

# Locating Britishness?

## Mediating Identity, Ethnicity, Community and Place in Multi-Ethnic Swindon



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Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

## Abstract

### *Locating Britishness? Mediating Identity, Ethnicity, Community and Place in Multi-Ethnic Swindon*

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This thesis explores how Britishness as nationalism, patriotism or national identity, and media come together in a local multi-ethnic urban population in Swindon, an ordinary English town. Providing a counterpoint to the elite political interest in Britishness from the 1990s onwards, it takes an ethnographic approach to the ways that “Indian Sikh”, “Polish” and “English” adults of prime working age (30-55) draw upon both news content (*media discourses*) and life experience (*experiential knowledge*) in ordinary conversation and interviews to experience and define Britishness. It also looks at local and diasporic belonging, identities, and physical and conceptual ‘communities’. The thesis uses a statistical survey to situate ethnographic and conversational analyses in a wider quantitative context. Theoretical context is provided through an interdisciplinary approach, connecting anthropological, sociological, and social psychological theories of identity, ethnicity, community, nation, diaspora and belonging with the media studies and media anthropology literature on consumption of news content, news talk and the articulation of identities.

The thesis breaks away from historical discourses of Britishness that excluded ethnic minorities and emphasised difference by treating all informants as citizens and residents of the British nation. It also breaks away from community and ethnic-minority studies which locked their informants into single neighbourhoods or ethnic communities by taking a town-wide perspective emphasising common experiences of residence. It moves beyond media-centric studies which attribute undue importance to the influence of the media by splitting general talk from news talk, and engagements with *media discourse* and *experiential knowledge* in an approach termed ‘*discursive constructionism*’.

To meet these goals, it analyses two pan-ethnic case studies of general talk and news talk at local and national levels. The first shows how general talk about a sense of place in the town connects thematically with the most discussed stories from the local paper. The second shows how talk about routine national news prompts a series of critical commentaries about politics and society that are interlaced with discourses of nation and identities. Three ethnically-separate case studies show how engagements with ‘extraordinary’ international news stories from British and diasporic television news allow informants to construct identities and ‘symbolic communicative spaces’ in the international frame.

Altogether they enable a view on how individuals use different information resources to make sense of who they are, where they belong and the other people around them.

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*I dedicate this thesis to my family in England and Australia.*

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<sup>1</sup> All are comprised of data from the *Swindon Survey* unless indicated by \* which indicates Census data.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Key Theories and Concepts

## 1.0 Starting Point: Lived and Mediated Experience

[1] *The Browns were very friendly, and frank about their feelings on migrants and English nationalism. They were frustrated with the lack of interaction between migrant and local families on their estate. They were huddled on the sofa, their youngest son playing a videogame rented on Lovemovies.com. I had a copy of the Daily Star under my arm which I had bought because of the cover item on a banned St George's Day parade. Jim Brown noticed it and said he also had a copy. The story made him angry that he wasn't allowed to 'be English.'*

[2] *Krystyna and I were talking, over a sandwich, about how Swindon's Polish community was into its third British-born generation, some of whom spoke Polish and were interested in their heritage. Krystyna wanted to know about the language situation of Swindon's "Punjabi Sikhs" whom I was researching. I explained that the only non-English speakers I'd met, apart from the very elderly, were migrant marriage partners. Krystyna retorted that she'd heard on the news how a Pakistani girl who'd been sent to Pakistan for marriage had been found strangled in a lake in Britain. Luckily that sort of thing didn't happen among the "Poles".*

[3] *Mandip and I chatted in her lounge whilst her younger child ran about. She told me her mother had travelled to India on her Indian passport, mistakenly leaving her British one behind. At the end of her stay, British Airways had refused her check-in at the airport in Delhi because she couldn't prove she was British. A copy of her passport, faxed by the family, hadn't been accepted and so they'd anxiously had to courier the original from London. Mandip had just heard on the news how nine Pakistani students had been deported following a foiled plot to blow up a shopping-centre in Manchester. She was irritated that such things made security tighter for genuine British Indians.*

This thesis investigates the range of information resources we are confronted with in daily life that help us to make sense of who we are, where we belong and the other people around us. The above vignettes illustrate a choice of sources including: what we experience on the streets, what others tell us and information from news media. But which of these should we trust and which is most influential? The thesis sets out to answer these questions in multi-ethnic England through an interdisciplinary examination of the roles of *media discourse* from the news media and *experiential knowledge* gained during daily-life in shaping "English", "Indian Sikh" and "Polish" adults' verbal constructions of identity, community and belonging in Swindon, an ordinary regional town. It



utilises an ethnographic study of adults' conversations in a workplace, community venues and private homes to explore individuals' uses of a local newspaper, spread of national news *outlets*, and satellite and diasporic television, and their conversational engagements with political and public issues. As these reveal how they orientate themselves, the thesis constructs a multi-level analysis of feelings and meanings at local, national and international/ diasporic levels. The focus is on national attachments and identities but it also explores attachments and belonging/exclusion across other variables: ethnicity and race, religion, locality and diaspora. The *Swindon Survey*, a quantitative survey of the three 'groups' in Swindon provides larger-scale contextualisation of identity preferences and media consumption habits. For background and theoretical contextualisation, the thesis uses theories and concepts from anthropology, sociology, and social psychology to connect the literature on socio-residential, ethnic, national and diasporic community-belonging-identity with the media studies and media anthropology literature on identity formation and articulation through the consumption of news media content. It give special attention to the difference between lived from mediated experience so as not to over-determine the possibility that the media are indeed more influential.

## **1.1 *Britishness*: Journey to the Centre of the Political Agenda**

*Britishness* sprang into the public and political spheres as a prominent issue from the mid-1990s. A string of causes since the 1970s had highlighted the issue of insecurity over the nation's post-imperial identity, as discussed in section 1.4.4. Labour politicians, journalists, popular authors and academics were

debating and writing about what it meant to be British now.<sup>2</sup> Previously the territory of the far and centre right, discussants legitimated a language for the intellectual left to spawn opinion on matters of national pride and belonging, and a newly inclusive identity. “English” people had previously lacked the language and legitimacy to articulate on the subject of nationalism because of the stigma of racism inherited from far right proselytising,<sup>3</sup> and the exclusion of ‘majoritarian’ (Fenton, 2005) views from institutional multiculturalism during the 1980s. As journalist Alibhai-Brown had written:

Black, Asian and Irish Britons are urged constantly to think obsessively about their ancestral and religious identities. But when the English start wondering about themselves they find no understanding (Alibhai-Brown, 2002: 45).

They were now given an open invitation. ‘Race’, the phenotypical and skin colour manifestation of spurious folk biological notions of difference between white Britons and their black and Asian co-citizens and residents, the divisive hallmark of inclusion/exclusion inherited from the legacy of colonialism and post-war governments’ immigration policies, was no longer constructed as a barrier to acceptance as a member of the nation.<sup>4</sup> Advocates and commentators who saw ‘religion’, particularly vilified Islam, as a new marker of exclusion

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<sup>2</sup> Trevor Phillips, former chair of the CRE, suggested that 7/7 was evidence of multiculturalism having gone wrong, and that ‘Britain is sleepwalking to segregation’ (Werbner, 2005: 747). See also Goodhart’s ‘*Too Diverse*’, (2004) published in the *Guardian*, then *Prospect* magazine. Government reports authored by Crick (2003) and Cattle (2001) emphasised the value of citizenship and community cohesion. Politicians championing Britishness included Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, David Blunkett, and Michael Wills. Journalists included Alibhai-Brown (2004). Books and television programmes included: Paxman’s *The English* (1999), Colley’s *Britons* (1992), a special edition of *The Economist* entitled *Undoing Britain?* (1999) and Simon Schama’s documentary epic, *A History of Britain* (2000-01) (cited in Kumar, 2003: 251). A special edition of academic journal *New Community* (1995) featured articles on how Britain should move forward to re-think its national identity in the light of its post-imperial position (Miller, Crick, and Parekh, 1995).

<sup>3</sup> For example, Baumann (1996: 139) reported that his English informants feared being branded as racists if they questioned the value of positive discrimination.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Alien’ cultural customs, the major visible signifiers of difference from the ethnic majority, were also used as the basis for racism.

replacing 'race', argued adamantly for a new multi-faith national identity.<sup>5</sup> The shifts in thinking saw ethnic-minority members, more accustomed to being probed about their 'identities', now being persuaded that they belonged. Historian Linda Colley, enlisted by the government to deliver a speech at 10 Downing Street on the value of an all-encompassing British citizenship, was quick to point out in her influential book *Britons: Forging the Nation* (1992) that British identity had in fact always been heterogeneous and complex – multi-national with the four home nations (henceforth known as 'home nations' or 'home countries' in the thesis), globally located with its history of overseas colonies and dominions, and multi-ethnic after centuries of immigration (see also Nairn, 1977; Crick, 1995; Miller, 1995; Grillo, 1998: 169; Langlands, 1999; Wellings, 2002).

While political discourse superficially appeared to have moved on, my curiosity was stimulated as to how ordinary people felt. When I started my D.Phil research, aside from a selection of opinion polls carried out by social research bodies there was scant consideration of non-famous people's views. A rising interest in *Englishness* among some was exemplified by the waving of St George Cross flags at football matches (for example, Euro '96; the 2002 World Cup), the production of St George's Day cards, English tourist board campaigns, book sales figures, the mass public turn-out for the Queen's Golden Jubilee, and objectors to the fox hunting ban.<sup>6</sup> How, I wondered, would people living in an ordinary town, for example Swindon, respond to the rallying cries 'from above', as opposed to the residents of a 'global city' (R Cohen, 1997 [2008]: 157; Georgiou, 2006: 14) like London, exposed to human diversity daily

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<sup>5</sup> Parekh *et al.* (2000); Modood (1994: 66).

<sup>6</sup> Opinion polls were commissioned by Mori (1999; 2002), *National Centre for Social Research* (2004), and *YouGov* (2005). St George's Day cards were produced by Clinton Cards. The Tourist Board organised a week of events in 1998 entitled 'St George Invades Britain' as people were becoming 'less embarrassed to be English' (Paxman, 1998: 21). Paxman's (1999) book on Englishness sold 300,000 copies within two years of publication (Bryant, 2003: 393). Kate Fox also published her best-selling book, *Watching the English* (2004).

with people from all over the world in the street and on the tube. Ethnographers had already analysed local identities in regional towns and villages (Strathern, 1981; Wallman, 1982; Phillips, 1986; Young, 1986; Chapman, 1993; Rapport, 1993; Jenkins, 1999; Edwards, 2000), the identities of ethnic-minority members in single 'communities' (Shaw, 1988), and of diverse residents in multi-ethnic suburbs of the capital (Baumann, 1996). But from the existing anthropological literature, virtually nothing<sup>7</sup> had emerged about feelings towards British national identity. What did it mean to be British? Who was British and who wasn't? Did 'race' and 'religion' still matter? If people didn't identify as British, what did they identify as, if anything? What sociological variables and life experiences constituted inclusion and exclusion for British residents and citizens of different origins? And importantly, if and when people thought and talked about national identity, where did they get their information from – teachers at school, listening to politicians on television, talking to friends and people they met? By the time I undertook fieldwork between November 2007 and April 2009, the government, it seemed, had also responded, with the Ministry of Justice lobbying the public to submit their views on 'Britishness' via a website, social media tools *Facebook* and *Twitter*, and regional focus groups to its *Statement of Values* initiative.<sup>8</sup> The 2011 Census included a question on 'national identity', presenting respondents in England with the option of ticking an 'English' box as well as offering 'Scottish', 'Welsh', 'Northern Irish' and 'British'.

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<sup>7</sup> One exception is in Banks (1996: 171-178): a case study entitled 'The School Above the Pub'.

<sup>8</sup> The *Statement* was seen as a possible preamble to a Bill of Rights and Responsibilities that the Labour government proposed in a Green Paper in March 2009 but this was shelved before the General Election in May 2010. Michael Wills MP, interviewed December 2008; Amanda Williams, Ministry of Justice, interviewed April 2009.

My investigation could have been carried out almost anywhere in England, the least studied of the four home countries by anthropologists,<sup>9</sup> but Swindon, a former industrial regional town of 180,051 (British National Census, 2001) in Wiltshire, emerged *because* of its ordinariness, its ‘this could be anywhere’ feel. My first contacts – friends of friends and employees of the borough council – were at pains to stress how close to ‘the national average’ its demographic profile was. Walking around, it struck me as typical of the culturally unmarked and scenically unspectacular towns where many of England’s population live. The 2001 Census found that 91.48% of inhabitants were ‘white British’, leaving 8.52% of other ethnic backgrounds, a more marginal number than in England’s big cities, and towns known for ‘ethnic tensions’ such as Bradford (see Amin, 2002). With its high proportion of upwardly-mobile traditionally ‘working-class’ people of working age, lack of a large university, and its Conservative borough council, it seemed like somewhere where feelings about national identity could crystallise and be articulated by both ethnic majority and minorities.

This enquiry began with the nation as its primary unit of analysis, and adults of “Indian Sikh”, “Polish” and “English” origins<sup>10</sup> – all British citizens and resident in England – as its subjects of study. The understudied “English” make up the dominant cultural environment identified with the state, and the lifestyle

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<sup>9</sup> Northern Ireland is excluded from the discussion as I focused on Britain and more specifically England, due to the complexity of the province’s relationship to the British mainland. However, for Irish studies, see for example: Arensberg (1968 [1937]); Arensberg and Kimball (1968 [1940]); Brody (1974); Fox (1978); Glassie (1982); Cecil (1993); Donnan and MacFarlane (1997). For Scottish and Welsh studies, see for example: Frankenberg (1957, 1966); Emmett (1964); Chapman (1978; 1992); Ennew (1980); Charlsley (1982); Mewitt (1982a&b); Byron (1985); A P A P Cohen (1987; 1996b); MacDonald (1987); Parman (1990); Bowie (1993); Trosset (1993); Neville (1994); MacDonald (1997); Aull-Davies (1998).

<sup>10</sup> Although I acknowledge the socially-constructed character of these categories, it was necessary to draw the boundaries around groups to achieve the research goal of examining the relevance of ethnicity, race, religion, locality and national identity among individuals with different backgrounds in common, thus belonging to externally recognised ‘groups’. The diverse meanings of these categories were explored in chat and interviews, showing the interplay of individual and collective (group) identities. See Baumann (1996: 7-8) and Jenkins (1997) in section 1.4.2 on the difference between ‘categories’ and ‘groups’.

culture most readily available in the country, alongside whom ethnic and religious minorities reside. The “Sikhs” and “Poles” originally came to Swindon as economic migrants and refugees respectively, the first a brown-skinned people of sub-continental faith, the other white-skinned of European Christian origin. While advised by local public servants of various Asian origins that it would be unwise to pursue Pakistani or Bangladeshi Muslims due to potential difficulties with access, I was keen to examine another Asian group to angle the focus away from Islam, already the subject of disproportionately intense academic and media scrutiny. “Sikhs” and “Poles” were among the most numerous of Swindon’s residents of migrant origin and the most commonly identified ‘minorities’. The different histories of migration and settlement, and encompassed ‘religion’ and ‘race’ variables suggested that comparative analysis of identifications among these three ‘groups’ could shed important light on the question of who feels British today.

This thesis acknowledges that people experience many different strands of identity, and seeks to capture the dynamic character of identity construction and articulation. However, for short-hand convenience, I use a selection of specific labels when referring to my informants as the three collective categories in the study, especially when examining group trends. I put double quotes “” around them to indicate that my usage is not absolutist and essentialised. The labels are: “Sikh/s” (with “Indian Sikh/s” and “Punjabi Sikh/s” used interchangeably, but with emphasis on “Sikhs” from the Punjab in India as opposed to East Africa), “Poles” (or “Polish”) and “English”. I do not use quotes when referring to these people by group names in others contexts such as when describing *their* usages of the terms, general descriptions of their lives (it would be a slur on Swindon peoples’ ‘truth’ to question that it is “Sikhs” who settled in Swindon), or general references to notions of ‘culture’ and related terms, e.g. English culture or English identity. These double quotes also

help to differentiate between my usages and informants' usages which are sometimes included in single quotes. Double quotes "" are not used when these three ethnic groups are mentioned in the tables, due to space constraints. The local terms 'Old Poles', 'New Poles' and 'Swindon Poles' are written in single quotes when used descriptively in the text, because they are emic local terms.

"Sikhs" are known around the world as a distinct religious and ethnic group with a regional origin in the Punjab, India. The umbrella term 'Asian' is used to describe anyone of Indian Sub-Continental appearance in UK racial discourse, although the names of the three major faith groups represented among 'Asians': 'Sikh', 'Hindu', and 'Muslim', have emerged emically and etically since the large-scale migrations of the late 1940s onwards. The "Poles" are a national migrant minority, known by their nationality and never their faith in the UK. They are not recognised by any other term, although recent "Polish" migrants have been labelled more generically as 'Eastern Europeans' due to the public's indistinguishability of nationalities from the geographic east of Europe who have migrated to Britain since 2004. The "English" are widely known as people associated with the dominant ethnic group in Britain, living mostly in England. However as the thesis will show, many have mixed ancestry from all over the UK and Ireland, and increasingly the label "English" is used by people of other origins who live in England.

## 1.2 Being Methodologically Anti-Nationalist

With the exception of a handful of studies which address Scottish and Welsh national identities (Chapman, 1978; Charlsley, 1982; Bowie, 1993; Trosset, 1993; A P Cohen, 1996), ethnographers of Britain have failed to study national identity (English/British) in England, and British identity anywhere.<sup>11</sup> None of a list of works on England from the past thirty years addresses the subject (see, for example, Strathern, 1981; 1992; Wallman, 1982; 1984; Bouquet, 1986; Finnegan, 1989; Rapport, 1993; Chapman, 1993; Dawson, 1998; 2002; James, 1998; Hirsch, 1998; Jenkins, 1999; Edwards, 2000; Green, 2002),<sup>12</sup> probably due partly to the ideological influence of the main theoretical model in the 1980s and 1990s: Anthony Cohen's (1982; 1986) framing of the distinctiveness of local identities. He rejected the homogenising tendencies of the comparative sociology of mass societies (A P Cohen, 1982: 1-3) for its inaccurate generalisations about a single British culture, centralised state (until devolution), and the (now outdated observation of the) dominance of national press and broadcasting policies, linguistic and cultural norms, economic and political choices, and oversimplified identities imposed from London (A P Cohen, 1986: 8; 2002: 328). Another reason is anthropology's traditional research design and methodology, the small-scale local study produced by the single observer. How and where could one person carry out a physically-located, national-level study when it would be impossible to meet all the inhabitants of a nation (see also Anderson, 1983 [1991]: 6), and how would

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<sup>11</sup> National concepts (but not identity) were discussed in Rowbottom (2002) on British 'royalists', MacDonald (2002) on museums and shared British notions of 'home', and Wulff (2002) on British national ballet style; also Emmett, (1964: 4-5) and Frankenberg (1966: 91) on English society; Strathern (1992) on English kinship, comments made on 'English life' (Finnegan, 1989: 5-6; Jenkins, 1999: 20) or 'English thinking' (Edwards, 2000: 77).

<sup>12</sup> These studies may have examined English people but they do not consider English national identity.



anthropologists, who hang upon social constructionist arguments about the contingent and relational nature of boundaries, draw the limits of the nation?<sup>13</sup>

Research evidence from other disciplines, however, has justified the importance of studying the nation, suggesting it would be meaningful to Britons. Shunning globalisation theorists' suggestion that identity formation for all now takes on a global platform (e.g. Beck, 2002), Morley (2000: 14) amassed evidence indicating that most people born in Britain live near their place of birth and do not often move to new areas, making it highly unlikely that all participate in a web of global linkages. For example, "English" people as opposed to other Britons may be located within transnational networks of consumption, e.g. consuming products and media from around the globe, but the number living in England who are active participants in personal transnationalism, e.g. replenishing meaningful relations with family abroad via electronic communication and regular visits to the same degree as migrants and their descendents, is undoubtedly small.

Sociological and political science research has shown how British residents attribute different meanings to national identity, black and Asian Britons in England identifying with British citizenship and not cultural identity (Jacobson, 1997: 190-191; Modood *et al.*, 1997; Ethnos/CRE, 2005: 7) and Pakistanis in Glasgow identifying as Scottish-Pakistani or Scottish-Muslim (Saeed *et al.*, 1999). Focus groups showed that Britishness lacks meaning for white people (Ethnos/CRE, 2005: 18) and quantitative survey data (Health *et al.*, 2005) showed that in England, there are more people with exclusively 'British' or 'English' identities compared to Scotland and Wales, where there are few with

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<sup>13</sup> Psychological anthropologist Trosset (1993) made an essentialist but brave attempt to treat the nation as a unit of analysis by studying 'national' concepts of personhood and culture in two Welsh towns and other communities to formulate seven concepts defined by precise traits.

an exclusively 'British' identity and more with an exclusively Scottish or Welsh identity.<sup>14</sup>

Quantitative data from the *Swindon Survey* (see methodology section on p113-116 for its underlying rationale) shows a complex picture about different kinds of attachments relating to national identity among Swindon's "English", "Sikhs" and "Poles". All the categories named in the vertical columns in the tables are as written in the questionnaires by informants in their own words in response to open-ended questions. They are emic categories, and do not reflect my usage. Table 1 shows that the majority of "English" and "Sikh" respondents were born in UK/England compared to those born abroad, whereas slightly more "Poles" were born abroad. An overwhelming majority from each group held a British passport, suggesting a British citizenship identity (table 2). Respondents were asked to interpret their 'national origin' (table 3), and the three main responses were Britain (for "English"), Indian (for "Sikhs") and Polish (for "Poles"). Whereas a slight majority of "English" professed to have no religion, 98% of "Poles" and "Sikhs" declared themselves as 'Roman Catholic' or "Sikh" respectively (table 4). We know qualitatively that the category 'Sikh' describes a religious and ethnic group and is heavily used for identification, whereas the Christian categories are not utilised as such by the "English"/"Poles", despite Catholicism being a strong factor in Polish national identity. The majority of "English" people did not respond to the cultural heritage question (36%), reflecting the attribution of culture to ethnic minorities, but more overall identified with a variety of UK-based categories, mostly national but some local. The picture was clear for most "Sikhs" and "Poles" who saw themselves as 'Punjabi' (60%) and 'Polish' (77%) by cultural heritage. Only 5% of "Sikhs" saw themselves as having no cultural heritage whereas the

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<sup>14</sup> This reflects the Scottish and Welsh tendency to identify with their own nations as a rejection of the political dominance of England within Britain and the conflation of English/British identities.

number of “Poles” was higher at 20%, perhaps reflecting the ethnicisation of “Sikhs” and their ‘culture’ in British discourses. For each group, a small number of individualised invocations, including mixed identities, were recorded (table 5). These data justify the need for an ethnographic investigation to generate in-depth understanding of these complexities.

**Table 1: Country of Birth**

Country of birth										
<b>Ethnicity</b>	UK	England	Wales	India	Kenya	Pakistan	Poland	Within the EU	Egypt	<i>Base</i>
English (%)	16	82	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	87
Sikh (%)	18	35	0	40	4	4	0	0	0	55
Polish (%)	14	34	0	0	0	0	47	3	2	58

**Table 2: Main Passport Held**

Passport												
<b>Ethnicity</b>	UK	British	UK/ British	British/ English	English	Indian	Polish	British/ Polish	Polish/ English	Euro- pean	None	<i>Base</i>
English (%)	32	52	2	1	6	0	0	0	0	1	6	87
Sikh (%)	7	75	4	0	2	11	0	0	0	0	2	56
Polish (%)	9	52	0	0	3	0	31	2	3	0	0	58

**Table 3: National Origin**

National origin														
<b>Ethnicity</b>	UK	Britain	White British	English	Welsh	British Asian	British/ Indian	Indian	Punjab/ Indian	Sikh/ Punjabi	Polish	Polish/ Russian	Missing	<i>Base</i>
English (%)	6	66	3	24	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	87
Sikh (%)	2	25	0	5	0	2	2	55	4	2	0	0	4	54
Polish (%)	2	36	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	59	2	0	59

**Table 4: Religion**

Religion								
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Church of England	Roman Christian	Roman Catholic	Sikh	Bahá'í	Virtualist	None	<i>Base</i>
English (%)	28	8	8	0	1	1	53	85
Sikh (%)	0	0	0	98	0	0	2	56
Polish (%)	0	2	98	0	0	0	0	58

**Table 5: Cultural Heritage**

**Cultural Heritage**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	British	Traditio- nal British	White British	English and British	English	Welsh	Scotland	Irish	English/ Irish	Anglo- Saxon	English/ Midlands	Cornish
English (%)	21	13	2	8	27	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Sikh (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Polish (%)	0	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Cumbrian	Black Caribbean	Pottery Industry	British Asian	Indian	Anglo- Indian	Kenyan Asian	Punjab/ India	Punjabi	Sikh/ Indian	Sikh	Polish
English (%)	2	2	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sikh (%)	0	0	0	2	19	2	2	4	60	4	8	0
Polish (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	77
	Polish/ English	Polish/ Russian	Italian/ Polish	European	Western European	European Christian	Portu- guese	No reply	Missing	<i>Base</i>		
English (%)	4	0	0	2	0	0	2	36	5	87		
Sikh (%)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	56		
Polish (%)	7	2	2	2	2	2	0	20	5	59		

The absence of ethnography shows that although studying 'the nation' is a methodological challenge, people living locally experience the abstraction of the nation (and the state) in contexts where it is highlighted. The answer lies partly with Cohen himself, who observed that people grow aware of their unique local identities at an imagined boundary between their locality and the wider [i.e. *national*] society, of which they become conscious when coming into contact with its representations, such as events and communications involving state bureaucrats (A P Cohen, 1986: 8). This also applies in their engagements with various national institutions, events, services, businesses and products as citizens, residents, service-users, and consumers (see also Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008), or simply in discursive interactions (Billig, 1995; Hall, 1997) with people they know informally or intimately, family, friends etc. These engagements could occur whilst an individual was physically-located in their town or almost anywhere.

Points drawn from migration studies can be usefully applied to the study of nations. Anthropological critiques of cultures as bounded and of the geographically-bounded single field-site (see Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Marcus, 1995; Appadurai, 1991; 1995; 1996) freed migration scholars from these limitations so that they could map 'people, ideas, objects' (Candea, 2007: 169) across complex networks. These researchers have also critiqued the 'methodological nationalism' (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002) of research that enclosed the study of social and historical processes within the borders of individual nations. Indulging in a self-conscious 'methodological nationalism', however, frees the anthropologist from a fear of studying 'nations' by firstly, treating the nation as a bounded field-site (what Candea calls an 'arbitrary location') with due attention paid to the ethnographer's own 'processes of bounding, selection and choice processes' (Candea, 2007: 169) in its designation; and secondly, by examining how and where informants designate the

boundaries and contents of national categories themselves. Unlike Candea's (2007) problematisation of the social 'totality' or holism that the multi-sited ethnography can suggest, by designating the nation as an 'arbitrary location' of one's own framing, it is made clear that it is not a concrete, objective reality.<sup>15</sup> The present study takes the British nation-state and the constituent nation of England as its referential backdrop, and acknowledges the presence of other nation-states including India and Poland as key reference points in some informants' worldviews. I avoid imposing 'methodological nationalism' on the entire project with the multi-level analysis of informants' discursive constructions of their attachments at local, national and international/diasporic levels, acknowledging the range of social fields in which lives are lived.

By the start of fieldwork, *Britishness* was everywhere, but a complication was highlighted by existing research. Sociologists (e.g. Fenton and Mann, 2005; 2006) and social psychologists (e.g. Condor, 2000) responding to the rise of *Englishness* were finding that "English" people interviewed were unlikely to respond to questions about personal national identity being unsure of what it meant or if they had one, or worried about being seen as racists. Although other disciplines' research had illuminated ethnic-minority feelings on national identity, several seminal ethnographies (to which the present study is indebted) exploring the construction of ethnic-minority identities in the course of daily-life in Southall in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Gillespie, 1995; Baumann, 1996<sup>16</sup>) failed to include more than one or two informants' statements on British identity, those featured conveying a sense of exclusion. This absence was the result of two things: a preoccupation with local and diasporic identities in a period when ethnic-minority members still struggled to feel British - as black sociologist Gilroy asked: '...how long is long enough to become a genuine Brit?'

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<sup>15</sup> My fieldwork was multi-sited in the sense that units of analysis were the town and nation, and data were gathered at different locations in Swindon (see Chapter 2).

<sup>16</sup> English people were also studied.

(1987: 51); and a focus on 'diaspora' as the major theoretical advance: conceiving of migrant minorities as not simply resident in isolated ethnic 'communities' in host country locations of settlement, but as embroiled in wider diasporic networks.<sup>17</sup> However, all of this begged a question. If "English" informants were reticent in discussing national identity, the two other 'groups' risked feeling excluded, and existing research was based on ethnic-minority input to focus groups and surveys, where and how would I capture Swindon residents talking about national identity?

I took my cue from media research. Some researchers (Hall, 2002: 87-88; Schiffauer *et al.*, 2005) have shown how the education system can disseminate messages about citizenship and national identity.<sup>18</sup> However, ethnographic studies of media consumption (Gillespie, 1995; Mankekar, 1999; Abu-Lughod, 2005; Madianou, 2005a, 2005b, 2009; Georgiou, 2006) have shown that the media can have a direct impact on the perceptions of identity articulated by adults, as it reaches people throughout their lives as public discourse develops and changes.<sup>19</sup> Classic media theories exploring historical research,

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<sup>17</sup> As R Cohen (1997[2008]: 8) has observed, 'From the mid-1990s, diaspora was chic...' Momentum did not gather around the related concept of 'transnationalism' until the late 1990s (Portes, Guarnizo, and Landolt, 1999; Vertovec, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> Citizenship became a statutory foundation subject in English schools from September 2002.

<sup>19</sup> These studies have slightly different approaches to the issue of media power in the construction of identities. The first three studies highlight the 'top down' power of the nation-state, media and class categories, but emphasis audience agency in processes of identity construction. Gillespie's key argument on power is that although identity discourses and categories are predominantly shaped by 'nation state' and 'class politics' (1995: 208), the combination of transnational and domestic media transmitted a multitude of cultural resources that young diaspora members could draw upon to creatively construct hybrid diasporic identities, informally contesting the limitations of the above. Mankekar (1999) and Abu-Lughod (2005) have a similar approach to power showing how the 'top down' (see footnote 32 for explanation of the terms 'top down' and 'bottom up') ideological powers of state media (Indian and Egyptian state television) were subverted by the 'bottom up' agency of female audiences, who constructed personal readings of television drama serials inscribed with intentionally nationalist messages, aimed at reinforcing macro 'structures of power and inequality'. Both took a holistic view of 'mediation' by analysing the macro frames of national state media regulation and production, television drama serials as 'texts', reception of these programmes, and corresponding discussions where women engaged in social critiques of programme content, subverting and contesting dominant discourses. Madianou (2005a etc.) advanced the holistic approach to studying the media further by taking a multi-layered approach to examining media power at each



broadcasters' policies and content, and press content (for example, Anderson, 1983; Cardiff and Scannell, 1987; Billig, 1995) argue that the media is an essential vehicle in raising national consciousness, and talking about media content, particularly the news about government and societal affairs (Habermas, 1989; Dahlgren, 2005; also Livingstone *et al.*, 2006), can call for reinforcement of one's position as a citizen, resident, or member of an interest group. Most remain untested, lacking in empirical evidence, but they do highlight the fact that news is the major supplier of information on public affairs beyond the individual's sphere of personal acquaintances, and brings information on the wider area, nation, state and world to their attention.

These works are evaluated in the section on key theories and concepts.

I couldn't assume that talking about the news would specifically lead Swindon residents to verbally construct notions of identity. They might express such ideas in routine conversation or not at all. I heeded the observations of Gamson (1992: xi-xii), who split lived experience from mediated experience, noting that people have access to multiple information resources: 'media discourse, public discourse, popular wisdom (common-sense) and *experiential knowledge*. *Media discourse* and *experiential knowledge* are key concepts in the thesis. Lived experience or *experiential knowledge* includes many things: face-to-face encounters and information acquired in conversations with family, friends, state bureaucrats, people on the street and many others during the course of time spent in education, travelling, working, socialising, being at home and so

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interconnection level in the mediation process, locating each level in its' wider economic, cultural, and social contexts. This multi-level investigation meant examining the power of media as institution, text, and technology, people's experiences of media and journalists, and whether people contested or absorbed and repeated mediated discourses during news reception. Georgiou (2006) has a similar approach to the first three authors, but emphasised the power of transnational media forms themselves to alter the experience of diaspora by connecting distant communities, representing a range of cultural influences to scattered audiences, developing the conceptual spaces of diaspora, reducing time difference and distance, and creating distinct 'media cultures'.

on. It is, after all, now anthropological common-sense that identity-consciousness can develop during encounters with others (see Barth, 1969), whether face-to-face or via mediated representations and discourses. These suppositions threw up questions – what if, in seeking responses to national media, media with a different reach such as local, ethnic-minority, or diasporic media dominated as triggers of verbal positioning? Would informants reference local identities which might overlap with their physical locality, or diasporic identities? Following Gillespie (1995) who analysed consumption of local, national and Indian news among Punjabi youth, I broadened my enquiry to find out if and how different kinds of news content could trigger reflections on identity, knowing from the anthropological literature and recent think tank literature (Stone and Muir, 2007; Muir and Wetherell, 2010) that local identities in Britain are strong, and diasporic identities well documented.

### **1.3 The Multi-Level, Multi-Ethnic Group Study: Commonality and Difference**

Swindon was the place where my informants had their physical, material and other daily-life experiences. This locatedness also represented what they had in common as well as the nation itself, so the town became another unit of analysis.<sup>20</sup> In selecting a target informant group, I moved away from the abundance of literature on ethnic-minority youth (see Gillespie, 1995; Back, 1996; Alexander, 1996 & 2000; Jacobson, 1998; Hall, 2002) because teenagers are just becoming conscious of identity and nationality, experimenting with ideas

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<sup>20</sup> See Wallman (1982; 1984) on the suburb, and for recent literature on inter-ethnic mixing on a face-to-face basis on estates, suburbs and in a small town with a high concentration of established minorities and recent immigrants, see: Blokland (2003); Wimmer (2004); Jensen and Tyler (2009); Ray, Hudson and Phillips (2008); Wise (2009).

of self.<sup>21</sup> Instead, I looked at adults of 'prime working age' – 30-55 (a category advised by sociologist Anthony Heath) - with some demographic variables and experiences in common, to make for an equal comparison across the three 'groups'. I wanted to study people who are old enough to have life and work experience, exposure to different ways of thinking, possibly bringing up the next generation, and to know what it means to live in Britain and be a British citizen (unlike recent migrants). All these factors could likely have a bearing on established perceptions of national identity. Among the "Sikhs" and "Poles", this age range was equal to the second migrant generation, many born and raised in the town alongside the "English". Initial enquiries showed that this generation were mother-tongue or bi-lingual English speakers, able to engage the verbal idioms of the news and wider communication, in common with their "English" neighbours.

Like recent migration and ethnic relations scholars (e.g. Ash, 2002; Glick Schiller, Çağlar and Guldbrandsen, 2006; Wimmer, 2004, 2007), at the local level I wanted to avoid the traditional pursuit of analysing 'ethnic communities'. The focus on minority ethnicity and race masks other axes of identity (e.g. gender, class, consumption) that they share with 'other groups' (Ash 2002: 77; Wimmer, 2004: 2),<sup>22</sup> and also suggests they will only ever be seen as minority members within an ethnically or culturally defined nation. Undoubtedly my informants would be ethnically located and aware, and ethnicity would colour national and local identities. However, unlike diasporic studies (e.g. Gilroy, 1987, 1993; Hall, 1990; Gillespie, 1995), before casting them in the mould of ethnicity and race, I approached them (especially through interview questioning) as citizens of the nation and residents of the town with varied affiliations and attachments, in a desire to move 'beyond ethnicity'. I sought to advance beyond the

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<sup>21</sup> Heath and Tilley (2007: 674) have demonstrated how 'affective attachments' such as national pride are 'particularly likely to be related to formative experiences in early adulthood.'

<sup>22</sup> See also Ray, Hudson and Tyler (2009).

dominant black/white racial dualism of the colonial era, and the anti-racism advocacy of the race-relations era in British social policy which fragmented in the early 1990s (see Parekh, 1989; Gilroy, 1997; Modood, 1996). Stuart (1992a) leapt ahead by explaining that to bridge the 'majority' / 'minority' divide, the concept of 'ethnicity' should be 'reclaimed' as something relevant to all, not only minorities (see also Alibhai-Brown, 2000: 271). Everyone, he wrote, is 'ethnically located' and it was important to split 'ethnicity' from its associations with nationalism, imperialism, racism and the state and unsettle the 'hegemonic concept of Englishness' (Hall, 1992a: 257). He was an early champion of inclusive Britishness.

Literature on 'whiteness' (Frankenberg *et al.*, 1993; 1997) has shown its racialisation as a polemic against which skin-colour racism towards dark-skinned people has historically been constructed. However, corrective literature has told how in Britain's past, white-skinned colonised peoples such as the Irish were regarded as inbred barbarians (Hickman, 2005: 24-5). 'Race' as folk biological and cultural difference, and also 'religion' were harnessed with 'white' groups in anti-Semitic, anti-Catholic and anti-Irish prejudice in the 19th-century and recently (Hickman, 1995: 4). These experiences were absent in the race-relations literature which has 'rather unquestioningly accepted the myth of British homogeneity prior to 1945' (Hickman, 1995: 3). The black/white racial dualism has undoubtedly been painfully present in the experiences of black and Asian people. However, the dichotomisation of all white people on the other side of a central dividing line in racialised discourse and real life between those included in British identity and on the receiving end of equal, undiscriminating treatment, and the excluded and marginalised, is inaccurate. Goulbourne expressed the prevailing assumption that 'white' migrant groups such as Poles, Ukrainians and Jews were more likely to be seen as members of the cultural nation (Goulbourne, 1991: 122-3) because they are able to blend in

physically. However, scholars of white migrants such as the Irish (Hickman and Walter, 1997) and Polish (Staniewicz, 2006: 11) have documented the cultural and faith-based racism they have faced in Britain. Anti-Semitism is well documented throughout Europe (see Kushna and Valman, 2000; Kushna, 2006 on anti-Semitism in Britain). My Polish informants were quick to communicate the racism experienced by their parents and recent migrant relatives.

