creating a non-intimidating atmosphere with which the participants are comfortable with. The study might also recruit female participants who might be talking about their experiences for the first time in their lives.

In order to try and fill a gap in research methodology the author's sample will be as representative as possible, this was not the case with the iCoCo Bolton report (2007) which used a large unrepresentative sample in terms of communities, gender and age (refer to chapter 3) . In contrast this study intends to include a sample which strives to be as representative as possible in comparison to the iCoCo (2007) study.

The methodology strives to ensure that only that group is interviewed within the Asian community whose responses can gauge a better understanding of the interpretations and perceptions that are ascribed to vocabulary within Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework, thus seeking to fill a gap in knowledge and understanding.

The pre-interview briefing exposes participants to council messages and pictures that they see every day on billboards, council vehicles, when accessing council services and when receiving or reading council literature (see Appendix B

Presentation shown to participants). An example of which is of Bolton Council advertisements with pictures of ethnically mixed community members and Messages such as, '*your part of the Bolton Family*' and '*we value diversity and want you too*'. The impact of these images would no way influence a particular pattern of thought and the idea of structuring or influencing participant's answers can be discredited.

The standardised questions that will be asked to participants differ from those asked by iCoCo (2007) in that they are geared towards eliciting a more detailed



response from participants which was not the case with the questions posed by iCoCo (2007).

The data would be analysed through the constant comparison method, which Glaser (1978) explains have six steps:

1. Begin collecting data.
2. Look for key issues, recurrent events, or activities in the data that become categories for focus.
3. Collect data that provide many incidents of the categories of focus with an eye to seeing the Diversity of the dimensions under the categories.
4. Write about the categories that you are exploring, attempting to describe and account for all the incidents you have in your data while continually searching for new incidents.
5. Work with the data and emerging model to discover basic social processes and relationships.
6. Engage in sampling, coding, and writing as the analysis focuses on the core categories.

Glaser's (1978) six step approach to constant comparison will be utilised as a framework for qualitatively analysing all ten questions. This approach will ensure consistency across the data set. Analysis of the data through qualitative software was considered but as Mason (1998) advocates, this would not permit for deeper engagement with the data, as is the case with the constant comparison method. The method allows for the data to be read at deeper literal, interpretive or reflexive levels (ibid).

### **Ethical issues**

The research was carried out in accordance with the University of Bolton's Ethical procedures and Social Research Council Ethics Framework (see Appendix F: SRCE procedures, see Appendix D: Ethical procedures of the University). In addition all participants consented to take part in the study. (Appendix C: Consent form).

### **Reflexivity**

I acknowledge the possibility of researcher influence as I am an Islamic priest and occupy a prominent position in the communities power structure which I seek to interview, this may potentially have an impact on power relations, my approach will be to critically reflect on this during the research process and on the assistance from religious organisations in the recruitment of participants for the study, which could affect my findings. I acknowledge that other venues for interviewing could have been used such as local community centers' and public places. The data would be analysed through a variety of methods including Qualitative software or constant comparison, in the case of the latter I would compare an interview with others and try to generate common themes and patterns.

An important part of the research process is reflexivity, which is described by Nightingale and Cromby (1999) as:

Requiring an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining 'outside of' one's subject matter while conducting research. Reflexivity then, urges us to explore the ways in which a researcher's involvement with a particular study influences, acts upon and informs such research.

Nightingale and Cromby, 1999:228

This concept is further divided by Willig (2001) along personal and epistemological lines. The former relates to:

Reflecting upon the ways in which our own values, experiences, interests, beliefs, political commitments, wider aims in life and social identities have shaped the research.

Willig, 2001:10

Whilst the latter requires us to engage with:

How the design of the study and the method of analysis 'constructed' the data and the findings? How could the research question have been investigated differently? Thus, epistemological reflexivity encourages us to reflect upon the assumptions (about the world, about knowledge) that we have made in the course of the research, and it helps us to think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings.

Willig, 2001:10

In engaging with personal reflexivity, I acknowledge that being a practicing member of the Muslim community, many interviewees might feel that I would identify with all their views. As Hockey (1993 in Gallais, 2003:3) explains that with 'insider research' there is the fear that 'taken-for-granted assumptions' could remain unchallenged, whilst there was less likelihood of the researcher experiencing any 'culture shock or disorientation'. I also recognise that Participants could as a result of my pastoral/religious role divulge 'intimate details of their lives', (Hockey, 1993 in Gallais, 2003:3) because they perceive me as someone 'sympathetic'. Thus, this could have an effect on my findings. This power structure could be viewed in a wider Foucaultian (Foucault, 1972 in

Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000) discourse. In addition being male and interviewing female members of the community could affect the research findings.

In engaging with epistemological reflexivity, I acknowledge the sensitive nature of the topic I wish to research. The current political debates around immigration, religious tolerance and citizenship are ongoing and could affect the opinions and beliefs of interviewees. This could subsequently have an effect on the research findings. Research in to routine policing in Northern Ireland (Renzetti and lee, 1993) is an example of the problems that such research could encounter. In addition other venues for interviews could have been used such as community centers and public places. My approach has been to critically reflect on the various limitations mentioned during the research process.

## **CHAPTER FOUR FINDINGS: MEANINGS OF 'COMMUNITY'.**

In the previous chapter a gap in knowledge and understanding was identified in a recent study conducted by the institute of Community Cohesion (2007) in Bolton. A qualitative methodology was employed by the author with variables that would elicit a deeper understanding of the perceptions and interpretations members of the Asian community ascribed to vocabulary within Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework. A justification for the methodology employed, alongside issues pertaining to ethics, reflexivity and data analysis were also explored.

In this and the preceding chapter the information obtained through the qualitative interviews will be analysed. The responses will be categorised pursuant to the meanings participants ascribed to specific words and phrases, originating from the questions asked. This Chapter in particular explores perceptions and definitions the participants felt constitute a community and the mechanisms, ideologies and practices that it should encompass. Alongside this, participants explore the dynamics of the communities within which they reside.

### **What does a 'Community' mean to you?**

Through the method of constant comparison three distinct categories emerged each ascribing a different meaning to the term 'community'. The first category was community as locality, the second community as diverse interaction, and the third community solidarity.

### **Community as Locality**

There were a large number of references from participants to a ‘community’ being perceived in geographical terms. There was a notion that just as geographical boundaries were permanent, so to were the communities that resided within them, as two participants commented:

*‘...a group of people living within a particular area...there is a local community who are grouped together because of where they live...so that type of a community is always going to be there...’*

[Participant, I, Bengali, Male, 26]

*‘community...for me are all the people that are living around me...’*

[Participant, P, Indian, female, 33]

There was also an acknowledgement from participants’ of the diverse ethnic composition of their respective areas, in that participants were very aware of the quite recent immigration of Somalian, Polish, Arabs and Asian members of their community:

*‘...people who live together...they can consist of different cultures, like African, Asian, Middle-Eastern, Chinese...’*

[Participant, X, Pakistani, female, 34]

Interviewees engaged with the idea of ‘community’ at different levels, pursuant to their own personal attachment and involvement. The local community for example, could be mixed with different people, but because interviewees did not socialise with them or associate with them in the same manner as they would with their own community, differences did not matter:

*'I don't have the same sort of relationship with them... as my own [Indian] community...but I see them as part of my community because they live in the same place as I do'*

[Participant, S, Indian, Female, 24]

The participants did not mind about the ethnic origin or background of community members, all that they were concerned about was that members lived within their area and shared local council and community services, such as the school, surgery, housing office and social clubs. For this reason the influx in immigration within such areas did not seem to be of primary concern to them.

*'In this country a community...would mean a group of people which live together in a certain area...like where I live...all the Asians, white people and polish, Somalian... are members of my community...if we get on with each other is a total different matter.'*

[Participant, O, Pakistani, Male, 25]

There was a feeling amongst some participants that their culture and beliefs were at variance with that of emerging migrant communities within their areas. Interviewees felt although religious, cultural and visual differences existed within their communities; these contentions did not escape the fact that all the communities shared the same area and were in this sense binded, participants' added:

*'But overall I think that if they are living together in the same place...regardless of it they want to be together...that is a community'*

[Participant, H, Indian, Male, 27]

*'I do understand that communities are made up of so many different ...cultures and people...but they are just people who live in the same area as you...'*

[Participant, Q, Bengali, Female, 34]

### **Community as Diverse Interaction**

The second category that emerged from the data was, 'Community as diverse interaction'. Many participants felt that a community was characterized by people of different cultures, backgrounds and identities interacting with each other.

Indeed when discussing such qualities interviewees alluded to scenarios of an ideal community, where events are organised together irrespective of belief or background, or individuals knew each other to a degree that they could confide in each other:

*'They [community] sit down and have chats with each other...like you see on the T.V. where a community will get together and organise the 'village fair!''...'*

[Participant I, Male, Bengali, 26]

Although such notions of a community could be deemed as abstract and fictional, because of the participant referring to television dramas and soaps, the important point to be observed here is the participant felt, the term 'community' was synonymous with a strong bond between individuals, which culminates in activities which are inclusive.

There was also an emphasis on dialogue between different ethnic/religious groups which some participants found to be pivotal for the type of 'community' they ascribed to:

*'However...I wouldn't want to be part of a community that only has one colour or faith of people but a mix...of them and where each can live...with the other peacefully'*

[Participant T, Female, Pakistani, 32]



Many Interviewees felt that this dialogue could be the basis of comfort and security for all members of the community:

‘...Community is a place where I find it easy to live, if you don’t feel easy to live it is not... [*a community*], ‘

[Participant D, Male, Pakistani,27]

Many meanings could be derived from the term ‘*live*’ utilized by the participant, but in this context the Participant could mean that they feel that they should be allowed to go about their daily business without the fear of intimidation, harassment and violence. The alleviation of such vices would be the ideal community.

In contrast to participants who saw community in terms of ‘locality’, it seemed here that interviewees felt dialogue (which could potentially lead to friendship) amongst the diverse population was extremely important for it to constitute a community, and that mere geographical location was not sufficient to constitute a community.

### **Community Solidarity**

The third category which emerged from the data was ‘Community solidarity’. This category being an amalgamation of multi-faceted issues.

Within this category trust and understanding was seen by participants to be central to the idea of a community. Religious understanding was a prominent topic of discussion. The reasons for this are two-fold, firstly, because of the current media attention on religious extremism, some members felt that their religious practices could be misinterpreted or misunderstood by others, and secondly, the areas within which many of the interviewees lived were densely populated by members of faith communities. There was acceptance amongst interviewees that religion and religious practices could be divisive, but an open mind was needed by both parties to resolve issues.

*'...for example...whatever celebrations they are having...then they will understand for example if they are living near a mosque, then If its Friday prayers, they will understand that there will be parking problems...'*

[Participant A, Male, Indian, 41]

*'...you share your values, ideas, beliefs with others, respect other peoples religion and you have your own rights, everyone is respecting your rights and you are respecting everyone's rights...'*

[Participant D, Male, Pakistani, 27]

In the same manner participants felt that benefiting the area was an important part of a community. Interviewees felt this prosperity could be brought about by active volunteering and taking part in decision making processes that would make the collective life of the community better. It was felt that communities are not only places where different people live together, but places where people feel attached. This attachment would in turn lead to members wanting to benefit their own area, just as a person would want the best for his home, children and family and take steps that would benefit them.

*'[people] who are living in the same area and are benefiting that area in some sort of way...I am a governor at our local primary school...that's benefitting the community because im making sure that our children have a chance to get the best education...so people living together benefiting the community in any way through activities or taking part in decisions...that's really what a community should be about...'*

[Participant M, Male, Indian,28]

*'...white people done the attacks, people within the community got together, had a meeting and as a group we worked together with the police and the council to tackle such problems...increased awareness has led to a decrease in crime.'*

*Overall what im trying to say is that a community should work together to sort out common problems...'*

[Participant C, Male, Indian, 24]

There was a large group of participants who felt that a community is characterized by the way members help and support each other. Many interviewees felt that this level of community existed within their own ethnic group, within which they could find the comfort, solace and support that they need, whilst others felt that this sort of support could be offered to a certain extent by members of any ethnicity or background. There was a distinction made by interviewees between 'life events' where close family and friends could support one another, and reoccurring events, such as moving house, fixing the car and watching over property, which any member of the community could offer help and support with. Amongst the many responses, some participants expressed

*'...they [community] are a group of people who are living together as a whole, they are ready to do things for each other, like for example, if someone has to go to hospital or has an emergency their neighbour might look after their kids or just keep an eye out on their house...things like that show it's a community...'*

[Participant E, Male, Bengali, 22]

*'I was recently divorced...and had lots of support from parents, friends, family and local community...in terms of court proceedings, looking after children, finding a new place to live...a strong community helps one another in all sorts of hardships...if its common to borrow things from the neighbour like....milk, sugar, spices if we have run out of them...so that's the type of community I think is suppose to be created...'*

[Participant V, Female, Bengali,28]

*'I think a community are a group of people living together who help each other out...like if someone needs a hand painting or decorating then their neighbour or some guy in that street would come down who they know and help them out, if someone's car isn't working then someone in that neighbourhood...could be across the street would come down and help to sort it out...'*

[Participant B, Male, Pakistani,32]

The main meaning which participant's attached to the term 'community' here, is one of a common humanism, where there is a common disposition that as humans we increasingly dependent upon each other, and should therefore try to support and alleviate the hardship of individuals, who in turn should strive to do the same.

Participants also felt that such help and assistance had deteriorated over time. References were made to life in their homeland and how group support and help was core to survival and bonding. When different communities immigrated to England, participants felt that the support and group work had slowly faded, as economic prosperity and affluence took its toll, pitching individuals against each other.