Although the ethnicity of the white “English” majority was barely acknowledged or analysed as a discursive construct due to its construction as ‘the norm’ in historical racial discourse, Fenton and Mann (2005) challenged the stereotyping of the “English” in the older ‘race-relations’ literature. They were portrayed as either privileged above ethnic minorities who should aspire to be like them, or as racists and cultural ignoramuses, or as a one-dimensional empty category (Fenton and Mann, 2005: 2). Fenton has unpicked this:

The white ethnic majority...are not so much a group as an idea of a group which is ideologically reproduced, and is grounded in habits of thought and speech, both public and everyday... (Fenton, 2005: 4).

His observation indicated to me that exploring how “English” people themselves viewed their identities, whether they analysed themselves in ethnic terms, and giving them an ethnographic voice was important in overcoming the majority/minority divide in the scholarly presentation of racialised discourse. I had my own frustrations over the homogenising of white British identity, having been taunted by educational curricula<sup>23</sup> and fellow-students with post-colonial resentment at a multi-ethnic, south-east London school in the 1980s for being white and middle-class. My background takes in family origins

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<sup>23</sup> Alibhai-Brown (2004) wrote how 1980s multicultural policies in education were tinged with post-colonial guilt that took a punishing approach to white ethnicity, alienating white children by ‘uncritically celebrating previously colonized societies’ and by implication, ‘accusing’ and ‘undermining’ ‘white civilizations’ (2004: 52).

and residence in England, Scotland, Malta and Australia. I am a first-generation Londoner, the only member of my extended family born here. My identity represents native British diversity, and does include local, national and global linkages and attachments.

Another reason for opting for the rare multi-ethnic group study was the disciplinary standard that identity formation does not happen in isolation.<sup>24</sup> Processes of identity articulation among multiple ethnic and religious groups in Southall's inter-ethnic environment are the subject of Baumann's (1996) exemplary ethnography, demonstrating this format in urban Britain and providing the foundational model for this study. It urged me away from the single ethnic group study (or 'immigrant ghetto' or 'community study') and its portrait of a single 'autonomous culture' (Baumann, 1996: 9; see also Wimmer, 2007: 25).<sup>25</sup> The format suggests an ethnically isolated existence, unrealistic for urban Britain. Ethnic-minority studies also create an 'other' out of the ethnic majority by referencing (rather than studying) them as an implicitly oppressive force with whom minority members have little contact or affinity, which is somewhat inaccurate. Many black and Asian people identify with 'British' and majority cultural styles, and do not want to be tied to the culture of their parents

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<sup>24</sup> For other multi-ethnic studies, see Wallman, 1984 on households in London; Shashahani, 2002 on a neighbourhood in Tehran; Sanjek, 1998, on participation in district-level politics in New York; Liebes, 1997 and Madianou, 2005a on media consumers in Athens and Israel; Wessendorf, 2010 on residents' multi-faceted 'superdiverse' ties in a London borough. An advance on framing informants as 'groups' by ethnic, religious and nationality variables would be to take up Wessendorf's (2010) approach to 'superdiversity', examining a wider range of variables, including ethnicity, 'migration histories, religions, educational backgrounds, legal statuses, length of residence and economic backgrounds'. With my concern being to examine 'national identity', conceptualising informants as three separate 'groups' was an appropriate methodology. A further advance would be to study non-ethnic social units (see Wimmer, 2007: 25) with multi-ethnic participation, e.g. Sanjek's 'district-level political field' (1998: 2) and Tyler's 'community Forum' (2007: 581), and let the local relevance of ethnic and racial dimensions reveal itself. This was not possible in Swindon, as Chapter 2 explains.

<sup>25</sup> Wimmer (2004: 2) emphasised how transnationalism research (e.g. Vertovec, 1999) had already changed the perspective on immigrants in national contexts. However, studies such as mine which look exclusively at the second generation in settled networks, whose participation in transnational networks is irregular, require a different conceptual framework, e.g. the multi-level study.

or family origins (Modood, 1992: 3; 6). Baumann showed how identity formation is a process encompassing many facets of personal and collective identity, an approach that has become standard.

Although some of Swindon's "Sikhs" and "Poles" participated in organised ethnic and religious communities at the town's two *gurdwaras* (Sikh temples), the *Polski Ośrodek Katolicki* (Polish Catholic Community Centre) or Polish-language masses at Holyrood Catholic Church, generally they didn't reside in ethnic clusters but lived scattered throughout the town with "English" and other neighbours. In their urban lives, they were active in a variety of personalised networks by residence, ethnicity and other factors. Informants of all backgrounds felt that socio-residential community, once the cornerstone of British life (d'Ancona, 1996), had ceased to exist in most parts of town, a complaint voiced even by those whose main social networks were national and not local. This revealed again how shared experience can transcend ethnic boundaries. Although the "Sikhs" and "Poles" participated in national and local life, their notions of identity and feelings of inclusion and exclusion were fundamentally shaped by physical, cultural, religious, material and social influences from elsewhere. Ignoring their international/diasporic attachments or engagements with 'diasporic media' (Georgiou, 2005: 36; 2006) would have been to underplay a big part of their lives, so I included this dimension as well.

However, rather than provide a traditional in-depth ethnography of three 'ethnic cultures', my aim was to gain enough knowledge of the way that these were played out locally in order to be able to analyse culturally-specific reactions to media content in a comparative way. I also observed individuals in their homes. What is sacrificed in depth, partly through being finely-spread, and having to make the strange familiar and the familiar strange at once, is gained in breadth, as is common with multiple ethnic group studies. Of the existing models, Wallman's (1984) work on four black and four white

households was ahead of its time in treating ‘national/regional/racial origin’ as ‘one of a number of characteristics that may, or indeed, may not affect the way households organise a livelihood or relate to an area and the people around them’ (1984: 2) and examining ‘in what circumstances does the bond of local loyalty or local identity override the divisions of ethnic, cultural or racial origin?’ (1984: 3). However, it does not describe the wider context of local ethnic networks. Baumann provides stunning contextual and anecdotal depth to frame his strong theoretical argument, but his work is short on informants’ statements, some of which were taken from the BA dissertations of his research assistants (for example, 1996: 95). Madianou’s work on Greek, Greek Cypriot, Turkish, Pomac and Roma media-consumers in Athens focuses more on qualitative and quantitative analyses of media content and audience response and has less depth on cultural context, and individual lives and homes. Wessendorf’s (2010: 10) recent work ‘focuses primarily on social relations in public space’, not private homes.

## **1.4 Key Theories and Concepts**

### **1.4.1 A Multi-Level Approach to Community, Belonging and Identity**

Whilst the relationship between ‘community’ and ‘identity’ is often considered, the notion of ‘belonging’ is less well qualified. Yuval-Davis (2006: 197; 199) points out that it concerns a naturalised emotional attachment which is only articulated and politicised when under threat. She has also analysed ‘belonging’ on three levels, all of which feature in my analysis: 1) externally recognised belonging to identity categories in social or economic locations (applies in governments’ / my analyses of others’ identities); 2) in ‘individuals’ identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings’ (informants’ perceptions); and 3) in ‘ethical and political value



systems with which people judge their own and others' belonging' (e.g. whether immigrants qualify as members of a nation) (seen here in informants' construction of 'us'/'them' parameters to demarcate themselves from 'others' they disapprove of).

#### **1.4.2 Community, Identity and Ethnicity**

There is a close relationship between theories of local and ethnic communities, nations and diasporas, their members' feelings of belonging/exclusion and the identities they construct. All can be social fields, groups of people, organised networks, policy discourses, or identities. Moreover, the idea of 'community' has a special place in the British social imagination, as Chapter 4 will show, and has been the 'dominant discourse' on belonging over nationalism and patriotism. This section outlines the theories, particularly as a premise for assessing whether the social fields that informants construct in Chapters 4 - 6 constitute 'communities' or not, and how the term is used throughout.

Although 'community' has sat uncomfortably in social theory as a 'vague' and 'slippery' analytical concept (Amit, 2002: 13; citing Baumann, 1996: 14; A P Cohen, 2002: 165), the socio-residential community has been potent emically, and of long interest to sociologists and anthropologists of Britain. Dating back to Tönnies (1955) who recorded the transition from the intimate *Gemeinschaft* (community - idealised) to the anonymised *Gesellschaft* (society - reality), 20<sup>th</sup>-century British 'community studies' investigated its manifestations in rural villages (via a short period of interest in networks in the 1960s) through to 'encapsulated groupings' (Amit, 2002: 15) in urban locales (e.g. early examples include Frankenberg, 1957, 1966; Littlejohn, 1963; Banton, 1964; Cunnison, 1966). Tönnies' conceptual split rings true in this thesis. Physically-located and based on face-to-face relationships, community was treated in structural and

geographical terms, and place and people were conflated with culture and identity. Studies were replete with projections of the positive connotations inherent in the word 'community' as identified by Baumann (1996: 15): 'interpersonal warmth, shared interests, and loyalty' (see also Bauman, 2001: 1). Anthropologists sought these traits in their locations of study to indicate the existence of such objective communities (Pahl, 2005).

Barth's break-through theory (1969) of ethnic groups dislocated the equation between categorical or collective identity with shared culture. He demonstrated how ethnic boundaries can arise and can be articulated or ascribed by a group of culturally disparate people. 'Community' was not the substance of aggregation but the 'cumulative outcome of a set of choices and strategies employed by individual agents' (Amit, 2002: 16).<sup>26</sup> Taking an interpretive and experiential approach to culture, Anthony Cohen's work (1985) moved from structural and organisational approaches to face-to-face local or ethnic communities, to a symbolic one. Building on Barth's insights about boundary construction (expanded upon in the discussion of ethnicity below), communities were constructed by their members upon perception of a symbolic boundary during interactions with outsiders, as individuals became aware of self-identity in interaction with others outside the self. The common meaning of a community was less important than its malleable form, 'a largely mental construct, whose "objective" manifestations in locality or ethnicity give it credibility...' (A P Cohen, 1985: 109). A string of ethnographies paid homage to Cohen by describing locals around Britain delineating *who* constituted an authentic bearer of socio-residential identity through various behavioural and verbal acts (e.g. A P Cohen, 1982; 1986; Phillips, 1986; Young, 1986; Chapman,

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<sup>26</sup> Barth (2000: 18) later argued that the 'cultural stuff' of ethnic groups, of deep internal resonance, was heavily involved in boundary maintenance.

1993; Rapport, 1993; Jenkins, 1999; Edwards, 2000). Chapter 4 explores this in Swindon.

Cohen also outlined a theory of identity formation, relating individual to collective identity. The individual belonged to a symbolic community, located somewhere between kinship and society, which was the arena in which they acquired culture<sup>27</sup> through interaction.<sup>28</sup> Depending on a given community's (of locality, ethnicity, interest etc) social discourse, it was imbued with many symbolic meanings pertaining to common membership, recognised but not perceived uniformly. The individual was able to express a collective identity via recognition of common membership. Individuality was revealed by interacting in the community's social space, which could be invested in without being compromised. Community provided a referent for personal identities through which collective identities are refracted, as demonstrated by the relationship between personal and national identity (A P Cohen, 1996a, 1996b). This theory comes close to the approach to identity construction that will be taken in this thesis, whereby it is seen as an ongoing discursive process (see Billig, 1995; Mankekar, 1999; Madianou, 2005a; Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008) which remains incomplete (Hall, 1991: 47), experienced and articulated through everyday interaction with reference to significant diacritica (which can be externally imposed).

Anthony Cohen's theory's shortcomings include viewing representations of communities as entirely contextual and empty of social content (Amit, 2002:

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<sup>27</sup> Gupta and Ferguson (1997a: 5) have described culture as 'a site of difference and contestation' and pointed out how cultural globalisation and transnationalism have dislocated it from fixed places such as locality and nation, and broadened the range of sites in which culture is acquired (e.g. media).

<sup>28</sup> A P Cohen later enlarged this theory to apply it to the 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983; [1991]) of the nation (1996a; 1996b).

47).<sup>29</sup> This criticism has also been levelled at Barth's original theory of ethnicity, as outlined below. Some communities are conceptualised on the basis of what people have in common (physically, materially, politically etc, e.g. as in the case of national identity), not just in terms of oppositional categories (Amit, 2002: 59). Some also have a structural or organisational basis (e.g. the *Polish community* in Swindon) which overlaps with a socially constructed one. The thesis explores what informants mean by 'community'.

Throughout the last century (Alexander *et al.*, 2007: 769), sociological and political discourses about 'community' have centred on its decline, firstly in response to urban-industrial society, then to the 'homogenising logic' of nationalisation and internationalisation (A P Cohen, 1985: 76), and later the globalisation of political economies (Amit, 2002: 1) and American mass culture (Hall, 1991: 27), and increasing international migration. This has led to reassertions of ethnic, local (A P Cohen, 1985: 76; Hall, 1991; Beck, 2002: 38; Muir and Wetherell, 2010: 12), and religious communities (Barth, 2000: 27) and narrow racist nationalisms (Hall, 1991: 26). As Bauman observed: "'Community" is nowadays a paradise lost – but one to which we dearly hope to return...' (2001: 3) Anthony Cohen also remarked (1985: 77) that people seek to replenish the lost structural (or physical) boundaries of communities with symbolic boundaries, a major theme of Chapter 4.

Later ethnographies document a strong collective memory of the historical importance of notions of 'community' around Britain (A P Cohen, 1982, 1986; Rapport, 2002).<sup>30</sup> The themes of 'identity, belonging and the local conceptualisation of boundaries' (Edwards, 2000: 26) emerged as distinctive

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<sup>29</sup> A P Cohen (2000: 166-7) later revised his own position to accept this flaw in his argument, and as also applied to self and collective identity, '...likely, in part, to be non-relativistic and non-contingent.'

<sup>30</sup> Such works included Richards and Robin, 1975; Fox, 1978; Strathern, 1981; Byron, 1986; A P Cohen, 1982, 1986, 1987.

features of social life. These are explored in Swindon in Chapter 4. The discourse of declining communities is still present in politics and public life (Macdonald *et al.*, 2005; Charles and Aull Davies, 2005), and in Swindon (d'Ancona, 1996). A social shift towards 'individualism' notable since Margaret Thatcher's governance (Samuel, 1989: xxx [*roman numerals numbering in preface*]) has been outlined (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992; Grillo, 1998). Muir and Wetherell (2010: 5) describe it as resulting from 'neo-liberal labour markets, the casualisation of work, the decline of heavy industries, the changing nature of family life and patterns of cultural globalisation...' These have splintered 'communal ways of life' and 'cut through old bonds of common fate, mutual dependence and trust, as well as long-standing political and social commitments linked to neighbourhood, nation and class.' These effects are assessed in Chapter 4.

Although 20<sup>th</sup>-century scholars transcended the cultural stuff of communities, the Black Consciousness Movement in the US (Baumann, 1986: 12) of the 1960s and 1970s froze and stratified the concept of identity in a discourse whereby 'minority' groups could claim 'rights' based on the assertion of essentialised 'identities'. Although in Britain, the semantics of 'community' had gained a new elasticity,<sup>31</sup> the word is often '...a polite term for "ethnic-minority"'. Baumann (1996: 20; 22-23) observed a 'dominant discourse' on ethnic minorities influenced by Black Consciousness and present in the language of state and expressive arts articulators, which posited the fixed relationship between identity-belonging-community-culture found in the 1980s public policy ideology of 'multiculturalism'. It linked the collective identity of 'ethnic' minorities to discrete 'communities'. Each community was presumed to belong to a shared culture defined by a common heritage and a biologically reductive

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<sup>31</sup> In Britain, Baumann noted 'communities' of religion on either side of Northern Ireland's sectarian divide, of profession, even of taxation (1996: 14).

concept of 'race'. Baumann's (1996) reading of 'the dominant discourse' was still present in the language used by Swindon residents when describing ethnic minorities and ethnic groups, so the term is often used (with reference to his name) in this thesis. Although Southallians used a 'demotic discourse' amongst themselves which dissolved the equation between culture and community in a range of ways, they had to engage the 'dominant discourse' to compete for local authority funding for 'community' activities on the basis of 'ethnic' or 'cultural' need. The extent to which these terminologies are employed in Swindon is explored, particularly in Chapter 4.

Blokland (2003: 3) has echoed Amit's observations on 'community' in the scholarly portrayal of ethnicity: that it should be analysed as a discursive construction with structural meanings at its borders. This approach is taken up throughout, but is preceded here with an examination of the analytical development of 'ethnicity' in anthropology. Despite its purpose as an analytical tool, 'ethnicity' has been portrayed as a superordinate identity in much social science theorising since notions of 'race' came into scientific and public disrepute post 1945 (Jenkins, 1997: 9). Contemporary anthropological theorists of ethnicity (e.g. Eriksen, 1993; Banks, 1996; Jenkins, 1997; Wimmer, 2005; 2007) have taken their impetus from Barth (1969), as above, who critiqued prior usages in which biological heritage was linked to shared culture, fields of interaction and communication, and membership perceived both internally and externally as a distinctive category. Describing ethnicity as the 'social organisation of cultural difference', he showed how it is both relational and processual, with his focus on the perception and maintenance of boundaries between groups: an 'Us' and a 'Them'. Eriksen (1993: 28) called this 'dichotomisation', and also identified a simultaneous and essential process of 'complementarisation'. This occurs where both groups recognise a common field of interaction where they become a 'We' and 'You'. Eriksen (1993: 66) also

contributed an important insight that explains the different forms of behaviour people exhibit regarding different categories of others in a given common, multi-ethnic field of interaction, depending on the strategies of inclusion/exclusion permitted within the field. In the broad social environments of multi-ethnic Swindon and England, where most people perceive degrees of difference between different ethnic groups, people would regard others as 'more or less like us' (a strategy he called 'analog'). In other fields, such as the discursive constructions of boundaries between 'Us' and 'all the others' in the context of certain topics, all outsiders would be regarded with the same degree of difference (he calls this 'digital'). Both strategies are exhibited in Swindon, although 'analog' is the most common.

Barth and Eriksen's insights provide the basis for anthropological theorisations of ethnicity, but the literature has remained characterised by several unresolved oppositions. Although Barth successfully moved away from the linkage in folk theorisations of ethnicity between group identities and real or fictive kinship (Eriksen, 1993: 12), he still represented a position known as 'primordialist'. This views ethnicity as the most important personal identity, determined by origin and background in the indeterminate past (see also Soviet Ethnos theory in Banks, 1996: 17-24). The opposite of a primordialist position is an 'instrumentalist' one, represented by the work of Abner Cohen (1969; 1974). He showed how ethnic consciousness can develop under particular circumstances in the present, and how the group need for political power and economic resources can shape the assertion of ethnic identities for strategic ends. His work highlighted the situational aspect of ethnicity, although failing to explain how during large-scale change processes such as nation formation, ethnic categories can be pre-assigned by dominant groups without the agreement of individuals (Eriksen, 1993: 37). Jenkins (1997: 170) observed that whose categorisations are more influential, and the balance between self-identification

and categorisation emerge out of history and past experience, and become situated within contemporary power relations, and constitute the ongoing situation. Although both Barth (1969) and Eriksen (1993) wished to abandon the idea of ethnicity as being based on lists of objective characteristics, in his later work, Barth (2000: 12) noted the importance of political and symbolic power as regards those able to set the significant cultural diacritica perceived as relevant in a given society. Examples include language, dress, family structures, and phenotypical matter such as skin colour and facial features (Wimmer, 2007: 12), set from inside or outside an ethnic boundary, determining members and non-members. The forthcoming history of British national identity discourses shows how categories of ethnic inclusion and exclusion were created around particular diacritica, which still impacted upon my informants during the research process.

Another major tension between these two positions is the issue of how ethnic identities arise, as the symbolic dimension of *ethnicity as process*, whether they result from choice or constraint, are achieved or ascribed. Most authors (e.g. Ardener, 1989 [1972]; Eriksen, 1993: 56; Banks, 1996: 132) have agreed that ethnic identities result from both self-ascription to categories that emerge in informal group organisation, and those imposed by powerful bodies 'from above' for ideological purposes. Jenkins (1997) has usefully differentiated between "ethnic groups" (categories of self-ascription) and "ethnic categories" (categorisation by others), which, as in Barth's original formulation, do not automatically overlap. Wimmer (2007: 12) calls ethnicity 'the result of classificatory struggles', albeit reversible ones. In this, he builds on the insight developed by several authors (Eriksen (1993: 12; Jenkins, 1997: 14) that ethnicity results between the psychology of internalised individual self-identity, and the sociology of external group interaction, befitting Cohen's broader formulation of identity construction. In this thesis, this process can be seen at work when



individuals construct personal identities and also relate to constructions of collective identities and ethnicities, both of which are examined.

From an analytical point of view, Jenkins (1997: 172) has highlighted how the cultural content of ethnic categories must be illuminated to differentiate ethnicity from its fellow concepts of race, community and nation. To sum up, the approach to ethnicity that will be taken up here is Wimmer's (2007: 12; 14) usage of ethnicity from a 'boundary-making perspective'. This highlights *group-making* (formation and transformation), resulting from 'classificatory struggles'.

### **1.4.3 Nation, Nation-State and National Identity**

Although 'the nation' is a key idea in this thesis, the onus is on how different individuals construct and experience it, rather than a search for a single definition. Two anthropologically-relevant authors (Jenkins, 1997: 147; Madianou, 2005a: 8) have quoted Calhoun when he wrote: 'Nationalism is a rhetoric for speaking about too many different things for a single theory to explain it' (1997: 21). Here I will give a broad overview of some political science and historical theories, and social constructionist approaches to nationalism and the emergence of nations, as relevant.

Like ethnicity, nationalism is historically and situationally contingent (Jenkins, 1997: 151). Most authors agree that it appeared in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and spread around the world (Banks, 1996: 22). Three authors (Anderson, 1983 [1991]; Gellner, 1983; Smith, 1986) are of special interest to anthropologists because they explained the gradual evolution of nationalism in Europe as the result of a constellation of socio-cultural, economic and political factors and conditions. Due to large-scale historical changes that the different authors identify: industrialisation (Gellner, 1983), the end of the monopoly of

religion on ways of thinking and 'print capitalism' (Anderson, 1983 [1991]) or the development of dominant economic, administrative and secularised regimes (Smith, 1986), they agree that an educated elite drew the inhabitants of scattered socio-residential communities under a dominant regime of governance through the media of shared culture, history or language. Although neither Anderson nor Gellner mention shared ethnicity, all three assume that essential to the success of the project was a state of homogeneity - either cultural (Gellner and Smith), or temporal (Anderson) - across a bounded geographical territory. Once drawn together, individual residents of the territory formed a single cultural unit or 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1983 [1991]), which comprised 'the nation' itself. In his notion of 'imagining' the construction of the nation based on the experience of geographically dispersed newspaper readers, Anderson removed the necessity for actual face-to-face interaction to constitute 'community' (see Amit, 2002: 19).

'Nation' then became attached to 'state', the institutionalised rule of law over a territorially-based economy, enacted by a dominant political elite and facilitated through the power structures and official institutions of the regime. The state also held a monopoly on the use of violence to maintain order within the borders of the territory, and to protect it from outside interference, and the legitimacy to enforce assimilation, exclude, expel and kill (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 1-2). The 'nation-state' then is the binding of the populace with the structures of governance. Both are kept congruent through standardised language, ideological appeals to cultural symbolism and social values, history: often the idea of kinship or common ancestry and an ancestral homeland, and the continuity of these.

Unlike Anderson and Gellner, anthropological authors who have considered nationalism (e.g. Eriksen, 1993; Banks, 1996; Jenkins, 1997) drew attention to the ethnic basis of the nation-state, where the ethnic culture of the ruling elite

provided the cultural values for law and basis for national identity, the symbolic dimension of an individual's membership of the nation. Social science formulations of national identity are discussed below. Membership was also made legal through the protection, rights and obligations afforded to the nation's members with the bestowing of citizenship. Internal minorities were created as boundaries were drawn around the dominant ethnicity, and minorities' assertions of identity reduced to folk expressions (see also Eriksen, 1993: 155; Williams, 1989: 436, quoted in Banks, 1996: 159-160; Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008). However, the nation-state then ongoingly depended upon both its members' cultural and legal belonging. Like the classificatory struggles involved in the process of ethnicity, both the symbolic/ideological content (nationalism) and categories of membership (national identity, nationality and citizenship) are only made meaningful through an persistent classificatory struggle (Jenkins (1997: 148).

This thesis will support a line held firm by Billig (1995: 8-9) in his theory of 'banal nationalism' that despite the occurrence of economic and cultural globalisation, 'nationhood' is still the dominant ideology in the world today, what he describes as 'international common sense'. Using the Gramscian concepts of 'ideology' and 'hegemony', Billig argued that in international politics, an ideological, discursive consciousness has created a 'world order' structured by nation-states. It is comprised of notions of 'us', 'our homeland', 'nations' and 'the world' (1995: 4), in a way which appears 'natural' and 'moral'. These concepts are evoked during the construction and maintenance of 'us/them' boundaries, and Chapter 5 shows how informants engaged them to draw boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Billig (1995) demonstrated how assertions of nationhood are not only present during nation-state formation or crisis times, but are subtly 'reproduced daily' in the West during peace times. 'A whole complex of beliefs, assumptions, habits, representations and practices'

(1995: 6) relating to the nation are constantly 'flagged', particularly through political and media rhetoric, in a style so low-key that it passes almost unnoticed.

The key point here is the context of ordinary daily life as a place for the experience of nationalism and construction of national identities. In 1993, Eriksen (1993) differentiated between 'formal nationalism': the ideologies of ethnic identification that are part of the institutional and political organisation of the nation-state, and 'informal nationalism', a force rooted in its everyday civil society. This is the most relevant theoretical shift of the past 20 years, a tendency for social scientists to re-construe the nation as 'not just a product of macro-structural forces' (A P Cohen, 1996a; 1996b; Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 2) but also as a discursive construction 'from below': a switch from 'top down'<sup>32</sup> to 'bottom up' perspectives. Such approaches view 'the nation' not as a concrete objective reality, but an abstraction that people construct with multiple meanings in the course of daily life. As Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008: 2) argued, and I argue in the forthcoming discussion of media and nation, most of the traditional theories lacked empirical evidence as of ordinary peoples' views and experiences. These authors (2008: 3) developed a micro-level perspective on how the nation is invoked in daily life: in talk, in framings of the choices individuals make, in the everyday meanings and invocations of national symbols, and on national distinctions in ordinary people's mundane tastes and preferences. Furthermore, Anthony Cohen (1996a and 1996b) stresses the individual's agency: '...the nation is a squashy, flabby idea, and is compelling only in so far as its construction remains within the individual's power.' (1996a: 811). He has shown how people construct the nation through the medium of

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<sup>32</sup> The terms 'top down' and 'bottom up' refer to, respectively, the starting points for processes often involving significant powers, influences and impacts, that begin their effects at either the macro-level of state, economy and society and work their way downwards (top down) to the micro-level; or begin at the micro-level of individuals or forms of small-scale, local organisation, and work their way upwards (bottom up) toward the macro-level.

their own experience, and as influenced by their own circumstances (1996b: 146). Building on this work, I acknowledge the power of macro-level historical and political forces, but seek to understand how 'the nation' is given meaning by ordinary people in the banal contexts of Swindon life, using an approach that will later be described as '*discursive constructionism*'.

As the focus of the thesis, a working definition of 'national identity' is needed. Social scientists have failed to agree on what this problematic concept refers to (e.g. Nairn, 1977; Schlesinger, 1987: 220; Hall, 1992b: 292; Miller, 1995; Parekh, 1995; Jacobson, 1997). Jacobson (1997: 182-183) has outlined four contested approaches: 1) the conflation of national identity with ethnic identity (as already rejected by Hall, 1992a); 2) national identity as the conflation of ethnic components with political or 'civic' ones (the approach employed by New Labour); 3) national identity as one aspect of an individual's self-identity; 4) national identity as a fluid process. The last two are most relevant here.

Jacobson's research on British-Pakistanis showed that Britishness is impossible to conceptualise based on objective criteria, however hard governments try (e.g. the *British Statement of Values*). However, criteria widely repeated by Jacobson's informants (also by my informants) included 'civic' Britishness = citizenship, 'racial' Britishness = the white majority, and 'cultural' Britishness = attachment to the English language, Protestant religion and national heritage; specific behavioural traits including tolerance, reserve, modesty, knowledge of popular modes of speech, food and dress, familiarity with the social and political institutions of the country; and the value of rational individualism underpinning social and political behaviour (Jacobson, 1997: 193).

Billig (1995) introduced the idea of national identity as a discursive process 'found in the embodied habits of social life, including use of language and modes of thinking... ways of talking about nationhood...' and a personal orientation involving 'being situated physically, legally, socially as well as

emotionally...' (1995: 7) and sharing in familiar (taken-for-granted) assumptions about 'nationhood, the world and "our" place in that world.' Again I step away from 'top down' approaches to national identities by drawing on Billig's ideas (which have been credited as influencing scholars of 'bottom up' national identity, e.g. Cohen, 1996b: 147; Madianou, 2005a: 50; Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 2, although his work still takes a 'top down' view of media power) to analyse ordinary people's expressions.

#### **1.4.4 The British Nation-State**

Historical accounts of the development of the British nation-state show the emergence of British identity discourses in the past and help to contextualise ideas expressed by informants throughout the thesis. However, secondary historical sources do not offer the same first-hand verification as the human subject. Most supply top-down accounts of national identity.

The British nation-state and British and English national identities evolved earlier (Wellings, 2002: 97) and differently than most European ethnic nationalisms. The origins of English nationalism are in dispute (Smith, 2006: 441) but the "English" population has never been homogenous, comprising invading immigrants and later refugees - Celts, Romans, Jutes, Angles, Saxons, Vikings, Normans, Flemings, Walloons, Huguenots, and African slaves (Crick, 1995: 174; Hiro, 1971: xi; Anwar, 1998: 1; Home Office, 2004). A series of Acts of Union joined Wales and England (1536), the English and Scottish crowns (1603), then the Treaty of Union (1707) created the state of Great Britain uniting Scottish and English parliaments, but encompassing all three (Kearney, 1989: 117; Colley, 1992: Chapter 3; Grillo, 1998: 169; Heath, Rothon and Andersen, 2008). The wording 'United Kingdom' was introduced in 1801 (Kumar, 2003: 6) when the English/Irish parliaments were joined. In the early 1700s, English political structures – the parliament at Westminster and unwritten constitution

- were remade as British, and the Church of England became the state church there. The official state identity configured by a pan-British elite was based on English culture, Protestantism, and defined in opposition to Catholic France (Colley, 1992). Nairn (1977: 64) and Langlands (1999: 57) argued that British and English identities were conflated. Crick (1995: 174-5) counter-argues that cultural aspects of the British Isles have always been intertwined, even with England's suggested political dominance in their history (Kumar, 2003: 14).

The early state was heavily influenced by the Protestant religious doctrine of individual experience and conviction (Miller, 1995: 160), and roughly conforms to the ideal type model of a 'liberal democracy' (Modood, 1997: 21-22). The official national identity was drawn from pride in institutions and systemic success in Empire and the national economy, rather than ethnic identity (Grillo, 1998: 169). However, the British example mostly conforms to another ideal type model: 'civic nationalism' (Ignatieff, 1994: 4; Miller, 1995: 155-7), encompassing political and legal belonging to the nation-state, and emotional and cultural belonging to national identity. Modood wisely argues that political culture and the public sphere are never morally neutral (Modood, 1997: 19), and a common way of life and national identity were still promoted although its ethnic basis was underplayed (Baumann, 1999: 19).

National identity then passed through different incarnations. Colonised peoples in Africa, the Indian subcontinent and Ireland were implicated in the British Imperial-national or 'Anglo-British' identity realised by the ruling elite during the great 19<sup>th</sup>-century expansion of the British Empire (Crick, 1995; Miller, 1995; Langlands, 1999; Wellings, 2002). During this period, British identity discourses celebrated the superiority of English political institutions and culture, the upper-class lifestyle and masculine values such as modesty, self-deprecation, gentlemanliness, emotional reserve and benevolence, and an

ideology of 'racial' or bio-genetic superiority over non-"English", non-Caucasian people (who could for a time be 'English'/'British' none the less).

The colonial political-national identity stretched to encompass all these peoples provided they remained in their own territories and did not interfere in the construction of the home national identities in Britain. Nationalist currents at home maintained a homogeneous 'ethnic' basis, such as the wave of English 'pastoral' cultural nationalism of the late 19th-century and 20th-century between the two World Wars (see Bryant, 2003; Kumar, 2003; Samuel, 1989: xxi). Critics of Imperialism defended Englishness against the corruption of Empire and the neglect of domestic reform in an ideology that became known as 'Little Englandism' (Bryant, 2003: 399; Kumar, 2003: 213). The objectionable (racial) otherness of Empire was contrasted with the purity of the localised English racial type, and the interplay of both discourses affirmed the deeply racial basis to British and English identities (Baucom, 1999: 5). The British suppressed English culture – the cultural basis for Empire - by devolving it to the colonies to build up their 'cultural, commercial, political and demographic "economies"...' (Baucom, 1999: 38), thus removing cultural authorship from the English themselves. This might account for its seemingly low profile, then ardent resurgence at particular times like the 1990s.

The Second World War strengthened pride in British institutions but weakened the state and imperial-national identity (McCrone, 1997: 595). At the close of Empire when the newly independent states rejected British citizenship, a British Nationality Act (1948) separated citizens of the UK and remaining colonies from those of the new Commonwealth Countries (R Cohen, 1994: 18; Hiro, 1971 [1992]; 201). Baucom (1999: 10) argues that the new laws reinforced the idea of English space at home (representing a dominant English racial identity) and British space abroad (representing colonised peoples and people from the other home-nations).



The population had become more heterogeneous during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with Irish and Italian economic migrants, Polish and Jewish refugees and students and seamen from Africa and India before the Second World War. European refugees and volunteers from Poland and elsewhere came in its immediate aftermath (Anwar, 1998: 91), followed by mass economic migration from the former colonies in the Caribbean, South Asia, Africa and Ireland from the late 1940s, then by a continuous intake of refugees (e.g. Asians from East Africa in the 1970s, many of sub-continental origin; Goulbourne, 1991: 171). Commonwealth citizens had the right of entry and the right to vote, but were not accepted as 'British' by the native population under the long-term influence of colonial ideologies, and met with abhorrent racism (Grillo, 1998: 17; 173). Migration became more strictly controlled (R Cohen, 1994:18; Hickman, 1998, 2005; Goulbourne, 1991), 'racialising' the boundaries of the British nation (Hickman, 1998: 303).

Since England won the 1966 World Cup in particular, national identity has been celebrated through cultural and sporting success rather than political achievements (Muir, 2007: 13). A wave of nationality acts in the 1970s and 1980s altered the character of British citizenship with the principle of blood or descent replacing birthplace in a current or former British territory (R Cohen, 1994: 18; Grillo, 1998: 176). At the same time, traditional national identity began to decline because 'outsiders' were becoming 'insiders' (see Wallman, 1978: 214) due to ethnic-minority formation and mobilisation, and attachments to upper-class traits faded. Scottish and Welsh nationalism grew in profile in the 1970s owing to economic prosperity (Goulbourne, 1991: 89; Kumar, 2003: 240), and Nairn (1977) prophesied 'the break-up of Britain'. Britain also joined the EEC (now EU). Race and religious discrimination were slowly outlawed (Grillo, 1998: 177; Schuster and Solomos, 2004: 269), although far right councillors were intermittently elected from the 1980s. Furthermore, Thatcher revived Little

England ideologies (Bryant, 2003: 400). However, no serious political attempt was made to reformulate an official national identity until the election of New Labour in 1997 (and spurred on by parliamentary devolution). Further occurrences between the late 1980s and early 2000s reinforced the need to strengthen it, including: the rise of Islamophobia, terrorism abroad and at home including 9/11 and 7/7, popular opposition to British military intervention in conflicts abroad such as Iraq and Afghanistan, 'riots' between white and Asian youth in northern English towns, and critiques of 1980s policies on 'multiculturalism'. The Britishness agenda was heavily promoted in the 2000s, with a new focus on a racially inclusive citizenship and heterogeneous national identity (albeit one centred on 'core' British values; Ray, Hudson and Phillips, 2009: 116). It never caught on with the British public', however, because of public indifference or resistance to top-down efforts to build identities (Muir and Wetherell, 2010: 11). Globalisation theorists argued that globalisation weakened nation-states and national identities (see Hall, 1991: 25). Recent quantitative analyses (Tilley and Heath, 2007; Heath, Martin, Elgenius, 2007; Heath and Roberts, 2007) have answered that, although there has been a slight decline in British national pride, particularly among the young, attachments remain relatively strong.

#### **1.4.5 Diaspora**

The concept 'diaspora' has faced criticism for having greater descriptive than analytical value (e.g. Sinclair and Cunningham, 2000: 11). Here I set out its incarnations before explaining how it is used here in conjunction with the term 'transnationalism', to understand the basis for formal organisation among the "Sikhs" and "Poles" in the past, and continuing attachments in the present.

The 'classic' definition found in the 1960s and 1970s social science literature (R Cohen, 1997: 1) was based on the historical Jewish experience of living in exile

from Palestine, a traumatic scattering of people, which led to the emergence of a collective conscience of victimhood, although this interpretation of Jewish history has been critiqued (Clifford, 1997; various authors in Alexander, 2010: 10). This model was also applied to Armenians, Greeks, African, Palestinians (Safran, 1991; R Cohen, 1997 [2008]: 1; Brubaker, 2005: 1; Georgiou, 2006: 47; Alexander, 2010: 10), and has been labelled a 'victim diaspora' by Robin Cohen (1997 [2008]: 8).

From the 1980s onwards, the concept was applied in the literature to a range of groups and phenomena characterised simply by the dispersion of people. Brubaker (2005: 2-3) has identified these as including 'trading diasporas'; migrant groups involved in homeland politics; labour migrants who keep emotional and social links to a homeland; 'transethnic and transborder linguistic categories' (e.g. Francophone, Anglophone etc); 'global religious communities'; emigrant groups when they have assimilated; 'migrations of borders over people'; 'ethnocultural' or 'country-defined diasporas'; and other sub-cultural groups (e.g. queer). This over-expansion was critiqued (see Clifford, 1994; Sinclair and Cunningham, 200: 21; Brubaker, 2005: 1) for having lost its analytical value and emphasis on a particular historical experience.

Some 1990s authors (e.g. Safran, 1991; R Cohen, 1997 [2008]; Gilroy, 1997) tried to create coherent definitions by defining the features of a diaspora, whilst remaining true to its origins. Both Cohen (1997 [2008]: 180) and Gilroy (1997: 304) emphasise traumatic involuntary dispersal, Cohen from an original homeland, and Gilroy, due to 'war, oppression, poverty, enslavement', under threat of violence or death. Both also include leaving a homeland voluntarily in pursuit of economic opportunities: 'work, trade or colonisation' (R Cohen, 1997 [2008]). Both stress new cultural experiences that result from dispersal, good and bad. Cohen (1997 [2008]: 180) outlined some of these (all also outlined by Safran, 1991: 83-84, except the last one): a collective memory and myth of

homeland, idealisation of supposed ancestral home, a return movement, strong ethnic group-consciousness sustained over time, a troubled relationship with host societies, a sense of solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries, and the possibility of 'distinctive creative, enriching life in tolerant host countries' (1997 [2008]: 180). Brubaker (2005: 5-7) has given additional emphasis to the issue of boundary maintenance in the preservation of a distinctive identity in the host nation. He also proposed how diasporas work in practice, with Cohen's 'solidarity' as the element binding transnational networks of cross-border social relationships, continuous 'across space and time'. Gilroy has been careful to point out their situational aspect in describing diasporas as: 'a relational network' (Gilroy, 1997: 318), whilst Brubaker (2005: 7) stresses that their continuity depends on the responses of second and subsequent generations.

The expansion of the term to include economic triggers for dispersion fits the "Sikh" case well, as the first generation left the Punjab in pursuit of economic betterment in the UK. However, in keeping true to the 'classic' definition of diaspora, before migration they experienced the trauma of the deaths of loved ones among the millions of casualties caused by civil unrest in the Punjab immediately after its partition between India and Pakistan in 1947.

There is no precise scholarly agreement over the meaning of diaspora and its features, which are crucial and non-crucial, with the 'classic' definition regarded as too narrow by some, and expansive definitions regarded as weakening the unique emphasis of the concept (e.g. Georgiou, 2006: 48). There are also different contexts of usage. For example, Clifford (1997) highlighted the need to avoid confusing 'diaspora as theoretical concept, diasporic discourses and distinct historical experiences of diaspora'. As an adjective, the term

‘diasporic’ has been used and is used in the thesis to denote ‘an attribute or modality’, e.g. diasporic consciousness (Brubaker, 2005: 4).

Another tension between the older ‘classic’ and newer ‘postmodern’ invocations of the mid-1990s onwards (e.g. Gilroy, 1993; Brah, 1996; Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma, 1996) is between fixity and essentialism, and fluidity and hybridity. The classic definition was faulted for its essentialised emphasis on a fixed homeland where identities were bound by the race/ethnicity overlap with the territorial nation-state. Migrants were portrayed as static ethnic groups in the host society and expected to assimilate into its cultural veneer (Safran, 1991; Tölölyan, 1996; Alexander: 2010: 8). However, aware of the transnational lives that some migrants lead following dispersion, postmodernists challenged two major limitations: the relationship between nation, race, ethnicity and citizenship in an essentialised ‘homeland’ (Gilroy, 1997: 328; Alexander, 2010: 14), and the static ethnic or religious community (R Cohen, 1997 [2008]: 9). As a campaigning device advocated by diasporic scholars themselves, their reworking of diaspora offered new visions of identity as not bound by place and nationality. These could be used to take issue with ‘inequality, discrimination, and marginalisation’ (Alexander, 2010: 14), although fluid identities are not a solution in themselves.

The transnationalism framework provides useful support to these postmodernist critiques as it revealed the multi-sited, cross-border connections and activities that diaspora members invest and engage in (cf. Georgiou: 2006: 10). I sidestep momentarily to examine the meaning of the term ‘transnationalism’, which became prominent in the literature from the late 1990s. Cheaper air travel and improved electronic communications technologies enabled greater cross-border activities on a mass scale (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999: 223). Vertovec (1999: 447) described ‘transnationalism’ then as: ‘multiple ties and interactions linking people or

institutions across the borders of nation-states', which along with 'systems of exchange and mobility', function intensively in real time. The primary participants were a new category of migrant entrepreneurs avoiding the repressive effects created by global capitalism, by engaging in grass-roots level, cross-border economic transactions (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt (1999). They were differentiated from previous migrants by the level of intensity and simultaneity of their long-distance activities. Although transnationalism stemmed from economic pursuits, these gave rise to transnational political, cultural and social ones as well (Vertovec, 1999: 453). For Vertovec (1999: 450), many long existent diasporas now functioned transnationally. Paying homage to this focus on *activities*, 'transnationalism' is mostly treated here as a category of practice and a form of network, engaged in to varying degrees by individual "Sikh" and "Polish" informants, with due recognition of its economic origins, but also its applicability to the social, political, emotional etc. Similarly, diaspora has also been recognised as a 'social condition or process' (Anthias, 1998 in Alexander, 2010: 8) and a 'category of practice' (Brubaker, 2005: 12) employed strategically to make appeals, communicate projects, shape expectations, justify loyalties, and formulate identities etc, as will be observed throughout.

Both diaspora and transnationalism theorists emphasise the agency of the individual (Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999: 220) who should not be overlooked in favour of the collectivity (Alexander, 2010: 32), and different degrees of engagement / awareness (or none at all) in transnational practices or diasporic consciousness (cf. R Cohen, 1997: 13; Burrell, 2003: 331; Brubaker, 2005: 12). Burrell's concept of 'small-scale transnationalism' (2003: 323-324) can be usefully applied to Swindon's "Sikhs" and "Poles". It describes individual's transnational outlooks (and *diasporic consciousness* in these cases) and low key

communications with relatives abroad that are so ingrained and taken-for-granted that, she suspected, might appear insignificant to an analyst.

Returning to the postmodern framework, a main benefit was that it recognised the diverse heterogeneous influences and experiences, and the transformative quality of diasporic identities (Hall, 1990; Clifford, 1994). In the cultural sphere, the locales of diaspora, or as Georgiou (2006: 5) defined them, the 'layers of diasporic space', are the 'home, public, city and nation and transnational'. Diasporic spaces link 'the mental, cultural, social and historical, physical and spatial' (Georgiou, 2006: 5; see also Gilroy, 1993; Brah, 1996). In these physical and conceptual / mental spaces, 'social relations, communication and action' occur, and notions of identity and face-to-face, communicative and conceptual communities are constructed. The 'imaginative copresence next to real immediate copresence' allows diaspora members to experience ambivalence around feeling a sense of belonging in several places. They often experience a sense of 'being here, there and in-between' (Georgiou, 2006: 22). Caught in the tension between identities in a state of flux between the many nodal points connecting the locales of diasporic space, and collective categorisations shaped by shared history and ancestry (cf. Hall, 1990; Alexander, 2010: 13), postmodernists recognised the inevitable 'hybridity' of historical and cultural influences at play (Brubaker, 2005: 6). Some are grounded in national territories, some are shaped by transnational experiences.

Earlier, Gilroy (1997: 335) also emphasised the role of communication in his idea of 'diasporic space' as 'communicative circuitry' between 'dispersed populations'. Furthermore, drawing on Robin Cohen's (1997 [2008]: 8) observation that in the global age of cyberspace diasporas can be mentally envisaged with the help of expressive media, Georgiou (2006: 3; 48) writes:

Media are increasingly taking the role of mediator of the triangular spatial context of diasporic belonging: in the locality, in the host country, in connection between the country of origin and the global diasporic community. (2005: 47)

Chapter 6 explores how the diasporic media perform this function.

Critiques of the postmodernism framework included its overemphasis of the extent of 'deterritorialised' identities, with notions of homeland belonging still strong among diaspora members (R Cohen, 1997 [2008]: 2). Diasporic belonging can also be essentialised (Brubaker, 2005: 12). Furthermore, repressive ideologies are found within diasporas themselves (Georgiou, 2006: 9), particularly regarding internal diversity and disagreement over dominant ideologies, as my case studies will show.

Besides drawing on the dynamic character of the postmodern framework, I agree with those authors (e.g. Clifford, 1997: 249; Alexander, 2010: 8) who maintain that the place of historical trauma within demarcations of diaspora cannot be forgotten. The "Sikhs" experienced trauma prior to economic migration, and the "Poles" qualify as a 'victim diaspora'. In the Polish case, there has been an ideology of national pride around exile for political reasons since the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the country's various periods of occupation (Garapich, 2007: 6-10). However, with regard to the first generation of "Poles" in Swindon, multiple traumas: the experiences of forced deportation from Poland to Siberia by Stalin during the Second World War, and military conscription away from 'the homeland' by the Nazis, the loss of 'homeland' territory due to shifting borders after the war when parts of eastern Poland were seceded to Russia, and also the dangers associated with returning home to post-war Soviet-imposed socialism (Burrell, 2003: 325-6), created an internal discourse of 'victim diaspora'.



## 1.5 Media Framework: The Study of News Consumption and Identity Articulation

### 1.5.1 Media and National Identity

Schlesinger (1987: 234) influenced the two key scholars of news consumption and identity articulation (Gillespie, 1995: 12; Madianou, 2005a: 8; 19) to whom this thesis is indebted by asking whether communications technologies create national identity or whether they harness pre-existing discourses circulating in society to construct a mediated sense of 'nation'. They started with identity, which I argue should not be shrugged off as weak in comparison to the power of media. However, several modernist theorists of top-down nationalism suggest that the media (among other factors) created identities. Two scholars: Anderson (1983 [1991]), already cited, and Gellner (1983) hold that medium is more important than content. Anderson (1983 [1991]: 35-36) suggested that readers in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Europe were able to imagine themselves into a national community for the first time by reading newspapers, thus awakening national consciousness. His theory is useful for analysing all kinds of mentally-envisaged social formations, but overlooks the fact that 'community' can be experienced as 'real' (see Chapter 4 on local community). Furthermore, what is 'imagined' may not qualify as a 'community'.

Borrowing from Madianou (2005a), I use a concept in this thesis called 'symbolic communicative spaces' as a possible alternative to conceptual communities. Borrowing the concept from Schlesinger (2000b) and Barth's theory of ethnic group boundaries (1969), Madianou (2005a: 4-6; 74) described 'symbolic communicative spaces' as conceptual fields encompassing the construction of boundaries of inclusion and exclusion according to a binary scheme of thought, and (I add: Eriksen, 1993) the *dichotomisation* of an 'us/them', affecting audiences' discourses about their identities, and feelings of

belonging (see also Gillespie, 1995: 206). Different kinds of 'symbolic communicative spaces' are created in discussion by informants, who can project varied cultural influences into them, particularly at diasporic level.

For Gellner (1983: 127), the style and language of media communications was significant in engendering nationalism, that those able to understand them were included in the 'moral and economic community'. This theory is less useful because, as the thesis shows, ethnic-minority members able to understand the style/language of media do not always feel included in the nation. Another theorist prioritised content. Hobsbawm (1992) suggested that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, media made national symbols part of everyday lives, and broke down the distinction between public and private spheres<sup>33</sup> (cited in Madianou, 2005a: 15), which of course holds true to this study where informants engage with public matters in their private homes.

Other top-down theories focus on 'nation reproduction and maintenance' (Madianou, 2005a: 16) through content, and the stylistic and structural properties of mediated communications. Cardiff and Scannell (1987; also Scannell, 1989) applied the principle of 'imagined communities' to British public service broadcasting. From the 1920s, the BBC produced output designed to promote a sense of communal identity among national, regional, or imperial audiences, drawn into a national calendar based on yearly, seasonal and weekly cycles with the relay of national events. These included the FA Cup final, the Grand National and the Last Night of the Proms (Morley, 1992: 260-261). They generated a national temporality and integrated such events into the 'temporal structures' of everyday life in ordinary homes. (Morley, 2004: 420-21). In the early 21<sup>st</sup>-century, the variety of programming available means that people can select carefully what they consume or ignore, and public service broadcasting does not dominate the media sphere in the way it once did.

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<sup>33</sup> All contemporary arguments about the media's effects are framed by this split.

However, the popularity of televised Royal Weddings testifies that many people are still drawn to such events, whatever meanings they take from them.

Cardiff and Scannell (1987: 171; also Scannell 1989) have also drawn attention to the simultaneity of news consumption. They took their cue from Bausinger (1984: 344) who showed how the arrival of a morning paper ritually punctuates the start of the day and temporally connects geographically dispersed readers. Drawing a lead from Anderson's work on newspapers, they conveyed how the regular daily scheduling of news bulletins, especially the early evening broadcast on television, became a focal point in peoples' organisation of time. These are useful propositions but are hypothetical until examined with empirical evidence, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.

Dayan and Katz (1992) have also drawn upon the concept of 'ritual' to argue that the televising of special 'media events' - sporting events, state pilgrimages and funerals - draws audiences into a ritual occasion intent on celebrating national identity and renewing loyalties to the establishment. Jointly organised by both media and state, they depict a visual spectacle, and are pre-planned in viewing schedules, disrupt normal viewing routines and daily activities, and inspire collective consumption. Their focus is often on the ceremonial resolution of a crisis, but not crises themselves (Liebes, 1998: 72), and they are intended to be commemorative, restorative or transformative (Dayan and Katz, 1992: 20). Chapter 6 exemplifies a media event aimed at Britain's Polish diaspora, which ignited patriotic sentiments in informants. It was the only one that fell during fieldwork and shows that uncritical patriotism breeds more easily amongst diaspora members separated from their 'homeland'. Chapters 5 and 6 show examples of "English", "Sikh" and occasionally "Polish" informants expressing British patriotism in response to news coverage of a range of more routine news stories, and coverage of war/sport. However, both

engage many critiques of Britain and British identity during news talk and other conversations throughout.

Couldry (2003) extends the focus on 'ritual' to criticise 'media events' with his theory of 'media rituals'. He suggests that media are constantly surrounded by ritualised activities, including ritualised broadcasts, viewing/reading, and talking about the media. The feeling of social cohesion that 'media events' can create during group viewing is just a heightened version of what people can sometimes feel when watching the nightly news and discussing media content. He is critical of 'media rituals', as they can continuously legitimate and draw attention to an ideological effect of the media, that it is the main point of access to contemporary accounts of the way the world is, a mythical social centre with symbolic power. Whether the media is at the centre of society is a crucial proposition assessed during the case studies, which question whether the news is the central source of information in adults' lives about the world around them.

In comparison, other authors focus on the role of the national media in creating and sustaining the ordinariness and normality of daily-life. Scannell (1996; 2000) argued that national broadcasting cultures utilise national communicative structures that he called the 'care structures' of radio and television. These are styles of programme-making and modes of address that work by making audiences regard them as natural and unremarkable. They result in the creation of a 'public world' that appears ordered and familiar, and gives substance and structure to daily-life, shapes expectation, anticipation, and directedness. Generating a sense of 'dailiness' and 'ordinariness' is also a characteristic of news content itself, which can raise national awareness. This is undoubtedly true, but Chapters 4 – 6 show how critical informants can be about such 'care structures'. They often questioned the impression of the world presented by news and the techniques used to create it.

Morley's (1980; 1992: 82) research on the daily current-affairs programme *Nationwide* demonstrated how a set of norms about life in Britain was deducible from its content. Billig's (1995) work on 'banal nationalism' showed how the nation is constantly 'flagged' in ordinary, everyday reporting in newspapers. He analysed how the British national press naturalise the national frame of reference by using what he calls 'homeland deixis', little words such as 'we' and 'here' to pertain to Britain and the British, without naming them directly. Linguistic deixis is defined by Billig (1995: 106-7) as a form of rhetorical pointing which anchors sentences to aspects of their contexts of utterance in view of the speaker. Deitic words point to contextual terms such as the time, place or people involved. In the rhetoric used by politicians discussing the nation, little words such as 'we' and 'here' can indicate speaker, listener and national belonging or context. A classic example of 'homeland deixis' would be 'this country'. Analysis of deixis will be applied in examining informants' statements in Chapters 4-6 where they placed themselves inside and outside various social fields through the use of object pronouns such as 'we' and 'they'.

Top-down theories contribute a point of special interest here, that the transmission of extraordinary 'media events' *and* the banal, routine properties of everyday media content both have the potential to shape informal national identities. This project, however, avoided taking news reporting of ceremonial/nationalist occasions as its starting point, as it is obvious that these frame the nation and may enhance the likelihood of generating informants' statements about identity. Instead, the research process unveiled what kinds of news stories gave rise to identity articulations.

Among the limitations of top-down theories is that they employ an internalist thesis (Schlesinger, 2000a) of processes within the nation and not beyond its borders in accordance with the 19<sup>th</sup>-century model of the nation-state, when (as Cardiff and Scannell acknowledged with the imperial audience), many 'media

events' are televised outside their nation of occurrence (see also Couldry, Hepp and Krotz and their contributors, 2009). For example, Chapter 6 explores the international televising of a terrorist attack and a *diasporic media event* (my adaptation of Dayan and Katz's (1992) term: a 'media event' taking place in one location but transmitted to Polish diasporic communities around the world so that they are included). Also problematic is their top-down approach and lack of empirical evidence (see Moores, 1993a: 10 for a critique of Cardiff and Scannell), which is remedied with my ethnographic study; and the homogenous audience response prophesised in Anderson's (1983 [1991]) model, and subsequently assumed by the others. The next section on the public sphere theory discusses problems surrounding the envisaged ethnic homogeneity of audiences. Since the late 1970s, the agency of individual media consumers to derive their own meanings from content has been recognised, first by Hall *et al.* (1977; 1980), and Morley (1980; 1986) who highlighted the multiple axes of identity and experience that are brought to bear on responding to content, and as my case studies demonstrate. The top-down theories also falsely assume a simultaneous response (see Couldry, 2003: 66). This is less likely now than at any other time during the media's history, due to the global proliferation of media platforms.

### **1.5.2 The Public Sphere and Media Talk**

Several top-down theories, also informed by the idea of the 'national communicative space' (Schlesinger, 2000a), propose what is questioned in the thesis: that exposure to news content makes people discuss it together and engenders notions of citizenship (or other identities). These theories are addressed in Chapters 4 – 6. They suggest that news about contemporary events and public concerns has special credence in shaping peoples' outlooks as it concerns the real world in which they live. Habermas's (1989) 'public sphere'

denotes an ideal type model of a conceptual public space between government and society in 18<sup>th</sup>-century Britain.<sup>34</sup> Within it, the public<sup>35</sup> was said to have come together to rationally discuss the conduct of the state and monitor the government through exercising their opinions. This theory has been widely applied to the modern mediated public sphere, particularly public service broadcasting (for example, Curran, 1991; Calhoun, 1992; Fraser, 1993; Robbins, 1993; Silverstone, 1994; 2005; Dahlgren, 1995). As my data will show, the media do not constitute a dialogic public sphere,<sup>36</sup> and the public have no control over representations circulating in it (Gupta and Ferguson, 1992: 19).<sup>37</sup> Morley (2000: 119) has argued that the mediated public sphere constructed by British public service broadcasters is not multi-ethnic, but culturally and linguistically characterised by a white, lower-middle-class English national identity, despite the presence of ethnic-minority presenters. “Sikh” voices make this point in Chapter 5. Moreover, the complete news environment now includes local, diasporic, transnational, alternative and antagonistic media fora for different interest groups. Some of these ‘public sphericules’ (Gitlin, 1998) are no longer territorially bounded within the nation. Uses of diasporic television channels are described in Chapter 6. Scannell (1989: 153) has argued that communicative rationality is far from the circumstances of most informal discussions about media content, as my thesis will show. Responses are often emotional.

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<sup>34</sup> Silverstone (1994: 67) argues that it was not egalitarian but restricted to bourgeois males.

<sup>35</sup> Madianou (2005b: 100) distinguishes between three definitions of ‘public’: political scientists’ usage of ‘the public’ as citizens; ‘the public’ as equated with ‘the nation’; and ‘public’ as political and democratic processes, mediated and otherwise.

<sup>36</sup> A survey conducted for the BBC by researchers at Cardiff University (Williams and Wardle, 2008: 32) revealed that only 23% of the British public have engaged with a news organisation by sending material producing content for a newspaper, television, radio or website. The majority of those are from a limited demographic group, who are overwhelmingly male, aged 45-54, and employed full-time as a middle manager or professional.

<sup>37</sup> Material access to mass media is not egalitarian, and government information is subject to regulation and control, shaping what the public are given access to via the media.

However, the focus on conversations about mediated public affairs highlights the crucial link between media consumption and talk. I will shortly consider how 'media talk' (Gillespie, 1995) is a rich source of data and contains extensive social commentary.

Dahlgren's (2005) work on 'civic cultures' is an ideal type, anthropological rendering of the public sphere that shines a useful focus on how media talk might lead to articulations of identity and citizenship. It has already partially been tested in Britain, as below. 'Civic cultures' refers to strands of daily-life that can lead to political participation, which includes knowledge, value systems, and forms of daily practices. The theory includes a three-pronged configuration<sup>38</sup> of the public sphere with the third dimension comprising: interaction and citizens' media consumption and talk between themselves: the discursive process through which audiences become 'a public'. Talking about politics and current affairs is tantamount to participation in democracy (2005: 320-321). The symbolic goal of talk is that people are drawn towards a feeling of 'citizenship' as the form of individual and collective public identity achieved through participation in 'civic cultures'. Research inspired by 'civic cultures' (Couldry, Livingstone, Markham, 2006), addressed the supposition that Britons are disillusioned with and disengaged from democratic processes. Although not focused on media talk as an end in itself, these researchers showed how *although* media consumption contributes to 'public connection' - a basic orientation towards the public world where 'matters of importance' are played out - it did not *ensure* it. Therefore studying media consumption can reveal how people orientate themselves towards the world; thus analyses of media talk about content may unveil precise orientations, as the thesis will show.

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<sup>38</sup> The first two dimensions are structural and representational.



### 1.5.3 Local Media

Although the theories of media and nationalism and the public sphere are predicated on the national level, local news platforms which provide a forum for the news in physical localities might hypothetically affect individuals similarly. I question whether this is the case in Swindon where a local paper, the *Swindon Advertiser*, commanded the most attention of all local media and attracted the highest readership of all newspapers. Rosie *et al.* (2004: 438), who researched the regional press throughout the UK, critiqued Anderson *et al.* for assuming that local consumers will imagine themselves into ‘national’ communities.<sup>39</sup> This is salient in an era where ‘local’ and ‘global’ influences are greatly acknowledged. The literature on local media in Britain is scant<sup>40</sup> and Franklin and Murphy (1991) argued that academics have neglected it in favour of national media (1991: 3). This is unsurprising, however, as like Billig (1995), countless scholars maintain that despite globalisation, nations are still the dominant unit of organisation and daily-life in the world, and national media are the preferred context of media regulation, production and consumption (Abu-Lughod, 1993a: 466; Ginsburg, 1994: 7; Curran and Park, 2000: 11; Morley, 2004: 433).

Nonetheless, in Britain, many ‘provincial papers’ enjoy monopoly circulation (Franklin and Murphy, 1991: 5), like the *Swindon Advertiser*. Using statistics from The Newspaper Society, Franklin (2006: xvi) claimed that 85% of adults in Britain read a regional newspaper. Franklin and Murphy (1991) have shown that local papers are ‘highly influential’ in defining news (especially political news) agendas. In a mediated public sphere-like manner, they have high potential for setting the agenda for discussions of local matters (1991: 6), and

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<sup>39</sup> This argument will be applied to transnational/diasporic media and belonging later in the chapter.

<sup>40</sup> For exceptions, see Murphy, 1974; Franklin & Murphy, 1991; contributors in Franklin, 2006; Aldridge, 2007; Ofcom, 2009; Temple, 2008; Singer, 2009.

provide a 'relatively open and pluralistic forum for public discussion and debate', and commitment to reflect diverse local opinions and promote local patriotism (1991: 9). This theory is tested in Chapter 4.

Research from the UK's broadcast regulator Ofcom's *Review of Local Media* (2009) also examines the reasons why people use media and supplies two types of usage. Ofcom categorised its informants' uses of local media into, firstly, 'functional' uses, where readers sought practical information such as event and entertainment listings, traffic and weather reports, classified and services, and news content on surface issues such as events, road and hospital closures. The second usage was 'emotional', where readers engaged with deeper-level content about people, places and issues that affected their area to connect to a sense of community, particularly through participatory forums like letters pages.

#### **1.5.4 The Anthropology of 'News Talk'**

All ideal-type models, such as the Media Studies models of media and nationalism / national identity discussed in this chapter, remain ideal-types without empirical evidence, which is where an anthropological approach to the study of news consumption and talk is useful. Anthropologists began to study the media seriously from the mid-1990s, integrating top-down and bottom-up perspectives by treating media as a social form entwined in the representation and articulation of macro-processes such as the construction of national publics, identities and nation-building (Morley and Robins, 1989: 32), and consumption as a process whereby localised understandings are negotiated (Ginsburg, 2005: 20). In keeping with the anthropological tradition, the mediated *language* of broadcast and print forms has been regarded as a vehicle for transmitting mediated *culture* (Osario, 2005: 44), and consumption as a mode of cultural articulation (Spitulnik, 1993: 298). Stemming from an 'ethnographic turn' in

media consumption research and the qualitative tradition of audience studies in the family home (e.g. Ang, 1985; 1991; Lull, 1990; Silverstone, 1990; Morley, 1992), a new generation of anthropologically-informed ethnographic studies of media consumption analysed informants' talk about content consumed (e.g. Mankekar, 1993, 1999; Gillespie, 1995; Abu-Lughod, 1993b, 1995, 2003; Bird, 1998; Madianou, 2005a). 'Media talk' was treated as a site where a combination of *media discourses* and actual life-experience (including social statuses such as gender, national identity, citizenship) were drawn upon by individuals to position themselves and voice opinion over concerns in their lives, their conceptual 'locations' in the world, belonging and identities, although the extent to which any type of resource has a greater impact was not analysed, which is where my approach differs. The 'talk' generated engaging social commentaries on social and political issues, and has been identified by the researchers as a rich source of data (Lull, 1990: 149; Gillespie 1995: 58-9; Bird, 2010b), unveiling informants' core 'mental and behavioural orientations' (Lull, 1990: 149). This thesis follows in this tradition.

### **1.5.5 News Consumption**

My experiences in the field show why, beyond its regular scheduling and possible ritual consumption, news features so highly in analyses of media/identity. I began my investigation with an informant-led, open-ended approach to the content of different media *platforms* (television, radio, newspapers, internet), genres of content, programmes, sections of publications, and websites that might feature in informants' articulations. I use the term '*media outlets*' to describe all of these. However, it was quickly apparent from qualitative and quantitative data that the diversity of terrestrial and non-terrestrial local, national, locally and transnationally-produced diasporic content referred to, was too expansive to give any coherence to the study. To

see what similarities and differences occurred in the responses of individuals identifying with the three 'groups' and to note the interplay of individual and collective perspectives, some commonality of content consumed was required. 'The news' was the one common reference point across all informants' articulations (see also Madianou, 2005a), and at local and national levels they had daily access to the same stories. Amazingly, they responded to the same ones, embellished upon in conversation, so therefore research focused on the news. Commonly consumed *outlets* are analysed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

Gillespie (1995) has shown how the modes of address of national news raised consciousness among her Punjabi informants of a range of different cultural positions - as British citizens, Punjabi migrants, members of an Asian ethnic-minority and so on. With news consumption a daily activity for my informants, the thesis explores whether it is also a key trigger in raising consciousness of notions of identity and belonging/exclusion in Swindon. Madianou (2009: 330) demonstrated the many informational and non-informational uses of news consumption. It can serve the civic duty to be informed, or be 'a statement of identity, an aspiration, a desire to participate in a cultural or political narrative, a habit, or a resource that helps people cope with the demands of everyday life.' She took the anxieties/embarrassment that people express when they are out of touch with the news as evidence that 'the presence of news in everyday life is naturalised and taken for granted' which exemplifies its power. This was confirmed by my informants rarely being able to recall where they had heard a story, seldom mentioning individual *outlets*, rather specific stories (see also Bird, 1998; 2010a: 12) and saying: 'I heard it in the news', 'it was on the news', 'in the media', 'the press'. The entire news environment was more influential than individual *outlets* at national and international/diasporic levels, echoing scholars who maintain that genres (e.g. soaps, news, sport) are more influential than individual programmes (Morley, 1992: 129; Peterson, 2003: 136-7). This has

never been more cogent than in the present, as Madianou (2009: 333) acknowledged: 'news has become ubiquitous...' through the choice of a multitude of *outlets*, and temporally, with rolling news challenging the concepts of 'national audience' and ritual viewing of evening news, as Chapter 6 will show. Bird (2010a: 12; 2010b: 420) observed how, owing to these features, news is hard to handle in consumption research, received sporadically and imprecisely defined. It is about process, not text, she writes; news is a 'symbolic system' that reflects and represents culture, and endures regardless of the individual story, which changes daily (Bird and Dardenne, 1997[1988]: 334-335).<sup>41</sup> Anthropologists (Bird, 2010b; Postill and Braeuchlar 2010) have recently approached 'news talk' through theories of 'practice', identifying it as one of a number of practices surrounding consumption, several others of which feature highly here: intertextual references to various *outlets* and receiving news second-hand through talking to others. Studies of news consumption are in the minority compared to analyses of content but pertinent examples include Morley (1980, 1992); Philo (1990); Lewis (1991); Gamson (1992); Bird (1998), contributors in Bird (2010a); Liebes (1997); Gillespie (1995; 2003; 2006); J Cohen and Metzger (1998); Madianou (2005a); Gray (2007); Martin (2008); Ostertag (2010).

### 1.5.6 Discursive Constructionism

For the study of verbal reflections on identities and the world, a theoretical approach is needed which combines talk with the mental style in which relevant social fields are envisaged and constructed. Madianou (2005a: 19) has highlighted how in Greece the news made a language available enabling people to think and talk about the nation. The model for the anthropology of news talk developed by Madianou and contemporaries (e.g. Gillespie, Bird) connects well

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<sup>41</sup> See Bird and Dardenne (1997[1988]) on the culturally-constructed nature of the news as narrative, myth and chronicle, in the sense of its rhetorical and structural construction, and its social function. Study of the news itself is beyond the scope of this project.

with the new nationalism literature that shifts the focus from macro-level structural analyses to micro-level analyses of the ways in which national identity or the nation is discursively 'constructed, undermined and subverted in daily-life' (for example, Billig, 1995; Endensor, 2002; 2006; Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008). I term this approach: '*discursive constructionism*'. Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008: 33) also advocate ethnographic studies of routine conversation during daily interaction to see when and how the nation is mentioned.<sup>42</sup> Two theoretical claims assessed with the evidence in Chapter 5 on national news talk/consumption come from Calhoun (1997) and Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008). Calhoun argues that nations become meaningful in daily-life because people make discursive claims about them. They become constituted 'by the way of talking and thinking and acting that relies on these sorts of claims to produce collective identity, to mobilise people for collective projects, and to evaluate peoples and practices...' (1997: 223; quoted in Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008: 4). However, as acknowledged by Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008: 7):

...most of the time, the nation is not something ordinary people talk *about*; rather it's something they talk *with*. This is the nation not as the object of talk but rather as an unselfconscious disposition about the national order of things that intermittently informs talk....it is not (only) a topic of talk, but also a culturally available scheme that can be discursively deployed to make sense of other topics of talk, explain predicaments, and order social difference (Gamson, 1992). When national frames are discursively invoked, social actors become national actors, diverse phenomena become national phenomena, and everyday stories become national stories...

I argue that the idea that people talk *with* a nation refers to instances when they talked about the national context, public or issues, they made these matter 'national', by using indirect terms of reference, such as 'homeland deixis' (Billig, 1995).

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<sup>42</sup> This has been a prominent goal in the work of discourse analysts and social psychologists, for example: Dijk (1984); Wodak *et al.* (1999); Wetherell and Potter (1992); Condor (2000 & 2006); Condor and Abell (2006); Condor, Gibson and Abell (2006); Abell, Condor and Stevenson (2006).

### 1.5.7 News Consumption and Ontological Security

Researchers analysing what people 'do' with news and how it can orientate them in daily-life and provide them with a sense of stability and security (e.g. Silverstone, 1993; 1994; 2005; J Cohen and Metzger, 1998; Gray, 2007; Ostertag, 2010) have harnessed Giddens' (1990; 1991) concept of 'ontological security'. It is a key concept here and refers to '...the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environments of action...' (Giddens, 1990: 92) including those outside the individual's immediate environment (e.g. places/events mediated by media), and requires constant attention to sustain. It results from the ability to trust in the reliability of people/systems, and actively engage in the events, patterns and relationships of daily life in talk and interaction physically, cognitively, socially and with the confidence of experience. This leads to the development of a practical consciousness which protectively mitigates excessive anxiety in the chaotic and insecure conditions of a globalising world (see also J Cohen and Metzger, 1998: 50). The practical consciousness is grounded in the unconscious (Giddens, 1990: 92) and established with emotion and cognition (Silverstone, 1993; Gray, 2007; cited in Ostertag, 2010: 826). Chapter 4 shows how local manifestations of these conditions challenged informants' ontological security.

Silverstone (1993: 579) has illustrated how the media sustain daily routines and ontological security in an era when face-to-face relationships have ceased to be the daily support system (e.g. scattered families and disappearing socio-residential communities); for example, in northern Europe. Durham Peters (1997) has suggested that in today's globalised era, people now see life 'bi-focally', through a double prism of local face-to-face experiences (which count as a fragment of the social totality of the rest of the world), and in its global entirety through mediated representations. People's limited personal

experience and common-sense born of a locality has been downgraded as less trustworthy than the limitless mediated representations of the 'general' globalised world.

In our 'insecure' position, the broadcast news can help broker a sense of trust despite the anxiety it brings into daily lives. Silverstone (1993; 2005) has outlined its contradictory features: the window it provides viewers onto that globalised world of chaos and conflict, yet its regularity in schedules, homogenised techniques of presenting crisis and chaos, accounts of heroism and disaster, news anchors, and 'care structures'. These features help individual viewers make sense of what they see, resulting in a 'dialectic of security and anxiety that results in the creation of trust...' (Silverstone, 1994: 16) and ultimately ontological security (Silverstone, 2005: 197).

News consumption/talk created this dialectic of insecurity/trust among Gillespie's (1995) and Madianou's (2005a) informants. Southall's Punjabi youth interpreted the news for their elderly relatives as a way of confirming adult status and entering the wider world as well-informed British citizens.

Conversely, particular stories, e.g. reporting of racist attacks and the gulf war, made them feel vulnerable and insecure, and aware of the difficulties of fitting in in both Britain and India. News consumers in Athens preferred Greek news as relevant to daily-life, fostering ontological security. However, when the Turkish minority had bad experiences of speaking to journalists and were misrepresented, they switched off. Moreover, most informants drew upon life experience to contest essentialist discourses of Greek Christian national identity contained within news reporting of the violation of Greek airspace by a Turkish military plane during a joint military exercise by Greece and Cyprus. However, many resorted to assertions of essentialised national identity (similar to those expressed in news coverage) when viewing news reports of an 'external' conflict in neighbouring Kosovo, which threatened their ontological security.



This thesis harnesses the concept to investigate the strategies used by informants to create/reaffirm it, including: rationalising media behaviour, distancing themselves from the nation, or articulating their connections to it in the face of social change.

### **1.5.8 'Disaster Marathons'**

Following on from the trust/anxiety dialectic created by media events and banal news stories, I draw upon a concept which categorises hyper-anxiety-inducing, traumatic news events, Liebes' (1998: 73): 'disaster marathons'. It is employed to analyse a case study of terrorism in Mumbai in Chapter 6. It describes the live broadcasting of events such as 'urban rioting, terrorist attacks, army accidents causing major loss of life, sometimes even natural disasters' as they unfold. Like media events, 'disaster marathons' break up normal schedules, but differ as sudden breakdowns in national order (1998: 80-81) without preplanned symbolic closure or long-term solution. They can threaten personal safety, and their visual and emotional impact can create extreme anxiety.

Unlike media events where 'the establishment takes over media and public [*in* 'disaster marathons'] oppositional forces (internal to society or external to it) take over the media (and the public)...' (1998: 73) and the continuous roll of 'live' pictures, reports and studio commentary on television becomes viewers' anchor during a period of chaos when the government appears to lose control.

Other scholars have argued that 'disaster marathons', for example, 9/11 (analysed by Blondheim and Liebes, 2002, 2003; Stepinska, 2009) are not a national phenomenon. Those orchestrated by transnational terrorist networks affect people from multiple nations and transnational audiences, as my Mumbai case study will also show (see also Gillespie, 2006; Couldry, Hepp and Krotz 2009). Nonetheless, Couldry (2003: 66) argues that during such crises, the sum total of media *outlets* can still create an impression of a common thematic

or social centre for national audiences (and sometimes transnational ones, see Hepp and Couldry, 2009) with media, governments and audiences influencing each other, and a sense of an event developing away from the primary location. This idea is tested in Chapter 6.

### **1.5.9 News Consumption at Diasporic and International Levels**

A theory is needed about media consumption/talk at the international/diasporic level. A perspective that looks back into the nation from outside supersedes the limitations of the internalist thesis on media /national identity, placing the 'home' nation in the international frame and clarifying attachments/belonging for those with links to more than one nation. Madianou (2005a) found that the media did not shape identities in Greece in a causal way but contributed to the creation of common communicative spaces which catalysed feelings of belonging/exclusion. I borrow her approach, given the parallels in both studies (multi-ethnic group views on national identity), and harness the concept of 'symbolic communicative spaces' as described earlier, to examine the way that informants respond to international/diasporic media content. The concept is most useful at the international level of analysis because different national and cultural spaces are open to informants. The question of diasporic attachments is also addressed theoretically with the literature on *diasporic media*.