Participants also attributed a decline of help and support amongst communities to longer working hours, possibly in pursuit of a better standard of living. The work commitments it was felt had left little time for social bonds to be strengthened:

*'in Pakistan because there is so much poverty, the life is more natural people need each other and help each other more...in this country there is a lot wealth and education so communities are more independent of each other...so we live for a long time in the same area but wont have contact with anyone apart from those who share the same culture as me...'*

[Participant O, Male, Pakistani,25]

*'when I was really small, my family and people from our village in Bangladesh moved to England....i remember that....everyone would help each other out...whether that was with moving house....looking after each others children....finding work....it was like a team....that sort of community is what I'm talking about...that's what community means to me...but in this day and age its different....people have got more wealth....and I feel that they have moved....and there is less help....and support of each other....'*

[Participant Q, Female, Bengali, 34]

Finally some participants considered a community constituting a group of people who shared the same culture. This type of community would be to the exclusion of all other people living within that area, consisting of only the same ethnicity. The rationale behind such thought was that participants felt that people who shared the same culture, life experiences and values, were more able to interact and support each other on this basis:

*'...a community are a group of people who share something in common...like the place where they live or the culture that they have all grown up in...that is the real important part about communities...they are made up of people who passionately share something in common'*

[Participant Z3, female, Bengali, 24]

*'...I would think that a community is made up of people from the same culture or background...because its these people who have the most in common....so I wouldn't really think that a community can be a mixed group of people...it wouldn't really work...'*

[Participant R, female, Bengali, 31]

### **Would you say that you are part of a ‘Community’?**

From the data analysis two distinct categories appeared, firstly there were those participants that felt they were part of a mono-ethnic/mono-religious community and those who felt that they were part of a multi-ethnic/multi-religious community. Ethnicity and religion were used inextricably at times by participants, as though both terms were intertwined with each other, and were not perceived as separate entities.

#### **Mono-Ethnic/Mono-Religious Community**

Participants in this category felt that ‘community’ was a term which they would interpret to mean a strong bond that they had built with individuals around them owing to the many times they have assisted, supported and guided each other throughout their many ‘life events’.

*'I think that when you share experiences and time together with any age group of people...you feel part of them..and a lot of the Indian people in this area I have known since I was young...and because over the years...i have seen them grow up and they have seen me...we do ...have a good bond...'*

[Participant, Y, Indian, female, 31]

*'I would say [that I am part of the community]...but I think that the sense of community which we have is because of all of us sharing a common religion...'*

[Participant T, Pakistani, female, 32]

*'yes...I'm part of my community...in the manner that I generally talk with...get help and support...and attend events with them...'*

[Participant, Bangladeshi, female, 34]

*'the problem is...as I've grown older I don't feel...that I have much in common with other cultures...my white friends have over the years slowly faded out...i feel its not in a bad way...its just that they are hanging around with their own group of people and we are hanging around with our own group and community...so overall I would say that... I'm part of my Pakistani ...community...'*

[Participant O, Pakistani, Male, 25]

Within this category respondents felt that links with their own ethnic communities had been forged because of the strong solidarity that existed amongst them. They felt that continued help and support for each other was a key factor in feeling part of a 'mono-religious/mono-ethnic' community, apart from the obvious commonalities of a shared religious identity and ethnic background.

Interviewees felt that members of their own 'mono-religious/mono-ethnic' community offered unconditional support in times of hardship and problems. Indeed, respondents talked about visiting each other's houses on a regular basis, to ask each other about problems and offer advice. An Interviewee also discussed being involved in local women support groups, which consisted of mainly Asian women, and how their involvement in these groups helped their ethnic community create a stronger bond. Participants also discussed how the mosque at times played a central role in creating community bonds, one participant mentioned how a local mosque had arrangements to assist new arrivals to settle in to the community:

*' when any person arrives from abroad in our community...the mosque has facilities to make ...sure that they are looked after and helped...in any sort of way the women which arrive...we ...befriend them and make sure that they feel part of our community...'*

[Participant T, Pakistani, female, 32]

It was felt that religion had a transcended bonding quality in this context, as new arrivals were looked after and supported because of their religion rather than any

other factor. Furthermore, one participant discussed her divorce and how it was a very troubling time for her. She mentioned how her own ethnic community went to great lengths to support her, offering to look after her children whilst she had to attend court hearings. The community also assisted her in finding her new accommodation, going with her to the local housing office, helping her to fill out housing benefit forms, showing her how to express an interest in council housing. The Participant felt generally that these sorts of actions made her feel more attached to her ethnic community.

Interviewees also discussed racist incidents in their areas, and how their ethnic community helped one another by taking care of property, valuables and children to ensure that no harm came to them.

*'I remember once...when there were a lot of racist incidents...where we live and our [Bangladeshi]... community looked out for each other...by making sure that they kept an eye on the youngsters...and the Bangladeshi houses...and other valuables...i think that I feel a real part of ...the Bangladeshi community...'*

[Participant Z3, Bangladeshi, female, 24]

overall within this category, the main reasons for participants feeling part of a 'mono-ethnic/mono-religious' community was due to the familiarities amongst group members, in terms of culture, lifestyle, trials and tribulations. Participants felt that these familiarities characterized the strong loyalties and support networks amongst them. There was an impression by participants that those of different ethnicities or religions would not share the same loyalties and offer support because of the differences of culture, lifestyle and experience.

There was also a discussion amongst participants of other ethnicities and cultures mocking their beliefs and not understanding their culture. The 'fear of difference' was discussed by one interviewee and how she felt that wearing her hijab meant that members of non Muslim communities would be afraid or even ridicule her beliefs.



Participants felt comfortable within their own ethnic groups, and the 'fear' of being perceived as different could be a possible cause for them not associating themselves with their wider or indeed geographical community

### **Multi-ethnic/Multi-Religious' Community**

In contrast, the second category which emerged was of interviewees associating themselves with a multi-ethnic/multi-religious community. In this context 'community' was interpreted to mean the diverse composition of individuals that the participant interacted with. There seems to be an emphasis on 'diversity' in terms of culture, race and religion within this category, as participants felt that these variables in fact made it a community:

*'... I would say that I am part of a community...a mixed community of different backgrounds and ...cultures...and I feel proud of that...'*

[Participant Z, Indian, female, 26]

*'... the community I belong to is the area I live in...this includes my neighbours...people from ...different religious backgrounds...people who own businesses in our area and people of all ages,...I personally get on well with everyone'*

[Participant C, Indian, Male, 24]

At times associating oneself with a 'multi-ethnic/multi-religious' community was done out of desperation rather than choice. An in-depth discussion with participant Z found that she had been a victim of domestic violence for a number of years. When she had attempted to discuss the issue with her own ethnic group, she was told to be patient.

She then contacted a domestic violence charity and was offered a range of services and support packages. Participants also felt that there were different levels or layers of communities which they belonged to.

They felt that because of the advancements in technologies and communications, people had been brought together on different landscapes. Participants discussed how they were part of a school/college community, health and fitness community, Internet community, religious community. It was felt that the amount of involvement in each community constituted their level of attachment:

*'I personally feel part of many different communities...the friends that I socialize with...my.....religious community...the people that are from my background...they also form a community...some communities that I am part of are actually bigger...than others and I do feel ...part of some [communities] more than others...'*

[Participant U, Pakistani, female, 27]

A participant felt part of a 'multi-ethnic/multi-religious' community because of the diversity of cultures in her locality:

*'...I do have a good group of neighbours...who are white...and also African...I do get on really well with them...when we moved in...they helped us tremendously...and even now if we were ...out...they keep an eye out for our house...'*

[Participant Z4, Bangladeshi, Male, 27]

This diversity had led her to engage with white and African families, which she had such good relations with that they watched over her property, children and other valuables when her family were out. The participant explained how she had exchanged many Christmas cards and Eid gifts with her neighbours and

encouraged her children to play with children from different cultures so that they would in turn appreciate the diversity in society.

It was felt that the participant had gone out of her comfort zone, to engage with other cultures and now felt at ease with members of other cultures, evening managing to create the same help and support networks which were discussed by participants in the former category.

The participant did acknowledge that many members of her ethnic community frowned upon her actions, feeling that if they let their children associate with members of other cultures, bad habits and character would be picked up. The participant did not seem to agree with this idea and maintained that allowing children to engage with each other at a young age could break down barriers and reduce future community tensions.

An Interviewee in this category felt that he was part of 'multi-ethnic/multi-religious' community, when he was employed. The interviewee talked about his interactions with various white and non-Asian people which he enjoyed. These interactions ceased since the participant has been unemployed. The participant discussed that now within his own community he has not mixed with white people or non-Asians and mentioned the culture within which he was brought up, which subsequently shaped who his friends were.

Overall participants who felt part of a 'multi-ethnic/multi-religious' community seemed to have taken steps to engage with different cultures, whether this was done out of desperation, choice or necessity. The majority of interactions with members of other cultures were positive, with one participant resenting the fact he was now unemployed, because during his employed time he enjoyed positive interactions with other cultures.

### **What does a 'Common sense of belonging mean to you'?**

Two categories emerged from the data; the first was 'cultural empathy' the second was 'locality attachment'.

### **Cultural Empathy**

Many participants felt that appreciating the diversity of cultures, beliefs and spectrum of values that different people within the community shared was core to creating a 'common sense of belonging'. It was important to learn about other people's cultures, and value your own. There was a sense that participants wanted to engage with other cultures but they felt that their own culture would be misunderstood or mocked in the process.

The words 'Muslim' and 'Culture' seemed to be used interchangeably at times, as though it were the same thing, possibly highlighting the confusion amongst participants of defining their lifestyle as culture or religion:

*'...people being able to share their culture, express their views, talk about their problems openly...without being scared or thinking that others will judge them and make them feel small or low because of it...'*

[Participant, Z, Indian, female, 26]

*'...it means that everyone feels part of something...like when you play rounders or football...working together to...boost knowledge and understanding of each other's culture'*

[Participant, Z2, Pakistani, female, 35]

*'...England is one of the most mixed up places in the world...you have people from every part of the planet...who do feel comfortable living here...mostly because they think that they are being valued and their culture is being respected...'*

[Participant, L, Bangladeshi, male, 36]

There was a perception of participants wanting a sense of belonging amongst their community members, equal to the strong bonds that they enjoyed amongst their own ethnicity or culture.

Participants discussed a variety of examples where such 'cultural empathy' could reduce community tensions. One Interviewee discussed how in a mixed Muslim and Hindu area where they lived had many tensions, especially when Hindus celebrated Diwali and Muslims observed the Ramadan fasts. The interviewee explained how congestion and loud noise upset members of the community. In another example, an interviewee mentioned how community tensions raged between Hindu and Muslim community members in their area, after rumours that a local Hindu sweet shop had been sprinkling cow urine on their shop baked sweets. They further explained that if there was more cultural understanding on both sides then such community tension could be reduced.

There were also discussions amongst participants at a perceived lack of cultural diversity education, which they thought had led to a fragmented sense of belonging. Many participants felt that a lack of religious/cultural conversation amongst different communities was a key concern which again highlighted the need for cultural empathy :

*' there is like a culture problem...so the main reason why we [Asian] don't associate with them [White]...is just that we have such a difference in part to culture...and I don't feel that white or other women...do really understand or respect it...'*

[Participant T, Pakistani, female, 32]

Interviewees discussed what a 'common sense of belonging' meant to them in metaphorical terms. At times it was compared to a factory, where each worker understood their role and job within the organization yet respected others and worked towards a common goal. In the same manner participants felt that a 'common sense of belonging' could be equated to community members being

perceived as links within a chain with each link supporting the other. Participants also felt that 'cultural empathy' was important because of the formation of what they thought to be as 'ghettos' within their communities.

They discussed how immigrant families were given homes on newly developed estates and areas and such developments had slowly become populated with members of one community. In turn residents of other areas rarely associated with newly arrived immigrants and kept away from their estates.

### **Locality Attachment**

In this context participants felt that a 'common sense of belonging' meant to them valuing their community. They felt that this could be achieved through various practices and measures, ranging from engaging with community projects that reduced crime and disorder, or volunteering in a variety of capacities that would be of benefit to the community.

There was an assumption that all the work that is done by community members would inevitably allow for the progression and stronger foundation of all the community.

There was also discussion around community members showing pride in the various community facilities, such as community centres, places of worship and businesses.

*'...i suppose the goal could be that we all want our local neighbourhood to be free from certain things...like crime, racism,anti-social behaviour...volunteering on police panels, health care panels, local neighbourhood.... panels.....so involving people in these decision making processes I feel would...really get them to have a goal to achieve...'*

[Participant P, Indian, female, 33]

*'...having pride in the local community, in our facilities and people....we should think that we have a share in the mosques, churches, temples and schools..if a*

*church is attacked for example then everyone in that community should help to sort it out...if a mosque is attacked then everyone regardless of who they are should work together to get that problem sorted...'*

[Participant G, Bengali, Male, 22]

One participant described how the local mosque was vandalised by youth and how various facilities had been vandalized over the years, this they maintained could be stemmed once people were taught to value local facilities.

Members of this category felt that a 'common sense of belonging' could be attained geographically, through showing pride in local facilities, rather than 'culturally' through respect and value for different cultures

**What would you think is the best way to create a 'Common sense of belonging' and bring your community together?**

The data analysis revealed two categories: Awareness and contact across lines of division (i.e. religion, culture, and ethnicity), Adoption of core British Values

**Awareness and contact across lines of division**

Reconciliation amongst religions and cultures was acknowledged as a major factor by the majority of interviewees, this could lend itself in part to the ethnicity of the sample chosen, their religious convictions and the methodology employed. There was acknowledgement by many participants through the manner of their discussions, that barriers to creating a common sense of belonging were the variety of cultures, beliefs and practices within their communities.

There was also a divide amongst participants about how to create a sense of belonging, with some favouring cultural/religious/ethnic reconciliation, based upon a shared vision and understanding. For others the adoptions of British Values were seen to be the solution for creating the common sense of belonging.

Participants felt that there was a need for members of different communities to appreciate difference and diversity. This appreciation could be obtained through a number of creative initiatives. In terms of raising religious awareness and cross-contact, Participants provided their visions on how they perceived that such contact could take place.

For example members of the Christian community visiting a mosque and members of a mosque visiting a church, interviewees felt that facilitating public inter-faith events in places of worship rather than community centres could also be a step forward in creating a common sense of belonging amongst different religions. Many felt that Religious leaders also had an important role to play:

*'...I feel that people can be brought together through religion...all religions do teach to respect human life and the religious or sacred text and buildings...'*

[Participant, K, Male, Indian, 38]

*'so first I would get the different communities or their leaders in my area...to sit down and have a good chat about what the misconceptions are and how to tackle them....'*

[Participant, R, Female, Bengali, 31]

Because religion played a large part in the life of their communities, participants felt that it could play a constructive role in the reconciliation process. There was a perception amongst interviewees that their religion was largely misinterpreted and misunderstood.