### **1.5.10 Satellite Television for the Diaspora**

Since the arrival of foreign satellite channels in the 1980s, a burgeoning literature in anthropology and media studies has explored how people of refugee and economic migrant origins engage with locally and transnationally produced '*diasporic media*' (e.g. Gillespie, 1995; Sinclair, Jacka and Cunningham, 1996; Sreberny, 2000; Georgiou, 2001b, 2005; 2006; Tsagarousianou, 2001; Aksoy and Robins, 2003; Madianou, 2005a). In her literature survey and data on Greek

Cypriots' media consumption in London and New York (and concurring with my data), Georgiou (2005: 44) found that satellite television is preferred to the press for connecting diasporic audiences through: 'The connectedness, simultaneousness and sharing of common images and narratives between country of origin and the different positions of diasporic groups...'

Gillespie (1995), Georgiou (2001b, 2005; 2006) and Tsagarousianou (2001) showed how first-generation migrants desired news from their home countries owing to nostalgia, and in order to connect to them culturally, politically, economically and emotionally. Gillespie (1995) includes an early example of how some second-generation Punjabis were also keen for news from India based on fears of deportation inherited from their parents, as well as anxieties over media portrayals of "Sikhs" as terrorists following political turmoil in the Punjab and the assassination of Indira Gandhi (1995: 115; 120). One of my "Sikh" informants, Mohinder, shares this perspective in Chapter 5.

There is much evidence to suggest that many UK ethnic-minority members have experienced a sense of disconnection from the national media, possibly heightening interest in diasporic media. Gillespie showed how during the Gulf War, the UK national media addressed Punjabis as part of an audience of UK citizens but often excluded them as Asian migrants from the nation constructed by its modes of address. Morley (2000: 119-124) supplies evidence that British public service broadcasters have failed to connect with black and Asian audiences effectively. This creates a preference for the less Anglo-centric modes of address and contents of satellite and cable television, including American channels showing more 'black' programmes, UK's Sky News and channels from countries of origin such as India's *Zee TV*. Ofcom research (2007: 9; 13; 63) has outlined a high interest in news and political affairs among ethnic minorities, as well as feelings of exclusion from the mainstream, owing to the way they are portrayed, demonstrated by empirical research on Muslim

audiences since 9/11 (Ahmed, 2006: 980; see also Ofcom, 2007, on Black and Muslim audiences). Logic would hold that people of migrant origin with access to other countries' perspectives would be critical of the media in their country of settlement. In a project examining how South Asian, Arab, Afghani and Turkish families in Britain and Germany responded to news coverage of 9/11 (Gillespie *et al.*, 2006: 903; 913), respondents cited various problems with the way Western media such as the BBC and CNN covered international events, leading them to seek information from non-Western news *outlets* such as *Al-Jazeera*. Problems highlighted included frustration over lack of information from reported events that affected their countries of origin, and fears of bias and narrowness of political perspective in reporting, particularly during crises. My findings are not so clear cut, as Chapter 6 shows.

Ethnography has produced informants less cynical about Western news media who desire to engage with *domestic* media and be 'literate' (Livingstone, 2004) in and well-informed by them. Gillespie's (1995) and Georgiou's research (2001b; 2006) has shown first and second-generation Punjabis and Greek Cypriots respectively consuming diasporic television and placing personal emphases on British news on BBC/ITV. 'It's the news of this country...our country, we are interested in it', one middle-aged Cypriot man said – 2001b: 12). In a highly useful example, Aksoy and Robins (2003: 83) showed how exposure to British television devalued the Turkish public service network *TRT* among Turks in London. Using their concept of 'banal transnationalism' to describe how it brought the 'everyday' of Turkey and Turkish consumer culture closer to most informants, they discovered that its modes of address often failed to translate to viewers who became more critical of it through their knowledge of British television. For those informants whom it reminded of home, it did just that rather than idealistically connecting them to an imagined 'ethno-cultural *homeland*', and no more than the other Turkish products

available and habits practised in London (2003: 9). Their project provides a useful point of comparison for Chapter 6.

#### **1.5.11 'Multiple Media Literacy'**

Diasporic media studies are useful to this study because they have demonstrated that most bilingual people of migrant origin are 'literate' in more than one news culture. As Georgiou explains: 'Diverse media consumption allows them to develop a reflexive, critical approach towards the media, both diasporic and mainstream' (Georgiou, 2006: 156). Gillespie (2006: 915) calls these viewers *sceptical zappers*, channel-hopping between different nations' television. She identifies viewers with high levels of media and political awareness, *competent cosmopolitans* able to contrast and analyse culturally diverse news sources in their everyday lives, leading to flexible modes of reasoning and openness in interpreting events, although not all bilingual viewers have these levels of literacy and interest. Unlike Gillespie *et al.*'s (2006) informants, Aksoy and Robins' (2003: 13) informants used British television to criticise, for example, Turkish television's images, programme quality, channels, censorship, bias, and scheduling. My "Sikh" and "Polish" informants were *competent cosmopolitans*, with '*multiple media literacy*', a term I use to describe their position, since they are bilingual news consumers with access to perspectives from several nations with which to compare British public affairs and styles of reportage.

#### **1.5.12 Beyond Media-Centricism: Lived and Mediated Experience**

I separate *mediated* from *lived* experience in this thesis because I noticed that some of my informants' main reflections about the issues of interest came not in response to news consumption and news talk, but were articulated in general conversation with reference to various face-to-face kinds of 'real' experiences.

This fits with a new awareness that scholars (e.g. Tomlinson, 1991; Madianou, 2005a: 2) are developing, that placing media at the centre of studies assessing its influence wrongly leads to a foregone conclusion about its role. As discussed, Couldry (2003) has challenged the 'mediated centre' that media rituals artificially construct. Media anthropologists who have explored the role of social statuses/life experiences in informing 'talk' inspired by mediated content (e.g. Abu-Lughod, Gillespie, Madianou) have illustrated the very significant role that these play in shaping the meanings drawn from the cognitive and emotional encounters and negotiations that the individual experiences during the *mental meeting* between previous experience and mediated content. For example, taking a practice-based approach, Sreberny (2000: 182) showed in her work on Iranians in London that media consumption was one among a variety of cultural practices which raised diasporic consciousness. However, none of these authors have assessed which is the more influential resource – mediated or lived experience.

Attempts to assess which has been the dominant source of information in fashioning perceptions resulting from consumption are in the minority, and I take my lead from them. Pertinent examples include Husband and Hartmann (1974). They found that personal experience of a group of people meant less reliance on *media discourse* for information about them, in their study of white working-class secondary-school children and consumption of *media discourse* about black people. Philo (1990) showed how "English" people who had direct experience or personal knowledge of the 1984-5 miners' strike or access to non-mediated sources of information were more likely to reject news accounts conveying that the picketing had been violent, whereas those reliant on the television news for information tended to believe it. Madianou (2005a) has shown how most of the television news viewers in Athens who challenged the essentialised discourses of nationalism in Greek reporting of the 'airspace

incident' had alternative personal experience with which to make sense of the event (e.g. compulsory military service) whereas in the far-removed Kosovo crisis case, informants were reliant on the news and less likely to challenge it. These examples suggest that personal experience can be a more powerful source of information from which to make sense of events in the world and construct meanings than news.

Some anthropological theories of the media/culture relationship (e.g. Bird, 2003) blur the boundaries between lived and mediated experience by suggesting that '...all of us are living in a mediated culture' (Bird, 2003: 4). Bird writes: 'We really cannot isolate the role of media in culture, because the media are firmly anchored into the web of culture, although articulated by individuals in different ways' (2003: 3). In such approaches, media are treated as part of a symbolic space produced by the 'engaged activity' of individuals and groups who position themselves in relation to dominant forms of expression and ideologies (Silverstone, 2005: 193). The media articulate culture through language as do individuals discussing mediated experience, which attributes power to the media in the formation of culture (see also Bird, 2002: 163). She quotes Seiter (1999) who asked how data about media audiences should be separated from data about society, families or the community.

Tomlinson (1991) offered a more nuanced approach, separating 'mediated culture' and 'lived culture', and proposing a dialectic between media and culture as an 'interplay of mediations', one aspect of cultural experience being mediated by another. After all, all cultures involve interactions between representations and 'lived reality'. He suggests that the meaning we make from media consumption is shaped by the things going on in our lives, but 'our lives are lived as representations to ourselves in terms of the representations present in our culture' (1991: 61), including past mediated experience. The relationship between lived/mediated experience is difficult to analyse into its constituent

parts, but like Sreberny, Tomlinson recognised that people are involved in many 'relationships and practices' (1991: 63) other than media consumption and advises that media must be de-centred from the position they have gained in theories like Bird's. He concludes that although the media may be the dominant representational aspect of culture, the 'lived experience' of culture which included 'discursive interaction of families and friends and the material-existential experience of routine life: eating, working, being well or unwell, sexuality, the passage of time and so on...' (1991: 61) comes slightly higher in peoples' assessments of 'reality'. After all, people judge mediated experience in terms of whether it rings true to 'life' (1991: 62).

Although Bird (2003) recognised that individuals articulate the same mediated experience differently, the media-centric perspective still begins with and gives more credit to collective representations of culture than the unique cognitive, emotion and embodied experiences of the individual in *culture-as-lived*. Durham Peters (1997) may have argued for the de-valuation and de-authentication of individually accumulated face-to-face experience in comparison to the generalised mediated representations of the global, but Anthony Cohen must be heeded (1994: 77). He urged of individuals' relationship to the collectivity that their attachments/ meanings are mediated firstly by the individual self-consciousness and life experience. The empirical evidence disclosed before suggests that by turning away from the news and relying on life experience to evaluate the scenarios reported, individuals trust mediated experience less than what their individual self-consciousness has perceived from lived, face-to-face experience. When exploring how informants discuss mediated experience and personal experience, not to separate them in conversational analysis is to imply that the influence of the collective representation is stronger than the powers of the individual self-consciousness in meaning-making. Cohen advocates treating individuals as individually driven rather than socially or culturally-driven



(1994: 7). My aim in methodologically separating mediated/lived experience is to de-centre the media.

As mentioned above, Gamson's (1992) set out to evaluate the media's influence on public discussions about politics in the US and explore the different information sources people used in forming opinion in group conversation. He outlines *media discourse* and *experiential knowledge*, which correspond with the *culture-as-represented-in-the-news* and *culture-as-lived*. The first refers to journalistic discussion of public issues using sets of ideas and symbols to convey the meaning of a narrative and the repertoire of communicative tools or 'frames' utilised in reportage – central organising ideas, catchphrases, metaphors, key 'spotlighted facts', and popular culture shared with audiences. *Experiential knowledge* means the stories that people tell about themselves, people they know or have heard about from the media (concurring with Tomlinson), that is, concrete experiences grounded in the 'real world', not the opinions of a journalist. Two further concepts will also be borrowed. Gamson used the term 'issue proximity' to describe whether a story felt near or far from respondents' personal experiences, and suggested that 'framing' or convincingly analysing its structural effects could bring it closer. He also uses the concept of an 'injustice frame' with a 'we' who conflict with an authority and a 'they' who are responsible for a problem and also have the power to change it. When used in reportage, these 'frames' can prompt audiences to talk about their pain and anger over hardships in their own lives as it relates to the story which makes these emotions relevant.

## **1.6 Contents of Each Chapter**

Chapter 1 has explained the rationale behind the thesis, particularly the historical/current context of Britishness and the ethnographic background, set

out the main questions and reviewed the key theories and concepts that will be used to analyse the ethnographic data. Chapter 2 provides a social, historical and economic overview of Swindon, explains the methodological choices made, describes the data collection process for both the ethnographic and quantitative data, and introduces key informants. Chapter 3 examines the ethnic make-up of Swindon and supplies an ethnographic and statistical profile of the three cultural “groups”. Constructions of significant identities are examined in particular. Chapters 4 – 6 use a combination of ethnographic data, conversational analysis and statistical data to present three case studies of news talk. Each one explores the balance between uses of *media discourse* and *experiential knowledge* in informants’ statements. Chapter 4 analyses the relationship between informants’ strong town-wide sense of place as articulated in general conversation, and how a set of themes that characterise it are reflected in the most discussed stories from the *Swindon Advertiser*. Chapter 5 explores the relationship between articulations of national identities in general conversation, and the ways that discourses of nation and identity are interlaced with critical commentaries about politics and society spawned from news talk about Britain’s national news. Chapter 6 presents three single ethnically-separate case studies exemplifying how news talk about ‘extraordinary’ news stories – the Mumbai terrorist attacks, comparative news consumption between British/Polish news and ceremonial broadcasts on TV Polonia, and British coverage of war and sport – helps informants to construct identities and symbolic communicative spaces in the international frame. British national identities and diasporic identities are investigated. Chapter 7 supplies an overview of the thesis’ contribution to existing debates, lays out the findings on identities, ethnicities, communities, nation, diaspora and belonging, brings together the conclusions about news talk from the three case studies, and offers a perspective on the relationship between *media discourse* and *experiential knowledge* in news talk.

## Chapter 2: Swindon: The Fieldwork Town, Methodology and Informants

### 2.1 The Fieldwork Town

Swindon struck me as typical of any humdrum suburban British town. A series of A-roads connect disparate neighbourhoods via an unwieldy system of roundabouts and link socially disjointed populations. Its ordinariness was a joy for market researchers. A council strategy document reported: 'Because the population is demographically very close to the national average, Swindon is frequently used for market research for new products and services during testing stage...' (*Swindon – This is Swindon: Culture and Leisure Strategy* 2003 – 2013: 16).

It had also earned something of a reputation as a 'joke town' in the national media (d'Ancona, 1996: 8), to the dismay of the authorities. Hudson wrote in 1965 that the problem '...is not so much to find the money to put up buildings, but to persuade the outside world to take Swindon seriously' (1965: 22-23).

Another research team described it as 'the butt of jibes bracketing it with the joke-places such as Neasden, Slough and Scunthorpe' (Boddy *et al.*, 1997: 297).

It has an impressive history as the site of *Monty Pythonesque* infrastructural experiments, such as the department of transport's 'multi-mini roundabout' unveiled in 1972, known in local humour as 'The Magic Roundabout'. This was sardonically promoted by Tourist Information as the town's most famous landmark on key-rings, postcards and t-shirts.



**Figure 1: The Magic Roundabout**

I received a harsh initiation into Swindon's negatives in my first months of fieldwork, becoming quickly depressed by the urban dilapidation and unsafe atmosphere of some areas, the obvious poverty and low levels of education among some of its residents. I had to engage my wits to avoid physical and sexual attack by a group of drunken men on leaving a town-centre pub one evening. I ruled out working alone at night and continued in a state of resignation, like most residents, that one had to overlook a lack of aesthetics and gentility to appreciate its virtues.



**Figure 2: Run-Down Council Estates**

Local attitudes seemed contradictory, initially negative and dismissive, but gradually, a quiet defensiveness emerged. Employees at a national company where I did a workplace ethnography articulated this mixture of perceptions. For Chantelle, a white “English” woman in her 40s, Swindon was ‘soulless’ but ‘got a bad press’. Erring towards the more defensive was Lyle, a white “English” 28-year-old who hadn’t been born in Swindon but had lived there ‘99.9% of his life’, and for whom its ‘statistical averageness’ was noteworthy. It wasn’t the best or worst place but ‘it had everything you needed.’ June, an Irish folk singer in her 50s, sharing a few anecdotes at a pub jam session one night, nailed the perpetual Swindon state of mind: it was a fascinating town that

people always said rude things about, yet underneath, was a hidden gem. I heard this again and again.

As its social dynamics are complex, Swindon presented a sociological labyrinth, an observation reinforced by Lord Kilmuir, a local aristocrat, who noted in 1967 that it offered material to an urban anthropologist and observer 'which would make most social historians envious...' (d'Ancona, 1996: 9). As an anthropologist proposing to study it, I was warmly welcomed by the middle-aged, middle-class public servants and community mobilisers.

## **2.2 The Building of Swindon**

Swindon is a 'post-industrial' town set in stark contrast to the rolling green fields, chalk hills, 'market towns and old monuments' (Harloe, 1975: 14) of rural Wiltshire. Recorded in the Domesday Book in 1086 as 'hill where pigs are kept' (d'Ancona, 1996: 9), its Old Town area was originally a small market town on a hill. Under industrialisation, Daniel Gooch and Brunel built the headquarters of the Great Western Railway (GWR) at the bottom of the hill and opened a station in 1840. A local industry developed around the manufacture of railway rolling-stock, creating employment for thousands of railway workers and navvies. Terraced housing and workers' cottages were built in the Railway Village estate, and around Manchester Road (both in the Central electoral ward).<sup>43</sup> A civic identity emerged around the town's manufacturing role, with GWR providing facilities and amenities (d'Ancona, 1996: 14). Once the railway works were expanded, regional migrant labour was recruited from the North of England, Scotland, Wales, London and the South East, establishing a culture of 'incomers' that persists today. As the town expanded into areas such as Rodbourne (Moredon ward), the New Swindon eventually met Old Town as

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<sup>43</sup> Electoral Wards are shown on a map on p89 .

workers' terraces worked their way uphill, with handsome properties erected for the trader class (Harloe, 1975: 19-20). A housing expansion came in the 1920s and 1930s with the building of Swindon's first council estate at Pinehurst (Harloe, 1975: 46), and private estates of bow-fronted detached and semi-detached houses with small gardens in tree-lined streets.

During the Second World War, several factories were erected to fulfil military needs, the Vickers Armstrong factory, and Plessey's electrical engineering works (Harloe, 1975: 52). However, the town's economy and the dominant historical identity continued around the railways, with notions of community resting on direct or indirect employment there. The phrase 'to be on the inside' meant being employed at GWR in local parlance, with its overtones of a tight community cultivated within (Harloe, 1975: 35; d'Ancona, 1996: 13). This 'inside'/'outside' distinction has been reformulated through changing times in the town and prevails today. The 20th-century saw the slow decline of profitability of the railways (d'Ancona, 1996: 10) and a drop in the number of jobs until the works closed in 1986. D'Ancona reported that it was more of a cultural than an economic loss (d'Ancona, 1996: 14), as the GWR identity persisted as a nostalgic romanticised notion late into the twentieth century.

Post-war urban policy dictated that after 1951, existing centres should be given the status of 'overspill' towns to accommodate tenants from local authority districts that were full. Swindon was designated a London overspill town in 1952, and the borough council was put in charge of the largest town expansion scheme in Britain (Harloe, 1975: i). It built new estates of brick houses and multi-storey tower blocks of flats in monotonous uniform style (Harloe, 1975: 77) such as the now notorious 'P's' estates, known for their poverty – Penhill (ward of same name), Park North, Park South (both in Parks ward), and also Moredon (ward of same name). Whole estates of young families from London's East End (known as 'Londoners') were re-located through the Industrial

Selection Scheme, with aged parents joining them later, around 30,000 people in total (Kilmuir, foreword in Hudson, 1965: 8). 'Social problems' were recorded on some of the new estates and over-simplistically linked to a lack of 'social organisation' and facilities for the cultivation of community and entertainment (Hudson, 1975: 125). Private estates were built for the growing numbers of professional and managerial workers, leading to the growth of a 'vocal' middle-class in areas such as Lawn and West Walcot (both in self-named wards).

Employment opportunities opened up as the town's economy diversified between the 1950s and 1980s. Alongside rail and car (e.g. Rover, now BMW) companies and Plessey's came electrical and scientific companies, distribution firms, company depots (e.g. W.H. Smith's: Harloe, 1975: 91), manufacturing, and 'white-collar' jobs in finance, professional and scientific services.

Employers included Allied Dunbar, Nationwide Building Society, Burmah Castrol, and Intel Corporation, the government research councils; then came the technology industries for IT, computers and electronics including Honda and Motorola. The town underwent a total economic and social transformation becoming a major growth centre. The local economy was now tied to national and global economies with investment from UK and foreign multinationals (Boddy *et al.*, 1997: 18). The mixture of old Swindonians, Londoners, a new middle-class and overseas migrant-workers splintered the old working-class social identity. However, the increasing number of managerial and professional workers tended not to live in the town, commuting into Swindon from surrounding villages and towns, meaning that 'there is a section of the community and social structure of the town which, if not actually missing, is significantly smaller than it would otherwise be' (Boddy *et al.*, 1997: 294).

Many of the new companies were located in the monolithic concrete and glass office blocks in the New Town area (in Central ward). Behind this is the main shopping area around Regent Street with its mix of high-street chains and



cheap Pound shops. The town centre sits awkwardly between the New and Old Towns, with civic buildings on the upland towards Old Town – the council's headquarters, the town hall, a new library under development and the Wyvern Arts Centre. A perception uncovered throughout was that the town 'lacks a civic centre or cultural heart' (d'Ancona, 1996: 10) boasting no central university campus or cathedral, only a small campus for the University of Bath in Park North. Several shopping facilities were devolved outside the centre such as the Great Western Designer Outlet Village on the site of the old railway works. The town's main sports and leisure facilities, the Oasis Leisure Centre and the Link Sports Centre, are both situated away from the centre.

The town expanded outwards from the 1970s with a string of campus-style self-contained business parks complete with social and leisure amenities utilised by commuters and dotted around the town. The new neighbourhood of West Swindon (comprising wards: Western, Shaw and Nine Elms, Toothill and Westlea, and Freshbrook and Grange Park) had sprung up by the 1980s with a mix of tenanted and privately-owned housing. West Swindon comprises a carefully modelled district centre and smaller urban 'village centres' such as Toothill, equipped with shopping and leisure facilities (Boddy *et al.*, 1997: 185). Thousands of middle-class professionals moved to West Swindon to take up well-paid jobs in the new sectors. Whilst the housing is less monotonous than on earlier council estates, there is an obvious uniformity about the maze of winding cul-de-sacs branching off into mini cul-de-sacs with well-kept detached houses in mahogany brick bearing timber window ledges and door frames, in fenced gardens with large garages. As the town's economy continues to grow, and corporate enterprises such as Motorola have moved into new sites around Swindon's northern frontier, new 'urban village' estates and a limited amount of association housing have been constructed in North Swindon areas, such as Abbey Meads (ward of same name) (Boddy *et al.*, 1997: 242).

## Swindon Housing



**Figure 3: 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Terraces**



**Figure 4: 20<sup>th</sup>-Century Council Estate**



**Figure 5: Modern Private Estate**

Figure 6: Town Centre - This Could Be Anywhere...





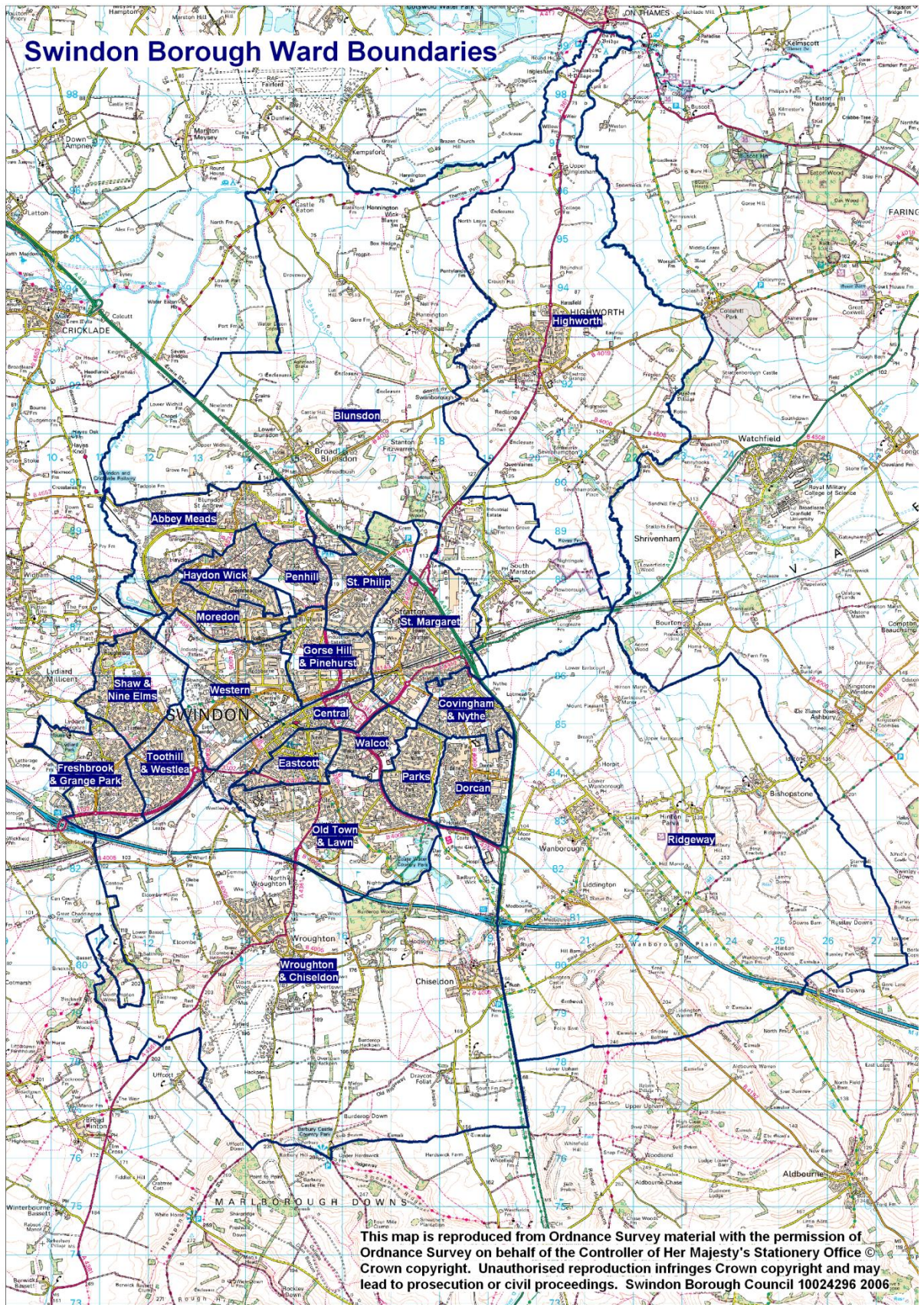


Figure 7: Map of Electoral Wards in Swindon



**Table 6: Electoral Wards Where Respondents Lived**

**Swindon Electoral Wards**

	Abbey Meads	Blunsdon	Central	Covingham and Nythe	Dorcan	Eastcott	Freshbrook and Grange	Gorse Hill and Pinehu	Haydon Wick
<b>Ethnicity</b>									
English (%)	8	2	6	2	4	1	4	8	7
Sikh (%)	0	2	27	2	5	0	2	4	0
Polish (%)	2	2	17	12	2	3	2	3	3
			Old Town and Lawn	Parks	Penhill	Ridgeway	Shaw and Nine Elms	St.Margaret	St Philips
English (%)	4	0	16	4	1	1	0	11	2
Sikh (%)	0	0	16	0	2	0	11	5	0
Polish (%)	0	2	29	0	0	0	2	10	0
	Toothill and Westlea	Walcot	Western	Wroughton and Chiseld	Other	Base			
English (%)	4	4	4	4	5	85			
Sikh (%)	21	0	4	0	0	56			
Polish (%)	2	5	0	0	3	58			

## 2.3 Swindon's Economy Now

Data from the 2001 Census on the town's occupational profile is composed of the nine basic NS-Sec (National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification) categories used by sociologists and national statisticians. They are ranked in an order revealing that of the total working population of 131,072, the largest occupational category is the second highest on the scale, 'lower managerial and professional' at 19.14% of the total working population. This is followed by the sixth category from the top, 'semi-routine' at 13.72% and then the third category, 'intermediate' at 12.9%.

Data from the *Swindon Survey* was based on a five-category version which amalgamated the four highest categories 'Higher Managerial and Professional Occupations', 'Large Employers and Higher Managerial Occupations', 'Higher Professional Occupations' and 'Lower Managerial and Professional Occupations' into a single category 'Managerial and Professional Occupations'. The sixth and seventh categories were also amalgamated into a single category, 'Semi-routine and Routine Occupations'. These data represent 192 respondents from a smaller sample of "English", "Sikh" and "Polish" adults from within my fieldwork networks. Table 7 shows different patterns to the town's overall population in 2001 with most "English" in 'Intermediate Occupations' followed by 'Managerial and Professional' and then 'Semi-Routine and Routine'. For the "Sikhs", most were employed in 'Semi Routine and Routine', then in 'Managerial and Professional' roles and a much smaller number in 'Intermediate' occupations. "Poles" scored highest in 'Managerial and Professional' jobs, then 'Semi Routine and Routine', then 'Intermediate'. These findings reflect the many "English" people working in 'Intermediate' jobs in administration and service industries (e.g. customer-service agents at my *host company*, see below), the number of "Sikhs" in factory work and own-business

ownership, and the number of ‘Old Poles’ in management and ‘New Poles’ in unskilled roles.

**Table 7: Socio-Economic Class of Respondents**

Class according to the NS-Sec (5-class version)

	Managerial and professional occupations	Intermediate occupations	Small employers and own-account workers	Lower supervisory and technical occupations	Semi-routine and routine occupations	Never worked and long-term unemployed	<i>Base</i>
<b>Ethnicity</b>							
English (%)	32	38	1	4	25	0	84
Sikh (%)	38	10	6	0	42	4	52
Polish (%)	41	20	4	4	32	0	56

The smaller sample of informants from whom I collected ethnographic data worked for a wide range of ‘typical’ Swindon employers, from banks and insurance companies, the research councils, I.T. companies, Swindon Borough Council, to Honda and BMW, in a wide variety of occupations, mainly administration, but also teaching, cleaning, technical occupations, and sales. Until the onset of the British recession in 2008, Swindon was held up for its consistently below national average unemployment levels (see also Boddy *et al.*, 1997: 266).

Tables 8 and 9 also show the education/qualifications profile of Swindon Survey respondents. The majority of the “English” held the lowest level of qualifications with GCSEs/equivalent followed by post-16 qualifications, whilst the majority of “Sikhs” and “Poles” held degrees followed by post-16 qualifications. The highest numbers of qualifications were obtained in Britain with significant numbers of “Sikhs” and “Poles” qualifying abroad.

**Table 8: Qualifications of Respondents****Qualifications of respondent**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	Completed Degree or Higher Degree	Any other post-school qualification	A-levels or equivalent	GCSEs or equivalent	No qualification	<i>Base</i>
English (%)	18	20	21	33	7	84
Sikh (%)	35	9	30	20	6	54
Polish (%)	45	21	14	14	7	58

**Table 9: Highest Level of Education Obtained in UK/Abroad among Respondents****Highest Level of Education Obtained in UK or Abroad**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	UK	Abroad	Missing	<i>Base</i>
English (%)	77	1	22	87
Sikh (%)	66	30	4	56
Polish (%)	46	37	17	59

## 2.4 Methodology

### 2.4.1 The Fragmented Field

The anthropological ideal of the single fieldworker becoming deeply immersed in a single community of closely-linked individuals is unrealisable when applied to Swindon. Since the arrival of Londoners and overseas migrants, Town Hall strategists have struggled with the fragmented social structure of the town and the difficulties in cultivating strong social bonds (Hudson, 1965: 10).<sup>44</sup> As d'Ancona put it: 'To the outsider, 1990s Swindon feels more like a place to pass through than to live in' (d'Ancona, 1996: 10). Nowadays, disconnected long-standing residents, commuters and short-term workers from all over the UK, and a small but diverse range of overseas migrants form an

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<sup>44</sup> Since the 1950s, a series of policies aimed at achieving solid neighbourly relations and social cohesion have been pursued, from community development plans on estates and throughout the town (for example, Harloe, 1975: 118) to developer hopes that West Swindon's 'village centres' would prompt the creation of community identities (source: Pam Pixton, Neighbourhood Engagement Officer).



atomised social matrix, whose members grapple with a geographically dispersed layout, disparate neighbourhoods and broken community bonds. Many have no roots where they live, with few residing for more than a generation. With the lack of outdoor social fraternising in cold northern Europe, the town's lack of a 'civic centre' (d'Ancona, 1996: 10), the sharply defined public/private – work/home separation in Western and English culture (see Chapter 3), public/private separation in politically correct social discourse, and what can be said in public and what cannot, and the lengthy social audition one must pass through before making genuine 'friends', the ethnographically ideal 'community' is largely absent. Hockey (2002: 211), an ethnographer of Britain, has written: 'Many of the field settings in which Western researchers conduct "anthropology at home" are very different from those in which our discipline developed its distinctive approach. Everyday social interaction in the West is often spatially dislocated, time-bounded and characterised by intimacy at a distance.' I often lamented that it would be easier to meet people in Africa. Research in fragmented urban networks gives Marcus's (1995) 'multi-sited' ethnography its meaning, impacting on the form of ethnography, and requiring a shift in the anthropological audience's expectations.

#### **2.4.2 First Contact: Observation Period**

As the three 'groups' lived scattered throughout Swindon, and because I have a disability that required continuity of Oxford-based support services, I lived in Oxford for the duration of my fieldwork. I commuted to Swindon most days. I first thought that in order to capture Swindon's fragmented social dynamic, I should base myself in a range of spaces and meeting spots. I visited council offices, an FE college, individual homes, pubs, local societies such as the Swindon Philosophy Society, a theatre group, a dance class, pub jam nights,

churches, and the voluntary bureau but struggled to find places that would produce enough adults of all three backgrounds. Indeed most Swindon hobby and civil society groups were overwhelmingly 'English' and attended by a set of middle-class, middle-aged 'usual suspects'. I was keen to avoid 'tribalising' the town (see also Baumann: 1996: 31), but accepted that in order to meet a spectrum of people from each group by age, gender, occupation and interests, I would need to start off in mainstream and ethnically separate public spaces. Therefore, I contacted individuals at the larger "Sikh" temple, *Shri Guru Nanak Gurdwara*, and the Polish Catholic Community Centre, both attended by a demographic mix. In seeking out a single location with an 'English community', I was presented with an anomaly as the majority don't gather according to ethnicity.<sup>45</sup> Ironical that in England it proved hardest to meet a cross-section of the "English". The only place where I would meet them regularly was a workplace, so after initial enquiries, I obtained the agreement of the customer-service headquarters of a national company with a mainly "English" local workforce<sup>46</sup> to being a regular participant observer on 'work-placement'. The company requested anonymity, and will be known as '*my host company*'. From November 2007 to July 2008, I carried out regular participant observation in these three places, later continued in private homes.

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<sup>45</sup> With the exception of far right political groups.

<sup>46</sup> I met one Sikh woman there who lived in Swindon, but no second-generation Poles.



**Figure 8: Posing in a Swindon Pub at the Request of Research Assistant Krystyna**



**Figure 9: *Shri Guru Nanak Gurdwara***



**Figure 10: *Polski Ośrodek Katolicki* (Polish Catholic Community Centre)**

Determined to study all three ‘groups’ at once rather than having three separate ethnically enclosed experiences, I began visiting the temple, community centre and host company during the same period. I memorised the details of visits and recorded them in a laptop fieldwork diary on returning home. I did not separate my observations from my personal feelings as my emotions became part of the fieldwork narrative and showed that I was experiencing the same ‘Swindon state of mind’ as informants.

Sunday prayers and eating at the temple *were* the only ways to meet “Sikhs” in any numbers. I recruited two “Sikh” female, Punjabi-speaking research assistants, Ranjit and Amarjit. Both were married, Swindon-born members of the second-generation in their 40s. They helped me to integrate by offering guidance on customs such as covering one’s head and removing shoes, appropriate behaviour, and taught me Punjabi small-talk that I used whilst drying up in the temple’s kitchen and serving food in the dining-hall.



**Figure 11: Covering My Head at the *Gurdwara***

Although the main language of conversation was English, with Punjabi for talking to elders, my efforts to speak Punjabi were received with smiles. An

initial difficulty was not seeing the same people each week, with intermittent attendance by the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> generation, and unknown attendees from across the South West or India. I didn't gain much access to men through the temple as meals were eaten with same-sex relatives and friends, so in the initial phase, I talked with women only whilst we ate together after *seva* (service) in the kitchen.



**Figure 12: Eating a Punjabi Lunch in the Dining Hall at the *Gurdwara***



I was privy to their conversations. Match-making for young “Sikhs” was a frequent subject of gossip. In one lively dialogue, my research assistants and I met Sarah, a woman in her 30s, and Mrs Bajwa, her mother. Mrs Bajwa had been approached at a party by a doctor enquiring about Sarah’s single status.

Sarah however was adamant that she didn't want to be restricted by a husband. She valued her independence. Conversation jokingly turned to relationships among elders in the temple, then '*Make Me A Marriage*', a television show on BBC2 where "English" girls were set up Indian-style. My assistants agreed it didn't resemble the Asian way, and laughed that if I painted my skin darker, dressed in Indian clothing and did a lot of *seva*, I might be in with a chance for a Punjabi husband.



**Figure 13: "Sikh" Female Friends**

I felt welcomed and my presence was never challenged. When my disability became visible through the use of crutches, I received sympathy, and my Oxford affiliation was much approved of by older people impressed by educational achievements. Community leaders and attendees willingly opened up. I suspected that the "Sikhs" were used to explaining themselves to "English" people, particularly in defending themselves against racism.

The management committee of the Polish centre nominated Krystyna, a Swindon-born second-generation "Pole" in her mid-50s as a research assistant. Access to attendees of the centre was formal because the language of interaction was Polish, so I was more reliant on Krystyna, who taught me Polish phrases.

Use of these was welcomed by the older generation, but I found that regular access to adults of my target age group was not sustainable through the centre. Most activities were focused on the elderly or the under 18s, so I established an ad hoc presence at groups and events where any younger adults might be present, including the Saturday school, Brownies and Scouts, the folk-dance group, religious events and festive days, and fund-raisers. I was heartily welcomed by community leaders but the context was also a barrier as people prioritised quality time socialising with family and close friends at the centre, and had limited time for a researcher.

My lack of Polish hindered integration. However, I detected an all-round reserve towards the notion of being scrutinised by an outsider, and with the exception of the management and some altruistic individuals, many “Poles” were unwilling to engage with me. For some, it seemed to be a lack of time; others were sensitive to questioning and worried about anonymity and standing out, who might hear their opinions. I gradually brokered contacts, although it took many months. Access to males was difficult because the majority of adult males marry young, especially the newer migrants, and spending time with a young woman working alone was unethical. There was another language barrier with recent migrants who did not speak good English and were embarrassed by it. The management committee often introduced me as ‘the researcher’ or ‘the student’ ‘from Oxford’, labels that could be intimidating.





**Figure 14: At a Polish Event with the Mayor of Swindon, War Veterans and Folk Dancers**

At my host company, I did two unpaid shifts of data-entry and filing per week for seven months, sitting at a work-station as a member of several teams of customer service agents ranging in age from their 20s to late 50s. An email went around on my first day introducing me as ‘a PhD anthropology student from Oxford University studying human behaviour in different places’. My new colleague Lyle had looked up ‘Anthropology’ on *Wikipedia* and emailed the entry around the office. Most saw me as a young student on work placement. Whilst doing tasks, I tried to listen in to desk-side conversations to hear if colleagues talked about anything connected to identity, taking notes in my mobile phone.

People were friendly and inclusive on a work level. I was accepted to the extent that I functioned as a team-member and joined in with the banter and jokes, team spirit and social gloss of the office. Once, Lyle was on hold whilst waiting for a commercial service provider to answer the phone. He broadcast the call through the ‘speakerphone’ so that everyone could hear the ‘cheesy music’ which evoked snorts of laughter and comparisons to the soundtrack to a porn film. Another source of amusement was the names of some customers. Moira, a Welsh woman in her 50s, told me in hysterics that she had dealt with ‘Iona Mountain’ and ‘Simone Salmon Angelfish’ in her time. I quickly became part of



the everyday chat. Beyond this, I achieved no deeper integration into colleagues' personal lives. We did not have age, social background, home town or shared life-experience in common, although there was a fragmented range of ages, lifestyles and home localities. All we shared was nationality and workplace, not the substance of deep friendship. An invitation home depends on being 'friends' so I met with unwillingness to participate in 'home interviews' (see Chapter 3).

#### **2.4.3 The *Swindon Survey* and the Boundary with Sociology I**

Using the model of the '*Southall Youth Survey*' by Gillespie (1995) and Baumann (1996), which reaped the benefits of survey data, overcame anthropological suspicion of statistical 'generalisations' (Gillespie, 1995: 52-53) and included data on media consumption, I devised a similar survey to achieve four objectives. They were 1) to obtain a demographic profile of a cross-section of "Sikh", "Polish" and "English" adults to guide me in mapping local ethnic cultures, 2) to track the media *outlets* and genres that were engaged so that I avoided enquiring about media that were not of 'natural' interest, 3) to ask informants to respond to questions about identity in their own words and on their own so that I could cross-check qualitative data gathered in my presence, and 4) to provide context of scale for my ethnographic data in order to make my project of interest to non-academic political and policy actors and processes (see A P Cohen, 2002: 327).

Data from the National Census (2001) was used to aggregate statistics for the whole populations of England, the South-West region and Swindon on: age, gender, ethnicity, country of birth, religion, occupation, educational attainment, and household type. However, Swindon-level data on other key factors in my mapping exercise were omitted, and none of the major national surveys covered all interest areas or had a large enough sample at the local level. When

examining the Census data on “Poles” and “Sikhs” at local level, the demographic profile for British-born “Poles” was not detectable as they are submerged in the ‘White - Other’ ethnic category. Although Census data would have enabled the identification of second-generation “Sikhs” through the ‘religion’ and ‘country of birth’ variables, this would have left a simplified picture of their attachments to ethnic identity (they could have ticked a variety of options) and national identity (absent from the 2001 survey).

I therefore created my own questionnaire under the guidance of Anthony Heath (see Appendix II). It explored: neighbourhood of residence, age, gender, religion - faith and particular sect/denomination, cultural heritage, household type, occupation and class (based on the five-category version of the NS-Sec), educational attainment, country of birth, passport/s, ‘national origin’ (as interpreted by informants), languages spoken, length of residence in Swindon, parents’ birthplace/place of residence (to build a profile on the different generations of families/kin), travel outside the UK, and political party affiliation. All but the questions on neighbourhood of residence, age, gender and level of qualifications asked for answers in informants’ own words so that the data was emic, rather than based on imposed categories. A question on national identity was left out due to the subjectivity of the concept, especially in Britain. The tables below show the basic demographics of respondents.

**Table 10: Sex of Respondents**

<b>Sex</b>			
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Male	Female	<i>Base</i>
English (%)	47	53	87
Sikh (%)	46	54	56
Polish (%)	42	58	59

**Table 11: Age Profile of Respondents**

<b>Age</b>					
<b>Ethnicity</b>	18-29 years	30-44 years	45-59 years	60 and over	<i>Base</i>
English (%)	23	36	28	14	87
Sikh (%)	32	32	25	11	56
Polish (%)	17	32	25	25	59

A further section asked about ownership of media equipment - radios, televisions, DVD players/VCRs, satellite, digital and cable television, computers and internet, their locations in homes, relationships with those with whom media consumed and discussed, and preferred broadcast channels, genres and programmes, and newspapers consumed. Much of this information was rendered obsolete as the variety of media consumed was too overwhelming for a single study (see Chapter 1).

Professor Heath created an 'ideal sample profile' of respondents, applying the demographic ratios from the 2001 Census for the whole town based on age, gender and occupation to each 'group' to be 'loosely' representative of Swindon overall.<sup>47</sup> I therefore had to be precise in my selection of respondents. Based on the three-generation classification used to identify people of Irish heritage in Britain by Hickman, Morgan and Walter (2001), a three-generational definition of each 'group' was used, encompassing people raised with cultural identification with a 'group', *and* familial descent, so for example: 'Anyone of

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<sup>47</sup> It is difficult to be entirely representative with a small sample size.

“English” origin: people raised as “English”, people with 1 or 2 “English” parents or people with 1 or 2 “English” grandparents’.

It took 10 months to gather 217 questionnaires. I applied the ‘snowball’ method to a range of distribution methods: by email to friends and contacts, via the employee intranet of the Council, local leisure and civil society groups, opportunistic distribution at the temple, after masses at the community centre and Holyrood church, visits to shop, at a primary school, during one-off interviewees, and at an EFL class. My “English” work colleagues were happy to fill it in and ask friends. Participating in research at work proved no obstacle. My research assistants engaged their personal networks, and my “Sikh” assistants used the reciprocity of relations with kin to their advantage. It was less easy in Polish networks where obligations to help were based on individual relationships, and questionnaires were returned if someone was interested in the project. “Poles” were the most suspicious and reluctant to complete them, perhaps the hang-over of wartime and communist scrutiny. The answers were transformed into aggregate statistics by four sociology research assistants using the STATA package, and a simple cross-tabulation analysis was performed where each variable was run against responses from the three ‘groups’. The data is presented in 52 tables (see Appendix III) and throughout the thesis.

#### **2.4.4 ‘Media Talk’ and the Boundary with Sociology II**

People did not talk much in public about the media with the exception of a few brief conversations on non-news content. I carried out thirteen individual interviews with work colleagues during work time after six months of fieldwork. During interviews, several mentioned ‘news talk’ in pubs, but night work ceased to be an option for me for safety reasons. Meeting people in their homes or in ones or twos seemed the best strategy for hearing ‘news talk’.

Therefore from July 2008 until April 2009, I met up with over 46 individuals many times each<sup>48</sup> to conduct semi-structured interviews (and some casual chat) on Swindon life, media consumption and identity. I focused more on couples than single people as the assumption was that people discussed news together when they cohabit, which was proved qualitatively. I also undertook restricted observation of personal dynamics in the domestic environment.<sup>49</sup>

Time spent in homes did not constitute in-depth studies of 'the household' as an analytical unit (see Wallman, 1984; 1986), or 'the family, household and domestic' as a 'moral economy' in the 'private' sphere (see the work of media studies scholars, for example, Lull, 1988, 1990; Silverstone, 1991; Silverstone, Morley, Hirsch, 1991 1992; Silverstone, 1994). These studies miss the wider contexts of town, nation and diaspora. Several anthropologists have stressed the sharp public/private and work/home distinctions in British and English society and culture. MacDonald (2002: 99) has suggested that since the nineteenth century, British 'homes' have represented a haven from public life, and Strathern (1992: 129) adds that they symbolise a private space in English culture. It is almost a cultural violation to enter a home if one has not been invited as a long-term close friend<sup>50</sup> so it is not surprising to find home-based ethnography in urban Britain almost entirely absent. For example, Baumann (1996) mentions that people visited his home but never describes a visit he made to someone else's home. Finnegan's (1989) ethnography of amateur music-making in Milton Keynes focuses on public spaces and contains no home-based ethnography or portraits of individuals. Jenkins (1999) presents a

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<sup>48</sup> Occasionally a teenage son or daughter would join in interviews, for example, the Witmanowskis' 17-year-old son Kryzstof is included in the thesis as a regular participant, although I focused on adults.

<sup>49</sup> Silverstone *et al.* (1991), citing Wallman (1984), say of participant observation of families in Britain: '...it is not impossible, though it is difficult.'

<sup>50</sup> Silverstone *et al.* (1991: 209) recruited informants through a market research agency and paid them initially before concluding it was too expensive and rewarding further informants found through a school with 'a small gift' at the end of fieldwork (1991: 221).

finely-detailed analysis of class, religious identities and 'locality particularity' as it emerged in history, families/households and individual 'personalities' among the working-class in East Bristol, but using historical accounts and 'sixty family histories' (1999:115) rather than home-based observation. It might be easier when spending a year mingling with the same characters in a small village (see Rapport, 1993; 2002), but not in a larger place where daily-life is anonymous and fragmented. In an accurate defence of the prominence of the ethnographic interview in urban Western anthropology, Hockey (2002: 215) highlights it as an alternative:

Anthropology at home uses this method to a valuable effect, but in a limited range of settings: in institutions, in organisations and among people whose lives unfold outside of domestic space. Work on aspects of Westerners' lives which are secluded within the home – sex, housework, family relationships, informal healthcare – tends to use interviews. It seems like the only practical solution in the context of occupational and residential fragmentation, strong boundaries to private space and a miserably cold and damp climate for up to ten months of the year.

My presence in homes was an accomplishment in itself. I found that the public/private demarcation was equally prevalent in Swindon Polish culture, although "Sikh" homes are more of an open site for visiting relatives and friends. People have little incentive to participate in research unless out of established friendship, public spirit, charitable altruism or financial incentive. In urban life, working-aged people are busy with work, commuting, children, social life and leisure. Daytime is spent at work, evenings with children or hobbies and social life, and weekends are for chores, family activities, hobbies and social life. There is little time for hosting researchers for more than a few hours. The primary ethnographic encounter is the interview meeting supplanted by whatever participant observation is possible, so the urban ethnography has much in common with qualitative sociology. What is lost in traditional perceptions of 'depth' in following multiple ethnic groups and non-

linear networks in a town and nation is gained in breadth, and multi-level analysis. Hockey (2002: 210-221) correctly urges that the ethnographic interview *not be seen as the poor relation to participant observation* in a methodological hierarchy which risks restricting British ethnography to traditional methods and fieldsites such as small islands. Skilled interviewing can yield high quality material, but more important is the parallel between interviewing and real life:

...the research interview is a culturally appropriate form of participation in Britain [...] (210)... As a practice, it conforms closely to Western categories of experience. The perceived 'inadequacies' of interviewing – that it extracts a fragment of time from an individual's life, allows no embodied access to other life-worlds and relies upon accounts rather than direct experience – these are the ordinary features of everyday social interactions which Westerners currently live with and negotiate [...] (220)...My argument has suggested that what is seen as the experience-far method of interviewing may actually be experience-near in Western settings [...] (221).

I found no neat overlap between people who talked about the media in public places, and those who agreed to home interview. I searched widely for four 'families' from each 'group', aiming to visit the adult members up to fifteen times each, which would allow 'sensible' intervals over nine months. After initially applying rigid selection criteria which ruled out willing people with whom I had a good rapport, I re-framed my quest more broadly for Swindon-resident adults of the right age and occupational profile who consumed media and were willing.

Recruitment strategies differed for each 'group'. After facing refusal to participate from "English" work colleagues, I searched elsewhere for "English" families. I initially interviewed several lowest-income families through Council contacts. Interviews were dominated with discussion of poverty, health problems, and criminality in the family. There was no deep engagement with media and wider social groupings, so I set about recruiting slightly higher-income families. Two came through the Council: both breadwinners employed

there, and one a council tenant himself. Being presented formally as 'an Oxford researcher' not bound by the authority helped more than being 'a fellow employee'. Another couple I found through a personal friend and visited straightaway, another through visiting *Swindon Conservative Club*. I did initial interviews with two males and one female, then requested further interviews with partners. Gender impacted less on relationship-building with "English" males than with the "Sikhs" and "Poles" as there was no barrier to approaching married males for interview on a semi-formal basis, unlike at the temple or centre, which revolved around the entire family.

I advertised for "Polish" interviewees in the centre's newsletter and distributed 'Fun Fact Sheets' with data from the *Swindon Survey* to try to attract volunteers, but to no avail. I eventually approached one pro-active "Polish" woman who had been helpful and agreed to be interviewed at her workplace. When I told her I wanted to interview her with her husband fifteen times, she temporarily dropped contact. I changed strategy and asked another woman if I could attend an event and interview whoever was there, and I was invited to the Saturday school summer picnic in Lydiard Park. I interviewed her for fifteen minutes in view of other mothers, and several came up out of curiosity and asked if they could be interviewed, enjoying seeing their children speaking Polish into my minidisc recorder. One told me she felt sorry for me having seen me at many events and felt that I deserved responses with my commitment to the project. She later recruited several friends for interview. I followed up after these interactions by phone or email asking for interviews together with male partners in homes, and all agreed. Subsequent visits were built up slowly. I also interviewed a few 'New Poles' for contrast, with Krystyna sometimes translating.

My research assistants advised me to offer a small financial incentive to charity or the temple, to tempt "Sikh" respondents. Apart from the Bajwas who



willingly agreed to be interviewed, my assistants recruited all the female informants from their own networks, which took several months because they did not want to be 'pushy'. I was presented as their 'friend', which helped interviewees to 'trust' the situation of allowing a stranger into their homes. Some had also seen me at the temple, which showed commitment. I was introduced to women because of the gender issue, and requested contact with male partners on the second and subsequent visits. I requested the second interview either after the first, or after a short time gap, thus obtaining agreement to do subsequent interviews. Most people requested not to be paid after one or two interviews.

It took three months to get the agreement of 4 "Sikh" 'families' (2 married couples with children, 1 married mother with children (her husband did not participate), 1 mother and adult unmarried daughter), 4 "English" (3 married couples with children, 1 engaged couple with no children), and 3 "Polish" (3 married couples with children) who I saw 3-7 times each. I also interviewed single people on a one-off basis at my host company, several young couples of different ethnic backgrounds in their homes once or twice, and some adults once or twice at the Polish centre or in their homes, particularly 'New Poles'. Everyone who agreed was pro-active and 'community-minded', or had obvious reasons for having a wider outlook – disabled family members or family members who worked away from Swindon/Britain.

I was focused on the news for continuity of output, and common access to the same content at local and national level. Stories that informants respond to are reconstructed from notes on my own consumption of UK national media and the *Swindon Advertiser*. No-one objected to being recorded, and I observed that my youthful appearance and disability aids relaxed informants, showing my own vulnerability. After initial interviews, everyone opened up and reported enjoying voicing their frustrations during the meetings. I began with general

questions and proceeded to media by the end of the first meeting. In all interviews, I asked the question 'What has caught your attention from the local/national/diasporic media recently?' and often didn't have to prompt further for 'news talk' and the wide-ranging social commentaries that followed. The meetings lasted thirty minutes to three hours at various times of day, and I was occasionally invited to have tea or a meal with the whole family, more towards the end of fieldwork. Some of Lull's ideal list of activities based on US research that a consumption researcher can take part in (1990: 34) such as eating with the family, playing with children, chatting, and taking part in television consumption were possible, but not, as he suggests, helping with chores. To have imposed myself on the running of the household, reserved for family and close friends, would have transgressed my carefully negotiated status as a guest. Like Silverstone *et al.* (1991: 213) participant observation also involved noting 'the objectifications of the households' aesthetic and domestic culture' and being able to 'gain all sorts of inconsequential information about family relations or significant events...' Meetings were arranged by phone or email as often as I felt able to request them, and I interviewed all informants in a series of 'waves' to ensure they had access to the same news stories. Outside of meetings, informants rarely contacted me except those I saw at the temple or centre.

The combinations of people I had access to each time were arbitrary, and I had to interview whoever was available. Many interviews were with both partners together, which often led to a more provocative discussion, with people comfortable in articulating deeper feelings. Partners provided someone to disagree with, reinforcing or moderating their views. Gender dynamics played a role as I observed that male partners tended to remain quiet for longer to start with, letting their wives and girlfriends talk, until I pressed them to speak and sometimes they came in strongly and dominated. Following gender dynamics

throughout the course of interviews was not a main feature of research.<sup>51</sup> I sometimes observed spontaneous ‘news talk’ as the television was a prominent feature in homes and news programmes often ran during interviews. Informants sometimes flicked between channels to find illustrative examples, particularly the “Poles” with diasporic channel TV Polonia. Interviews were surrounded by a lot of general chat. I gossiped with the “Sikh” women and discussed popular and tabloid culture with both “English” and “Poles”.

## **2.5 Pen Portraits of Informants and Their Homes<sup>52</sup>**

Sarah Bajwa was an unmarried nursery teacher in her early 30s, who worked in London during the week and lived with her mother, a widowed pharmacist in her late 50s, at weekends. They had moved to Swindon from London in the 1980s when Sarah and her brother were children. Both were sharp and opinionated, prone to pouring out their feelings at length. They lived in a modern bungalow featuring a through-room, with glass patio doors onto a back garden. The Indian influence was visible in the decor with brightly coloured and gold Indian throws and cushions on the sofa, and pictures on the walls. Prominent in the living-room was an enormous flatscreen television with satellite channels, and a full-length cabinet featuring family photographs.

The Ghalal family comprised Gurbax, a Bradford-born secondary teacher in her 40s, and her 40-something husband, Mohinder, who had moved to Swindon from Leeds with his family when he was a child. They had met via a family introduction. Mohinder had been off work with a back injury for several years and looked after their two young children. They lived in a terraced house and their home was tastefully furnished with a small amount of iconography and

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<sup>51</sup> The subject has been studied in-depth elsewhere. See for example, Morley (1986).

<sup>52</sup> All names have been changed, unless otherwise indicated.

art suggesting “Sikh” culture. Gurbax was the calmer personality, with Mohinder, something of an armchair sociologist, liable to debate his views in a lively way. They had a large television, always switched off, but no satellite dish or home computer.

Mandip was born in Swindon, and was in her mid-40s. She worked as a part-time administrator and had two lively toddlers. She had been formally introduced to her Indian husband. However, although she spoke of him often, I never had the chance to interview him as he ran his own business and was frequently out. She was often at home during the daytime with her younger child and lived in a roomy two-storey house with conservatory on a newish estate. Her living-room was strewn with toys, and children’s television and DVDs ran continuously under interviews. She was a cheerful woman who frequently served up tea and cake, and child’s play became a part of the interviews, often leaving me to shout over the sound of excited squeaks. Two large prints of “Sikh” *gurus* hung in her hall.

Charan and Kamal Sahota were an upbeat couple in their 40s, introduced by family, with a grown-up daughter at university and a primary school-aged child. Charan, a young-looking woman, was born in Essex and had moved to Swindon as a teenager. She worked as a mobile product demonstrator who worked across distances. Kamal was born in Dubai but had a distinctive London-Asian accent and worked as a technician at BMW. Kamal’s mother also lived in their spacious detached house with garage on a new estate. Their deluxe combined kitchen, diner and living-room featured a large television with satellite and assorted equipment, and small and large pictures of “Sikh” *gurus* on the back wall.

Other “Sikh” informants included my research assistants, Ranjit, her Indian-migrant husband, local businessman, Surjit Raj, and my other married

researcher, Amarjit; Ranjit's aunt Balbir, an Indian-born woman in her late 50s, part-time supermarket-worker and carer to a disabled relative; the 'Chalal girls' – three animated young sisters from the temple, including Jasvinder, a fun and mischievous unmarried woman and IT consultant aged 30; temple elders such as Mr Grewal (*real name*), a shopkeeper in his 60s on the management committee, and the temple's *giani* (priest) from India.

The Witmanowski family comprised Klara, a Swindon-born physiotherapist in her late 40s, her two teenagers, and her Swindon-born husband Tomasz, a park-keeper of the same age. They had met through the Polish centre and lived in a handsome terraced house. Their third-generation older child, son Krzysztof, was studying for NVQs and had an obvious interest in the world around him. They were active in the organised community, had strong opinions on politics and history, and were avid news consumers. Their television was always running news programmes on Polonia during interviews which took place around their pine kitchen table, and their computer terminal with webcam stood close by. They were redecorating in a tasteful minimalist style when I visited, and a large carving of biblical figures on the wall was the only obvious sign of their Polish Catholic identity.

Ryszard Ciechanowicz had met his wife Zofia, late 30s, at school in Swindon. The pair had dated whilst she had done a training course abroad and married when she returned. Now in his early 40s, Ryszard cut a tall figure who had come to England from Poland aged 11. He had traces of an accent but his English was fluent. He worked in the car industry whilst Swindon-born Zofia worked in engineering research. Zofia was a regular at the centre and had a jolly personality. They had two primary-aged children who were being raised as bi-lingual and they lived in a modern semi-detached house on a hillside road. The houses on their street, like seaside homes, were painted in light and pastel colours, and their through-room stretched to a small garden behind.

Their enormous television received TV Polonia and other satellite channels. Besides several carvings depicting biblical scenes, there was nothing specifically 'Polish' in their house.

Wanda Wilkowska, a smartly-dressed 'Swindon Pole' in her early 50s, was married to a Russian-born "Pole" Roman, and they had three school-aged children. He was a fairly recent migrant and retained a strong accent. She worked as an administrator and he in a shop. They lived in a two-storey detached house on a new estate, and on entering the downstairs living room, the East-European interior style stood out. Patterned carpets, a large crucifix on the wall, photographs in gold frames and Polish ornaments on the mantelpiece made an immediate impression. Leather sofas with a mechanism producing a footrest were the location of interviews and tea and cakes were served by Wanda. There was also a medium-sized television showing Polonia and Russian stations.

Other "Poles" (*all members of the second-generation unless indicated*) interviewed once or more included: my research assistant Krystyna (*real name*), Helena Sosnowska, a Swindon-born member of the third-generation in her 30s, marketing employee with a toddler; Leokadia Kuczyńska, a Swindon-born married woman without children in her late 40s who worked as a cleaner; Agnieszka Pasterowicz, a Swindon-born PA in her late 40s, married with two grown-up children; Krysia, a Leicester-born woman in her late 40s working as a manager, who had moved to Swindon to marry her "Polish" husband; Kaz, a construction site manager in his late 40s and his friend Stan, a security manager of the same age; Danuta Szymkowska, a teaching assistant in her early 40s, married with small children; Franciszka Nowak, a single retired woman in her 60s with one son; Bronek Rejek, a trustee and former chairperson of the centre in his 70s, and his wife Maria (*real names*), both members of the first generation with several adult children; Nadzieja Kowalska, a council employee, wife and

mother in her early 40s; Stanislaw Swora and Roman Giemza (*real names*), war veterans in their 80s and both former chairmen of the centre; Aleksander Włochowicz, a recent migrant in his 30s, married with two tiny children, working as a special needs helper and occasional musician; Monika Torowicz, a recent migrant and single office administrator from Warsaw in her 20s; and Katarzyna (Katia) Biczewska, a languages teacher in her late 20s, single, also from Warsaw.

Steven and wife Dinah Buxley lived in a small two-storey house on a council estate with their young son and Steven's two sons from a previous marriage. Steven was local and Dinah from Bristol. Both were in their late 40s, and both had disability impairments. Steven was almost blind and Dinah had mobility problems. Steven worked for the council and Dinah did part-time cleaning. Both were community-minded and sympathetic. She was pro-active in the church community and volunteered on the arts scene, and both were heavily involved Labour politics, with Dinah's lifelong ambition to be an MP. The furnishings in their house were worn, it smelt of their pet cats and dogs, and was crammed full of media equipment: a huge flatscreen television, a video recorder and DVD, a record player, computer terminal and video gaming console.

The Browns comprised Jim and wife Jennifer, a 40-something couple with three children under 18, who lived in a largish housing-association brick town-house on a new estate. Jim was employed by the council in Penhill whilst Jennifer was a stay-at-home mother. Jim was a heavyweight figure with tattoos, protective of his family, and both were friendly and Swindon-born. Interviews were held in their enormous living room which looked onto a patioed garden with a door in the back fence through to a lane connecting the houses. The silver flatscreen television ran frequently in the background and teenaged children, friends and their parents wandered in from time to time.

Emma Thorpe and Martin Shore were a cohabiting couple in their 30s without children, engaged and planning their wedding. She was a born-and-bred Swindonian, he had moved to Swindon from Staffordshire for work after university. Emma worked as a project manager at Intel and Martin, a mining engineer, did month-on month-off shift work in China. In their modern town-house situated in a cul-de-sac on a new private estate, an almost vertical staircase led up to their living room containing a large television with a Sky box and an extensive CD collection, with an enormous stereo and large speakers either side of it.

Jane and her husband Andy Harding were a married couple in their 40s with a 10-year old daughter Hailey and 14-year-old son, Toby. Both were Swindon-born but had lived for many years in Germany where Andy had worked as an army technician. They had been back in Swindon for a few years, and had set up home in a two-storey detached house on a leafy private estate. Jane worked in a sales role near the Conservative Club where they enjoyed socialising, and Andy travelled the UK in his current technical job. In their lounge, a large white china statue of a terrier dog sat next to their live terrier dog, to the amusement of the children.

Other “English” informants interviewed once included Swindon-born Jean, a family woman in her 60s, and her daughter Angela, who had a toddler and was on long-term sick-leave, both of Penhill; host company colleagues (*all customer-care agents*): Lyle, a 28 year old who had moved to Swindon as a child; Chantelle, a 40-something female from London; David, a single man in his early 50s from London; Derek, a man in his early 60s from Rodbourne; Gary, a 30-something man with a girlfriend, born in Essex and raised in Swindon; Sally, a Cumbrian in her early 40s who lived with her husband in a village outside Swindon; Nancy, one of the original resettled East Enders from London who’d lived in Swindon with her family since the 1960s; Anne, a softly-spoken



woman of 44 who had moved from Stoke-on-Trent when she was 1 and who lived with her husband since her children had left home; Dion, one of the supervisors in her mid-30s, born in Swindon; Hannah and John, who were 33 and 32 respectively, both from Swindon, working for the council and in pharmaceutical research and living in Rodbourne, and Nigel, a 40-something local journalist who was a seventh-generation Swindonian from a 'railway family'.

Two other informants were Moira, a gregarious Welshwoman employed at my host company, mother of two, in her 50s, and June, an Irish folk singer in her 50s, resident in Swindon since her 20s.

## **Chapter 3: The “Indian Sikh”, “Polish” and “English” Residents of Swindon**

This chapter introduces and profiles the three ‘groups’. The histories of settlement of the two migrant-origin groups are sketched out whereas the history of the “English”, the town’s resident majority since its founding, is also the history of the town presented in Chapter 2. The chapter also introduces internal cleavages, residential patterns, socio-economic position, cultural, religious and identity orientations, language habits and social networks. Unlike in the bulk of the thesis, the “Sikhs”, “Poles” and “English” are profiled separately here because they have different histories of arrival in Swindon, community and religious institutions, speak different languages, and some of the traits, behaviours and values inhabited and practised differ from an ethnic perspective. These aspects are described in this Chapter so that culturally specific responses in ‘news talk’, especially identity articulations, in Chapters 4 - 6 can be contextualised.

### **3.1 Overall Residential Population: Ethnic Groups**

Alongside the white British, of whom the national and ethnic group “the English” are the socially dominant and numerically largest ‘group’, Swindon is also inhabited by a small but diverse mix of people of overseas migrant origin (first generations and their descendents). They include Irish economic migrants from the railway-era, war-era Polish refugees, and Italians, originally prisoners of war. There are also Indian economic migrants including Sikhs and Hindus, Pakistani and Bangladeshi Muslims, and later ‘twice-migrant’ (Bhachu, 1985) arrivals of Indian origin from Uganda and Kenya. The town also has small

numbers of Chinese, West Indians, Africans and Japanese (Honda workers). New migrant nationalities were economic migrants from Goa, Brazil, the Philippines, and small numbers of refugees from Somalia and Afghanistan. Swindon's migrant communities were residentially dispersed across the town, with the exception of the high concentration of Pakistani, Goan and Somalian households in the Broad Street and Manchester Road area, with its ethnic food shops and take-aways. The table below shows the composition of Swindon by ethnic group.

**Table 12: Ethnic Groups in Swindon Based on Census Data\***

Swindon	Frequency	%	Cum. %	Frequency	%	Cum. %
White	171,409	95.20	95.20			
White: British				164,707	91.48	91.48
White: Irish				2,308	1.28	92.76
White: Other White				4,394	2.44	95.20
Mixed	2,045	1.14	96.34			
Mixed: White and Black Caribbean				813	0.45	95.65
Mixed: White and Black African				200	0.11	95.76
Mixed: White and Asian				664	0.37	96.13
Mixed: Other Mixed				368	0.20	96.34
Asian or Asian British	3,837	2.13	98.47			
Asian or Asian British: Indian				2,283	1.27	97.60
Asian or Asian British: Pakistani				649	0.36	97.96
Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi				492	0.27	98.24
Asian or Asian British: Other Asian				413	0.23	98.47
Black or Black British	1,268	0.70	99.17			
Black or Black British: Caribbean				744	0.41	98.88
Black or Black British: African				409	0.23	99.11
Black or Black British: Other Black				115	0.06	99.17
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group	1,492	0.83	100.00			
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Chinese				784	0.44	99.61
Chinese or Other Ethnic Group: Other Ethnic Group				708	0.39	100.00
TOTAL	180,051	100.00		180,051	100.00	

The table shows the usual resident population by their perceived ethnic group and cultural background

The population of this table is all people.

The Ethnic Group question records each person's perceived ethnic group and cultural background.

Source: 2001 Census of Population

Of my three 'groups', the "Poles" are accounted for in the 'White: Other White' Census category at 2.44%. Of the religion categories, the 'Christian' option totals 70.07% of all surveyed respondents. Indian economic migrants are the largest non-white ethnic category at 1.27% with "Sikhs" comprising 0.56% in the religion categories.

## **3.2 The "Sikhs"**

### **3.2.1 Economic Migration to Swindon**

According to Jaginder Bassi, director of Swindon's Racial Equality Council (REC), the first Sikh, a clothing pedlar, arrived in Swindon in 1932, upholding a pattern of "Sikh" pedlars travelling around British cities during the 1930s (Ballard and Ballard, 1977: 22; 28). He came from a village called Samrai in the Jalandhar district of the Punjab, and was followed by three others who lived in a caravan near Chiseldon on what is now the M4. After the partition of the Punjab between India and Pakistan in 1947, rural Punjabi Sikhs came under renewed economic pressure with Sikhs and Hindus migrating into the area from the Pakistani side of the new border (Gillespie, 1995: 29). Males from displaced families belonging to the Jat caste began to migrate to Swindon in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Most came alone and worked in local factories such as British Rover (later BMW), Plesseys and Vickers. Their wives (if they were married) and families began to join them from the late 1950s into the 1960s. As Baumann observed in Southall (1986: 54-55), this was chain migration with the new migrants securing their passage through family contacts.

Besides Jalandhar, Punjabi families also came from the Ludiana district and others, with a large number from the villages of Samrai, Jiandala, and Badala. A minority came from cities such as Delhi and Mumbai, followed by refugees of

Indian origin from Kenya and Uganda in the late 1960s. I met very few of this group, with Punjabis and their descendents making up the greatest majority. For some migrants, Swindon was their second port of call after arrival in Britain, moving from cities such as Birmingham and London, although many came straight from the subcontinent.

In the past 25 years, there has been a trickle of Sikh migrants, mainly spouses, parents and grandparents of people already settled in Swindon. They have largely arrived on work permits obtained through the Highly Skilled Migrant Programme, or relatives on extended visits for weddings, returning home after one or two months. Bassi and several community leaders estimated that there were around 4000 individuals living in Swindon who would define themselves as “Sikhs”, or 200-250 families. This concurs with the Census data which numbered the “Sikh” population at 4614 in 2001.

Sikh women initially stayed at home running the household, but needing to pay for the weddings of their second-generation offspring, many later sought employment in cleaning jobs and factories. Conforming to the pattern observed by Ballard and Ballard (1977: 42-3) among Sikh families in the 1970s, Swindon’s Sikhs, once reunited with their relatives, settled in a close residential community in the terraced houses of the Broad Street, Manchester Road and Farringdon Road area near the station. Sarah Bajwa remembers a strong feeling of neighbourliness: ‘...it was a very safe place for you to be. You could walk out and about, go into each other’s homes – everybody knew whose kids you were with and what you were doing outside – there was good community spirit at that time in that area.’

An organised ‘Sikh community’ emerged around family attendance at functions such as wedding parties and eventually the establishing of a *gurdwara* in 1972. It was housed firstly in a school, then in an old church building in Old

Town's North Street. As the original settler families established themselves and their British-born children began to grow up, the community conformed to the classic pattern of Sikh settlers in other towns who moved out to the suburbs when roots were being put down locally (Ballard and Ballard, 1977: 42-3). From the 1980s, there was a large-scale movement out to the newer estates in West Swindon, and Pakistanis moved in. Because Sikh families went to live scattered across West Swindon and other parts of town, 40something house-husband and father Mohinder Ghalal recalled that the mass move didn't incur an adverse reaction from the ethnic majority: '...where they're not all living together in one area they're sort of spread out and therefore the white community don't feel, "Oh, they're all moving into our area!"' Only a few families remain in the inner city neighbourhood around Manchester Road among the predominantly less affluent Pakistani and Goan families, although a few local families still own property there, now rented out. My assistant Ranjit's aunt Balbir told me through a mix of translation from Punjabi and broken English that she felt there were now too many Asians living there, particularly Goans. Some of them caused trouble and things had changed. It would be nicer if there were still more Sikhs.

### **3.2.2 Racism Since Settlement**

For most Sikhs, skin colour and cultural racism were not regarded as overwhelming problems in Swindon. Jaginder Bassi told me that '...most of the so-called immigrants who've come to Swindon in the past 40, 50, 60 years have actually been welcomed by the local community.' Mr Grewal, a temple trustee who moved to Swindon in the 1970s from London, cut off his long hair before migrating to Britain, upon hearing that men in turbans weren't liked. Thirty years later, he had never experienced any racism (apart from occasional white noise name-calling) but felt inferior in that his Sikh identity was not visibly as strong as for men with beard and turban. Surjit Raj, a more recent migrant

who'd been in the town for ten years after meeting his Swindon-born wife on a business trip told me that there was no racism in Swindon: 'No in Swindon. In other town, no in Swindon.' However, some people I spoke to could recall someone who had been subjected to prejudice. It always loomed in the background as a possibility and there was a blanket awareness that 'the English' are capable of it. Sarah again: '...when we moved here, it wasn't easy at all. Because we moved in the time when it was the National Front and a lot of racism and we were very much in a minority then – we went to school and we were probably the only Indian kids there.' Most experiences stopped at derogatory name calling, but the occasional physical attack was recorded. Mandip, an administrator and mother in her 40s, explained: 'When you're children...but even then not majorly, only like, I think you'd experience it more in town – in the town centre. Because we've grown up in the town centre and there's a little rec or park near my mum's house and we walked through it to go to town so you'd normally get comments like 'Paki.' A couple of informants alluded to racist incidents in the present but they were few. Mohinder's wife Gurbax Ghalal, teacher and mother in her 40s, had experienced the term 'Paki'. She said: 'Society just uses the term "Paki" because you've got a brown face – that's the reality – they still use it, society! People in Swindon use it...Right-wingers, young people...if your face isn't white you're likely to be called names. If you're not English-speaking or you're not able to speak it well you're likely to be called names.' Mandip's husband had been unfairly treated at work but she was unsure if it was because he was Indian or not.

A new Asian racism had been observed since 9/11 (see Chapters 4 and 6), with a fear of being mistaken for Pakistani by non-Asians. Mandip, who thought that women experienced less racism on the whole, explained the exception: 'Unless you're dressed in the Muslim style - because you're in people's faces, aren't

you? Being different, looking different...’ Sarah Bajwa blamed it on the negative portrayal of Islam in the media and explained:

We’ve gone backwards in terms of how you integrate – before it had moved forwards and you didn’t have that sort of fear – now it’s coming back again – you know people look at you in a certain way and think that you are something that you might not really be. They associate you by the nature of your race that you’re going to be up to something...

### 3.2.3 Language

The language of the older generation remains Punjabi, particularly among older women who stayed at home, although Jaginder Bassi reported that the original migrant males learnt English fast because they were small in numbers and had to communicate at work. Most Sikhs from children up to the 40somethings communicated in English as a first language. They spoke a ‘pidgin Punjabi’ to their elders, and relatives in the Punjab. Passing on language skills and cultural knowledge was largely seen as the responsibility of women, the custodians of *heritage* in Swindon. Tables 13 and 14 show the virtually equal proportions who spoke English/Punjabi but the dominance of English as a main language in homes.

**Table 13: Languages Spoken by “Sikh” Respondents**

#### Languages Spoken

Ethnicity	English	Punjabi	Hindi	Urdu	Other European language	Oriental language	Base
Sikh (%)	89	88	16	5	11	1	87

**Table 14: Main Language Spoken at Home by “Sikh” Respondents**

#### Main Language Spoken at Home

Ethnicity	English	Punjabi	Missing	Base
Sikh (%)	55.4	37.5	7.1	56



### 3.2.4 The Second and Third-Generations

The second and third-generations of the original migrants, mostly born in Britain or on 'sabbatical years' in India from the 1960s onwards, have grown up to find work in a range of work, some still in factories such as Honda and BMW. Others are employed in small family businesses like corner shops while others, both male and female, have had professional careers in teaching, engineering, IT, or as doctors at Swindon's Great Western Hospital. I encountered differing views on the rate of those who returned to be near their families having left town to go to university.