One participant drew comparisons between the ill advised conceptions about Domestic Violence they had and how these were altered through attendance at a Domestic Violence Support Group and an advertisement campaign in the Asian community. The participant likened this experience to misconceptions about the Muslim community, and felt that a similar local media campaign could help to improve the image of the Muslim community.



On a cultural level, Participants felt that meetings amongst different ethnic groups could be held to discuss long held misconceptions, one participant expressed:

*'...[a common sense of belonging] could be done through getting the neighbourhood involved in different activities...if there is no communication at the neighbourhood level then the whole of the community life will break down...I don't see any local area organised fairs or activities...'*

[Participant, H, Male, Indian, 27]

Other participants felt that cross/inter-generational contact was important to achieve a common sense of belonging. It was considered that older members of the community could at times reinforce stereotypes by communicating their ideas and values to the younger generation. Participant's argued that this cycle could indeed be broken through cross-generational contact.

In addition an interviewee explained how young children mixed regularly in schools with each other and learned a great deal about each other's differences and cultures; this experience the interviewee expressed was lost once children had left school:

*'...the best way to do this [in our area] is for the council to get the Asian elders and White elders to sit down and have a chat because they usually are the ones brainwashing their kids...because at the end of the day we are all human, we have problems and if we can get this going a lot of the fear and mistrust we have of each other will be finished...'*

[Participant, F, Male, Bengali, 20]

*'...the younger generations should first be targeted in my view...there should definitely be more sports, events, communication through clubs and leisure centres with children from different backgrounds...even at nursery there should be...mixed classes...that is when people will grow up feeling that all the cultures and beliefs have a place in the community...'*

[Participant, X, Female, Pakistani, 34]

Other participants championed mixed community centres rather the ethnic orientated community centre in their locality. One participant discussed how they had heard on the radio about a school in London which had a multitude of cultures and languages and an assembly highlighting these different cultures was extremely successful.

The participant felt that the same sort of event should take place amongst members of their community. Some interviewees felt that 'physically' living out another person's culture could assist in creating a common sense of belonging, as this would move individual from verbal recognition to physical recognition of different cultures:

*'...but if I went to an English person's house and had a chat and a meal with them that...would be a totally different way of understanding their culture...'*

[Participant, Z1, Female, Pakistani, 27]

Some participants felt that 'a common sense of belonging' was lacking in the community because of the local community not actively playing a role in local projects and initiatives.

One participant talked about the positive experience he had whilst undertaking voluntary work for a Neighbourhood Renewal Programme, they felt that working with different ethnic members to clean up the local park and paint a community centre made them feel part of that community.

On the other hand a participant felt that the Criminal Record checks which are carried out when an individual wishes to undertake voluntary work and other bureaucratic regimes were counter-productive, in the sense that they stemmed community members involving themselves in projects and initiatives designed to mend relations.

The participant expressed how he once wanted to undertake some voluntary work with the Citizens Advice service, but his Criminal Record Check took so long to come through that he reluctantly had to abandon the idea. The participant further discussed his life in Pakistan and how he saw that strong community bonds were forged, because people would be able to freely help one another, not being restrained by the processes in western countries.

### **Adoption of core British Values**

In comparison, some interviewees felt that a common sense of belonging could only be created through adopting core British values:

*'...the common principles they could believe in like democracy, respect for the law, respect for different cultures and religions...'*

[Participant, W, Female Indian, 33]

*'...the best way that I think to create a common sense of belonging...would be to share the fact that we are all part of British Society...we should definitely show pride in that...'*

[Participant, Q, Female Bengali, 34]

*'...there is a lot of confusion as to what we can all share and have a sense of belonging too...we could have a British Day...'*

[Participant, N, Male Pakistani, 36]

In this context participants felt that British Values embodied the necessary framework for individuals to appreciate the differences in society. One participant expressed how during a short period of employment, he found that his colleagues were very understanding of his cultural sensitivities and beliefs. He argued that

this showed how understanding British society was. Participants felt that as there was confusion about what it meant to be British, or what values a community could hold in common, the easiest option would be to encourage people to see British Values as a focal point for creating a common sense of belonging amongst communities.

One interviewee discussed how the confusion over a sense of belonging could have stemmed from the fact that Britain was not part of the European Union. As the European Union had its own currency, flag, sets of laws and direction, people within it found it easier to 'belong'. Drawing on their experiences of living in France, the participant talked about how French society was much more patriotic than Britain. An interviewee also discussed the possibility of public holidays for all major religions in forging a sense of belonging for all communities.

The same sort of media coverage that Christmas receives, they argued should be provided to all the major UK religions, the participant felt that this would create a common sense of belonging, because people would get involved in the celebrations of different festivals as they do involve themselves in the celebrations of Christmas.

### **How do you think people will be able to value and respect each other?**

From the data a varied and multi-perspective range of meanings emerged for the two terms.

### **The meaning of 'Value' and 'Respect'.**

The term 'value' was mostly discussed and explored within a religious/cultural context. Participants felt that their Islamic faith was the key factor which contributed to their outlook on life and it was from this source the majority of participants felt they drew their values and morals. For this reason participants mostly discussed and engaged with 'value' in terms of their religion or culture, viewing it through this paradigm. Participants also felt that the more they

understood the religious/cultural values of other white/non-Asian people and the more white/non-Asian people understood the religious/cultural values of Muslim/Asian people, there would be a higher level of tolerance amongst different religious/ethnic communities.

The first category that emerged from the data related to participants stressing the importance of an understanding through improved communication about the ideological/philosophical reasons behind different cultures and beliefs, in order to create a deeper level of religious/cultural value and respect amongst people of different ethnic/religious backgrounds.

*'creating these two things [values and respect] will only be done through....communicating...if I never talk to a white, Hindu, polish....somalian person who lives next door or across the street from me...then that will automatically breed some sort of fear...and then further down the line that fear...will turn in to hatred...'*

[Participant L, Male, Bengali, 36]

There was discussion amongst some participants about the low turnout within organised multi-cultural awareness days within their community and how the content of the day, which consisted of brief presentations about Hinduism, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, was thinly spread, with mainly cultural cuisine to appreciate. This venture according to participants was the wrong method of trying to create religious/cultural value and respect amongst different ethnic groups; participants were in favour of more dialogue and debate.

Participants discussed the high levels of intolerance and fear that different ethnic/religious groups had of each other, which was an impediment to creating high levels of religious/cultural value and respect:

*'if they know people are different...and are able to tolerate each other's differences...then I think that you have respect and value for each other...people'*

*do understand that other cultures exist and that they live differently...but no one wants to tolerate it...'*

[Participant U, Female, Pakistani, 27]

Again, toleration was seen within a religious paradigm, meaning people accepting that communities could show their religious conviction, for example through the wearing of the hijab, beard, religious clothing. Or people praying openly and observing the core tenants of their chosen faith. Participants generally felt that if they were able to practice their chosen faith or adhere to their chosen culture without intimidation and fear from the community around them, then this would be a sign of tolerance. If on the other hand participants could not openly practice their faith or culture then it would be perceived as intolerance.

*'people all eat, sleep, dress work, but...they do it in different ways, but because I've only seen the way my family do it and not the way a white or black family do it I feel scared of them...so this fear has to go...'*

[Participant G, Male, Bengali, 21]

In the above quote the participant acknowledged the different value systems communities have, and the fear of difference that emerges from community members who do not subscribe to those particular religious/cultural values. So community members would value their own beliefs but not those of other religious/ethnic communities. The participant felt that the divide could be healed through a better religious/cultural understanding between ethnic communities.

Within this category of educating people to achieve better understanding, some participants saw value and respect in a mutual context. They felt that universal principles existed within all religions such as caring for the old, helping the needy, not causing harm to others. These principles participants felt could be focused upon to create mutual respect amongst different ethnicities and religions:

*'by sharing ideas and values everyone will realize that the ideas are the same...I don't think there is any culture in the world that for example...wont tell you to respect your parents, elders and other people...'*

[Participant Z, Female, Indian, 26]

Some participants saw mutual respect beyond a religious paradigm. They gave examples of white/Asian/Somali/polish groups who were also divided along Hindu/Muslim/Christian lines working together to raise funds for a disaster appeal. In this context the participants saw 'value' and 'respect' in general humanistic terms, not bound by the constraints of religion or culture, but more focused upon promoting the common good:

*'its [value and respect] only going to increase with community groups offering to help each other...like the Gaza appeal...or that Tsunami that happened...it got different groups to work together...help the needy and poor...'*

[Participant S, Female, Indian, 24]

In another example of ascribing the term 'value' and 'respect' to promoting the common good, a participant felt that the Millennium Award initiative should be more widely available, as it rewarded people on the contribution they had made to bettering a sector of society, rather than benefiting a particular race or religion.

In giving examples of how they try to show the cultural/religious value and respect towards other religions, one participant discussed how they regularly exchanged gifts with their Christian/Hindu neighbours, during Diwali and Christmas festivals. The participant explained that the interaction of different ethnic groups/cultures at the community level in this manner could eradicate many of the misconceptions and stereotypes held.

Participants also offered their own opinions on how better to promote religious/cultural value and respect amongst ethnic/religious communities. Visits by different religious congregations could be scheduled to different places of

worship, this it would promote stronger religious/cultural value and respect amongst communities, as opposed to the current arrangement of organizing multi-faith days and cultural awareness sessions in community centers. This arrangement according to participants showed an innate unease amongst faiths to engage with others within their own place of worship. There was also discussion of physically experiencing other people's cultures by promoting through some method visiting each other's homes.

Overall the responses unearthed two distinct meanings which participants attached to 'value' and 'respect'. The first perceived the two terms through a religious/cultural paradigm, whilst the other took a more mutual humanistic view.

To conclude this chapter, what has come to light are the varied meanings participants ascribed to words such as 'community', 'value', 'respect' and phrases such as 'common sense of belonging'.



## CHAPTER FIVE: [INTERACTIONS]

In this Chapter there will be an exploration and unpacking of what participants felt constituted ‘contact’ between different ethnic groups. There will also be an exploration of how these ‘relations’ are perceived and all importantly what comprises constructive or detrimental experiences.

**Do you think that you are treated fairly when you go to the job centre, hospital, school housing office, or when using a council service? Talk about your positive or negative experiences.**

From the data various meanings of positive and negative experiences were defined by participants. The first set of meanings related to positive experiences, where participants largely defined a positive experience in terms of public service staff understanding the cultural/religious needs of the participant and being non-judgmental when offering advice and services. In this context participants felt that constructive relations between ethnic groups constituted a mutual understanding of their religious and cultural practices, and the extent to which staff were prepared to accommodate these practices determined the positive and constructive nature of that interactions. In comparison participants largely defined a negative experience as their cultural/religious needs not being met, or public service staff asserting stereotypical/judgmental behaviour when dealing with them.

Although drawing such analogies may seem simplistic, it is worthwhile noting the conviction participants in this category have to their faith and culture and how they determine the success of interactions on these factors alone, and not other factors such as poor standard of cleanliness, equipment, understaffing or general lack of customer service. It is important to outline here how participants in this category felt that these factors were secondary to their prime concern of having their cultural/religious needs met, whilst other ethnic groups like the white

population may have measured a constructive or detrimental relation in the context of hygiene, customer service or any other non- religious/cultural factor.

### **Defining a positive experience.**

Within the positive experience category, they were participants who defined their experience in the context of being a customer, where they felt valued and the service provided was adequate for them:

*'I do regularly visit the council office to check for homes and things like that...because I want to move...but I don't feel that they have treated me differently...'*

[Participant Y, Female, Indian, 31]

The meaning that the participant gave to 'difference' in this context was in comparison to the services other customers received and it was connected to the customer's beliefs and convictions. In this context another participant felt:

*'...a lot of the [council] staff...just want to get their job done...'*

[Participant Z Female, Indian, 26]

In the above quote it can also be understood that the council's staff were focus on delivering a high quality service and are concerned with meeting standards and targets set by senior management, rather than intentionally wanting to cause cultural insensitivity.

In this regard, One participant felt that a positive experience meant that they were seen by a council staff member who came to visit their home, as 'equal' in the sense that the participant was a council tenant, yet different in terms of cultural and religious convictions. During the discussion the participant expressed surprise

and pleasure in the fact that the council staff member had shown religious/cultural courtesy when entering their home and removing their shoes. It is significant to point out here, that Muslim/Hindu families usually refrain from wearing footwear in their homes because they usually pray in various rooms within the house, and cleanliness of the floor where they pray is a precondition.

*'...once my boiler broke down and the council came out to fix it...the worker...asked me if he had to take of his shoes...it was such a good sign...i was really pleased...'*

[Participant L, Male, Bengali, 36]

The meaning given to a positive experience in this context was that the participant was treated as equal to other council tenants but in the same vein the council staff member acknowledged that the customer had cultural/religious preferences which made them different. This could reiterate an earlier point, that council staff members are more focused on service delivery and meeting standards, rather than causing cultural insensitivities. The staff member could have felt that removing his shoes and acknowledging the customers request was integral to him delivering a high standard and quality of service.

The meaning another participant gave of a positive experience related to the fact that at first he was perceived by his job centre advisor through an anonymous/stereotypical category, but during the course of the sessions the participant felt that he was perceived more as a person and developed a personal relationship with their advisor. T

*'at the start my advisor was a bit hesitant about me...because of my [practising] appearance...but now we've like bonded really well, he even calls me by my nickname (!)..'*

[Participant N, Male, Pakistani, 36]

The fact that the advisor was non-judgmental is also evident in building the constructive experience for the participant: This constructive experience constituted moving further than a professional relationship and seeing past the participant's ethnicity and religion. Socialization between the Participant and his advisor, which is evident from the advisor using the participant's nickname, is also a key factor in constructing a positive experience, as it has contributed a personal bonding element to relationship. The idea of participants being perceived as 'equal' but different in terms of their cultural/religious backgrounds is also evident to construct a positive experience.