### 3.2.5 The "Sikh" Community Now

*"Swindon's Sikh community is scattered across Swindon, and you don't necessarily bump into them in the shop or at the council."* (Gurbax Ghahal)

Since the dispersal of the socio-residential community, organised community gatherings have been centred on activities at the two temples, some pan-Asian activities such as women's groups and a day centre for the over 50s at Broad Green Community Centre, and since 2002, an annual pan-Asian *Mela* Festival organised by the borough council. Nan Bains, Community Development Officer (BME Women), reported that a non-existent *bhangra* music scene meant that young enthusiasts had to go to Midlands towns and London to attend gigs unless artists or a DJ were hired to perform at weddings. Women who socialised at clubs and gigs ran the risk of negative behavioural evaluations from elders so most did it in other towns, even then not free from the possibility of being spotted by a contact.

As Sarah Bajwa explained, the meaning of 'community' has changed for Swindon's Sikhs since the exodus to West Swindon:

... that's when really dropping in and out of your neighbours' and community spirit finished. It's not direct but whenever you go to the *gurdwara*, you'll

always know what's going on in the community because people are so interested in each other's lives, you easily will find out what is happening here and there. So it's just a different way of being a community now.

The largest organised 'community' gets together at a weekly Sunday gathering for prayers and a meal at a purpose-built *gurdwara* at Kembrey Park, an inner suburb. The original North Street temple lacked amenities and attracted too many parked cars, to the annoyance of local residents, so plans were drawn up for a new temple. Tensions emerged over the proposal for an adjacent Punjabi community centre with a functions hall, licensed to sell alcohol at socials amid fears of unwarranted drunkenness, so a break-away group fundraised for and built the large modern temple, named *Shri Guru Nanak Gurdwara* and its community centre. Completed in 2002, it stands on a dedicated site on land purchased from the Council. It is distinctive on the skyline with its three rooftop golden domes. Even on a stand-alone site, it hasn't been free from assault by local racists, such as a 'retaliatory' vandal attack carried out after 9/11 when it was near completion.<sup>53</sup> Social functions for *Diwali*, Christmas, *Vaisakhi*, birthdays, weddings and funerals were all staged in the community hall, Punjabi lessons for all ages were available at the temple, and there were weekly *dhol* drumming and dance classes, although they ceased two to three years before fieldwork began. The temple complex continues to be funded by donations from community members through the *golakh* (cash donations during Sunday prayers), and also hiring the community hall to non-"Sikh" groups.

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<sup>53</sup> Source: *Swindon Evening Advertiser*, 15/10/08.



**Figure 15: Diwali at the Gurdwara**

Informants reported that the Kembrey Park temple was run with a more mainstream religious philosophy, was more family-orientated and was the temple that ‘most families’ went to. The North Street temple was eventually knocked down and a replacement temple established in an old church hall in Deacon Street for those with a stricter interpretation of Sikhism. The reputation of this temple had no resonance with my informants. All fieldwork was carried out through contacts made at the Kembrey Park, where the majority of the second-generation congregated.



Figure 16: Around the *Gurdwara* and Community Hall

### 3.2.6 Faith and Temple-Going

The view at Swindon Racial Equality was that half the town's "Sikh" population were active adherents in the temple community with the rest 'Anglicised' non-attendees who did not feel an obligation to visit in order to be identified as "Sikh". 98% of *Swindon Survey* respondents identified as "Sikh" in the religion table (see p28 in Chapter 1). Among those who did attend (most of my informants), it was generally held that there was a stronger religious focus and more pressure to contribute to the running of the temple through *seva* (service) than they had experienced at temples on journeys to India. This was because the small community in Swindon depended on having all hands on deck for survival compared to Indian temples positioned at the heart of their society and temples in larger British "Sikh" communities.

Sikhism was experienced locally as a way of life and not just a set of religious teachings. For Sarah: 'I just think it's the way we live. It's not separate. You know, when you greet people you're using Sikh language. It's not just exactly religious, some of it. You live by the way of what you've been brought up because of the teachings....' Although most Sikhs professed some attachment to the teachings of the faith, most stated that keeping in contact with their 'culture' and 'community' were the strongest reasons for attending the temple. The get-togethers were also a good chance to catch up with family and friends. For the older generation, it was the backbone of the organised community and the place where community ties of essential support were renewed through regular attendance. Sarah's mother, Mrs Bajwa: 'They help you – the community is something – the families you don't know – in the sad occasion – all the people – they help...'



Figure 17: The Khanda, a “Sikh” Symbol<sup>54</sup>

Most visits to the temple took place on Sundays with all but the fervently religious and elderly ordinarily occupied with work and family life during the week. The exception was for a *parth*, a social gathering in honour of a family occasion such as the anniversary of a death or the birth of a child with a special continuous reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib* over two or three days . Every Sunday, an open prayer session runs from 10.00 am until 12.00 noon where men and women, dressed in traditional *salwar kameez* (Punjabi dress) with heads covered, enter the prayer hall through different doors and sit on white sheets on the floor. In a relaxed atmosphere, they listen to the *giani* (priest) reading passages from the *Guru Granth Sahib* in Old Punjabi from an altar at the front, blessing it, to a musical accompaniment. Attendees bow to the altar and donate money to the *golakh*, listen to community notices being read out, then after sharing *prashad* (a milky sweet), they retire to eat a Punjabi lunch in the dining hall downstairs, prepared in advance by volunteers carrying out *seva*, mostly older woman.

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<sup>54</sup> The double-edged sword represents a belief in one god.







Figure 18: In the Prayer Room at the *Gurdwara*



Most of my socialising and inclusion in gossip took place during meals with women as it was not permissible for females to be seen interacting too closely with males apart from husbands or relatives in case it interfered with a woman's family *izzat*, '...family honour, pride and respectability...', its '...corporate moral integrity and public standing...' (Gillespie, 1995: 38). Temple gatherings were the primary site for individuals to keep abreast of speculative information on community members such as matrimonial matches, qualifications and accomplishments of children, and old people talking about their illnesses and ailments. Unlike Gillespie (1995: 150) who distinguished between different categories of information-sharing among her "Sikh" informants in Southall, separating gossip from rumour, I did not study the process in any depth. However, one encounter led me to understand the local meaning of 'knowing' someone in Swindon, which was more 'knowing *about* them' than having a deep knowledge based on personal friendships between individuals. My research assistant Ranjit told her female friends that I 'knew the Chalal girls', three sisters in their 20s and 30s, 'really well' when I had shared friendly interactions with them two or three times at temple but not yet developed individual friendships. 'Knowing someone' was more about what information you had about them such as which family they came from, age, job, and marital status.

Most of my second-generation informants experienced a feeling of disconnection from the *gurdwara* as a moral community because of the old-fashioned ethos of its management committee. This was comprised of Indian-born men in their 60s and 70s, some illiterate, who were felt to be lacking in a willingness to be forward-looking about being a "Sikh" in contemporary Britain. One trustee spoke of the management committee's wish for younger people to be more involved in running the temple with a yearly appeal for

volunteers, but concluded that most were too busy with their own careers or early marriages.

The second-generation felt that the older generation weren't listening to them and hoped the centre would provide a cultural opportunity for young people. Product demonstrator and mother Charan Sahota's (early 40s) view was fairly common, that she wanted the temple to:

...bring our community together – we're not saying segregate – totally I'm against that. But let's do something so they can still identify with their own background and culture – they [*children*] shouldn't lose sight of all that together – which I feel they are. It's great to be in a Western society but it's also nice to hold on to your heritage. And it's great if you can combine them both. And unfortunately they've [*the elders*] never listened, they've never done anything, they're set in their ways – I just feel that if anyone could do it, it would have been the temple that could have driven the Asian community and brought us together. But they don't!

My informants also showed widespread resistance to the pressure of moral expectations and gossipy evaluation by the older generation with high ideals of family behaviour and work achievements. This had pushed Amarjit to retreat from the community:

I have to keep myself to myself basically. And I've been like that for quite a few years. I prefer it that way and just have selected friends, you know. So when there's a huge event I know when I am invited because I genuinely am invited. Whereas, you know, usually you have to invite everybody... I'm happy. I don't have to answer to any of the community, whereas, they can be a strong community. If anything goes wrong in anybody's life, they can condemn them.

A layer of hypocrisy was evident in such moral judgements when rumour revealed breaches of "Sikh" doctrine by community members of all generations including the elders, such as alcoholism, separation and divorce, bullying within families, domestic violence, and forms of pious behaviour. Mohinder put it like this: 'They say they're Sikhs [*and that*] they believe in the Sikh religion and yet they're drinking and eating beer – not in the *gurdwara* but at home – and the following day they go, pray, pray, pray – which is hypocrisy...'

Most informants were not particularly inward-looking regarding the organised “Sikh” community, and professed ad hoc attachments to and participation in it. There was a general sense of ‘take it or leave it’, a matter of personal choice, more about catching up with kin than devout religiosity, and also a chance for third-generation children to glean a sense of their heritage. Mohinder:

...generally it's mainly for the kids so they have an understanding that there is a Sikh temple, there are other Asians – not just my brother's family or my sister's family or something like that but they can see that there is a large Asian community – or Sikh community. Because when they go to school in their class they're probably not going to see another Sikh person or another Asian person out of thirty people – so they'll not see that.



**Figure 19: Sign Outside the Gurdwara**

### **3.2.7 Family Life**

Life for most “Sikhs” still revolved around family-centred networks of married couples with children, and extended family and friendship networks, with extended family households still in existence. The second and third-generation were more likely to follow the British pattern of nuclear family households without ageing parents, a possible source of hurt for parents less orientated towards the British way of life. These findings are reflected quantitatively in table 15. Table 16 shows comparatively that “Sikh” households were larger

than “English” or “Polish” ones. Table 17 shows that most “Sikhs” lived in houses.

**Table 15: Composition of “Sikh” Households**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	Single person	Single person with friends/ lodger	Couple	Couple with 1-2 Children	Couple with 3-5 Children	Single Parent with Child/Children	Adult Living with Parent, Aunt/Uncle or Siblings	Extended family*	<i>Base</i>
Sikh (%)	4	0	11	31	35	2	7	11	55

\*Includes couple with relatives of at least one partner, and unspecified extended family

**Table 16: Mean Number of People in Households**

**Number of people in household**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	Mean	Std. dev.	<i>Base</i>
English	2.9	1.3	86
Sikh	4.1	1.4	55
Polish	2.6	1.2	57

**Table 17: Type of Accommodation for “Sikh” Households**

**Type of accommodation**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced	Bungalow	Other	Flat	Room	<i>Base</i>
Sikh (%)	38	45	13	0	2	2	0	55

Many married couples were ‘introduced’ or matches ‘arranged’ through their parents’ preferred way of making matches via their networks of contacts. At one Sunday’s discussion at the *gurdwara*, Jasvinder Chahal, an unmarried IT worker of 30, estimated that about 90% of young “Sikhs” accepted these matches. Some of the younger generation were free to date if they left Swindon to go to university, but often kept their partner a secret from family until an engagement was definite as there was pressure to remain available for introductions. One half of a couple united through an introduction would often move to Swindon from another part of the UK for their marriage, usually the female partner. It was not uncommon among women and men in the 40s age group to find an Indian spouse paired with a British-born “Sikh”, although one

woman admitted that Indian husbands hadn't been her female friends' preference. All the second-generation couples I interviewed had met through introductions, with the exception of one female who had met her Indian-born husband through the organised community in Swindon whilst he was on holiday. Matrimonial relationships followed a traditional pattern because the Swindon "Sikhs" make up a smaller, more tightly-knit network than in other British towns, and older generation anxieties over 'losing culture' were therefore more acute. Almost all informants reported feeling that Swindon was 'in a time warp'. Besides marital ties, there were expectations of reciprocal help and support within family networks. In addition to contact via the temple, the women in my research kept up regular tea visits and phone contact with local relatives, and their children played together.

### **3.2.8 Orientations Towards India**

More so for the older generation but also for some of the second-generation, trips were made to relatives in the Punjab or elsewhere in India at intervals of a year or every few years. Connections were maintained to ancestral property and land owned by relatives, and attachments felt to 'home villages'. These held special resonances for Mohinder: '...we've actually got a village, which the five great-grandfathers came from, where they were born... And when you go back there, you get very emotional, you know, it's overwhelming, and it's a proud feeling, you know, just walking in your own village, wandering around.' The daily mental horizon included past and current attachments to India realised besides actual visits through communication via phone, internet applications, and Indian diasporic media, and I heard frequent story-telling of friends, family and events in India as a point of comparison with Britain.

### **3.2.9 Indian Caste**

Whilst much less of an issue to “Sikhs” aged 30 years and under, Indian caste (*jati*) was held to still be widely ‘relevant’ among people over 40, with some 40somethings focused on it and others having rejected it. It was accepted that people of 50 and over or those with a more traditional outlook still organised their social relationships and made judgements according to caste. My informants tended to reject it as an anachronism but the subject elicited initially guarded and then passionate views, and did not feature in interviews until I raised it. Jaginder Bassi and others informed me that the predominant caste of “Sikhs” in Swindon was the Jats (land-owners and farmers).

### **3.2.10 British Socio-Economic Class**

Like Ballard (1994: 21) disputing the use of the word ‘class’ as an imposition aligning “Sikh” migrants with the British working-class when they also functioned in a caste system, Jaginder Bassi agreed that caste had a greater bearing in Swindon although those from upper castes had crossed-over into the British middle-class on the basis of shared professions such as medicine, law and engineering. Several informants remarked on the similarities between the principles of caste and class. Charan noted that some “English” surnames originated from professions (e.g. blacksmith). Sarah Bajwa explained that she would never discuss class with her “English” friends. She knew that being in India’s intermediate class overlapped with being at the middle or top of England’s working-class. Indians created their own sub-divisions, which related to income, housing, and education, but the absolutely defining factor was imprecise. Indians who occupied “English” lower-middle or middle-middle class positions aspired to be upper class. No connection was made with “English” working-class pride, with “Sikhs” having a uniform ethos of upward

mobility and socio-economic attainment, so pride in a lower socio-economic position was a cultural contradiction.

### **3.2.11 Pakistani Muslims**

A frequent conversational reference was to Pakistani Muslims, another Asian group in Britain and the world, who were used as an ethnic, religious and cultural 'Other' to define what the "Sikhs" weren't. Raised as a generally negative point of comparison, one set of representations was based on grandparents' and parents' stories of partition and the centuries-old historical tensions between Indians and Pakistanis. The other set, deriving from life-long stereotypes and prejudice, reinforced contemporarily through personal encounters with local Pakistanis in Manchester Road, in the school playground, Muslim acquaintances, and portrayals of Islam in the British and Indian media. Extended dialogues included opinions such as:

Informant 1: I think we're all highly suspicious of Muslims...Yes, but that's because – I've heard things like in the Koran it's acceptable to lie – I don't know – it's what you hear – I've heard more than one person say never trust a Muslim, you know – and I know it's a huge generalised statement but you just don't know.

Informant 2: ...typical thing is – women now – Muslim women wearing the full thing and they're just showing their eyes – they don't want the English to accept what it is and they're playing off that – and that's sad in a way because it has increased – I've seen it in the big cities and on TV or newspapers. OK the women who wear it – they've got very good reasons – but I don't think it's what the women say – it's the men in their culture are saying – these women aren't even allowed to go and see a mosque...

These sets of representations were used to differentiate "Sikhs" from being mistakenly confused with Pakistanis by the white British, due to the public and media hype they have received since 9/11. Whereas most of my informants articulated critical commentary of the Pakistanis' stereotyped underachieving, repression of women and perceived wish to stick together away from ethnic others, some were aware of the generalisations being made and were defensive

in their favour, showing more closet sympathies with the shared experience of racism.

### **3.2.12 Orientations Towards Britain**

The subject of British and English national identity and culture elicited passionate debates about their different meanings. Britishness was linked to history, politics, birthplace and citizenship, culture (including behaviour), success and shame, and Englishness was equated with race, culture (including lifestyle), the royal family, history and participating in society. Sarah Bajwa and Mohinder rejected outright the meanings of both in the colonial past, in particular the 'British' of the British Raj. Sarah was rarely embarrassed to be 'part of this country' but: '...if there's something on the partition of India or the colonisation of India, you get a conflict because obviously you're in the country which invaded your motherland and as a result your family got moved around. Always an upsetting topic.'

There was a collective general ambivalence about Englishness and the English as a homogenous and exclusive ethnic and racial group, and disassociation with its connotations of the far right racist parties, the National Front and BNP. Sarah, a nursery teacher, was working on St George's Day (England's patron saint) and recalled:

...somebody said "Oh, did you know it's St George's Day today?" And I said "Yeah". And then she said, or somebody said, "Oh yeah, we put up a flag" or something. And I said "Well, what does St George's Day mean?" and they all just looked at me like "I can't actually believe that you actually asked me that", but nobody explained. And I was like "Does it have something to do with dragons, or knights or something like that?" ...but because it was the whole thing with national pride, I felt like a bit of an outsider...And the St George flag, isn't that the white one with the red cross? So to me, I have an association of that with the BNP and the Nationalist Party...

She also linked Englishness to the Queen, bygone years and enjoying a roast.



More ambivalence was felt towards English culture as a lifestyle from which the “Sikhs” were both ethnically excluded but included through having grown up around ethnically “English” people and shared to some extent by virtue of living in England, which gave them a sense of association. Mandip related English culture to a materialistic lifestyle and opportunities for children to interact with neighbours, friends and family, and join activity clubs. She also associated modern English culture with her “English” friends’ lifestyle:

‘...they’ve got more leisure time so for them English culture is still about the cooking, the music, going out, one or two holidays a year, and that kind of thing...’ For Gurbax, Englishness was about opportunities: ‘Being English is living here, working here, contributing to society and making an impact on the society that you live in. Making a qualitative contribution. And that your kids...you’ll achieve, they’ll achieve. You have aspirations and I don’t think you need to be English, I guess in one sense the opportunities are different. Whites go for opportunities.’ She highlighted the racial connotation in Englishness but her British-born third-generation seven-year-old-son came back from school talking about himself as ‘both ‘English’ [...rather than ‘British’...] and Indian’, the white racial connotations of ‘English’ removed from his understanding.

All my informants were highly critical of the notion of Britishness as discussed in the media by the Labour government, feeling that linkage to that Britishness had left them vulnerable to terrorist attacks after the Blair government’s interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the US/UK-led ‘war on terror’ (as discussed in Chapter 6). However, holding British citizenship also guaranteed a level of security, as Gurbax surmised: ‘It’s when you go abroad and stuff, the British embassy is not far away and stuff like that. I guess it’s a sense of...there’s a sense of security in Britishness. It’s not Zimbabwe...you know. It’s a thriving democracy. It’s like the States, it’s like other European countries.’

As with the “English”, feelings of pride in Britishness and a loss of pride in it often ran hand in hand. Charan’s husband, Kamal Sahota, a mechanic and father in his 40s, complained, sighing: ‘Britain used to be a place for the rest of the world.’ Gurbax, however, felt proud to be British, saying:

...you do feel good in lots of ways really, because this is where you’re born, this is where you’ve lived, worked all your life. And I can remember when we got the 2012 Olympics. That was great news. And when somebody wins in something, it’s good... you invest in what you do, in how you interact, you do make an investment. And you do also, the negative aspects do come into it as well.

She felt less proud when she heard about football hooligans and when her brother travelled to Amsterdam with male friends for a stag party and the hotel refused to accommodate the group together because of the reputation of British stags for drunken debauchery. Her brother was told he could stay because he was Indian and probably didn’t drink, a rare occasion when being an ethnic-minority Briton put him at an advantage. She also offered: ‘I think it does travel with you because you are British. People perceive that you are from Britain and therefore it must be like that...’

Charan also commented on the positive and negative stereotypes of Britons and their reputation:

...we’ve got almost two sides to this country. You can go anywhere and you can see that one thing with the British that is very good is that they are very courteous. You know, great manners, very courteous, very law-abiding as well to a certain degree. So I think that they hold strong values there. But there is a side that can obviously, just like any other nationality, you know, let the side down. And it’s unfortunately that sometimes that is how the world perceives us...it’s difficult because you’ve got your lager louts going abroad...And they are absolutely not portraying something that’s totally not British at all.

In these examples, the positive aspects of British behaviour (seen to represent its culture) were overshadowed with negative behaviours, also now shamefully taken as ‘British culture’ by people abroad. Charan also felt there was hypocrisy in attitudes to migrants when Britain had been a coloniser and with the UK

becoming multi-racial, perhaps it was payback time. She added: '...we see ourselves as British, as British Asian. And we're seeing now the new flock of immigration, and we're feeling the same way.'

Among all my informants, there was unanimous and unequivocal agreement that they were 'British' by birthplace and citizenship. Gurbax said: 'I would be misplaced in India... I have a sense of British and I say I am British and I am Indian sort of thing...' although some felt excluded from Britishness by the native population on account of their ethnicity including her and husband Mohinder. However strongly a "Sikh" identified with their British nationality, there was always an underlying feeling, however small, in not being of native ethnicity to the British Isles. Mohinder's feelings were stronger than most. He told me:

I don't think, you know, someone is going to come up to me and say, 'You're British, aren't you?' Or refer to me as British... I do look at it, I think, okay, British is actually being included, but you're not included, the way you're treated. But if you look at the British Empire sort of 50 or 100 years ago, when the British were abroad, like in India or whatever, they were like, they were special. The minority was special. Now we're a minority in this country, and we're British, have passports and we're part of the Commonwealth and everything, but we don't feel British, we don't feel as if we are welcomed into this country. Whereas if an American came...he's more welcomed...It has probably got something to do with colour...

Some "Sikhs" felt British partly by lifestyle too and had absorbed some of Britain's identifiable merits like multiculturalism and social equality. However, in a multi-ethnic population, several informants were unsure what features of the nation and values were still 'British'. Charan had observed:

...they've been diluted over the years. But then I say, have you ever been really well-appraised of what are the values, do we even know? Is that something that's been taught in schools? Or is it just something that I was brought up with, and therefore I was brought up with Indian values, because I was brought up in an Indian family. Um, I don't know.

Sarah remarked: 'It's such a mixture now, though with all the many generations of people who have lived here and who have made it like that. Now you say 'What is Britain?' or 'What is British'? The mixture of our values/how people behave is very British. Multi-faith education in schools is very British.' As with Englishness, Gurbax identified Britishness with a lifestyle: 'Britishness being working, holidays, making a home...Britishness is about all things, but it's different things to different people as well.'

My informants were perceived as unquestionably 'British' by Indian nationals on visits to India, and British or English identity linked me with several of my informant families when I took a group of students from India studying at Oxford to visit the *gurdwara*. Ranjit's two adult brothers and Gurbax referred to a British 'us' using dry 'British humour' to affirm a shared cultural connection, before asking for introductions to 'them', the Indian students. In another context, Gurbax joked that they were the 'real Indians', unlike 'us' (the temple-goers) who were just English and not Indian. One of my guests, a female student aged 24 from Mumbai observed that the second-generation of British "Sikhs" didn't identify with them, but the UK.

Finally, several informants had clearly formulated opinions on the difference between 'English' and 'British'. They found it easier to distinguish between these labels than my "English" informants (see later section) due to the recognised ethnic component in 'being English' and the flexibility in 'British' as a nationality and arguably a cultural identity as well. Sarah made this distinction, with which her mother, Mrs Bajwa agreed, when she said:

...They're [*the English*] very hard-nosed and they don't tolerate your difference. Basically you've got to conform or get lost. The British are more tolerant or more accepting, you know I've got a Black friend and a Jewish friend and I've got a Chinese friend and I visit all their homes and they know me and I know them. We eat each other's food. That's more British, whereas English, you're in a ghetto. You live there and don't let your stuff come my way and I'm not going to let my stuff come your way.

The distinction had become more easily demarcated in recent years:

Sarah: Before if you said to me, English and British, I probably would have said it's the same thing. But within the last 10 or 15 years I'd say there's a massive difference. Because somebody who has the connotation of English or goes on about being English, their ideology is going to be very different. Like that ideology like my mum said where it was the case of you leave your backdoor open and you know your neighbour and you're a community. Now it's "I'm shutting my backdoor and I don't want to know my neighbour." So that's why I think now the word English has for me like a more negative connotation than like British may have.

The changes in 'English communities' are discussed in Chapter 4.

### 3.2.13 Diasporic Space

Everyone I interviewed in the 30s and 40s age-groups was outward-looking and not overly explicit about themselves as an ethnic and religious group, a natural assumption because their differences from the white British were clearly marked. These comprised ethnicity, religion, parental language, skin colour, phenotype and cultural customs such as wearing Punjabi dress on occasion and cuisine. Indianness was expressed materially in homes through iconic pictures of "Sikh" *gurus* such as Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh, also military heroes, framed photos of ancestors in military dress, and Indian wall-hangings, ornaments, throws and cushions. My informants seemed to inhabit a hybrid space of native British and Indian behaviour, habits and values, with emphasised aspects depending on the orientations of each family and its component individuals. This culture was acted out in groups in the closed space of the temple and to different degrees in private homes. The labels 'British Asian' or 'British Sikh' are adequate in summing it up although it would be inappropriate to apply too fine a label as descriptive preferences varied according to the person. My informants were evidently more British-oriented than the "Sikh" teenagers in Gillespie's (1995) study, researched from 1988-1991.

According to Nan Bains, younger “Sikhs” went through not so much a conscious process of being able to pick and choose from two cultures, but cultural features on their radar widely known as ‘native’ to the two nations were more or less appealing for different individuals. She suggested that Asian culture was seen to be ‘restrictive’ with Western culture representing ‘freedom’, but that family and the temple community were important to “Sikhs”. The gossiping and unwanted scrutiny of one’s personal business was disliked.

### **3.2.14 Identity**

At the level of national identity, my informants were perceived in Britain as Indian or Asian by the white majority, British Asian or British by a minority of the British, and British or English in India. I uncovered general agreement on the descriptive labels ‘British Indian’, ‘British Sikh’ or ‘British Asian’ in contexts when their commonality to the white British was evident, and a variety of Indian categories when their sub-continental culture was under internal discussion. For example, over a cup of tea when I had visited to drop off questionnaires, British-born research assistant Amartjit and her Indian-born husband used the terms ‘Sikh’, ‘Indian’ and ‘Punjabi’ interchangeably during a discussion of ‘their’ culture. To them, the descriptive variant mattered less than the fact that they were encompassed within a generic Indianness that separated them from Britishness. Most held a critical dispossession towards Britishness whilst regarding it with some personal importance. Most individuals and couples in my interviews were comfortable with some variant on the label ‘British Asian’. Sarah Bajwa summarises a typical outlook although her emphasis on Sikhism is stronger than others:

I’d say Sikh first and then I would say I’m a British Indian. And those two I don’t think I would give any one more preference than the other – because for me it’s the same thing. I wasn’t born in India but both my parents were very – in the fact of how they raised us – we learnt Punjabi as our first language and

then English as our second language but it wasn't much time difference between learning those two. So for me – I can't truly say I'm Indian because I don't think I have the right – I've never lived there – so for me those two are equal but Sikh comes out prominently. Most of my life is lived around what my faith is – you know, it's very integral to what my family does.

When asked which of the cultural and religious aspects of her identity 'British, Asian, Sikh, Indian' were the most important to her, Mandip replied: 'Do you know, it's hard to say because I think there's an equal balance.' Other informants had a variety of different emphases. Gurbax said: '...I would put myself down as being British Indian and then I'd go Sikh – not a lot of people can break down Indian...' Charan told me: '...we see ourselves as British, as British Asian.' Sarah added that Britishness was reinforced when she travelled:

You do feel that that's where I'm from, that I am British and that's where I belong...To me it just means what I feel my outlook is and how I identify myself. If somebody asked me I would say I'm British or British-Asian, or some, British would be in there. And that's probably because of the fact that I was born here.

Mohinder connected less emotionally with his birthplace than his Indian ancestry:

British? ...it's just somewhere I was born, really. And that's about it. Um, and it's important that people, you know, or if I was born in America I would say I'm American Asian.... you know, my bloodline is Indian through and through, so there's no way, just because I'm born in this country, or Canada or Australia, you're not going to forget that.

### **3.2.15 Wider networks in the UK**

The family networks established by the original settlers were maintained less frequently by the younger generations, connected 'through grandparents'. These contacts were renewed more often between those who'd remained in Swindon after marriage and had met occasionally on a face-to-face basis.

Gurbax, who'd moved to Swindon to marry Mohinder, a local "Sikh", found that in comparison to her home town of Bradford:

...in Swindon you're not that easily recognised – there's an anonymity about it...the anonymity just allows you to get on with your life really. [*In Bradford*]...my working life provided friends and a social network but the dominant one was the Sikh community. And I guess it's my parents – English wasn't their first language so they didn't speak it strongly but all our associations we lived through them. ...if English is your first language [*in Swindon*] it's easy to network with other people so I think it's the difference between being second-generation or first-generation.

Like Gurbax, most of my informants had extensive networks of friends of "English" and other national and ethnic origins, and a range of other social attachments equally as important as their "Sikh" social networks. Gurbax again:

I go to the Sikh temple...So I feel part of the Sikh community...I would say at least once or twice a month...People know me and people know which family I'm linked to and everything else. In terms of work I feel part of a community – I have a strong group of female friends – some of them are my gym friends, some of them are my yoga friends, then there's people that the children have grown up with, two couples in the next street ... So I have a sense of community. I know parents of young kids round here – my kids go to the same school and we go to the same swimming thing and we chat. So I don't feel out of it anywhere – I know people at school – you become part of the community.

For Mohinder, his main communities were work friends and drinking acquaintances:

I stick to 2 or 3 pubs and they are what I call – you've got a working men's club, and then you've got a proper pub – working pub – not one of these town centre yuppie pubs, sort of thing – lager-lout type of pubs – but they're the pubs I've been going [*to*] for a good 20, 25 years anyway, since my dad was alive.

Kamal was not a regular at temple because he worked weekend shifts at BMW, and both he and Mohinder viewed the temple as a place for their mothers to socialise:

I work at weekends so I can't socialise at the functions, the prayers, so I don't have that much contact with that part of the – I believe in Sikh – I am a Sikh as far as that goes... Yes, I make friends through work, a few of my neighbours



and quite a few friends that I have, like. Mainly its work – some neighbours – we do go out for dinner together and stuff like that.

Neighbourhood attachments were generally unimportant in the hierarchy of identities although some, like Kamal, had a rapport with neighbours. There was a widespread feeling that the organised community centred on the *gurdwara* was more connected to the heritage of the second-generation. Informants held stronger senses of place in the town and regional identity in England, and were strongly aware of local identities and regional divides in the UK. Overall, Swindon was regarded as reasonable place to be a “Sikh”. One could, for example, buy Indian food there.

### 3.3 The “Polish”

#### 3.3.1 Arrival as Refugees in Britain

During the Second World War, General Sikorski commanded the Polish army from London, where the Polish government was exiled, as they fought alongside the allied forces. After communist Russia took control of Poland in 1945, the British government sponsored 115,000 Polish political refugees under the Polish Resettlement Scheme (Zubrzycki, 1956: xii). They included demobilised Polish troops, their dependents and other civilians (Sword, 1996: 28-9); educated professionals, prisoners-of-war and European Volunteer Workers (Patterson, 1977: 215, all of whom were ‘overwhelmingly Roman Catholic’ (Smith and Winslow, 2000: 5). The first “Polish” settlers in Swindon came from this batch, now elderly war veterans, and they recounted traumatic wartime experiences including deportation to labour camps in Siberia at the hands of the Stalinist Russians. After liberation they faced long stints in Displaced Persons (D.P.) camps in colonial outposts in India and Africa before eventual sea passage back to Europe to seek reunion with families. Another recorded wartime route to Britain (see also Sword, 1996: 25) was experienced by Roman Giemza, 80s, who was forcibly conscripted to the Nazi front, but was taken as a prisoner of war by the Americans and allowed to fight on the Polish front, before journeying to Britain as a refugee.

Due to a chronic shortage of civilian housing, Polish refugees were lodged in ‘resettlement camps’, vacated service camps and hostels, including around Wiltshire and Gloucestershire.<sup>55</sup> The demobilised military came with their schools, hospitals and military units which were transplanted into the camps, encompassed within an existing social structure with its own political and military leadership, and cultural and literary elite (Sword, 1996: 28). The

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<sup>55</sup> Fairford, Daglingworth and Northwick Park. See [www.northwickparkpolishdpcamp.co.uk](http://www.northwickparkpolishdpcamp.co.uk)

refugees undertook local employment on building sites, American airbases, and in Swindon factories such as Plesseys. However, camps had a self-contained social life with football teams, choirs, and theatre groups. The British government was keen to avoid ghettos forming and encouraged relations between “Poles” and the “English”, unsuccessful whilst they remained in camps, so “Poles” were allocated council houses, many in nearby Swindon, with a gradual move into the town from 1947-1948.

The “Poles” were unable and unwilling to return to the newly Communist Poland for many reasons, including lack of funds, and traumatic memories of deportation, imprisonment, war crimes committed against relatives and lack of remaining family. Some were also at risk of being killed for having anti-Communist sympathies or for having fought for the allies.<sup>56</sup> For many, with Poland placed in the Soviet sphere of influence in the Yalta Agreement (1945) between the Russian, British and American governments, the pre-war homeland (*kraj*) no longer existed. The Polish anti-communist leadership in London, the *emigracja* (émigré community) (Sword, 1996: 31), encouraged “Poles” abroad not to return in protest for a free and democratic Poland, so the focus fell on building a strong Polish community abroad.

### **3.3.2 Creating a Polish Community at the Polish Club**

National associations were formed, and organised Polish communities formed around Catholic parishes under the auspices of former army chaplains (Janowski, 2007: 12). According to Bronek Rejek, a trustee of Swindon’s Polish Centre, an organised community was first established in 1955 when ex-soldiers employed in Swindon formed a committee and an organisation for the purpose of get-togethers and activities such as Christmas parties. Following the movement of about 2000 more “Poles” into Swindon, a fondly remembered

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<sup>56</sup> Sources: Klara Witmanowska and *The Evesham Journal*, 26/07/52.

Polish priest, Father Stanisław Borek, became keen to establish permanent facilities. Stanisław Swora, an 83-year-old war veteran, recounted how Father Borek told him: 'Every Polish community in England, they collect the money to build house for church because we don't know when we are going back – maybe we stay all our lives in this – we've got do something...'

After renting rooms above a shop in Regent Street, Fr. Borek helped to establish a licensed SPK club and shop on Milton Road, used until 2007 when they moved into the Polish Centre. The wider community initially met in people's homes and hired halls for dances, then rented rooms in Faringdon Road. Eventually it was decided to use a bank loan and fundraising to build a purpose-built community centre with its own hall. A site was found on Whitbourne Avenue near Drove Road, and the current premises of the Polish Centre opened in 1965. A Mr Swora then took over the rooms in Faringdon Road and this became the *Polonia Club* which ran until 1982 (source: Mr Swora). Volunteers constructed the interior of the centre, with the original complex comprising a large hall for functions, a restaurant, library, bar and shop, and an adjacent chapel built later in 1978. Today it stands as a brick building complete with rear car park, and a set of prefabricated huts erected in 1967 for use as classrooms by a Polish Saturday School for children. The only architecturally distinctive feature is the small spire of the chapel with its cross aloft, and the Polish folk dolls in the window.



**Figure 20: Around the Polish Centre**



Figure 21: Notices at the Polish Centre

The Polish Centre, known informally in English as ‘the club’ or ‘the centre’ was initially in use 7 days a week, with some groups and social activities imported straight from the camps, for example the present-day choir was formed in Fairford. A youth club had been a prominent feature, but is no longer active, and attendance was a rite of passage for my second-generation informants. In its heyday, the existence of the centre encouraged more “Poles” to move to Swindon because of the support networks offered.



Figure 22: Sign Above the Door at the Polish Centre

### **3.3.3 Exiles**

In the only full-length ethnography of the war diaspora compiled on the basis of research in Polish communities around Britain, Sword (1996) argues that nationally the refugees cultivated the collective spirit of political exiles, an ethos fostered in local communities by post-war long-term settlers. They sought to prolong the 'legal continuity' of the Polish democratic government abroad. They saw themselves as representing "Poles" back home repressed by the new Communist regime (Sword, 1996: 29-30), but unfortunately for them, the British government and other Allies withdrew their recognition (Sword, 1996: 31). Sword argues that the exiles maintained their old image partially as a relief from the banality and ordinariness of British life and the unfamiliarity of the culture (Sword, 1996: 38). The legacy of this ethos was strongly present in Swindon with frequent evocations of homage to the sacrifices of the war generation.

By the 1960s and 1970s, the numbers of incomers from Poland to Britain had slowed, and new arrivals usually came to marry British-born "Poles", or escape the repressive political and economic climate at home, particularly once Martial Law was imposed in 1981 (Sword, 1996: 47). In Swindon, a small number of families came but mainly single women on three-month holiday visas with a view to finding husbands so that they could remain in England.

### **3.3.4 The Second-Generation**

The club thrived until the 1980s when the second and third-generation offspring born from the 1970s onwards were fluent in English and many rebelled against enforced Polish language learning and compulsory attendance at the centre. Sword suggests that the 'exile experience' was of less relevance to these generations with no experience of war or childhood in an independent

Poland (Sword, 1996: 229), particularly those who married partners from the UK, Ireland or other migrant backgrounds (Patterson, 1977: 225), and hence became less dependent on a formally organised ethnic network. Danuta Szymkowska, a second-generation “Pole” in her early 40s, with a husband of second-generation Irish descent, told me: ‘...as I’ve grown up I don’t need that community really anymore. I’m quite comfortable going to mass – I do like going to Polish mass – that is my first, where I feel most comfortable - but I’m quite comfortable going to English mass. I will go now to English places – I do go a lot more – because I suppose I’ve grown up.’

As Sword also found, however, Danuta’s generation often described themselves as ‘Polish’, and maintain aspects of Polish culture and traditions at home. Their ‘Polishness’ was not outwardly visible, and the only obvious indicator to non-“Poles” was their foreign surnames (Sword, 1996: 12). Wanda Wilkowski, an administrator, 50s, talked of her brother who conforms to this pattern by marking *Wigilia*, a Polish Catholic tradition observing Christmas Eve not followed by British or Irish Catholics (Sword, 1996: 142): ‘He’s married an English person and very, very happily married – got a lovely little boy. The Polish community doesn’t mean as much to him as it does to me. Although, having said that, he’s still very into Polish traditions.’

Attendance was even lower in the 1990s and beyond to the disappointment of the older generation. Some of the younger generation left for university outside Swindon and did not return, while some returnees who married locally gravitated back to the centre and sent their children to the Polish school. ‘The community’ was more important to those married to other “Poles”. Several adult returnees reported family pressure to attend and also that ‘the community’ could appear narrow in scope. Helena Sosnowska, marketing executive, a 3<sup>rd</sup> generation returnee of 30, said: ‘...once you move away you see it from a different perspective, and it’s quite hard then to slip straight back in to



how it was, if that makes sense, and I watch people who have lived here all their lives, and it's quite small-minded at times.' A recurring view was that the bulk of the older regulars at the centre were trying to preserve the past rather than appealing to the British-born generations or new migrants from Poland. Certainly there was a project to transmit the heritage to the third-generation, some of whom participated willingly, but many were harder to recruit into Polish activities once they were over 18. Others viewed the centre simply as a functioning business and a place to catch up with old friends.

### **3.3.5 'New' Poles**

Some of the 'New Polish' migrants arriving in Britain after Poland joined the EU in May 2004 came to Swindon. According to park-keeper Tomasz Witmanowski, 40s, there was at peak migration time an estimated 6000-7000 'New Poles', as they were known in town vernacular, with the 'Old Poles' making up the refugee generation and earlier migrants, and their descendents. They originated from all over Poland and were comprised of a mix of singles, couples and families, mainly in their 20s and 30s. The adults found employment in manual work in construction and factories, some in office jobs and a few in professions such as nursing or teaching. Most came because the cost of living was higher in Poland and the standard of living and wages generally lower. A typical migration strategy was to come for a few years for a new experience, to improve their English and save money to build houses and establish a better lifestyle at home. The onset of the recession in Britain is said by the 'Old Poles' to have pushed a fair number to return home prematurely given worsening local employment prospects. I met a small minority of 'New Poles' who wanted to stay in Britain permanently but they were the exception. Bronek's wife Maria Rejek reported that single people were more likely to return home as they missed their families and support networks whereas couples tended to stay if their children were settled in school. In Swindon, the

‘New Poles’ worked long hours so had little time for socialising with ‘the community’, but attended Catholic masses on a large scale and parents made use of the Polish school for their children. Sword found the same pattern among communist era migrants in the 1960s-1980s (Sword, 1996: 209).

### 3.3.6 Residential Community

The original settlers resided in Walcot, Lawn and Old Town near the Polish Centre. Those without funds lived on council estates in nearby Park South, according to Tomasz. The second and third-generation now live throughout Swindon, pride is taken in home ownership and there are few council tenants. A manager at the council’s housing department told me that “Poles” had always been keen to invest in their own accommodation and not waste money on renting, a comment reiterated by Maria Rejek and her friend during a meeting of the Over-65’s Day Centre. Both were keen for their second-generation children to own property. Table 18 shows that most “Polish” households comprised couples, then nuclear families. Table 19 shows that most “Poles” also lived in houses.

**Table 18: Composition of “Polish” Households**

Household composition

Ethnicity	Single person	Single person with friends/ lodger	Couple	Couple with 1-2 Children	Couple with 3-5 Children	Single Parent with Child/ Children	Adult Living with Parent, Aunt/Uncle or Siblings	Extended family*	Base
Polish (%)	15	7	32	27	8	2	3	5	59

\*Includes couple with relatives of at least one partner, and unspecified extended family

**Table 19: Type of Accommodation of “Polish” Households**

Type of accommodation

Ethnicity	Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced	Bungalow	Other	Flat	Room	Base
Polish (%)	19	29	22	10	7	12	2	59

### 3.3.7 Racism and Prejudice

I heard a few reports of racism experienced by the refugee generation in the post-war period based on English competition in the workplace, objections to the Polish language and the Catholic religion, whereas some had faced no slights at all. Stan, 40s, a security manager born to “Polish” parents in Swindon, was quick to highlight what his parents, and later he, had suffered, coloured by the highly emotive ‘fact’ of the Swindon “Poles” that settlement in Britain hadn’t been their choice:

Stan: Well, I can go back to when my parents came over here and they were treated very badly. They said people kept coming up saying “Bloody foreigners, go home. We hate you, we don't want you here”, that sort of stuff. Because at the time there weren't any Asians or anybody else, really. So the Polish were more or less...

CB: That was the late 40's?

Stan: Yes, that's right. And that had...they [*Asians*] did choose to come here. They [*Poles*] only came here because Poland was given to the Russians by the Americans and the British. And that's why they came here and they felt very aggrieved. And throughout the years, I've had people saying “Oh, you're Polish, why don't you piss off home”. Saying that England is for the English and all this sort of stuff. It was at work when I was working before, you know, yeah, definitely.

Patterson observed in the 1970s that “Poles” maintained a low profile as an organised group, so that most British were not aware of them as a formal ‘community’ (Patterson, 1977: 240). Echoing many second-generation “Poles” with resentment towards Britain for its lack of recognition of them as a minority national group (see Chapter 6) given their contribution to the allied war effort, Tomasz’s wife Klara Witmanowska, an administrator and mother in her late 40s, one of my key informants, aired a popular opinion that the “Poles” hadn’t demanded anything of the nation compared to other ethnic minorities:

I do think that sometimes some of these nationalities they go beyond expectation. I mean, when, even when the Polish people came here, they had no help whatsoever... our parents. Whereas now people come over and then

they immediately expect to be able to do everything... it's crazy. And Polish people, you know, I think have always been quiet and they've just been, they've just melted into, sort of, you know, the communities, and they've just been quiet and got on with things. I mean, okay, we have our own masses and we have the Polish community centre...but we don't, sort of, push it on people.

Most second-generation 'Swindon Poles' had an awareness of being different from the "English", mainly through the role of the Catholic religion in their lives, sometimes not admitting to being religious. This stemmed from some parents' experience of being singled out as Catholics. Children were teased for 'being Polish' but the teasing was perceived by parents as just a factor which made some kids different, the same as wearing glasses, not 'genuine' racism. Offspring were given 'more' or 'less' Polish names depending on how keen parents were to reinforce their Polish identity, either names working in both languages or identifiably Polish names. One woman was questioned over her Polish name on a CV, but put this down to curiosity not racism. Krysia, a British citizen and manager, in her late 40s, was questioned by immigration officers at Heathrow over her Polish name on a British passport, to her annoyance.

I heard much resentment that 'New Pole' migrants were scapegoated in the media whereas 'criticisms' of other ethnic minorities such as Asian groups were viewed as racism. Stan and his late 40something friend, construction manager, Kaz:

Stan: ...it's [*racism*] still raising its ugly head now because, you know, the Polish people that are coming over here now to work, you know, they're coming over here to work and yet the papers and the media will attack that, but they won't say anything about anybody else. And that is so annoying. So there's still very much, there's this high degree of racism.

Kaz: Yeah, but you can't criticize certain communities. That's the problem.

It is hard to assess the overall experiences of racism among the 'New Poles', not being the focus of this thesis, but only one of a dozen 'New Poles' I interviewed

reported any problems. A young “Polish” English teacher in her late 20s told me that one employment agency in the town had warned her that some advertised posts were ‘for British workers only’. Second-generation Stan, however, had witnessed racism towards “Polish” workers firsthand on construction sites.

### 3.3.8 The Polish Community Now

The Polish club is still the main venue for the community of regulars although people reported that many families of “Polish” origin living in Swindon did not attend. Bronek and Maria estimated that prior to the 2004 era migrations, there were 3000 people both born in Poland and of “Polish” descent living in Swindon. Church records were not a reliable source because many people of “Polish” descent are baptised by an English priest, but the Polish parish priest reckoned that about 10% of people with Polish ties living in the locality attended the available Sunday masses. The age range of those attending the centre ranged from babies to war veterans in their 90s.



Figure 23: War Veterans

The leading figure of the Swindon community was the priest, assigned to the town by the Polish Catholic Mission in England and Wales (*Polskiej Misji Katolickiej w Anglii i Walii*). The centre was funded by donations made privately,

via *Gift Aid*, church collections and revenue from the events/facilities, and renting out the hall to a Sixth Form and other community groups. The centre was managed by an Inter-organisational Committee of representatives of sixteen affiliated organisations, a finance committee of trustees, a church committee, and a pub manager. The affiliated organisations comprised branches of national organisations such as the 12<sup>th</sup> Polish Scouts group and Cubs and Brownies 'Orleta Lwowskie', and Polish Ex-Serviceman's Association (SPK) No 334; also social or activity-based groups like the Stańisław Moniuszko Choir, Błyskawica Football Club, Oberek Dancing Ensemble, and a fortnightly Day Centre for over-65s. A range of Catholic masses in Polish were held at the centre and Holy Rood Roman Catholic Church in central Swindon on Sundays and weekdays, although the main day of attendance was Sundays. The school ran every Saturday for second and third-generation school-aged children to learn the language, culture and history, and for migrant children to be taught in Polish. At the time of fieldwork, the shop was open several times during the week and at weekends selling Polish foodstuffs and confectionary, and festive items such as Easter cards. The bar was open several times per week for social drinking, carrying satellite television on the Polonia network from Warsaw.



**Figure 24: Senior Figures in the 'Community' Watching a Performance**



Figure 25: The Oberek Dance Ensemble





**Figure 26: Football Trophies**



**Figure 27: Polish Shop at the Centre and Artefacts for Sale at a Centre Open Day**



As Sword discovered in his research (1996: 140-148), an extensive programme of 'ritual celebrations' (Sword, 1996: 150), religious festivities and celebratory events ran at the centre. These included major Catholic festivals like Easter and Christmas and their associated festive days, for example, Palm Sunday, and specifically Polish Catholic associated events like *Śledź*, a social gathering at the start of Lent where pickled herrings on brown bread were eaten to mark the abstinence from meat during Lent. Holy days were marked such as *Boże Ciało* (the Holy Feast of Corpus Christi), where an outdoor procession was scheduled towards the end of May but was held indoors due to rain; also *Dożynki* (a Harvest Festival), and on the 1<sup>st</sup> November, *Zaduszki* (All Souls day) where candles were lit in remembrance at the graves of deceased relatives (a practice called *znicze*). Historical anniversaries were commemorated such as Polish Constitution Day (3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1791), which was honoured with an *akademia* (an entertainment or show with a message; Sword, 1996: 146), an event held where children from the Saturday school put on a play and sang. Various community or fundraising events specific to the Swindon community were woven into the seasonal calendar such as bazaars and scouting trips. The centre provided a complete social world for those who sought it, some with little social life elsewhere. As Klara commented to me: '...yes, I do find it is a lot of my life really – the Polish community – and I enjoy it. I like the people. Everyone's very friendly. It's like one big happy family and you feel secure, I suppose, as well, which is good.'



**Figure 28: Polish Grave**

### **3.3.9 Construction of Ethnic Community**

The existence of the centre has been the main way for the diaspora to stay connected on a face-to-face basis over the years and cultivate a sense of Polishness. There was an overlap between the physical presence of the organised community and their ethnic identity by fact of ‘blood descent’ or birth, with only “Poles” by birth or descent fulfilling the criteria for full membership. Following a tradition of Ex-Combatants Clubs (Sword, 1996: 198), non-“Poles” such as “English” partners could only be affiliate members without voting or participation rights, granted use of the bar only, although they regularly participated in events with their partners or friends. Certainly the community of regular attendees I got to know were extremely focused on maintaining a distinctive Polish identity. Whilst helping to clear up after a Polish Nativity event, Bronek Rejek, sweeping the floor with a broom, said to me in English: ‘It’s hard work inside the community...’, evoking a phrase that I heard over and over along with the alternative ‘in the community’. He meant literally within the activities that take place and networks that connect at the centre. Keeping a high profile at events was a way of remaining on the inside of its networks.



**Figure 29: Mr Rejek (looking into camera)**

### **3.3.10 Language**

The Polish language was the main marker of ethnic identity, being the perceptible factor, including names, to differentiate the ‘Swindon Poles’ from the British. Speaking in a pre-war dialect different from the Polish spoken by recent migrants, most employed a mixture of Polish and English at home, depending on the balance of their parents’ orientations towards Poland and England, their partner and children’s linguistic competencies, and whether their partner was Polish-born, Swindon-born of Polish origin or of “English” or other origin. Table 20 shows that Polish was the main language in more households than English, and Table 21 shows that Polish was more widely spoken than English by a slight margin.

**Table 20: Main Language Spoken at Home by “Polish” Respondents**

#### **Main Language Spoken at Home**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	English	Polish	Missing	<i>Base</i>
Polish (%)	28.8	57.6	13.6	59

**Table 21: Languages Spoken by “Polish” Respondents**

Languages spoken

<b>Ethnicity</b>	English	Polish	Russian	Other European language	Oriental language	<i>Base</i>
Polish (%)	85	93	7	20	0	59

Great pride was invested in children’s language skills although some only spoke Polish to their grandparents. Whole events were aimed at demonstrating children’s language skills, such as the annual post-Christmas nativity performance where Saturday school pupils sang songs, and recited Polish passages into a microphone or engaged with teachers in joking dialogue, scripted to amuse the adult audience. The Polish language has been a ‘cornerstone of national identity’ since the nineteenth century, and loss of language skills is tantamount to assimilation to the host society in the Western diaspora (Sword, 1996: 139; 197), which explains the emphasis on language learning.



**Figure 30: The Post-Christmas Nativity**

### **3.3.11 Catholicism**

Being a confirmed Catholic and attendance at masses, having a religion as opposed to ‘the English’ who ‘have none’, was a major feature of cultivating Polishness. The religion table from the *Swindon Survey* shows that 100% of “Poles” identified as Christian and 98% as Roman Catholic. Common perceptions were that the Catholic faith taught the values of citizenship, and to be nice and tolerant. I encountered varying levels of religiosity and attachment to the faith, from the weak to the fervent, although none of my second-generation informants appeared devout. Some attended masses as more an act of bonding with and pleasing family than pure religiosity, for example, Swindon-born Leokadia Kuczyńska, cleaner, 40s: ‘It’s not a big important

thing. I mean I go to Church most Sundays because my family do and they like to see me there. And because my partner does. Now before I met him, I didn't go at all...it's something I do more to keep the peace than I go because I really strongly believe. Now I do believe in God. I've got certain issues about the Catholic religion.'

The faith was mostly seen as a guiding force even if individuals had disagreements with some of its teachings, since arguably it was more important to have a moral philosophy than none. Klara and her husband Tomasz said:

Klara: It's like an anchor on us, isn't it?

Tomasz: Yeah, it's that, and it's kind of a fallback in a way. What I mean by that is, you know, because we're practising, then, I guess, most of the things you do in life, the decisions you make and the, sort of, values that you try to instil in your children are based on that, it's a derivative. So, yeah, it's kind of about that anchor, that solid rock that you rely on...

All agreed that the Catholic Church was synonymous with Polish culture, particularly because it had been repressed under Communism but remained a steady repository of Poland's own culture throughout Soviet times. Since the end of Communism in 1989, it has become the backbone of Polish culture in Poland and among the Polish diaspora in Britain since the nullification of political motivation for ethnic mobilisation (Sword, 1996: 197). Its role as a national symbol was universally acknowledged. As Tomasz explained: 'Polish focuses on the religious bit – there's God, there's family and there's the nationality itself, national pride.' Little distinction was made between Polish and British Catholicism, although attendance at Polish masses meant upholding the Polish language.

### **3.3.12 The Community as a Moral Space**

The Polish community was experienced by some as a supportive group who looked out for each other, such as Fran Nowak, a retired housewife in her mid-60s, who, in contrast, had found little sense of communal support and loyalty when participating in English groups such as the Weavers Guild. As Sword observed in Polish communities around Britain (1996: 128), for many, 'the community' attending the centre and the social network sustained through attendance was experienced as a moral space (Sword uses the term 'moral community') where a person could be judged according to ideals of morality in family life, religious adherence or contribution to the running of the social community. This space was a source of disquiet for adults who became subject to unwelcomed and unaccepting moral judgements such as one woman who found herself frowned upon for being a divorcee. However, its environment was viewed as a good place to train children in discipline and morality, the intertwining of religion and culture that was brought into play. It was a safe haven for children, protection from the dangers and temptations of English society, when they played with their friends there under the watchful eye of the community and the influence of Catholicism.



**Figure 31: The Community**



### 3.3.13 Diaspora

Although the majority of Swindon-born “Poles” I met at the centre had lived in England for most or all of their lives, most had an emphatic enthusiasm for Poland and their Polishness ahead of Britain and Britishness. Maria, now in her mid-60s, born to Polish parents in Austria during the war and raised in England since aged 3, felt that ‘Poles abroad’ wanted to be Polish. She was proud of being Polish, spoke Polish, had learnt the music, dance and traditions, and preferred Polish music records to English ones. A widespread feeling was harboured among the descendents that their refugee grandparents or parents hadn’t chosen the UK, unlike economic migrants. Klara sums the position up:

I’ve just felt quite strong about it that it was through no fault of our parents that they found themselves in England and life could have been so different if things had worked out differently and when you’re older and you’ve got your own family you realise what they gave up. They were people that didn’t go out, didn’t go holidaying. They saved every penny and made sure that we had everything we wanted and needed and we had everything – we had all of that – culture - and I just feel that I owe it to my children to pass it on to them.

To the ‘Swindon Poles’, Poland was a country that had been denied them due to fears of maltreatment until 1956 when the communist regime was liberalised to some degree (Sword, 1996: 40), the influence of the *emigracja’s* discouragement of visits, which waned in the 1960s (1996: 43), and practical reasons of lack of funds, and its impoverished state under the regime. They were brought up in a diasporic culture of nostalgia for pre-war Poland, yet on visits to Poland had never quite been accepted as truly Polish since to Polish “Poles”, that depended on birth on home territory and speaking in a native idiom, as Wanda explained:

I’ve been to Poland a few times and I feel quite at home there. Although I speak Polish, I think they know I’m not a true Polack from Poland because they can always tell that in your accent. Like you’ve got a very hard accent when you speak Polish. It’s anglicised...

Similarly, some of Sword's informants found themselves regarded as 'English' by their Polish relatives during these visits (Sword, 1996: 179).

### **3.3.14 Culture**

Besides expressing themselves in Polish, practising Catholicism, and raising children with characteristic discipline, the local understanding of Polish culture seemed to comprise an awareness that history was central to Polish national identity (see Chapter 6), and a vast repertoire of customs mainly acted out during events at the centre. Polishness was represented materially in homes with iconic religious art such as pictures of the Virgin Mary and crucifixes mounted on walls. Danuta Szymkowska, who lived in a semi-detached house, had named it with a Polish derivative of Danuta, mounted on a name plaque on the outside wall by the front door. Families used a combination of Polish diasporic media including the satellite television Polonia network and UK-published diasporic magazines and newsletters (see Chapter 6) to keep updated with the native language and culture; and also a mixture of phonecalls, and internet applications and technologies such as email, Skype and webcams to maintain regular contact and strong links with family in Poland. Visits had become much easier since the end of communism with regular holidays, periods working abroad, and the hosting of Polish relatives, augmented by the arrival of the new migrants since 2004.



Figure 32: Diasporic Magazine *Gonicz Polski* and Polish Satellite Dish

### 3.3.15 Identity

‘Diasporic’ is the best way of describing the general identity complex that informants articulated. Some informants inhabited a middle space that was not Polish, British or English.<sup>57</sup> Leokadia Kuczyńska, a vocal and opinionated lady:

You know, I was brought up with all the Polish traditions. But, you know, I was raised in this country so, you know, going to school here. So I've sort of had both cultures. Sometimes it's hard to sort of put yourself into a slot because you're not really one thing or the other... I mean, obviously I am English. I am British. But I don't particularly feel British. I feel more Polish than British. But then again I'm not really, you know, truly Polish because I was born over here.

Agnieszka Pasterowicz, Personal Assistance, in her early 50s and married to a fellow Swindon-born “Pole”:

It's [*Poland*] still very important. It's your roots. You know where you've come from because obviously we're never going to be Polish and we're never going to be English. We're in that middle space because the Polish don't consider us Polish and the English don't consider us English so we're sort of like that halfway house. We were very passionate - when I was a youngster I was very

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<sup>57</sup> These labels were often conflated by Poles for whom distinguishing between them was not a priority or matter of importance as they didn't have an native ethnic identity from the British Isles; neither had they experienced the same skin colour and appearance-based racism as the Sikhs, being of white-skinned European ethnic appearance, and blending in physically with the native population.

passionate about being Polish. I wasn't British I was Polish and then I went over and realised what a difference it is...

There was, however, an underlying sense that Britain was their country of birth, citizenship and residence, their formal nationality, which evoked mixed degrees of loyalty. Nadzieja Kowalska, a council employee in her early 40s, explained: 'I always say I'm British. I can't say I'm Polish because you're only Polish if you're born in Poland – whereas if you're British - and I can't say I'm English naturally because I have Polish parents but "British" covers every eventuality so I always put down "British", always, because I am.' The fact of Polish parentage and upbringing was strongly emphasised by all, an important fact of roots and heritage. Similarly Helena felt: 'If it's someone talking to me I'll say, you know, I'm a British citizen but I'm of Polish descent, and you know, I'm second-generation, so...is it second-generation? ...you know, born and bred the Polish way.'

Krysia was decidedly Polish and Britain was just her country of citizenship, one which antagonised some 'Swindon Poles':

Krysia: I'm Polish. I just happened to be born here. But that does not mean that I am anti-British, because I think you do that you get some people that I've come across, and it's almost like, hatred's probably too strong a word, they're antagonistic towards the UK.

CB: I've definitely come across that.

Krysia: And you say to them, "For goodness sake, you lived here for X-years. How can you live in a country that you profess to dislike?" And you can say, "Well, OK, 15 or 20-odd years ago the reason was that you couldn't go back, for fear of reprisals or you were not going to be accepted back, or whatever. You are now free to go and live in Poland, you can even take your English pension with you."

Mixed feelings were held towards England, and fewer people described themselves as English by nationality or identity. For Klara, England evoked mainly negative perceptions: 'I mean, England, it's still our, sort of, main home,

and it's our country because we were born here and we live here. But I must admit that I'm very disappointed, really, in how the country's going...' Helena felt more positive but still shunned an English identity:

Helena: ...I'm proud of being part of this country and living here and all the rest of it.

CB: Do you, would you describe yourself as English?

Helena: No you see it's weird, I wouldn't.

CB: Ah, why is that?

Helena: I suppose because it's always, I don't know, I suppose it's the way I've been brought up.

I found a universal pattern of a primary sense of belonging emotionally to Poland, as Stan admitted: '...I don't feel I belong anywhere. Honestly. That's the blunt sort of thing really. I don't know. That's the hardest thing really. I still, hand on heart, I still feel more Polish than anything. If it came to it...I'd say more Polish.'

A Swindon Polish local identity was quite strong among many descendents of the refugee generation, although neighbourhood attachments were less important than Swindon's Polish networks, as Klara and Tomasz articulated:

Klara: ...with me because of my close connection to the Polish community and I've got family here – my brother lives in Swindon, sister not far – I mean that actually means more to me than the actual town itself so...

Tomasz: It is – it's family that keeps you together. If it wasn't for family I don't think we'd be here, to be honest.

Most were split between the view above: frustration with the banality of Swindon, and the sense that it was their own place and home of their unique community above any consideration of national identity, such as Agnieszka: 'Well, I've always lived in Swindon so Swindon is – Swindon's my best place. I feel at home, you know?'

Ryszard Ciechanowicz, a car mechanic, early 40s, summed up what was a generally reflective order of priority for different notions of identity: '...Polish,

probably Swindonian, then British, probably the religion, would come right at the end.’ On the whole, I found most who used the centre regularly were inward-looking, and had a limited amount of interest in wider English or British society, mostly explained by the nation’s ‘lack of traditions’, religion, and strong local socio-residential community to connect to. Time and interest were invested in diasporic networks that surpassed the town, such as scouting involvement with Polish groups from towns along the M4 and in Poland, yearly trips and participation in dance competitions regionally in UK and occasionally in Poland, and YMCA camps /scouting activities with other Polish groups in the UK and abroad every four years. They were outward-looking to Poland but less so to the rest of the UK and the world.



**Figure 33: British and Polish Flags**

### **3.3.16 Socio-Economic Class**

Polish-born Ryszard and his Swindon-born wife Zofia, engineering researcher, late 30s, explained that whilst socio-economic class had more social importance in Poland than the UK, particularly one’s qualifications and level of education, this emphasis was much less felt at the Polish centre where according to Zofia,, ‘...they all worked together for the good of the Polish club...’ To the contrary,

Zofia had been on the receiving end of some inverse snobbery for having a degree. Klara suggested that the oldest people at the centre and some of the new migrants were more class-conscious, as were British-born “Poles” in London, but the core Swindon community had only inherited Poland’s system of formal social address rather than a class system. She attributed this to the standard Polish upbringing which stresses respect for elders and people of standing. In Swindon, this was played out through the use of honorific *Pan* (Mr) or *Pani* (Mrs/Miss) + surname until greater personal familiarity was established, when the surname could be replaced with a first name, although the honorific would be maintained.

### 3.3.17 ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Poles

The major cleavage in Swindon’s Polish population was between the Old and ‘New Poles’. A small number of Swindon-born “Poles” had responded negatively to the presence of ‘New Poles’, as Leokadia explained:

... a lot of them who come over, you know, they've just come over here to make money. They're not really interested in the country or the community or integrating or anything like that. They're just here to make money and some of them don't behave nicely. You know, you hear them walking down the street and they are swearing in some really bad language at the top of their voices because they think nobody can understand them.

She linked association with them to a loss of national pride:

They're not the best representatives of the country. And it embarrasses me ... sometimes I don't like to admit that I'm Polish ... I've spoken to other friends who feel the same. Before they came over it was like we had this unique position in the country where we were descended from our Polish parents who came over after the war. And, you know, we were a small community compared with the rest of the country. And there was a bit more pride about being Polish.

Sword (1996: 183) encountered a similar attitude in the early 1990s among

informants in various British towns displeased with the Polishness they discovered in the post-communist republic. The homeland had failed to match up to their expectations and jarred with their sense of patriotism. In Swindon, for Helena, the post-2004 migrants had undermined the carefully preserved Polish pride built up by post-war refugees:

...for years, and for decades, we, we as British citizens with a Polish background maintained a lot of the traditions and maintained the kind of, the proudness I suppose we all have about Poland. And yet, you know, certain communities, within certain communities they've come in and...they've either completely distilled you know...some of our communities that we've built for so many years have been disrupted...

Sword found that informants in the 1990s held similar feelings towards communist escapees (Sword, 1996: 2110).

Leokadia commented: 'We're all "chalk and cheese". The fact that we're all descended from the same nation doesn't really give us a lot in common apart from we speak the same language. And even then I don't understand half of them because their language has developed and they speak really quickly.' Most of my informants were more positive about their presence and held high hopes they would enlarge the local Polish community and reinforce its identity. Zofia was jubilant about their commonalities: 'People that have come from Poland are very similar to us – actually their upbringing is identical.' However, they used the centre for masses and school only, and the older generation were disappointed that they hadn't shown adequate interest in the social community.

Krysia found that this had created a divide demarcated by some 'Old Poles': 'There's a huge issue around the "them" and "us". And in the Polish they actually call them the "them" who have come over from Poland, and "us" who has either come over here 50 years ago or were born here. Those two align themselves, in that we're the "us".' Some 'Old Poles' were frustrated that 'New



Poles' weren't committed enough to their type of Polish patriotism, as Krysia explained: 'They didn't have to go through being denied their country, which breeds patriotism.' They were taking advantage of the centre's facilities without contributing in return. Sword (1996: 205-213) discovered a similar set of responses in Britain's Polish communities to arrivals from communist Poland in the 1960s-1980s, wary of emigrants who might be 'agents of the Warsaw regime' or resented as materialistic 'fortune-hunters' who undermined the hard graft of the impoverished refugees (1996: 209). He uncovered the derogatorily used term 'import' and pointed out that all "Poles" who had left Poland since the war had committed the ultimate sin of abandoning a homeland that the diaspora had cruelly been denied (1996: 213). A member of the Swindon centre's management committee explained deeper fears unleashed by the 'New Poles' disinterest. With numbers dwindling at functions, the centre was reliant on the migrants to supplement numbers and guarantee its finances and hence its future. The Polish priest focused on them at masses but their lack of interest in community activities indicated the need to change the kinds of functions and socials offered to appeal to the newcomers. The older "Poles", however, were unwilling to change their version of Polishness.

The few 'New Poles' I interviewed found the 'Old Poles' friendly and affable but felt disconnected from them because most migrants were in their 20s and 30s, with the adult 'Old Poles' at the centre in their 40s upwards. Furthermore, the few facilities set up with the 'New Poles' in mind proved unsustainable, such as a small 'internet cafe', resulting in a low take-up because the 'New Poles' had laptops at home. Some salsa and aerobics classes had folded due to low numbers. When I asked: 'And what's it been like – has it made a difference to you to have this Polish centre?', recent migrant Aleksander Włochowicz, special needs helper/musician, 30s, married with two tiny children, explained

that: 'No, it's not important because usually when I meet Polish people we met in our houses not here.'

When I asked Monika, a recent migrant and office administrator, 20s, about her perception of the 'Old Poles', she confirmed: 'Well I can only see them, not really talk to them, um, when I'm in church. So they're, they're extremely friendly. Extremely nice, and so close to one another, and so different from the Polish people even in Poland.'

The 'New Poles' generally perceived the 'Old Poles' as more patriotic than "Poles" in Poland, as Monika exclaimed:

Monika: It's extraordinary, how they can, how they want to learn the traditions. And they're like, they're English! ...I don't know, it might not be so strange, if they, if their parents gave them something like, I don't know, Polish flag.

CB: Yeah...a lot of the people from the older community that I've been interviewing are so patriotically Polish...

Monika: Yeah. More than the Polish people in Poland.

Her friend Katarzyna, a languages teacher, late 20s, found the 'Old Poles', particularly those born in the UK, less Polish than they perceived themselves:

I would say they're more British. Because most of them speak English, some of them switch to English when they are speaking Polish, I know that their parents might still try to teach them, or they might speak Polish with their parents, but with their friends, and if they go to their English school, and they've got English friends, their mates are British, it's no wonder that they want to speak English.

Moika and Katarzyna, both of whom I interviewed at Café Nero several times, enjoyed the way they had incorporated some British traditions into the routine at the centre, for example, going for a drink in the bar after Sunday masses, when no drinking took place after services in Poland.

Another disconnection that limited the centre's appeal to newer migrants was the lack of continuity between the pre-war traditions practised there and those known from contemporary Poland, shaped by communism and capitalism.

Folk dancing was promoted in Swindon whilst it was no longer popular in Poland, consumed by a dance vogue for ballroom dancing inspired by the TV transmission of a Polish version of '*Strictly Come Dancing*'. 'Old Poles' admitted that they enjoyed maintaining older traditions from Poland, such as wearing pre-war scouting uniforms. The UK Polish scouts weren't amalgamated into the British scouting network because they had different values and were turned down by Poland's national network for being too old-fashioned. The Swindon Polish traditions were wrapped in the complex of diasporic nostalgia cultivated by the post-war *emigracja* (cf. Sword, 1996: 177), and were as much a buffer against the pace of change and perceived loss of tradition in England as a link to their pre-war Polish heritage.

### 3.4 The “English”

It is difficult to write a parallel account of the “English”. Selected cultural and religious features and practices from countries of origin become emphasised, retained, discarded, adapted, and discussed as ‘representative’ in organised diasporic communities. It is harder to present a comparative cultural inventory for the ethnic majority in England due to their diversity of lifestyles, mobile and categorically malleable class system<sup>58</sup>, unarticulated ethnic diversity with the catchall ‘white English’ category masking manifold hybrid ‘blood descent’ and family ties, and cultural attachments to the ‘Celtic’ and other nations. Probably the most important factor is “English” people’s unfamiliarity with having or discursively constructing a conscious sense of national identity. They have had no need as English identity has largely been unchallenged. Swindon’s white British population, like the “Sikhs” to a lesser extent, has come from all over the country, representing a range of regional identities. It is ethnographically easier to pinpoint local specificities of lifestyle, identity and community, as demonstrated in many other local ethnographies (e.g. A P Cohen, 1982; 1986). However, local lifestyles and habits are not exclusive to the “English” but practised by “Sikhs” and “Poles” too. The socio-economic history of Swindon and its civil society are largely the affairs of the “English” but also of the “Poles” and “Sikhs”, and are not organised according to national or ethnic identity.

#### 3.4.1 Language and Employment

All my informants spoke English as a mother tongue, with other languages usually learnt at school, work or for fun, unless an individual had a parent who was a native speaker of another language.

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<sup>58</sup> I observed among informants that they attached a variety of different socio-economic, cultural and political meanings to traditional terms such as ‘middle class’, ‘working class’ etc.

**Table 22: Languages Spoken by “English” Respondents**

Languages spoken					
Ethnicity	Other				Base
	English	Polish	European language	Oriental language	
English (%)	100	1	11	1	87

Besides administration at my host company, informants from families interviewed worked for the council, in cleaning, telecoms, mining, building surveying, administration, corporate project management, journalism, scientific research, and two were housewives.

### **3.4.2 Work and Home / Public and Private Division**

I hoped to learn from host company colleagues about English life in Swindon, and the themes of identity, community, and media. An overarching finding was that ‘work’ and ‘home’ were presented in most desk-side conversations as very separate domains. The most common topics from most to least discussed were perceptions of the company, boredom and requests for help with work, living in Swindon (especially social life and opinions of the council), family and relationships, sexual innuendos about famous people and colleagues, the media, pop music, money – the costs of homes, consumer goods and long-term material aspirations, health issues, the unrecognisable foreign names of customers, and language and cultural difficulties of working remotely with a partner call centre in India. These topics fell into two broad groupings with frequent discussion of the first, Generalist Views including: a minimum of politics, media, taste, consumer issues, and opinions of Swindon, all conveyed in a light-hearted way. Once greater intimacy was established, I found myself privy to talk about Personal Views including: happenings at home, personal information, family and relationship status, and health issues. All conversation

was delivered in a humorous unemotional way, loaded with inverted sarcasm about the deliverer and colleagues, with rife teasing and camaraderie. There was an unspoken rule that the transmission of Personal Views was put across in a detached way, either superficially or in passing, and nothing of great emotional significance was presented. Friendships were struck up particularly among middle-aged women and young 20somethings, with the sharing of jokes and lunch breaks, after-work activities and work socials, but there was very limited discussion displaying very deep familiarity between any friends in the domain of 'family' or 'home', even with employees who had worked together for more than ten years.

As mentioned before, after six months, I interviewed individual work colleagues briefly on Swindon life and media consumption. After eight months, I requested home interviews from the same colleagues, who had enthusiastically completed questionnaires. Because we were not 'friends', they responded dubiously, either declining directly or avoiding replying to email requests. Questionnaires were fine in the context of work where I was a 'young student on work placement' but transgressing the private boundaries of 'home' was discomfiting. These findings resonate with Hockey's (2002) theorising that there is a marked separation between public and private life in the West.

Boddy *et al.* (1997) reported in 1997 of Swindon that 'there was much less overlap between people's work and non-work lives – people tended to live further from where they worked and to have less in common in terms of work experience with those living around them' (Boddy *et al.*, 1997: 290). This applies to "Sikhs" and "Poles" as well as the "English". It was common among colleagues and families interviewed for both adults in a couple or a single person to be at work for long hours during the day, with little or no time to forge ties with neighbours outside of working hours, meaning less connection with their neighbourhoods. This held even truer in the case of commuters, and

those with access to social facilities at work, such as Gary, a colleague in his mid-30s living with his partner. He had formerly worked at the research councils where: ‘...socialising-wise it’s the best place I’ve ever worked because they had so many activities going on...’ It was also common for nuclear families to socialise together at weekends rather than to engage with a wider network, whether friendship or activity-based. Jane Harding, 40s, who worked in a sales role, commented: ‘...whatever we do, we do with the family ... If we decide...the cinema, then we’ll go to the cinema, we’ll go out for a meal, but we’ll always do things around the children.’ Boddy *et al.* suggest ‘...the increasing dislocation between workplace and residence, and the increasing fragmentation of the social structure, a marked feature of modern living, is thus exaggerated in the case of Swindon...’ (Boddy *et al.*, 1997: 295) and further: ‘the notion of cohesive communities working locally and relating primarily to urban villages and district centres, still true to some extent in the 1950s and 1960s, has been overtaken by more fragmented and complex patterns linking work and home.’ (Boddy *et al.*, 1997: 296).



**Figure 34: Inside a Local Pub**

### 3.4.3 The Symbolic Disappearance of Socio-Residential Community

What was striking was a near universal high level of mourning for a lost 'community' in the sense of a supportive socio-residential collective (see Chapter 4). Throughout fieldwork, I heard far more verbal reflections on missing neighbourhood identities and senses of community amongst my "English" informants than "Polish" or "Sikh", although it was a pan-ethnic complaint. For the "English", neighbourhoods *were* the place where essentialised notions of 'local' community should *ideally* be found, similarly to findings in other urban British ethnographies (Wallman, 1982; Phillips, 1986; Young, 1986; Charlsley, 1986; Dawson, 1998; Jenkins, 1999; Edwards, 2000), even among those with strong work ties and weak neighbourhood ties. There were widespread claims of apathy among the "English" at banding together at community level and for some, a pro-active search for alternative spaces to experience a sense of belonging in a supportive group. Chapter 4 shows the variety of invocations of 'community'. Anthony Cohen (1985: 117) has a useful formulation of 'localism' as an inherent property of 'community': 'Community, whether local or ethnic, or in whatever form, need not be seen as an anachronism in urban-industrial society. Rather, it should be regarded as one of the modalities of behaviour available within such societies.' If any subjective feature of English life in Swindon stood out as a 'national' trait, it was this absent feeling of not easily belonging to a community. One informant thought community for the "English" had to be organised and didn't happen naturally except for ethnic minorities. Local attachments were expressed in other ways, for example, by Derek, a colleague in his 60s, who had moved from London to work as a BT engineer. He couldn't call himself a proper Swindonian as he'd only lived there for forty odd years, and 'real Swindonians' rather were the railway families. However, seeing residential areas listed by electoral ward rather than individual neighbourhood in my questionnaire, he remarked that



his home area, Rodbourne, wasn't listed. Without expressing any pride in or attachment to Swindon itself, he mentioned that Rodbourne had been an important area with a strong community because the railway works were located there, the 'original' Swindon.