Furthermore building upon this perception of a constructive experience being on where cultural/religious needs are catered for, rather than hygiene and quality of service or any other factor, One interviewee for example praised the local hospital services which their mother received and how culturally aware the nurses were, as they did not inject the interviewee's mother with medication because she was observing fast during the month of Ramadan.

In a similar context, one participant praised the vast amount of literature that was available at the hospital in community languages such as Urdu, Gujarati, Bengali, Somalian and Arabic. Participants discussed how this made reading about prevention of illness and other medical matters less problematic.

In addition, One participant discussed his experience of talking to his children's primary school head teacher to exclude them from a Christmas assembly on religious grounds:

*'...he did reply and was very sensitive to my views...they ended up giving them work under supervision...*

[Participant K, Male, Indian, 38]

The same participant also discussed how he had requested his school to allow his daughter to wear a swim suit which would cover most of her body, because of their religious beliefs, the participant felt that they were treated fairly in this

respect and praised the school. Again it is important to note how religious/cultural factors in this category are more important to the Participant then, for example, the quality of the education, facilities and resources at the school.

In deconstructing what 'positive' experiences mean to participants two distinct categories have come light. The first category are of those participants who feel that constructive contact is to them their cultural/religious needs being acknowledged above all else.

The second categories are of those participants who view a positive experience from a customer and service quality point. For these participants a good standard of service would suffice to constitute a constructive experience.

### **Defining a negative experience**

In contrast a negative experience was defined by participants to constitute an experience where participants felt that they had been lowered because of their religious/cultural experience not being met. Because the composition of the sample was from disadvantaged backgrounds and of ethnic minority, this could be a factor in explaining why the majority of participants viewed a negative experience from a religious/cultural angle rather than a service quality and customer satisfaction perspective.

In further exploring and analysing what detrimental experiences meant to participants, one participant for example, explained how they had tried to elucidate to their son's teacher why the former could not attend music lessons, based upon religious grounds, but was met with what they perceived to be ridicule. In addition a participant discussed how a job centre advisor tried to persuade them to apply for jobs which handled alcohol and pork, which was against their cultural values. One interviewee also explained how the hospital staff did not understand the importance of their wife's halal diet during her stay at the hospital:

*'...they [staff] were just not bothered about her religious beliefs...halal food, praying. These things seem small but staffs...were like getting annoyed with it...'*

[Participant H, Male, Indian, 27]

These examples share a common strand of perceiving a negative experience in terms of religious/cultural needs not being met, rather than other service standard and delivery factors.

In contrast, one participant viewed their negative experience as observing how their friend was treated unfairly by council staff. The participant discussed how their friend struggled to communicate with council staff during a meeting because of English not being their first language. Even so interpretation services were not offered. 'Fairness' in this instance meant that the friend was not able to access a high quality of service, and high standards of service not being met by staff.

In the same manner some participants felt a negative experience was an instance where they were treated stereotypically by public service staff, because of their appearance. An example is of a participant who felt that they were treated like foreigners by the manner in which they were spoken to by staff. The participant felt that their wearing of the veil had fuelled this assumption.

In this situation a negative experience was perceived as being categorized as a non-national rather than not receiving quality of service as was the case discussed by the previous participants. Deconstructing this experience, what comes to light is that the participant feels lowered and uneasy due to being stereotyped. This perception of a negative experience is further exemplified by the experience of another participant:

*'I do notice though that when you're waiting with your kids in the reception area for an appointment...people tend to look down on you...you just get the sense the fact that they just don't want you to be here anymore..'*

[Participant, R, Female, Bengali, 31]

In this context a negative experience is interpreted by the participant as other individuals showing a lack of understanding or being judgmental about the participant's appearance or culture. This interpretation of a negative experience is not attached to quality of service or standards and indeed such negative experience could occur in other domains of the participant's life.

Overall negative experiences were constructed by the participants to mean two distinct ideas. Firstly participants interpreted their negative experience to mean culture/religious issues not being understood or catered for, and on the other hand negative experience meant to participants that they felt stereotyped or suffered from judgemental behaviour around them.

**How do you think the council should tackle unfairness and difficulties that are faced by different communities when they are using council services?**

Participants ascribed various meanings to the terms 'unfairness' and 'difficulties', some participant felt that they could be seen within race, and ethnic parameters. Other participants felt that fairness could be described to mean BME communities having senior management positions in the council, whilst a final group of participants gave the two terms a more tangible form and felt that it could be measured through ethnic minority and service user assessment.

Three distinct categories emerged from the data, employing more Black & Minority Ethnic communities, Staff education/training and a panel/committee structure to consult with or inspect council services.

**Employing more BME Communities**

In the first category for instance, participants discussed that the council should employ more ethnic minority groups, because it would help to improve council services and reflect the council's conviction in promoting fairness and equality. Here the participant felt that 'fairness' meant which ethnic groups received which

jobs, fairness constituted equal redistribution of roles within the public sector, whom participants felt were not representative of the communities they served:

*'...you do notice in all council services that there are so many...white people that have been employed...no...where near enough Asian people...the only way to tackle unfairness is firstly inside the council...'*

[Participant O, Male, Pakistani, 25]

In addition, the participant felt that the higher paid position given to ethnic minority members the more the council would be tackling 'unfairness' issues. Here deconstructing 'unfairness' meant understanding the perceived inequality of paid roles within public services, participants felt. There was also an underlying assumption about 'unfairness' in relation to race and colour.

The 'us and them', dichotomy is evident from the participant's classification of an ethnic group as 'white people'. The participant also feels that 'unfairness' is based upon this race division and somehow certain members of the council could be favouring their own culture/races.

Furthermore participants also felt that allowing a more diverse range of ethnic groups working for the council would bring in different perspectives and experiences:

*'...so the first way to tackle this is to bring in more colored people they would be able to deal with Asian and Black people better and the other council staff can learn from them...'*

[Participant F, Male, Bengali, 20]

Within this category there was an assumption by participants that the roots of 'unfairness' and 'difficulties' that many encountered when using council services lay in the council staff's lack of knowledge about various cultures and beliefs. Participants felt that the fact that they were immigrants arriving regularly, and the fact that the population was becoming more diverse, made it more important for



council staff to be more culturally aware, and ‘unfairness’ and ‘difficulties’ here was interpreted as surfacing due to lack of education. In this context participant felt that these two terms could be remedied through cultural awareness training.

*‘...but if the majority of the directors and leaders of the council are white people...then there will be disadvantage...and difficulty...because they obviously would be seeing everything from their own cultural view and perspective...’*

[Participant S, Female, Indian, 24]

In this context the participant has interpreted 'difficulty' as services not provided adequately for diverse ethnic groups, if the senior management comprised people of one ethnic group. Again it seems that recruiting and retaining staff from a diverse range of cultures was important to counteract this 'difficulty'. Further insight and analysis can reveal how there was also an assumption in the above quote towards senior white management being ethnocentric and unsympathetic to other cultures and how this perpetuated ‘difficulty’ and ‘disadvantage’.

A more practical example of how ‘difficulty’ and ‘disadvantage’ was perceived by participants as meaning inadequate service provision for BME and emerging communities could be observed from the discussion with one participant who explained how they were stopped abruptly on the street by a member of the Somalian community. The Somalian individual showed them a council tax letter [final reminder] and tried to communicate to them what he should do about it.

The participant was surprised that the individual did not have the information to access council support services, and explained in the light of this incident, why the council should employ members of different communities across the whole range of services, with emphasis on the new immigrant groups in Bolton. In this situation 'difficulty' was interpreted as the immigrant not having access to literature written in Somalian, or a Somalian interpreter. This service the participant felt should have been provided by the council and the participant

interpreted the disadvantage as being the Somalian individual not being able to get assistance from the Council.

### **Staff awareness training**

The second category that emerged was for staff training and education. Participants felt that unfairness and difficulty could be tackled by the council through rigorous and ongoing cultural awareness and diversity training:

*‘what I would want is a chance to mix and learn with other people what their cultures all about...that same idea I think should be used for council staff...’*

[Participant E, Male, Bengali, 22]

*‘I think that all council staff should be trained to understand different cultures if they are to provide a service that’s right for those people...’*

[Participant Y, Female, Indian, 31]

In this context the meaning given to 'unfairness' and 'difficulty' by participants was that they might be receiving a sub-standard service from council staff, because staff did not have the cultural awareness or services were not in-place to accommodate them. This was in contrast to those who saw the two terms to mean inequality in the distribution of paid roles with in public services.

An example of this of ‘difficulty’ and ‘disadvantage’ meaning cultural insensitivity is of a participant rejecting a council property because he felt that the area was not appropriate for his children and family, the participant explained how the Housing Officer did not understand why not having a mosque near to his family and living in a predominantly white area without any Asian families nearby was an issue. In this situation the 'unfairness' perceived by the participant was more to do with cultural sensitivity, rather than quality of service.

The staff member was undoubtedly providing a good service to the participant, but the 'difficulty' of this situation was that the staff member did not seem to

acknowledge the types of barriers and problems the participant would face if they were to move in to such an area. The staff members actions can also be understood from the fact that council tenants are housed within areas where there are properties vacant. This means that usually council tenants do not have much choice as to which area they can move in to, partially due to long waiting lists.

### **A panel/Committee structure**

Finally, interviewees felt that the council could tackle the 'unfairness and 'difficulty' perceived and experienced by service users, if it formed panel/committee structures from diverse communities that could advise or inspect council services. It was felt that committees of a diverse ethnic composition could be utilized to oversee change and measure the quality of service that ethnic minority groups received. As these services could already exist within the borough, the fact that the participants mentioned such ideas could mean that they did not have the necessary links with the community and voluntary sector to access such knowledge, or it could show the extent to which the participants keep themselves updated about council involvement strategies.

Unlike participants in previous categories who interpreted 'unfairness' and 'difficulty' as council staff no having the relevant cultural knowledge or unequal distribution of roles. Participants in this category felt that the terms could be measured in some way; this could mean that participants were unhappy with current diversity and satisfactory regimes:

*'...we could have a panel of minority groups who survey and inspect all the councils...they are independent of the council like OFSTED...'*

[Participant M, Male, Indian, 28]

The surveying and inspection of the council services could mean levels of ethnic minority recruitment, racism, how compatible services are with ethnic groups and general quality being measured. The importance of building good relationships amongst council and service users was also emphasized by participants:

*'...the council should try to build relationships with key members of the community...its quite difficult because you can't totally get rid of disadvantage...its always there...but the council needs to be in contact with the right people to make sure that they are doing all they can to improve their services...'*

[Participant T, Female, Pakistani, 32]

In this context the meaning given to 'unfairness' and 'difficulty' are shortcomings in standards of council services because of a lack of clear communication between the council and ethnic groups. The participants felt that if there were constant discussions between ethnic communities and the council, then services would be better formed to accommodate these different cultures, according to their interpretation of 'unfairness' and 'difficulty' having measurable outcomes.

Not all participant interpreted 'unfairness' and 'difficulty' within a specific cultural paradigm. One participant felt that the council's complaint procedure was too complicated and took too long to reach a decision.

They thought that the process should be simplified and the simplification of this process would mean that the council would be able to tackle 'unfairness' and 'difficulty'. Here again it is important to note that the participant gives these two terms a tangible, measurable form.

**In your community do you mix with people of a different colour, Religion, Ethnicity, background to yours? If yes was it a 'good' experience or 'bad' experience, if no, what do you think prevents people coming together?**

From the data it emerged that participants perceived common terms such as 'mix' and 'different' in a number of ways. There were also a variety of angles which constituted 'good' and 'bad' experiences, which participants did not hesitate to explore.

### **Mix [Basic level of communication]**

The first group felt that a basic level of communication was enough to qualify as ‘mixing’ with members of other communities. This meant that the participants felt that aspects of communication such as conversation and discussion were adequate in their opinion to constitute ‘mixing. There was no mention of relationship building or trying to forge a strong bond, these interactions participants felt could be constructed, as is the case with Participant Y [below] who attended the day centre or such interactions could be spurred through life activities, such is the case with Participants’ Y and I [below] who discuss their experiences which rise out of everyday interactions:

*‘...as i look after my parents and take my mum out to the day centre...i mix with people of different backgrounds...i do enjoy it...because apart from me having a chat with them and learning about the way they live...i can also talk to them and share experiences of looking after and caring for disabled children...’*

[Participant Y, Female, Indian, 31]

*‘...the most I do is probably ‘hi’ and ‘bye’ to neighbourhood people if we bump in to each other, but not much more than that..’*

[Participant Y, Male, Bengali, 22]

It can be deduced from the above quotes how Participants strived for find common ground between themselves and members of other ethnic groups, which much of the time is constructed around the everyday chores that they carry out. This thin ‘guarded’ conversation, it was felt would be enough to constitute ‘mixing’, which points towards a lack of commonality between the participants and members of other ethnic groups within this category.

### 5.3.2. Mix [Socialisation]

The second meaning that participants ascribed to the word ‘mix’ was on the level of socializing. This socialization, participants felt could take place outside usual constructed interactions such as the day care centre, disability group, and domestic violence support group and job centre. This socialization it was observed went beyond the communication and discussion that constituted the previous category. Activities such as sports, going out for lunch, visiting each other’s homes and participating in everyday recreational/life activities were highlighted within this category:

*‘...yeah I do...I mix with people of white backgrounds sometimes we have a football match or play some play sports and its good you know, we can learn to live together and stuff...we take notice of key events...if its Eid for example then the neighbours’ don’t mind a bit of noise and when its Christmas we don’t really bother them, if they need parking spaces and stuff like that we sort it out...we also visit each other when a member of a household becomes ill...’*

[Participant C, Male, Indian, 24]

It can be seen from the above quote that the level of interaction between both parties is significant to extend the usual communication and expand to the private sphere of people’s lives. In the above example the participant gave the term ‘mix’ a much more deeper meaning and discussed visiting his white neighbour when they were ill and also engaging with them in a variety of sport activities, these socialization processes the participant felt gave them a better understanding of other people’s method of living and culture. It did seem that sport played a vital role in shaping interactions between different ethnic communities:

*‘I have lots of white friends through football, job centre, gym...where I usually go to train...’*

[Participant D, Male, Pakistani, 27]

*'...at the job centre I've got to know a black African really well, we always go for lunch and its good, get to share stories, experiences, were all human at the end of the day...'*

[Participant B, Male, Pakistani, 32]

In the above quote the participant again felt that the term 'mix' meant that he could engage with his friend on a personal level, discussing life experiences and building enough trust and respect between them to go out for a lunch. The focus of the exchange and friendship seems to be based upon common humanity, rather than trying to find a middle ground on the culture/beliefs, the two individuals felt that they could relate to each other on the basis of life experience.

There were a significant number of participants who felt that they did not 'mix' either in a communication or socialization capacity with members of other ethnic communities. The reasons were largely due to differences of culture/living and personal opinion:

*'...I don't mix with other groups like polish or white people...its not that I don't mix with them...we do have as women...issues...like the types of things which are acceptable in our culture...its more to do with being comfortable with the women you are talking with rather than...any sort of barrier problem...'*

[Participant S, Female, Indian, 24]

*'...I feel that most women from other backgrounds have a lifestyle which doesn't really link with the one I live...its think its more to do with a difference of opinion really'*

[Participant U, Female, Pakistani, 27]

From the above quotes the various views and opinions can be viewed around the barriers participants felt were present in communication and socializing with

others. It is important to point out that such interactions are a two way process and if either individuals or groups put barriers before them, there would be no fruitful interactions. There seems to be a lack of common ground between participants in this category and members of other ethnic communities upon which a solid foundation for friendship could be built, and the fact that merely associating themselves with members of other ethnic communities could be detrimental and frowned upon by other members of the Asian community could perpetuate these situations.

Interactions however were not exclusively seen within a cultural paradigm, some participants that other economic reasons lay in the way of communities mixing:

*'...the thing which I feel stops people coming together ...is that people are just too busy working...'*

[Participant H, Male, Indian, 27]

The participant in the above perceives 'mixing' as a recreational activity, and does not seem to attach much importance to it. The participant felt that financial pressures are what drive individuals and they have priority over relationship building and bonding.

### **Defining good experience**

The term 'good' was described as a social interaction where both parties engaged in everyday tasks such as eating, sport, group discussion, and being able to discuss life experiences and learn about each other's way of life. The 'goodness' in these activities could be perceived as the fact that every individual regardless of class or creed has a personality and a set of life experiences, which can be shared to learn and support each other:

*'...it's a very positive experience...because a lot of the time...people have so many negative attitudes and myths about other cultures...but when you sit down with*



*them and have a chat it does feel really good...it makes friendships and creates bonds...'*

[Participant Z, Female, Indian, 26]

*'I do enjoy it [talking] I can talk to them and share experiences of looking after and caring for disabled people...'*

[Participant Y, Female, Indian, 31]

Participants felt that many times the misconceptions that they hold about a member of another ethnic community were removed and in the same manner misconceptions which other ethnic groups held about the Asian community were also removed. The processes of talking and communication, alongside socializing allowed for many participants to focus on more humanistic ideas and perceptions of the world rather than seeing people from a wholly religious/cultural perspective. Again the perception of individuals having a personality and a set of life experiences which could be learnt from was at the centre of what constituted a 'good' experience.

In defining a positive experience, a participant discussed how he befriended a Black African friend, whilst visiting the job centre regularly and over lunch discussions they managed to discuss the hardships and struggles that they both faced in their home countries and in the UK. The participant discussed how he was both shocked and assured to feel that members of other communities go through the same sort of struggles and perseverance.

The participants did feel that a positive experience generally made them feel that other people around them regardless of culture, race or background shared many of the same economic/social concerns that they did, such as children's education, jobs and family networks. In this context a 'good' experiences constituted the

sharing of life experiences on a personal level, and thus created a bond and trust amongst the pair, which neither thought would exist.

### **Defining a bad experience**

On the other hand participants felt that a negative experience constituted an interaction where individuals were not treated or perceived as having personalities and valued life experiences, rather individuals were perceived within a stereotypical category and their life experiences and choices disrespected. This make up constituted a negative experience.

A good example is of one participant who discussed how riots in their area between white youths and Asian youths caused significant problems for months.

*'...well there have been lots of fights in our area between whites and Asians especially during the riots...it was really bad like a war had broken out...but anger was boiling for a long time...it just spilt out...'*

[Participant Y, Female, Indian, 31]

The participant explained how this backlash effect meant that white and Asian people became suspicious of each other and fighting or arguments would break out over trivial issues such as parking spaces, or children playing in front of houses. In the same way some participants felt that their culture/religion is misunderstood because of media misportryal and this lead to some negative experiences such as racial/religious abuse whilst out shopping. In both of these instances a few individuals could be blamed for recklessness but the whole group is stereotyped and disrespected.

### **Do you think your area is a place where different communities get on 'well'?**

From the data three perceptions of the term 'well' emerged. Participants perceived the term 'well' to mean, communication, socialization and peace. So if there was a basic level of communication amongst residents (as outlined in the previous question) they interpreted this to mean the community was getting on 'well'. On

the other hand participants felt that if there was socialization occurring (i.e. different ethnic groups engaging in social or sport activity together) they interpreted this to mean their community was getting on well, and finally a group of participants felt that the lack of riots and disorder constituted a community that got on 'well'.

### **Perception's of the word 'well' [Communication]**

Members within this category did not see communication or socialization as a prerequisite to peace. Indeed they felt that if communities were 'minding their own business' regardless of contact it was acceptable, as illustrated below:

*'...so we do need to break the communication barrier in the community as we don't have people talking to each other...i feel that the community has just got used to the fact that everyone is doing their own thing...'*

[Participant M, Male, Indian, 31]

*'I've not really seen anything being done where i live...not much events and things...we do have a lot of people trying...that's why we are still not communicating with each other...'*

[Participant O, Male, Pakistani, 25]

The participants within this category felt that the communication was lacking due to deep rooted prejudice and misunderstandings between different communities, the 'wellness' of these communities would remain in the absence of conflict and tension. This is obviously not a solution and can lead to parallel lives being lived by different communities all residing within one area. These negative ideas and isolationist thoughts take hold and as Participant M articulates, the community begins to feel that they do not have anything in common and ignoring or avoiding other ethnic groups becomes the norm within that area.

The neighborhood as discussed by participants becomes a flashpoint if any sort of incident occurs. Participants also discussed how within their areas communication

between different communities had changed overtime. This was especially true of areas where slow influxes of migrants have settled overtime.

Whilst some participants felt that they had witnessed the positive change of perception in the local white population and this culminated in both white/Christian residents and assisting the resident Asian population by voting in favour of building places of worship and education for Muslims.

### **Perception's of the term 'well' [Socialization]**

The second category which emerged was that of participants defining the term 'well' in light of socialization:

*'...I've had a polish builder...doing work at my dad's house...he was a really friendly guy...but it would be unfair to say that like that [like] the polish people in my community don't get on with the Asians...that's because we haven't got to know them properly'*

[Participant N, Male, Pakistani, 36]

In the above quote the participant discusses how socialization is important in order for a community to get on well. The fact that the polish builder has worked at the participant's father's house is testament to communication taking place. The participant further discussed during the interview how the builder needed to be supervised during the course of the contract. The participant acknowledged that he could not generalize from the bad character of the builder that all the polish community was the same, and thus stressed the need for socialization in order to get communities to work well and get to know each other. In the above context socialization helped to break negative stereotypes about ethnic immigrant communities.

Many participants acknowledge that socialization amongst members of the same communities was strong. Participants discussed how they perceived their

communities as ‘small groups getting on well with each other’. This participants felt was because of the strong bonds that they had and the culture, language or religion that they shared in common. Here the term ‘well’ could be perceived to mean how inter-ethnic groups reconciled their differences and engaged with each other.

One participant felt that it was important for communities to socialise with each other; this they felt was because of the need to solve community problems such as crime, anti-social behaviour etc. Without the full support of all members of the community, the participant felt that such problems could not effectively be solved and stated:

*‘the last time the fighting happened...the community leaders were called in to sort it out...but it didn’t work...because it wasn’t the imam and...the priest fighting it was their communities...’*

[Participant L, Male, Bengali, 36]

For them the term ‘well’ meant that ethnic groups within a community could sit around a table and negotiate with public services how best to advance and better their communities. Although these sorts of representations do occur, the question being asked by the participant could be, to what extent these representatives have community backing.

Another participant echoed this view and expanded that many of the religious leaders were not connecting with their congregations and trying to actively encourage dialogue between the different ethnic compositions. Instead the participant argued the leaders skirted around key issues for fear of causing controversy within their own communities, jeopardizing a key avenue in creating and contributing to ‘wellness’ within their community.

### **Perception's of the term 'well' [Peace]**

The final category of participants felt that the term 'well' meant that communities were living in peace.

*'...we haven't really had any racial problems...people have become less tolerant in our community...of Asians or immigrants in general...'*

[Participant H, Male, Indian, 27]

*'...well yes...i don't seem to see any problems in and around my streets, although there has been tension in other areas...'*

[Participant E, Male, Bengali, 22]

*'i would say that in our community people mind their own business try not to get in each other's way...that's the best description of it...'*

[Participant U, Female, Pakistani, 27]

Within this category participants felt that the absence of conflict constituted a community getting on 'well', there was no mention of communication or socialization being important in this process. Rather these participants felt that communities' not engaging with each other was acceptable if this led to peace, as articulated by Participant H, who admits that there is an intolerance of Asians and immigrants but because they haven't experienced any issues their community is a place where people are getting on well.

The underlying assumption of such a visual analysis, from such discussion is that difference is unavoidable and at times may not be totally reconcilable. In such a situation participant H found that the presence of peace was important, rather than trying to reconcile differences. There are obvious problems with such perceptions because avoidance breeds fear and unfounded prejudices between community groups which is unhealthy for long term stability of neighbourhoods.

There was discussion by participants about past conflict that had taken place within their areas, and that the community had become disillusioned with the police and security services as it was felt that police officers were siding with white residents. The tension which was mentioned took place between Hindu and Indian Muslim members of the community, the pretext being the election of the BJP Indian nationalist party in India and the subsequent violence and atrocities that took place.

In the same manner the other tensions which caused significant problems was fighting between white and Asian youths following the gradual rise of the British National Party. Overall the perception of 'wellness' to mean no visual display of disorder could be divisive.

**Do you think that the FOUR main points of Community cohesion [1. Promoting a common sense of belonging, 2. Positively valuing diversity, 3. Tackling disadvantage and inequality, 4. Promoting interaction in the workplace, schools and neighbourhoods] are enough to bring different communities together? Would you add or remove anything from this?**

From the data the main opinions and views which were discussed by participants were categorised under politics, Media and the state.

### **Politics**

The first category that emerged was related to politics. Some participants felt that a point added to the model of community cohesion which would ban racist parties like the British National Party [BNP]:

*“one reason why there were riots in Oldham and Burnley I feel...were because of the BNP stirring up the racial hatred saying that women were clad in veil and were being oppressed and the Asians...wanted to force their culture and religion on all the whites...total rubbish...you have the public getting angered... and to vent their anger they are joining the BNP”*

[Participant U, Pakistani, Female, 27]

*“...they [BNP] feed off stuff like that [violence], they love it...it gets them votes and proves their message”*

[Participant F, Male, Bengali, 20]

It was felt that the work of the BNP was counter-productive to community cohesion, because many of their supporters had become disillusioned with the way public services were distributed and also immigration. These individuals then vented their anger by joining the party. It was felt by participants that the BNP thrived off such individuals and at times encouraged violence, racism and instability in order to gain votes.

There was considerable discussion about the role of MPs. Participants felt that many members of parliament were out of touch with the reality of many situations. A case in point was ethnically/religiously diverse constituencies. It was felt that as MPs themselves at times lived in quite affluent areas, with low crime and disorder levels, they paid lip service to constituents concerns about issues such as immigration, unemployment, and disorder.

This it was felt was largely due to MPs not directly being affected by such issues. There was also discussion around MPs pushing the agendas of their constituents to gain popular vote. One participant discussed how MPs could have an anti-immigration stance to gain white popular vote, rather than having a genuine interest to safeguard the jobs and local services of constituents.

*“if they [Politicians] in an all white area and there are Asian and black people moving in then the MPs might want to keep that area white because the public vote is in favour of it... “*

[Participant D, Male, Pakistani, 27]

## **Media**



The second category that emerged pertained to the media. The majority of participants within this category felt that the model for community cohesion failed to address the issue of Media bias and predisposition and how a ‘cohesive’ media was vital for the success of community cohesion as a whole. It was felt that the media was responsible for creating ‘stereotypes’, undermining the hard work done to foster community relations:

*“ because we can have all [the] interaction...all the trust and respect for each other...but it counts for nothing if the Media is constantly showing negative images of communities...I remember that a polish guy was beat up really bad a few months ago...that’s because the Media kept on saying that polish...immigrants are taking up British Jobs” .*

[Participant M, Male, Indian, 27]

*“ if you had one week of media coverage on community cohesion...that would have so much of an impact...look at big companies that are always advertising...’brand awareness’ ...I think they call it...so use the same channels and get the[community cohesion] message out there”*

[Participant R, Female, Bangladeshi, 31]

Participants agreed that the Media wielded immense power in shaping the minds and choices of viewers. This power it was felt should be utilised positively to foster community relations and dispel the myths held by ethnic communities about each other. It was felt that the Media was at times trying to create division and instability by taking religious issues out of context and presenting them to viewers. Participants did discuss the positive work done by some channels to discuss culture and religion, but felt that these sorts of programmes should be widely transmitted and available and many a time, people who were interviewed did not really represent the views of their communities.

For this reason it was felt that that a point should be added to the cohesion framework which made it compulsory for the media to largely positive images of

ethnic groups and communities. It was felt by participants that having the media work within a cohesive framework would propel the community cohesion agenda to higher levels and a wider audience. One participant discussed their experience of living in Blackburn and how a successful media campaign about diversity and cohesion, which utilised local radio, news and billboards to advertise the diversity and cohesiveness of the town, was an example that could be followed.

Some participants felt that a step in the right direction would be involving more Black and Minority Ethnic groups in the production, editing and presenting of documentaries, shows and in general any programmes. This it was felt would greatly alter the way many programmes were made and bring fresh and diverse perspectives and experiences to the table.

*“...communities themselves should be encouraged to make documentaries about... their... lifestyle and religious activities”*

[Participant U, Female, Pakistani, 27]

### **State**

The third and final category which emerged was around the role the state and local government could play in achieving cohesion. Some participants within this category felt that a point should be added to the model of community cohesion which emphasises the need for the resident white population in the U.K. to integrate more as the model of community cohesion seems to have been drawn up for immigrant communities:

*“...as the whole thing was developed after the riots in 2001 there should have an emphasis that the cohesion idea...isn't just to civilise the Asian community...its for everybody...even the white people have a responsibility...so sharing of the responsibility for everybody...that is how it should be explained..”*

[Participant Z, Female, Indian, 24]

It was felt that the cohesion framework was an exercise to remedy the integration problems associated with dysfunctional Asian communities in particular. This idea was perpetuated it was felt, by the attacks in London and Newyork.

Participants explained how cohesion should be viewed as a two way process. Where the white resident population are prepared to comprise on their perceived prejudices and perceptions of other ethnic groups and other ethnic communities are prepared to set aside their prejudices. If there was not compromise on both sides, participants felt that there was a danger of cohesion activities being viewed as singling out ethnic groups only.

Furthermore, it was felt by participants that the framework for cohesion should allow for more physical interaction amongst communities visiting places of worship and experiencing the lifestyle of other communities:

*“we should get people live out different cultural experiences even it if means living in another country for a bit...like Jack Straw who went India once for six weeks”*

[Participant B, Male, Pakistani, 32]

*“...I would add a point about making it compulsory for people to learn about other cultures...possibly through sitting and experiencing life within that community...”*

[Participant P, Female, Indian, 33]

Participants explained that many times other people’s cultures were only discussed on the television or read about in books. They felt that true appreciation lay within physical experience. Participants did acknowledge that it would not be easy to get different ethnic groups to allow each other a glimpse in to their personal lives. But it was felt that such a step would be needed to show the diversity through which people live their lives.

One participant discussed how such interaction was imperative for the younger generations, because in essence they were the future of the country. The participant discussed how sports and outings did play a good role in building relationships, but experiencing others peoples cultures through sharing their private experiences.

In addition an incentivised structure was suggested, by some participants, where the council would increase funding or reduce council tax for example of communities that showed evidence of active engagement and relationship building:

*“...you could increase funding or give people some sort of reduction in council tax and bills if they were to mix with each other...the government gives more money to schools that work really well...cuts the money if it doesn't...that same idea should be used to increase community cohesion”*

[Participant J, Male, Pakistani, 26]

The participant felt that such an idea was feasible because it was the manner in which public service delivery is structured. Furthermore there was discussion about monitoring effectively the quality of cohesion. Although such measures are bound to exist, the participant was directing his idea more towards effectiveness and focus. The participant felt that the framework of cohesion should have focused objectives that should be monitored rigorously.

*“I think that...that if there was a design...where you could have an action plan for each community...and measure how well the plans are working...that would be good”*

[Participant Y, Female, Indian, 31]

Overall within this chapter there was a wide ranging discussion by participants around the sorts of ideas that could be added to the cohesion framework that could make it more effective and fit for purpose.

The next chapter will attempt to discuss the findings in comparison to the meanings and interpretations of the key vocabulary given by Cantle (2001).

## Chapter 6: Discussion

The previous two chapters sought to qualitatively analyse the data through the method of constant comparison, whilst exploring the diversity and depth of the main themes that emerged. Pursuant to the crisis of coherence in British identities discussed in Chapter 1, this chapter will discuss the extent to which participants perceptions and interpretations of key vocabulary corroborate with that of Cantle's (2001). (see Chapter 1 for an outline of the community cohesion framework or Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion on the competing interpretations and definitions of Cantle's (2001) community cohesion framework.). A summary of participants interpretations in relation to Cantle's (2001) are tabulated on the following page:

<b>KEY PHRASE OR TERM</b>	<b>CANTLE'S (2001) INTERPRETATION</b>	<b>PARTICIPANT'S INTERPRETATION</b>
<i>Community</i>	Geographical.	People of different cultures interacting with each other, assisting each other.
<i>Common sense of belonging</i>	Meaningful expression of common interests, through participation in civic society, community projects, British heritage etc.	Mutual understandings amongst members of different faiths and cultures.
<i>Creating a common sense of belonging</i>	Through symbolic acts or rudimentary vision statements, signed by members of statutory or voluntary bodies.	Grassroots interactions between ethnic/cultural groups i.e. sports, cross generational discussion, places of worship being a resource for the whole community, having discussions at people's homes over a meal etc.
<i>Value and respect</i>	Reducing fear of difference, interactions should be seen as learning opportunity not threat.	Their faith and physical cultural practices should be respected.
<i>Creating Value and respect</i>	Through ' <i>Celebrating diversity days</i> ', highlighting contributions of BME communities to music, popular culture and Business.	Promotion of meaningful and serious dialogue between ethnic, cultural and religious groups. Diversity days seen as ' <i>superficial</i> '.

<p><b><i>Positive and negative experiences when utilising public services</i></b></p>	<p>Seen in terms of quality of service. Negative experiences could be stopped through legislation and discrimination measures.</p>	<p>In terms of how accommodating services were to their culture/religious practice and sensitivities.</p>
<p><b><i>Interaction/mixing</i></b></p>	<p>Should be on three levels, 1. Social, 2. Associational, 3. Structural. But does not define the level and quality of the interactions.</p>	<p>Two levels. 1. Basic communication i.e. ‘hi/bye’. 2. Socialisation. Participants felt the second was more beneficial</p>

### **The Concept of *Community*.**

Cantle’s (2001) framework for community cohesion interpreted the concept of *community* largely on a geographical level and discussed strategies employed by local councils to reinforce this idea. Perceiving communities in geographical terms has been a historic policy objective of the Labour Government. Tony Blair discussed the importance of Locality pride and as a result pledged a modest £3.5 billion for poor estates, discussing *village Projects* when he ascended power (Daily Express 1998). Ebenezer Howard’s vision for bringing the countryside into the city to build a sense of good village spirit were also considered and as a result “Community Estates” such as Bourneville (1879), Letchworth (1907) and Welwyn (1919) were built alongside neighbourhoods in Newyork being constructed on Howard’s geographical pride vision. The concept did not have the anticipated success as such houses were built upon the same simplistic designs and vandalism became common upon these estates (ibid).



In line with Cantle's (2005) geographical interpretation of Community he highlights the success of utilising geography as a uniting factor for the town's citizens. Similarly Cantle (2001, 2005) discusses the geographical approach taken (for example) by The Greater London Authority (GLA) after the London Bombings of 2005. The GLA developed a highly noticeable but quite subtle campaign revolving around the phrase *Seven Million Londoners, One London*. This Cantle (2001,2005) elucidates was developed in to a much broader *One London* campaign and gained the support of private and public sector businesses.

Cantle (2001, 2005) praises the strategy of utilising the common fact of all Londoners sharing the same city as a force for unity and direction. The geographical aspect of this campaign is significant for Cantle (2001,2005) as it links in to his interpretation of how communities should be united and brought together to forge a common identity.

Furthermore, in line with Cantle's (2001,2005) interpretation of geography as a core factor in forging community identity, he outlines the work carried out by the London Borough of Waltham Forest which developed a *225,000 people: one community* slogan following the arrest of a number of alleged Muslim extremists in the Borough in 2006 (ibid). The Council developed a mission statement:

225,000 people live in Waltham Forest. It is one of the most diverse boroughs in London, and we have a fantastic track record of people from all walks of life and different backgrounds living together.

We are determined to celebrate the pride and unity which characterises our streets, our neighbourhoods and our borough.

Our '1 Community' campaign is about bringing the people of Waltham Forest closer to each other, and we hope you will be part of the '1 Community' events and initiatives planned over the coming years to celebrate the strength and diversity of Waltham Forest.

walthamforest.gov.uk/2010

In addition the Waltham Forest campaign utilised a '*1 community sofa*' advertisement campaign where different ethnic, cultural, members of the community were encouraged to sit and discuss matters that were important to them and the local community.

Furthermore Cantle (200, 2005) praised the work of Blackburn with Darwin Council for its *belong to Blackburn campaign*, which it communicated via billboards, buses and local media. This strategy was utilised following an incident of extremist violence which could have led to reprisals against certain sections of the community.

Overall the three examples that were outlined by Cantle (2001, 2005) as good practice for uniting communities all have the use of geographical location as a uniting factor for these communities. It is apparent from the explanations given by Cantle (2001, 2005) that he strongly interprets *community* largely in a geographical sense.

The data analysed by the author in Chapter 4 did reveal some participants that interpreted *community* in a geographical sense. There were however a significant number of participants who interpreted the term community in terms of people with different cultures, identities and backgrounds actively interacting with other, and having a compulsory component of solidarity through assisting and helping one another. Participants felt that the reconciliation of these contesting entities was imperative for long term sustainable forms of community cohesion.

This is in contrast to the short term geographical interpretation taken by Cantle (2001,2005), as participants felt that communities would superficially unite under the banner of their location but their contested issues and practices would simmer under the surface. There is thus a clear interpretational difference between Cantle's (2001, 2005) perception of a *community* and that of these significant number of participants. The former felt that a *community* were a group of people whose uniting factor and focal point would be the geographical location within which they reside. Three examples of such successful campaigns (The Greater London Authority, Waltham Forest Council and Blackburn with Darwen Council) were given by Cantle (2001, 2005) in support of this idea.

In comparison the latter felt this interpretation superficial. They argued that a community should have a uniting factor built around the diverse and in-depth interactions of its members. They felt that solidarity was important and individuals addressing cultural, religious, political differences in an open and mutually tolerant way should personify a community.

The participants also felt that community being merely geographical as Cantle (2001,2005) alludes would still allow the differences, prejudices and insularities of different ethnic and cultural groups to foster. This stance is given weight by conclusions drawn the Blackburn iCoCo (2009) report. The council's work around community cohesion was formerly praised by Cantle (2001, 2005) which found:

- Changing demography – large numbers of young people, a growing Asian population and some evidence of ‘white flight’
- High, and in some respects, growing levels of segregation between different communities geographically, within schools and at work, including perceived ‘no go’ areas
- A consequent tendency for communities to live parallel lives with little contact with or knowledge of other communities

- Evidence of suspicion or hostility (though largely non violent) between people from Indian and Pakistani heritage and between white and Asian groups.
- Tensions, particularly for women and young people, between traditional community expectations and new aspirations and opportunities
- High levels of deprivation, impacting particularly on people of Pakistani heritage
- Tensions arising from the focus on preventing violent extremism

iCoCo Blackburn Report, 2009:80

### **Interpretations of *Common sense of belonging***

Moving on, Cattle (2005:179) interpreted the term *common sense of belonging* to mean the promotion of a meaningful expression of common interest. He believes that this common purpose can transcend cultural differences, foster political identity and create a union or bond between disparate groups and their interests. Cattle (2001, 2005) cites the work done in Canada as good practice with components viable for adaptation in the U.K. The country has focused much on nation and identity building and has invested much money in its *We All Belong to Canada campaign*, which clearly supports and emphasises multiculturalism, together with a clear set of values and pride associated with Canadian citizenship, civic society and community engagement.

The Canadian Campaign promoted a variety of National awareness days over the calendar year, including: The National flag day, international day for the elimination of racial discrimination, Anniversary of the Canadian charter of rights and freedoms, National volunteer week, Celebrate Canada week, International day for peace, Canada's citizenship week, Remembrance day and human rights day ([www.cic.gc.ca./2010](http://www.cic.gc.ca/)).

The Government of Canada in addition organised hundreds of reaffirmation and citizenship ceremonies that would take place during key national events across the country. The Canadian parliament passed a renewed *Citizenship Act (2002)* which would allow for the creation of Citizenship commissioners to promote the values, roles and responsibilities that were expected of Canadian citizens (ibid). In collaboration with The Dominion Institute, the *Passages to Canada Speakers' Bureau* was launched in March 2003, on the Canadian Learning Television in Toronto. The Speakers Bureau throughout the year invites immigrant speakers into classrooms and community groups to recount the human dimension of immigration and to impart a sense of the personal challenges connected with leaving one's country and starting anew in Canada. Youth are encouraged to participate by sharing their stories on a dedicated website (ibid). In April 2003, *Teach Magazine* and Canadian heritage launched a new educational resource entitled *My Commitment to Canada*. This activity guide explored the rights and responsibilities associated with active citizenship. Four core Canadian values were discussed: *respect, freedom, belonging and peace*. Through the focal activity, youth are encouraged to express their own declaration of citizenship and to share it within their local community (ibid).

Cantle's (2001,2005) interpretation of a *common sense of belonging* to mean participation in civic society, community projects and British heritage, links in to previous competing interpretations around the overall aims of the community cohesion framework. These include critiques of the framework for community cohesion to restore pride in British Citizenship and the restoration of public order (see Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion).

The data however differs in this regard. There were participants who felt engagement in local projects, civic society and British heritage would enhance the unity of the community they resided in. The majority of participants interpreted a *common sense of belonging* to mean an emphasis on mutual understandings between other cultures and faiths that resided within a particular community. Participants felt that this was more important than factors such as pride in the

local area, engaging with civic society and identity which Cantle (2005) promotes. There was awareness of the important role that religion and culture played within communities and some participants felt that at present (due to the lack of mutual understandings) if they engaged in discussions on any level with members of other communities their own religion and culture could be open to ridicule and mockery.

***Creating a Common sense of belonging.***

In this context Cantle's (2001, 2005) interpretation for the creation of a common sense of belonging is for communities to largely focus upon lengthy word statements and symbolic acts. Cantle (2005) also gives local practical examples by way of emphasising the work done by a number of local authorities in this respect, who have constructed rudimentary vision statements. Cantle (2005) concludes that these statements have explicitly cut across political party lines and made clear that the support of one community over the other will not be favoured. The boroughs also signed a *diversity pact* with all faith, cultural groups agreeing to share an atmosphere of tolerance and respect.

The London Borough of Hounslow statement of commitment was singled out for praise:

We will not in our campaign materials or in our dealings with constituents and other members of the community, seek to create or exacerbate divisions between different groups within the community.

London Borough of Hounslow, 2003 in Cantle, 2005:181

These rudimentary vision statements Cantle (2005) believes are key to his interpretation of creating a common sense of belonging.

Another example for creating a *common sense of belonging* mentioned by Cantle (2005) is the government's £6 million 'pathfinder' programme; which was setup to explore ways of enhancing community cohesion and to develop a charter for agencies to sign up to. The charter was adopted by many types of Council such as Rochdale, Leicester and London Boroughs of Barnet and Tower Hamlet and the latter was given 'Beacon' status (ibid).

Rochdale Councils vision statement (2010) for example reads:

We believe that all individuals should be provided with the opportunity to take a full part in the social, economic and cultural life of our borough. We are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination, promoting equality of opportunities, eliminating harassment and promoting positive attitudes towards potentially vulnerable groups. We will make sure that our programmes and activities take into account people's different needs.

We will remove barriers and create opportunities which help to narrow the gap between the most disadvantaged and others.

Our Community Cohesion Strategy has a vision "a borough where all people have a sense of belonging based on mutual respect, enhanced life opportunity and shared responsibility". It has five outcomes which are:

- people feel a sense of belonging,
- enhanced life opportunities,
- diversity is valued,
- positive relationships within and between communities and,
- people take responsibility.

All partners have signed a community cohesion protocol indicating their commitment to co-operate in achieving our shared vision stated in the Cohesion Strategy.

Participants however interpreted a common sense of belonging differently. A large number of participants felt, that rather than having vision statements, charters, *symbolic acts* (such as signing ceremonies between and amongst voluntary and statutory agencies), and meetings in neutral venues spearheaded by leaders of the community. There should be much more interaction at the grass root level of communities. This participants felt, could manifest itself in a variety of ways. The methods participants advocated include; religious communities holding events in each other's places of worship, the older generation socialising with each other, the younger generation utilising sport as means of socialisation, and having ethnically mixed community centers, rather than the current single ethnic model. There was an underlying ideological push by participants to move away from 'superficial' forms of creating a common sense of belonging i.e. vision statements, charters, symbolic acts, towards a more grass root geared path of actual socialisation, which was tangible with the results being of physical benefit to community relations.

Cantle (2005) acknowledges alongside others who have conducted research into cultural engagement such as Asaf et al (2003) that an unfortunate effect of setting out to create a common sense of belonging amongst diverse communities has been the way in which differences and individual identities have been contextualised, through various public and private sector programmes. These programmes have responded to 'difference' by attempting to build the capacity of a particular group and the capacity of their leaders and then attempt to allow the disparate community groups to engage with each other. Whilst the focus on disadvantage can be justified, separate programmes tend to undermine the possibilities for building a shared identity and common cause has tended to be neglected (ibid).

In this respect, Powers (2001) argues that the government itself has undermined the community cohesion framework by entrenching ethnic minority groups against each other over competing for 'scarce' funding for projects and



programmes in ethnically diverse communities (ibid). Furthermore distrust, hate and manipulation have become common in order to secure funding and project extension opportunities, which are all factors contrary to promoting a 'common sense of belonging'.

These negative cycles commence because various community groups are pitched against each other to compete for limited funding and resources. These barriers of competition could be perceived as a reason for community groups to resort to the signing of charters, agreements and conducting symbolic acts. There unity could be perceived to be superficial and actual socialisation and mutual cooperation as participants suggested at the grassroots level would seem unlikely due to competing funding interests.

Other issues which undermine a 'common sense of belonging' as Ouseley (2001) discusses are various self-styled community leaders who do not represent the true voice of their communities.

Cantle (2005) expresses the general concern of the ethnic minority community leaders who often hold quite powerful positions within their communities and have the ability to engage support for a particular project or purpose without any real debate or challenge within their community. In this respect Asaf et al (2003) research in to cultural engagement in Leicester pointed out the deference given to leaders of some communities. This was evident through tribal hierarchies such as the *briaderi* system in the Pakistani community. This situation is expedited by the fact that many local types of council prefer such power blocks as it makes dealing and providing ethnic minority specialist services easy. This system has a detrimental effect on the communities that seek representation as they are constantly kept in a state of dependency by their community leaders, who control the finances and general politics of the group (Cantle, 2005).

***Value and respect.***

Another interpretational variation pertained to the terms *value* and *respect*, which Cantle (2001:186) explains to be the diversity of people's backgrounds and circumstances being appreciated and positively valued.

Cantle (2005) interprets these terms on two levels. Firstly it could be perceived as a branch or extension of the 'common sense of belonging' vision, in that the building of an inclusive society has at its foundation as openness towards other cultures and backgrounds. The fear of difference should be minimised and the interaction should be seen as an opportunity to learn rather than a threat. Cantle (2005) does acknowledge the dynamics of different cultures and backgrounds in that some could be more inward looking than others and more hostile to foreigners. This is an area which Cantle (2005) admits needs to be understood and the significance of societal openness to change has yet to be developed.

The second level through which Cantle (2001) interprets the terms *value* and *respect* is through localised and shared activities. Cantle (2005) champions the various *celebrating diversity* programmes that have civic backing as an example for people to come together. He advocates more cultural festivals, awards for successful minority businesses, the use of multicultural images on websites and posters to promote the area and the development of ethnic minority music and art events to boost the value of diversity.

At the centre of Cantle's (2005:187) interpretation of *value* and *respect* is that when members of ethnic groups and communities see the contribution they are making to society in terms of arts, music and culture they will foster greater value and respect for each other.

Furthermore Cantle (2005:187) asserts that introducing people to new experiences in non-threatening environments or neutral venues could make their interaction with other cultures and backgrounds more pleasurable, which will have a more

positive effect and encourage people to engage with new experiences. In addition he feels that these neutral venues are something to be regarded as interesting and an important arena to explore and learn, rather than recoil from out of fear and ignorance.

Participants however interpreted differently *value* and *respect* and perceived it in terms of members of other communities respecting the faith they ascribed to and the physical practices that they employed as a result of their faith. Cantle's (2005) interpretation of *value* and *respect* which emphasised the use of multicultural images, awards for minority business and minority art and music did not register with participants. Participants clearly felt that the main issue at hand was religion/culture and the lack of understanding of it by members of other communities which inevitably leads to tension. Cantle's (2005) interpretation could seem secular in the sense that he engages with cultural aspects such as music, festivals and economic aspects of ethnic communities in terms of their contribution to business and enterprise. In participants eyes Cantle (2005) has not acknowledged the importance of religious experience and mutual religious understanding as the core aspect to fostering *value* and *respect* to many members of the Asian community.

### **Creating *value* and *respect*.**

There was also an interpretational difference in the method which Cantle (2005) feels will create *value* and *respect* and the method the participants felt would create the same two qualities. Cantle (2005) (as mentioned previously) feels that ethnic minorities would *value* and *respect* each other when they see the contribution that they have made to wider British society in terms of culture, arts, music, business and food etc.

Many participants felt that *value* and *respect* will be created when members of other communities understood the dynamics of their faith and culture, rather than contribution to society. Many participants also differed with Cantle's (2005)

interpretation to valuing diversity. They felt that *Celebrating diversity* days and cultural festivals (as suggested by Cantle, 2005) were ineffective because of the low numbers of people attending these events. There were also a number of participants who felt that holding these events in neutral venues such as community centers, schools or colleges was ineffective.

For this reason some participants felt that there should be open discussion panels within communities to address specific religious/cultural issues where all members of the community regardless of religion, background and gender could sit and openly discuss the anxieties and concerns that they have. This, participants felt would also aid learning from other cultures and practices. Participants saw the key issue that should be dealt with was faith more than culture. They felt that members of faith groups should hold discussions in each other's places of worship which would give a strong and positive signal to both communities and their commitment for mutual respect and understanding.

There was also participants who felt that 'superficial' interactions within these *celebrating diversity days* and cultural festivals should be replaced with encouraging individuals who have different ethnic, cultural backgrounds to visit each other's households and over dinner or refreshments discuss issues which they felt was important to them.

Overall the creation of *value* and *respect* was through the medium of face to face conversation and discussion about key issues of concern and anxieties to all parties involved. This was in contrast to Cantle's (2005) idea of multicultural events and festivals which ignored the key concerns of faith and ethnic groups and focused rather on variations of food, clothing and music.

### ***Positive and negative experiences.***

Another key policy area for the community cohesion framework pertains to creating positive interactional experiences for citizens in a variety of contexts including work and when utilising public services. Cantle (2005) interprets

positive and negative experiences within a discrimination and quality of service context. In line with this interpretation he outlines a variety of measures that the government has employed to ensure inclusiveness and phase out discrimination from public services. Cattle (2005) explains how *Anti-discrimination measures* have been utilised by the government which is based upon historic legislation stretching over 40 years. These measures are largely in respect of race, to prevent discrimination on the grounds of employment, housing and other services. Further strategies to promote positive interactions included *Prohibition of incitement to racial hatred* this legislation has had some effect on controlling advocates of conflict and violence, particularly by the extreme right.

Cattle (2005) emphasises the role of *Ethnic minority monitoring/ targets* that employers are asked to collate and constantly review to ensure equal representation and raise the quality of service. *Positive action measures* are also discussed by Cattle (2005) to increase quality of public service and foster positive relations.

These include measures that equip members of disadvantaged groups with the skills to compete on an equal basis for employment, social housing and in other areas, such as supporting equality targets. At the most limited level they may include advertisements for jobs are placed in areas where under-represented groups are more likely to see them and in ways that they can relate to them. For example by using images of those same groups in the advertisements. Similar measures Cattle (2005) argues have also been used to develop the confidence of under-represented groups to apply for jobs on an equal basis.

*Positive discrimination* is also discussed by Cattle (2005) as a method through which public services can increase their quality and how positive relationships can be fostered. This is where discrimination is allowed in order to ensure that people from disadvantaged groups can meet certain quotas. In addition Cattle (2005) refers to the lessons learnt from the McPherson Report (1999) and Section 71 of *the Race relations Act 1979* following the death of a black teenager, Stephen

Lawrence and the emphasis the government has put upon combating institutional racism in both the public and private sectors.

In contrast to Cantle's (2005) interpretations of positive and negative experiences within a discrimination and quality of service context, many participants felt that when interacting with public services they perceived *positive* and *negative* experiences within a religious/cultural light. The participants focus when interacting with public services was upon whether their religious/cultural needs could be met by the service or not. If the need could be met they felt it was a positive experience, if the need could not be met they felt that it was a negative experience.

The positive and negative experiences of participants revolving around religion and culture correlates with Cantle's (2005) admission that the prohibition of racial hatred legislation and anti-discrimination legislation has limitations that can be exploited by many groups outside employment and training services. The prohibition of racial hatred legislation for example, is not comprehensive and not yet applicable in all circumstances.

For this reason protection against discrimination on religious grounds is presently limited to employment and training. The anti-discrimination legislation Cantle (2005) admits has had little effect on controlling the advocates of violence and conflict, particularly the far right. However, their activities have become more covert and, as a result more difficult to openly discuss and defeat by rational argument. In addition, their targets have changed to enable them to get round the law, for example, by targeting Muslims on a faith basis, rather than ethnicity or race which is an offence.

Participants focus on the accommodation of religion/culture when interacting with public services could reflect how gaps in discrimination law have led to public service staff being less accommodating of culture/religious issues without the fear of judicial reprisals.

***Interactions and mixing.***

Cantle (2005:188) interprets interactions amongst members of different ethnic and religious groups in vague terms. He discusses with the various forms of cross-cultural contact and engagement, Distributing cross-cultural contact across three categories.

**[1] Associational:** Associations which are open to people from different backgrounds and facilitate interchange and co-operation within the organisation. In addition inter-associational contact would allow the interaction of single identity groups through networking.

**[2] Social:** interaction by individuals by meeting through shopping, travelling, or leisure activities. An extension to this could be social organisational interaction where individuals participated in sporting, music and arts in association with clubs and societies.

**[3] Structural:** are interaction opportunities which largely depend upon the extent to which schools and housing are segregated and how particular groups and market factors create divisions, which militate against cross-cultural engagement (ibid). Cantle (2005) does not specify in measurable terms what level or category of interaction is preferred, but merely alludes to interactions consisting of each category would allow for cohesion to be built progressively within communities.

Cantle (2005) also places great emphasis within the community cohesion framework upon positive interactions within the neighbourhood. This dimension he explains was added to the community cohesion framework as a means to countering the growth of ‘parallel lives’ in which there was no contact between different groups and a real ignorance and lack of understanding between them.

Cantle (2005) admits that *parallel lives* are hard to break down and it will take some time for communities to establish *positive relationships* where there has been no contact with each other at any meaningful level in the past. Whilst there are many towns and cities which do not have a high level of physical and

geographical segregation, there are many areas which are dominated by one community or another.

Cantle (2005) further explains how *parallel lives* can still be evident in other ways in multi-ethnic/religious communities and in education, employment, faith and cultural and leisure activities. Cantle (2005) outlines how the ‘fear of difference’ is not only based upon white and Asian communities, but also inter-generational, inter-ethnic and ageism issues are examples of how ‘fear of difference’ plays out on different levels.

Participants interpreted *mixing* with others and getting on *well* with members of other communities on two levels. The first level was that of basic communication, whilst the other was that of ‘socialisation’. There was a clear distinction between the current basic ‘hi’ and ‘bye’ level of communication that participants experienced and the more socialised level that they aspired to.

Participants wanted to transcend the mundane ‘superficial’ social interactions that they felt occurred with members of the other community through shopping and leisure activities and focus more upon socialisation which they felt was the key to creating positive interactions within their communities.

They were also inclining (as previously discussed) of the community cohesion framework focusing upon culture and festivals which participants felt could foster a basic level of communication amongst ethnic groups for decades, as each group felt they superficially knew ‘enough’ about the other. These superficial interactions would begin to show weakness participants felt when community relations were tested by a significant event or disturbance.

This chapter has sought to compare the interpretations members of the Asian community gave to key vocabulary within the community cohesion framework to the interpretation given by Cantle (2005). Furthermore the chapter has clearly outlined the interpretational differences that participants and Cantle (2005) ascribe to these vocabularies.



The preceding chapter will provide a summary of the extent to which the author has addressed the research question. The manner in which and how the research was pursued. The significance of what was found in relation to the body of literature that informs this study, and will also attempt to identify further areas for research.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION**

The previous chapter compared participant's interpretations of key words and phrases within the Community cohesion framework to that of Cantle's (2001, 2005). The aim of this endeavour was to establish a core aim of the thesis which sought to assert the extent to which Participants interpretations and Cantle's (2001) corroborate.

This chapter will discuss how and why the author pursued the research. What was found, and the significance of what was found in relation to the body of literature that informs this study. In addition the chapter will identify further areas for research and recommendations.

### **Limitations**

The study interviewed marginalised members of the Asian community who would not usually participate, due to cultural and religious sensitivities. This could be one reason why many of the interpretations given by participants are within a cultural/religious framework. Furthermore thirty members of the Asian community were interviewed for this study as this was manageable. Generalising the findings of such a small scale is also questionable.

### **Why and how the research was pursued**

The study was conceptualised as a research proposal submitted for funding by the author and Prof. Carole Truman to the Marriott Trust in June 2008. The trust was established using a legacy donated by John Marriott who joined The Bolton Le Moors Branch of The Rotary Club in 1978 as a founder member. The funding criteria stipulated that any research project undertaken should be of benefit to the Bolton population. Various strands were identified by The Trust for possible funding of which one was community cohesion.

The community cohesion strand was of particular interest to the author who is of Pakistani heritage and had previously completed an undergraduate degree in Applied Community Studies. Studying the degree stimulated an interest in debates around multiculturalism and community cohesion. After conducting an in-depth review of the literature surrounding these concepts an Institute of Community Cohesion Report (iCoCo, 2007) became the foundation upon which the proposal was structured. There was a gap in knowledge associated with the methodology of the report which is being addressed in this thesis.

In particular the reports lack of qualitative interview-based fieldwork on the Asian community in Bolton was both apparent and surprising. The Asian community was at the fore of media attention due to terrorism and extremism issues for which reason Bolton has received funding from the *Preventing Violent Extremism* (iCoCo, 2007) initiative. Government policies that had been formulated to assist in the moderation of these communities were contested and controversial. In light of all these issues the author felt an in-depth semi-structured interview-based qualitative fieldwork should be undertaken to fill a gap in knowledge and research, which could adequately probe the constructs and perceptions members of the community understood from Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework. (refer to chapter 3 for a further discussion).

The author enlisted the assistance of The Bolton Council of Mosques who utilised their expertise and extensive links within Bolton's Asian community to find participants who were deemed suitable for the study by meeting the criteria set out in the methodology. The participants were interviewed either at the community organisations premises or at their own residence, whichever they felt more comfortable with. A brief presentation was shown to them to brief them about community cohesion and then a 20-25 minute interview followed. The participants' interviews were recorded and the recordings were destroyed after transcription, as set out in the participant consent form. The transcriptions were then analysed in accordance with Glaser (1978) method of constant comparison. This method entails gathering data along themes and trends that emerge. These themes and trends are

further analysed to ensure that that the diversity within them is not overlooked. This method allows consistency and thorough engagement across the data.

**What has been found.**

This study has found the extent to which members of the Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities attach importance and significance to their cultural and religious identities. Many of the interpretations that participants gave of Cattle's (2001) community cohesion framework, had a common thread pertaining to culture and religion. Through the qualitative semi-structured interviewing approach the study has been able to meet its principal aims and objectives. An in-depth exploration was thus possible of the manner in which members of the Asian community extended their cultural and religious identity to public spheres. The participants did not limit their cultural and religious identity to the traditional spheres of the home and places of worship as members of other communities usually do.

In addition the study was able to deconstruct to some degree the manner in which participants negotiated interactions, specifically the manner in which they felt that there was a need to shift from *superficial* interactions and celebrations of difference, i.e. cultural diversity days, multifaith events, towards more *physical* and grassroots interactions i.e. members of the community being able to sit together and discuss key concerns over dinner at an individual's residence, cross generational discussions, places of worship being utilised as community centers and a resource for the whole community etc.

The participant's interpretation of *Community* was largely understood in terms of assistance and support for one another. This characterisation did tie in to participants' religious ideas, which places great emphasis and reward for those who strive to lighten the burden of others. The interpretation's participants ascribed to a *Common sense of belonging* was largely based around mutual understandings between members of different faiths. This highlights the extent to which participants felt these issues have been neglected or not addressed by policy makers. This could also highlight the sense of religious difference and alienation that they sense due to

religion being perceived as the source of many conflicts and problems in recent times. The fact that Cantle's (2001,2005) idea of a *common sense of belonging* to mean engagement in civic society and local projects not registering with many participants is also interesting.

This is because all members of a community could engage with local projects and civic society, but this would mean that they did not understand each other's cultural and religious practices and learn from one another. The process of learning from each other's cultural and religious practices is extremely important for breaking down barriers and myths. Cracks can then appear in relationships between members of the community, as cultural and religious taboos serve to create insularity and inevitably could become a source of contention.

Participants felt that *a sense of belonging* was more about Britain being a place where all cultures and religions could *belong* and be treated equally. Participants felt from their life experience this was not the case, for which reason many participants felt that religious/cultural understandings were at the centre for creating a robust sense of belonging.

Many of Cantle's (2001, 2005) interpretations of terms such as *Value, respect, positive* and *negative* experiences could be perceived as *secular* in comparison to participants' interpretations. A good example is the idea of creating *value* and *respect* within a community. Cantle (2001, 2005) discussed promoting the contribution made by BME communities to popular culture and business. This interpretation assumes that all members of the Asian community have a culture that they all agree with and ascribe too, which is not the case. More conservative and religious members of the Asian community spend many voluntary hours working within their religious organisations, by for example, cleaning, cooking for events, providing logistics, financial aid etc. Cantle's (2001, 2005) definition of recognising only those individuals and groups that contribute to popular culture and Business would marginalise and undermine the work of these individuals.

In addition the interpretation of *positive* and *negative* experiences when utilising public services, by participants is an example of how they extend their religious and cultural identity to the public sphere. Many of the participants in this study were those who would not traditionally take part and whose ideas and opinions are not usually heard. These included women who wear the Nikaab (full Islamic veil), and practicing Muslim males (who for example have a beard). This could be a reason as to why many participants felt that accommodation of their cultural practices were at the core of judging their experience.

In comparison, Cantle's (2001,2005) interpretation was focused upon legislation, anti-discrimination measures and raising the quality of service. Although these are all important issues that need addressing, there seems to be an assumption by Cantle (2001, 2005) that legislation and quality of service can eradicate the concerns that members of religious communities have when accessing public services, which as the study, shows is not the case.

#### **The relevance of what has been found in relation to the literature review.**

The emphasis on cultural and religious identity that participants have shown in this study has been discussed by many authors. Some have felt that this emphasis is a positive characteristic whilst others are much more critical. Bagguley & Hussein (2003) have, for example discussed how Government policies over the past twenty years have privileged separate ethnic identities, focusing on notions of equality for different religious and ethnic groups. The fact that many participants constantly defined themselves and the interactions they had through the medium of culture and religious identity does give weight to this argument. Cantle (2001) discussed how past British policies pertaining to multiculturalism did not attend to the psychological and social needs of its diverse communities; to develop clear awareness of and commitment to the need for change; to provide a realistic level of local resources to reduce competing demands upon them and the need for clear leadership, in which programmes are mainstreamed rather than left to poorly resourced voluntary organisations.

Furthermore the strong discussions participants had around the need for mutual religious/cultural understandings, links in to earlier concerns that Bagguley & Hussein (2003) observed on how the government has encouraged religious and cultural identity yet profoundly neglected the need to promote good relations between them. This need is highlighted by participants in the study.

Research carried out by Furbey et al (2006) and Billings & Holden's (2008) has shown how dialogue and interfaith work bolstered ethnic minority cohesion (specifically in the Burnley 'Building Bridges' initiative), whilst Jayaweera & Choudary (2008) have documented the positive interfaith work in Bradford.

Furthermore, participants felt that rather than engaging in political and community projects they should focus more upon cultural and religious harmony between community members. This idea is further discussed by Modood (1997,2005,2007) who outlines the impossibility to build what the first domain of community cohesion terms 'Common aims and objectives, common moral principles and codes of behavior, support for political institutions and participations in politics' (Beecham, 2002:22) when many communities have contradictory cultural values, beliefs, practices and politics. Cattle (2009) acknowledges the dilemma of religious reconciliation amongst members of communities:

Whilst diversity of culture is generally seen as bringing new, interesting and enriching experiences, there is more ambivalence about diversity of religion, which may be seen as creating more challenge in areas that still have a sacred and sacrosanct basis. This is understandable in the sense that faith is a 'zero sum game' and fundamental beliefs are, by definition, irreconcilable.

(Cattle, 2009:5 *secular governance in a multi-faith society*)

Many of the interpretations of *value* and *respect* explored by participants in the study were based around building understandings between members of communities about the basis for religious practices and observance. In discussing the root cause of religious and cultural intolerances Johnson (2008) cites the second domain of

cohesion which highlights ‘tolerance and respect for differences’ (Beecham, 2000:45), but they believe that the government has undermined its model for community cohesion by failing to teach children about each other’s culture. There has been a failed attempt at communicating ‘Asian’ culture in particular to students who have not been given an appreciation of Asian life but have been presented with a ‘hackneyed formula of samosas and saris’ (Johnson, 2008:34). The government’s citizenship Programme can also be branded as demonising Asian and African students and at times segregationist as there are sizeable topics teaching students about the ‘The East Indian Tea Company’, ‘The British Empire in India’, ‘The Scramble for Africa’ and ‘Slavery’ which have overtones of Britain’s Imperial Past, which many communities could find offensive and derogatory. Many participants did equate value and respect to deeper understandings of religious and cultural beliefs, which gives weight this thesis.

The overwhelming response of participants in equating *value* and *respect* solely in reference to cultural/religious understandings can also be explained by what Darlow et al (2005) describes as *the criminalisation of Asian youth*, in the 2001 riots who were given harsh sentences for minor offences. In total 191 people were given custodial sentences totalling more than 510 years for their part in the various riots that took place in 2001. These were the harshest and most widespread sentences given for public disorder since the Second World War, rendering these youth unfit for society and further flaming the ideology of violence and protest amongst diverse communities who maintain that they are treated like ‘foreigners in their own lands’ (Darlow et al, 2005:24). According to them many of the protesters argued that it was only the ‘coloured’ rioters that were treated in such a detestable manner whilst many white youths were ignored or given lighter sentences. Gilroy (2009) on the other hand does not feel that the experience of migrant communities is the same as it was fifty years ago and that the issues faced by new generations differ greatly from those faced by their parents and these issues are usually exemplified, being twice as burdensome on the new generation. This is because the new generations are nurtured in an atmosphere of mutual respect and equality, but this government engineered



environment of the classroom is soon dispelled by the hostile surroundings of the real world, which have racist and prejudice overtones.

Bodi (2002) explains the 'harshness' of the sentences and documents that: Istifar Iqbal was given an eleven months jail sentence for picking up, but not throwing, two stones; Asam Latif was handed a four years nine months jail term for *lobbing* six stones; Mohammed Akram, was given five years for hurling various *missiles*; Mohammed Munir, was given four years and nine months for throwing two stones; and Ashraf Husain, was handed four years for throwing three stones. (ibid) .

Bodi (2002) further elaborates by contrasting these sentences to Belfast, where the stakes are much higher due to the Northern Ireland disputes. A first offence of riot in Belfast and the surrounding towns and cities would land an individual a fine, a second offence of riot would incur a heavier fine or a suspended sentence. According to staff at the Belfast Telegraph:

If the judge was making an example out of you, you'd probably get 30 days for throwing a petrol bomb, what makes their (convicted rioters) punishments harder to swallow is that most of the convicted have no history of criminality.

(Bodi, 2002)

The emphasis that participants placed upon *community* to have a core component of solidarity is discussed by Bonney (2003) and elements who feel that the current model for community cohesion is 'minimalist' and suggest a more demanding vision, drawing upon Anglican tradition to 'put another's interest before your own, where you care for one another (ibid). Many organisations have argued that the community cohesion model must go beyond 'mere tolerance and also beyond the concept of 'a community of communities' to a 'deeply held and lived sense of human oneness' (Leith, 2002) they also argue that the communitarian concept of 'diversity within unity', that 'diversity without unity is division; unity without diversity is uniformity' and that both extremes should be avoided (ibid).

### **Identifying areas for further research**

One of the aims for the research was to explore the coherence in British identities amongst members of the Asian community. It has become apparent that participants had strong feelings about their religious and national identities. In a large number of cases participants felt that their religious identity took precedence over their national identity and that this precedence was due to the religious freedom and expression their national identity (i.e. being British) had granted them. Further research could be undertaken around the gap in cultural and religious understanding the government has of these communities. The study was limited in scope so it is relative to look at other towns and cities and consider the responses that would be derived from a similar methodology. There is also scope to study how relative issues flagged up in this study are to members of other Black and Minority Ethnic communities.

### **Recommendations and dissemination of research outcomes.**

The study has highlighted the sensitivity of race relations and diversity issues. Participants had largely felt that their religious and cultural identities had a role to play in the public sphere. There are implications of this understanding for Bolton Council and local community and voluntary organisations when engaging with marginalised Asian communities. The way services are tailored and delivered could be reviewed in light of the research to fill any gaps in equality and diversity procedures.

There are also implications for faith communities. To this end the author has been involved in designing and delivering a multifaith chaplaincy course at the University of Bolton. The course was delivered over a period of seven days. The faith and community cohesion session was delivered to an audience of twenty five Chaplains/ representatives of different faith and community within Bolton. The session made extensive use of the literature review carried out in this study to place faith and community cohesion in context. The findings of the research were also discussed in light of engaging with faith communities and lessons that could be learnt. The findings prompted thoughtful and insightful discussion. The success

of the course has meant that another course is currently being designed by the author and other members to be delivered in March 2011 and have accreditation by The University short course department. This course will allow the dissemination of the study to reach an audience within the Northwest of England.

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