### 3.4.4 Residence in Swindon and Material Culture

As the ethnic majority, "English" people populate all areas of the town. As concerns housing types, my key families lived: on a run-down council estate, one in a housing association town-house on a new estate and two as owner-occupiers on upmarket new estates. Table 23 shows that couples or nuclear families were the dominant household types and table 24 shows that most "English" people lived in houses.

**Table 23: Household Composition of "English" Households**

Household composition

Ethnicity	Single person	Single person with friends/ lodger	Couple	Couple with 1-2 Children	Couple with 3-5 Children	Single Parent with Child/ Children	Adult Living with Parent, Aunt/Uncle or Siblings	Extended family*	Base
English (%)	10	3	30	34	12	3	3	3	85

\*Includes couple with relatives of at least one partner, and unspecified extended family

**Table 24: Type of Accommodation for "English" Households**

Type of accommodation

Ethnicity	Detached	Semi-detached	Terraced	Bungalow	Other	Flat	Room	Base
English (%)	22	40	23	2	3	9	0	86

Home interiors varied in individual styles but identifiably 'English' features of decor were uncoordinated furnishings, a bric-a-brac style for displaying mementoes and ornaments, china figurines of dogs and cats, collections of framed photos of family and children displayed on surfaces and walls, patterned carpets and mats, and a few mounted crosses.

### 3.4.5 Leisure Activities and Hobbies

Overall, I encountered more apathy than activity at my host company. A colleague, David, an incomer and single man in his 50s, was more engaged than average. He was a member of the 'very middle-class' *Swindon Choral Society*, '...full of snobs that want to sing and listen to the kind of music that they like...', frequented organised National Trust weekends away around the country and was interested in archaeology but unsure about local *outlets*. He insightfully pointed out: '...there's a lot of people who do join societies but I think the vast majority just get on seeing their friends, watching telly, doing gardening and they've got their own interests that they'll follow [*such as going to the gym*].'

Individual and family pursuits included visiting pubs (usually local pubs due to weekday busyness and issues of safety), sometimes to watch football on satellite television, eating Sunday lunch in country pubs, visiting parks, the Wiltshire countryside, and nearby towns, and contributing to the school PTA. My families were more involved locally, being the pro-active 'type' taking part in research. One family's weekly routine included voluntary work collecting tickets at the Wyvern Arts Centre, taking their canine pets to dog-dancing classes, being active in the Labour party, and going to the neighbourhood community cafe. The recession had a knock-on impact on the overall level of socialising, with people staying in to save money. Gary reported in March 2009 that: '...socially a lot more of my friends and family just haven't been going out as much as normal. Certainly over the last six months we've all tried to have meals at home.'

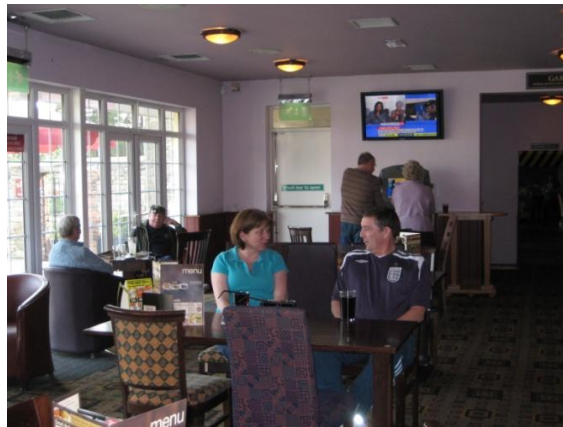


Figure 35: English Spaces?

### 3.4.6 Ethnicity and National Identity

Although the BNP had an obvious presence in Swindon with their hoardings appearing on lamp-posts across town at times, and the local parliamentary candidate for the UK Independence Party (UKIP) living near to one informant family, there was no other public expression of an organised ethnic “English” community at local level. Baumann (1996) noted in Southall that “English” people failed to recognise themselves as either a ‘community’ or a distinctive culture, and little attention was paid to the Church of England as the state religion. They simply took it for granted that they were the native population hegemonically identified with the state. The terms ‘culture’, ‘community’ and ‘ethnic’ were connected to ethnic minorities (1996: 19; 96; 137). Among my work colleagues, subjects which might prompt reflections on identity such as religion and immigration were not much discussed in groups but it was a different story during one-to-one chats or family interviews once trust was gained. As unfolds in the thesis, a perceived communicative atmosphere of political correctness prevented “English” people from speaking out in public so they confided in me in private.

Overall, there seemed to be an awareness of a shared ‘Swindon’ lifestyle and ‘culture’, the lifestyle of a regional town, more homogenous than life in London, and one lived by the majority of “English” people, less reminded of cultural diversity than London-dwellers with the tangle of different nationalities and lifestyles. It was not clear, however, how much this shared culture was to do with English ethnicity or nationality, or just Swindon.

In their (2005) study of “English” responses to issues of national identity, Fenton and Mann found that, contrary to the ‘evidence’ of patriotic public displays at football matches and on state occasions, direct questioning in interviews meant little as a line of enquiry or the actual verbal notions of

‘ethnicity’ and ‘identity’ as a descriptive terminology. They uncovered more responses to notions of ‘nation’ through broader discussion of the state of Britain. In a later paper (2009), they describe strategically pursuing questioning over ‘local sense of place’ and ‘work’ in individual interviews and focus groups as a way of investigating how notions of nation were indirectly articulated before broaching the topic of national identity directly. Sociological and psycho-linguistic studies have shown that English-born white people articulate and attach a repertoire of meanings to Englishness in one-to-one interviews (Condor, 2000; Abell *et al.*, 2006; Condor *et al.*, 2006; Byrne, 2006; Skey, 2010). It is rarely articulated through the same language of British race-relations or cultural or ethnic nationalism as “Sikh” or “Polish” conversations on this topic.

Identity was discussed by employees when it arose in the context of related topics such as family origins, genealogy, and birthplaces, rather than as a stand-alone subject. The scarce number of such conversations prevents broad conclusions about which identities had greater resonance among work placement informants. Here is an example. David was born in Cheshire and lived all over the UK prior to moving to Swindon, and Derek was born in London. Prompted by the questionnaire, David told me that his family had origins in London, Wales and different parts of Scotland, so he was ‘totally mixed UK’, not English but British. He had ‘Celtic sympathies’ within England where there were ‘too many Germans’, in other words people of Anglo-Saxon origin. Derek felt more English than British, and because he had some cousins who had emigrated to and settled in Chicago, he found genealogy fascinating but knew it took a long time to construct a family tree.

National differences within the UK were occasionally commented upon by people born in England justifying their claims to ‘Celtic’ identities on the basis of ancestry or ‘blood’, or for a few Irish or Welsh workers I met, for whom personality traits and accent were also a vital criterion of first-generation

authenticity. Moira was proud of her strong Welsh accent identity within the company and extolled the virtues of Welsh people who were open, direct, straightforward, gregarious, and passionate about what they did, how they behaved, and expressed their feelings 'more than some nationalities'. I asked if 'other nationalities' were more stiff, inhibited, reserved, and self-conscious, traits commonly linked to "English" people, and she agreed.

My "English" work colleagues had a sense of a common British 'something' binding them together as a body regardless of national differences within the UK, but they didn't use the word 'culture' in group conversation to describe their own *way of life* because of its associations with ethnic minorities and migrants. The common 'us' became apparent at the boundaries of 'foreignness' over cultural or linguistic differences. One day I shadowed Sally, a Cumbrian in her early 40s living with her husband in a village outside Swindon, who was working on the case of a person with a Hungarian name (uncovered through *google*) and didn't know if it was a male or female. She remarked to me that it was difficult if the name wasn't in '*our* language' and didn't want to be rude to foreign customers by referring to their gender incorrectly. Similarly, everyone shared the same 'we' when it came to the Indian I.T. staff on sabbatical from the Indian partner company who sat together in one section of the office, and also stood out as Indian in dress sense, a constant 'them'.

### **3.4.7 Individual Host Company Interviews and Informant Family Interviews**

During 'private' encounters with individuals and families, passionate views on the meanings of Britishness and Englishness were unleashed, somewhat contrary to Baumann's (1996) findings. This was particularly so among those with right-of-centre political views<sup>59</sup> who regularly articulated that they were

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<sup>59</sup> Most informants did not hesitate to disclose their political orientation in private. See Table A11 in Appendix III on p431.

silenced in routine interactions, and daren't speak their mind in public situations for fear of being taken as racist. Those with more liberal or left-wing orientations were more relaxed in discussing national identity, but had a less well defined sense of it. Overall, the subject proved enormous, multi-stranded and complex. The terms 'English' and 'British' were mostly used interchangeably, sometimes chosen to reflect contextual shifts, for example as this interview extract with Jim and Jennifer Brown, a couple in their 40s with children, council warden and housewife respectively, shows:

Jim: Well, British, is what I would say more European, isn't it...it clearly covers more countries. Britain, Europe covers it, it's the same thing, isn't it, it's over time...

Jennifer: Yeah, and I think at times we are British, and then sometimes we are English. And I think that mostly we are English.

The conversation continued with Jim pointing out that 'we' are British at war, during the Olympics and in parliament. At other times, informants showed no contextual awareness.

### **3.4.8 Responses to Englishness / Britishness in Individual and Family Interviews**

#### ***a) Becoming Aware of Englishness***

Everyone interviewed, regardless of political orientation, encountered the same self-conscious sense of Englishness as a boundary raised by interactions with foreigners, with three contexts where this occurred being phone calls to call centres in India, working abroad on an army secondment to Germany and a mine in China, and whilst ordering a Chinese take-away, but rarely in "English"-to-"English" daily encounters. Jennifer commented after a frustrating call conversation with an Indian call centre: 'I don't mean to be rude, but I cannot do Indian accents... I was getting so frustrated, and I asked, you know, is there...any English person that we can talk to...'

### *b) Defining Englishness*

For some, Englishness was summed up by objective cultural traits but ultimately defined by birth and language criteria. Jim and Jennifer listed queuing, being reserved, caring, sympathetic and charitable, loving animals, eccentric, fair and passionate at sporting tournaments and unable to cry in public. For Jim, birthplace gave automatic entitlement to an English identity: 'You are what you are where you're born. That's what I think. And that's not racist or anything. That's just saying, if you're born in England, you are English to the day you die. If you're born in Spain, you are Spanish until the day you die.' For others it was birthplace and language competence. For Jim's wife, citizenship by birth and naturalisation were in different leagues: 'I think if you're born here, and, you know, you're raised here, you are British by right. I think those who get your passport, it's a privilege. You know, if you come into the country and accept British citizenship, and you get your passport that's a privilege given to you. Whereas that's your right if you are born here.'

### *c) Expressing Englishness*

Various informants were frustrated at the public link between English patriotism and racism, and also resented the fact that it was publicly acceptable for people from the Celtic nations and ethnic minorities to express their national, religious or cultural pride. Several informants felt cajoled by ethnic monitoring forms not offering an 'English' tick box option into being British when they considered themselves decidedly English, for example, Jane and her technician husband, Andy, also in his 40s:

Andy: ...You sit back and you think, I'll always be proud to be English.

Jane: Yeah, but we're not even allowed to say that. We're not even allowed to say we're English, we've got to be British. The Scottish are Scottish, the Irish are Irish, and the Welsh are Welsh, but we have to class ourselves as British... but they don't...I mean, how many years did you do in the army? You had about sixteen years in the army, or probably a little bit longer, when we were in Germany, and [*the*] records [*department*] wrote to you and said, "What are origin are you?"



Andy: Yeah, they wanted to know what Origin I was... and where was I from. So I said, "C of E, from England."

Jane: You couldn't fill it in, you said...

Andy: I was going to fill it in saying I was a Muslim called Mr Abujhaba or something, but then I thought "No I'm not, that's crazy." [...] I'm not racist or anything like that, at all, I'm not. But, you sit back and you start to think, "Hang on a minute, we are losing our bit of Britain. We're not Britain, forget Swindon, forget London..."

It seemed hypocritical that ethnic minorities could publicly express identity in cultural or ethnic terms but not the "English":

Jim: ...there's a mini-bus going around, and it's got the West Indian club on the side. If I drove a mini-bus around Swindon with the English Club on the side, I'd get arrested for going to extremes. We can have a Caribbean festival out on Foreigner Field, but if you had a one-sided English festival...and called it that, you'd be arrested before you got the posters up. So how can they have that, you know, how can they have that and we can't?

Similar frustrations came from hearing the National Anthem rather than the perceived English anthem '*Land of Hope and Glory*' at sporting competitions, lack of a public holiday on St George's day, and "local authority qualms" towards residents flying the official English George Cross Flag. Jim and Jennifer again:

Jennifer: They are going to try and change it, but they say you can't hang it, for fear of...

Jim: For fear of offending Muslims.

Jennifer: ...offending Muslims.

Jim: Me, I've, um, I've got a big flag up on the side of the house, sorry, I'm not racist, but, you know, this is my country... But the council, they want me to take it down, but I think that's all wrong... But the thing is, if you go and speak to the Muslims and the immigrants, they don't find it offensive, they're not put off by it, they think it's right that you do that. And yet, when the World Cup football is on, you find Polish flags, French flags, German flags.



Figure 36: The George Cross Flag in a Back Garden and a Pub

#### *d) Loss of Culture and Pride*

Some informants, noticeably those with left-wing and liberal political orientations conversely articulated experiencing a loss of English culture and identity, attributed to various factors, and subsequently pride. Concurring with the historical accounts identifying cultural and institutional Englishness discussed in Chapter 1, Steven Buxley, a council employee, 40s, identified these two strains, commenting:

...Englishness as sort of cricket on the green...Englishness as we knew has, I think, basically gone by the way. Partly through greater integration, but partly because of a development of, well, other people can't define what a *chav*<sup>60</sup> culture is, they've got an idea, but it's a culture of lack of engagement with anything. And because of that, I think we've kind of lost an identity.

English identity was also no longer represented by historic and constitutional symbols:

I couldn't say it's the flag, it's the queen, it's the Church of England, it's Parliament... BBC World Service, and kind of a particular accent that went with ...the BBC in general, um, a public school system, a class system, all sorts of

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<sup>60</sup> The term 'chav' probably originates from the Romani word 'chavvy' meaning youth. It has been in popular circulation for some years and is understood as a derogatory term for an urban-dwelling working-class person behaving in an anti-social way, and linked to styles of dress including the clothing label *Burberry*, designer sports-wear and trainers, visible gold jewellery etc.

things like that that would have...made more Englishness than Britishness seem as, as a distinct thing....

Steven also identified an absent spirit of national unity of the kind induced by extraordinary national events such as strikes and wars, contributing to a blurred identity. Martin Shore, a mining engineer in his 30s, ruminated that traditional Englishness had morphed via shared language into a commercial global America. It was no longer about the UK but via the linguistic connotations of the term 'English', a global language of American brands, e.g. 'English is Coca-Cola, McDonalds, Disney, etc... Englishness is more associated with American values, just through the dominance of the language.'

Like the recent negative aspects of cultural Britishness, these informants found that England's modern day image was negatively tarnished by the behaviour and reputation of English and British holiday makers in southern Europe.

Nigel, a reporter in his 40s on the *Swindon Advertiser*, pronounced: 'You look at our image abroad...has got pretty bad so I don't think I'd be that keen to say that I'm English. Well, we will in America because they love the English. If we went to Europe I don't think we'd be that proud of being English.' Martin's fiancée, Emma Thorpe, an I.T. worker in her 30s, was embarrassed by '...an image of a British tourist! Bright pink lobster, eating egg and chips.' For her, English identity had been nullified and reduced to nothing: 'I don't really see it as an identity, I see it as someone who lives in England. ...It's not something I'm proud of...I don't think. It's just where you live.'

A similar loss of pride in political Britishness was expressed, more by those with left-wing and liberal sympathies than with right-wing political ones, for whom Englishness had more (positive) resonance. Martin, conflating the terms 'England' and 'Britain', said:

...England standing on the world stage. I think it's more relevant to [*the*] sporting prowess of the nation than the political prowess of the nation. Or the trading prowess of the nation, the financial prowess. It just seems a shame...

We're not Great anymore...Should we drop it? Drop Great Britain and just become Britain...Just say, "Hey! Who wants it?!" Put it on *ebay*. You could have Great Germany, or Great Saudi Arabia, or Great Iraq, "Sorry, we messed up your country... have this."

These informants were quick to dismiss the importance of their taken-for-granted national identity, but aware of the obvious benefits of coming from Britain, listing institutional and social values. Emma and Steven are cases in point. Emma confirmed: 'I feel privileged...I live in a liberal country where I am allowed a lot of rights, as a female as well as a human being, I've got a lot of freedoms that I appreciate. But apart from those things, I couldn't really come up with much that I was kind of proud of to be white and British.' Likewise, Steven: 'I think there are some terrific things here, I mean, the welfare state, and the fact that despite all our money-for-me-now culture, we've still clung to looking after the worst-off in our society...And every time someone tries to challenge that, we, we tend to, um, hunt them down...' Martin listed a string of 'positive' values he defined as his 'personal' British values [*via email*]: '...the need to see fairness in all walks of life, the need for equality, to help when it's needed. Respect those who have earned it, teach those who need it, make friends of foes. Make things better.' He also professed his own attachments based on lifestyle, culture, climate, kin and belonging, institutions:

Britain is my home, most of my friends and family are here. I like the weather, beer, food, tolerance, open media. The safe society. The bad things about Britain at the moment is mostly the financial plight...my earnings are less, I cannot buy goods as cheaply as I used to. The British media is always bad overseas....I find that British music is worldwide, most of it is still the Beatles and the Rolling Stones...

There was broad agreement that a Britain including Scotland and Wales was more desirable than England because of the better external image and stronger internal sense of community in those countries. Nigel commented: 'Probably 'Britain' is OK because then you can include Irish and Scottish who have probably got a better reputation – a better image – abroad.' Steven had spent ten years living in Glasgow, commenting heavily on the strength of identities in the Celtic nations and adding:

...they really do have a wonderful sense of community...They'll come up to you in Glasgow and they'll say, "You a murderer?" You say, "No." They'll say, "You a rapist?" You say, "No." They say, "You a conman?" You say, "No." They'll say, "Do you want to come out for a drink with me?" As long as they've got you sussed they're your friend...they take you into their soul, you know, which is why I can see some of the problems developing here, because you can see some of the deprivation but without the community. It doesn't hold it together.

However, he thought there was something of a fictional artifice in the federation of home-nations: 'I'm not even sure what British is. I think British is something that was created from politics...Yes we were British, because we were told that we are British. Haven't got much in common besides a legal system and language, but culturally very different.'

### **3.4.9 Identity**

Most were reticent at first when asked to define an identity due to the paucity of ordinary discussion of the subject in social life, the interchangeable, contingent and relational labels, and the measuring of birthplace and blood descent origins of their different ancestors leading to hybrid constructions. Emma, one of few informants with no hybrid ancestry, and pointing out a conflation of England with British that she observed was sometimes made by Americans, described herself thus: 'I would say English. Unless I was talking to someone who was American or something like that, and then I'd just say

British...cos I just have this image that Americans don't know the separate countries of England.' Knowledge of the self-sufficiency of the Celtic countries drove Steven's rationale: 'Nationality? I would have said British but...But now I would say definitely English because I think that the smaller countries within the UK can definitely stand more autonomy.' However, he dismissed Englishness as a pure ethnic identity: '...our history goes back sort of, with um, you know, Celts and Romans and Saxons and Vikings and all sorts. So I've never really seen, I've seen Englishness as...almost, a pseudo-culture...'

I agree with Edwards (2000) who remarked: '...Englishness is an unmarked category: the baseline from which otherness is defined' (see also Nairn, 1977; Banks, 1996: 177). It is the baseline against which all other UK identities are measured, a boring and ordinary identity devoid of the exotic connotations of Celtic identities. The "English" have no recent history of repression (having been the oppressor) or of fighting a named enemy for independence. Nor have they had to break away from a dominant force and establish a unique place in the world. However, England is full of white people from diverse backgrounds, which remains unacknowledged because they are overridden by a taken-for-granted national identity, incorporated in the catch-all 'white' ethnicity.

Many informants professed more complex identities, such as Steven's partner, Dinah, mother and cleaner, 40s:

I'd have to go with Scots because both parents are Scots. We came from Norman French. We came over with William the Conqueror. But I'd say good bit Scot because they say you take after your father's nationality but he, I know was born in Dorset but his father was a Scot so my grandfather...Scots.

Steven observed: '...you've got the identity of having grown up in a very Scottish family but never having been there, so you've got yet to go.' Hannah and John, a cohabiting couple in their early 30s working for the council and in science research, were comfortable with a British identity. Hannah said: '...like

most people in England, I'm a mongrel, I've got Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English, probably on an equal share really, so I would definitely say British.'

John: 'I'd probably say British first, I'd say I was English, and I sort of identify with that. But I'd prefer the British mantel, because I prefer the diversity associated with Britishness, and that's a very important factor.' There were only two expressions of European identity in my entire project, from Steven and Nigel, who said: 'I feel myself more as a European these days than English.'

#### **3.4.10 Mobile Class Structure**

Most reflections on class occurred when informants identified the kinds of people residing in different Swindon neighbourhoods on a 'working-class', 'middle-class' or 'posh' basis, but the whole arena of class transpired to be a grey area when applied to themselves. Most gave little importance to stratifying themselves or their friends and contacts. The Buxleys, a low-income family living in a council house, professed to mixed working-class and middle-class values by virtue of Dinah having a more middle-class background. By contrast, another interviewee, Martin, considered himself born into an agricultural working-class but a university education had pushed him upwards into the middle-class. He came into contact with a management stratification system at work, hypothesising that it was more relevant than the traditional class system. Steven suggested that the mobile class system had led to a new breed of non-traditional high earners who didn't necessarily bring middle-class values with them, were 'chavs' and disrespectful. Martin's fiancée Emma, whilst admitting that her mother and siblings disagreed about whether her offsprings' university education had moved them from working-class to middle, was more certain that: '...class does have an impact depending on what class you are in, but maybe middle-class is just in the middle of everything.' There was no

consensus on the meaning of class categories but a tendency to view class as a mobile and fluid category.



Figure 37: Out on the Streets of Swindon

#### 3.4.11 Christianity

The anthropological literature has suggested that with the exception of minority migrants' faiths, and specific areas with a history of observance and fervour, such as Clachan, Isle of Lewis (Mewitt, 1982a&b), and Glasgow (Charlsley, 1986), the native inhabitants of Britain form a post-Christian society. The 'national' Church of England attracts a decreasing rate of regular worshippers at churches in practice (Modood, 1994; Smith, 2006: 449). Other denominations and sects, including the Catholic Church, have a stronger appeal among their followers than C of E among the majority of "English". As Parkin has asked: 'How do you study the religion of a society whose members often say that there is none?' (Parkin, 1999, p. xi). However, in Swindon I found a variety of different kinds of attachments to some branch of the faith, with couples not sharing the same orientations. This is supported by *Swindon Survey* data showing that 46% of "English" respondents declared a faith in comparison to the marginally higher 53% who had none.



**Table 25: Religion of “English” Respondents**

**Religion**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	Church of England	Christian	Roman Catholic	Bahá'í	Virtualist	None	<i>Base</i>
English (%)	28	8	8	1	1	53	85

Dinah was fervently religious (Church of England), and said of St Andrews, her parish church: ‘There is a real little community and we put on little talent shows...’ She articulated her faith in general conversation, for example, after attending Swindon’s *Mela* festival, suggested that: ‘...Jesus would have been in the thick of it...’ Her husband Steven wasn’t religious: ‘I absolutely wouldn’t say the church [*was one of my communities*], I find it non-inclusive and very backward thinking...’ Emma was raised as a Methodist attending Sunday school as a teenager and has many Christian friends, but had lapsed in her own practice, but said that: ‘It does feel that other religions are stronger in England than Christianity. Have a bigger, kind of, voice, anyway.’ Her fiancée Martin, on the other hand rejected the state church as: ‘...a romanticised notion.’ Jennifer Brown was raised as a Catholic and active in the parish community. Jim, on the other hand, demonstrated what might be defined as the average connection a white British person might have to the church: ‘To me personally [*it doesn’t mean*]... a lot because I’ve never been very religious – funerals and weddings, type of thing – but that’s not to say I’m not a believer.’ Jenkins (1999) encapsulates this position in a reformulated theoretical conception of religion in England as the regular observance of liturgical practices, but considering religion rather as a spiritual and social institution providing nodal points in a wider value system. My data showed that many people come into contact with the Christian church and its beliefs through the wider value system, at times of rites of passage and through networks linked to its voluntary, youth and social welfare groups. The Hardings had a new angle on religion. In one discussion

of Catholic and Protestant sectarianism in Northern Ireland observed by Andy who'd held an army post in Belfast, Jane asked her 10-year-old daughter and 14-year-old son what religion they were. Her son replied that he didn't know, then came up with 'Christian', looking to his parents for validation. His mum asked her daughter, who replied 'English.' Both parents laughed.

## **Chapter 4: SWINDON: (S)hit (W)eather (I)s (N)ormal (D)ay (O)r (N)ight: Local Life and the Local Paper**

### **4.1 Introduction**

At my host company, I learnt how to work a database from Anne, a softly-spoken woman in her 40s who had lived in Swindon since she was one. She smilingly agreed with the town's reputation for being boring, and passed me a note with the local saying and this chapter's title written on it, 'in case it was useful for the thesis.' However, echoing Irish folk singer June's supposition that Swindon was a 'hidden gem', this chapter explores how residents thought through their town. Following theories of the symbolic construction of community and identity formation (A P Cohen, 1982; 1985; 1986), it asks if they felt a sense of belonging and if they constructed notions of community and identity, what meanings they constructed on the basis of *experiential knowledge* in general conversation, and what resources they used and meanings they constructed during news talk about the local paper, the *Swindon Advertiser*.

### **4.2 Social Change and Community**

'Community' has historically been an important concept in Britain (A P Cohen, 1982, 1986; Rapport, 2002) and there is a long-standing tradition of social science research on the themes of 'community, continuity and change' (Macdonald *et al.*, 2005: 587) from Frankenberg onward (for example, 1966). A key reoccurring theme is fear sparked by the unknown impact of change on the ways of life of socio-residential communities, and uncertainty regarding the future. Historically discourses have circulated in Britain's public and private spheres about the decline of communities, and now the rise of individualisation, so what local discourses were present in Swindon? The socio-

economic situation there parallels that of other post-industrial towns such as former mining areas (see Dawson, 2002). Previous researchers in Swindon (d'Ancona, 1996; Boddy *et al.*, 1997) reported that the loss of GWR's local industrial economy had led to the collapse of social structures and identities tied up in the organisation of labour around it, suggesting a profound impact on social dynamics.

Recent studies (Macdonald *et al.*, 2005) recognise continuing attachment to the concept of community as a buffer against change throughout Britain. However, based on research in Swansea, Charles and Aull Davies (2005: 681) suggest that each generation has its own perceptions of a decline in community and that these should not be taken at face value. These expressions can be a nostalgic way of constructing what Pahl (2005: 633) has termed a '*community-in-the-mind*' as the symbolic community constructed in the present, rather than the latter being a reflection of the 'real' community of the past, linked with constructing a perceived culture of deprivation in the present. Several researchers have offered explanations for nostalgia in England. In Lancashire, Edwards (1998: 149) linked it to local economic and social decline, and nationally, Britain's political and economic decline in the world. Strathern (1992) found a 'residual nostalgia' for the past in English culture, and Savage *et al.* (2005) see it as a defence against globalisation, which MacDonald *et al.* (2005) contest, suggesting that place and locality matter just because people live and invest somewhere.

My informants observed changes in several areas of town life, the most widely discussed being environment, ethnic make-up and ethnic relations, and the nature of socio-residential relationships. This chapter initially takes these three topics as contexts for the analysis of informants' views on change, sense of place, community and identity. Given Swindon's economic and social transformations (see Chapter 2), it asks if nostalgia plays a role in shaping

contemporary perceptions, how the situation in Swindon ties into national and international trends, and if the alternative social formations to the traditional socio-residential community as unearthed in other urban British studies also exist in Swindon. Following Habermas (1989) and Dahlgren (2005) it asks whether, in public sphere-like manner, talking about the content of the *Swindon Advertiser* led, as Franklin and Murphy (1991) proposed, to a sense of local patriotism, and reinforced bonds to the town.

### **4.3 Rethinking Community, and 'Ressentiment'**

Additional theoretical concepts are required for the analysis. Two are alternatives to 'community'. One is the useful concept of 'personal communities' theorised by various researchers (for example, Spencer and Pahl, 2004; Pahl, 2005; Morgan, 2005; Alexander *et al.*, 2007). These are complex individual networks of family, friends, neighbours, and workmates '...linked and performed through ties of emotion, trust, security...' (Alexander *et al.*, 2007: 788). They provide a sense of continuity as they are forged at different points across a lifetime and contribute to a sense of identity and belonging derived from an individual's biography. Some are geographically based, others are not. They are universal and examples of 'communities-in-the mind'.

Another is Finnegan's (1989) notion of 'pathways'. The term described the routes taken by those engaging in the social interactions, habits and ties forged whilst attending musical activities. These routes were known and regularly chosen; many remained open although some fell by the wayside for a time or were reformulated. 'Pathways' then are: '...culturally established ways through which people structure their activities or habitual patterns that... are known to and shared with others...' (1989: 323), and are more structured and permanent

than personal networks. People also follow pathways within employment, schooling, housing, sports, church, child-rearing and so on (1989: 325).

Theorists such as Giddens (1991) and Silverstone (1993; 2005) have outlined the dialectic of trust/anxiety present in the process of creating ontological security, which mitigates potential threats posed by change. This chapter also explores the strategies informants employed to respond to change. I use an additional concept, Scheler's (1961) French-language 'ressentiment', borrowed from Fenton and Mann (2006: 13-15; 2009: 530), and harness their 2009 analytical framework in the analysis in this chapter. In nearby Bristol, Fenton and Mann (2009) examined how self-understandings and personal experiences informed white working- and middle-class "English" individuals' orientations to 'nation, place and the country'. In their 2006 paper, 'ressentiment' described the sense of victimhood felt by some ethnic majority members focusing on privileged 'others' (e.g. migrants) over grievances concerning change within the local and national communities. The term is similar to the English 'resentment'. Fenton and Mann (2006: 14) cite Meltzer and Musolf (2002), who unpicked the main differences. Both terms are grounded in feelings of 'hurt, insult, displeasure', but 'resentment' is 'short-term and particularised' whereas 'ressentiment' is long-term and socially located. Negative feelings are coupled with a sense of powerlessness, hurt and frustration at the inability to respond, accompanied by a desire for revenge which cannot be satisfied. The quest for revenge is less likely to be sought or enacted materially than symbolically (all Fenton and Mann, 2006: 14). Fenton and Mann's (2006: 5, 7-9, 14; 2009: 526) informants complained of material loss when access to services was threatened (or removed) as migrants appeared to be prioritised, and the symbolic loss of their country 'not being the same any more.' Actual feelings of revenge were expressed through the sentiment of wanting to repatriate migrants (2006: 14). However, these resentful sentiments were the result of a mesh of factors,

including class expectations and frustrations, changing local environments, age and life course, mediated by personal events, experiences and modes of digesting experiences across the course of a lifetime. These views in turn were mediated through place, work and other experiences, and often shifted during single conversations, with the potential to affect social interpretations of unwelcomed, unwarranted social changes (all Fenton and Man, 2009: 519-20, 529-531) . Now I describe consumption of the *Swindon Advertiser* and other local media, before beginning an examination of perceptions of Swindon uttered in general conversation.

#### **4.4 Consumption of the *Swindon Advertiser***

The *Advertiser* (known locally as ‘the *Adver*’) is the most consumed of the local media. It sells about 22,469 copies per day (figures for Jul-Dec 2007, as fieldwork was starting), with most copies read by several people. In all, daily readership is approximately 56,234 people<sup>61</sup> out of a population of 180,051, and many informants reported skimming it at work or reading a relative’s copy. The *Swindon Survey* shows different trends in its consumption, and other media were mentioned in conversation. Table 34 on p283 shows consumption figures for all newspapers. 53% of “English” respondents admitted reading it, and ethnographically it provoked the most interest and discussion. Other media rarely mentioned included free magazines, such as *Link Magazine* and *Buzzy Bees*, commercial radio stations GWR and Brunel FM plus BBC Swindon, then regional television news on ITV or the BBC’s *South Today* or *Points West*. 51% of “Polish” respondents read the *Adver*. “Poles” reported more interest in the national news and Polonia’s television news than local. They were more

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<sup>61</sup> Source: <http://www.swindonadvertiser.co.uk/aboutus/newspapertitles/advertiser/>

dismissive of local media which did not cover Polish community affairs, particularly radio, although GWR gave them occasional coverage. The Polish parish newsletter was the main source of community news, and there seemed more interest in their own community than wider town affairs. BBC and ITV regional television news were critiqued, firstly as Swindon falls between regions covering mainly Oxford (BBC's *South Today*) and the West Country (BBC's *Points West*, ITV's *The West Tonight*), and because of its marginalisation on the news agenda. Leokadia Kuczyńska, who strangely enough had no television, commented on this, saying: '...it's [*Swindon*] not the centre of anything. It's on the outskirts all the time.' 30% of "Sikhs" claimed to read the *Adver* and it was mentioned by all my informants. Minimal interest was expressed in local news, and there were scant mentions of other sources, only GWR by Kamal Sahota and rarely Sarah Bajwa, and also Oxford's Fox FM.

Despite its wide readership, admissions of pleasure in reading the *Adver* were rare. Colleague Gary remarked: '...quite like[d] reading the gripe from Swindon that comes from the editor...' Most informants were critical of the quality of its basic news content, accusing it of lazy journalism, sensationalism, trivia and 'untruths'. Informants all read it nonetheless. Ofcom's (2009) research found that nationally most respondents only sought basic information from the local media, and had little need of opinion and analysis, reflecting low expectations compared to national media. When transferred to the case of the *Adver*, this may explain why it was still consulted despite readers' cynicism about its quality. Its availability as a source of news about Swindon was trusted while the quality of its news could create anxiety (see also Silverstone, 1993; 1994; 2005).

Furthermore, informants used it both 'functionally' and 'emotionally'.

Functional uses included glancing at Friday's 'What's On' listings for details of festivals, concerts, events, associations and clubs; reading about economic



matters: mortgages, local employers, the economy, and job ads. 'Emotional' uses included reading the letters to tune into local debates, and following the affairs of one's own and other ethnic communities. Martin Shore read the local, national and international news on the *Adver's* website from China where he did mining work. The BBC news website was blocked there due to government censorship of Western media, but not the *Adver*. These observations confirm that the paper's role as a lynchpin of the community was more important than its reputation for 100% accuracy.

I interviewed editor Dave King at the paper's Old Town offices, and he told me that the *Adver* wasn't just about selling papers but being responsible and bringing the community together. Also, endorsing Franklin and Murphy (1991):

...you could say that a newspaper is a galvanizing force in a community. It can form opinion; it can sometimes even change opinion... We do have an opportunity here to set agendas in terms of what's happening in the community... We're the people who help to start conversation in the pubs in the evening.

I asked him about stories that had united different ethnic communities. He responded that the paper approached 'our community' as a whole and didn't focus on 'ethnic life' specifically as stories had to be relevant to the 'whole community'. Later, he admitted that the majority demographic in his readership was a factor in deciding upon content:

We are an Anglo-Saxon newspaper. However, whichever way you disguise it, we are an English newspaper. And the majority of our readers are Whites, they are, some of them are local but they come from all over the shop. So we've got to bear in mind that...

#### **4.5 Responses to Swindon in General Conversation**

During conversations at my host company and home interviews, before informants embarked on news talk, they told stories and shared views about

the town based on their *experiential knowledge*. I begin with these reviews.

‘Community’ is used by informants to describe: 1) organised ethnic communities or just ethnic groups, 2) geographically-bounded socio-residential communities, 3) social networks which correspond with the town-level or smaller population groups, sometimes implying civil or moral responsibility (this version is used in public policy or by spokespeople, such as Dave King, above); and 4) a feeling comprising ‘interpersonal warmth, shared interests, and loyalty’ (Baumann, 1996: 15; see also Bauman, 2001: 1).

#### **4.5.1 Sense of Place**

Throughout my research, all informants reacted strongly when questioned about their town, and there was a deep pan-ethnic town-wide sense of place *not* rooted in socio-residential communities. This section illustrates the range of feelings I encountered. There was a wide spectrum of opinion, and much denigrating of the town and joking about its’ stereotypes, the place ‘...where all the Honda Civics are made...’, but also a quiet defensiveness. It was described as ‘OK’, ‘convenient’ and ‘easy to live in’, had all the required facilities and amenities, and was well located near to ‘nicer places’ such as Reading and Oxford. Many noted its easy access to attractive green Wiltshire landscapes and its own parks (e.g. Lydiard Park and Old Town Gardens).

Some people were more complimentary, and descriptive accolades included: ‘the island of Swindon – in the middle of the South West’ and ‘my comfort zone’. During an interview one sunny day at work, Nancy, a London overspill migrant in her 60s, hair pulled up into a top knot, large gold earrings and a heavy Swindon accent, charged to defend it. She didn’t mind ‘people coming to work here because there’s enough jobs for most people if they really want a job but when they knock Swindon you think, you know, “Just clear off” ...’ She also defended it in public during a lively exchange among the employees in our team.

Negative feelings were equally common among those born locally and incomers, and verbalised using many expletives. Swindon was disliked, a source of pessimism, not worthy of support or recommendation, and residence was accidental through work, family or factors beyond individual choice. Old “Poles” were rooted through family ties and their organised community rather than enthusiasm for the town itself, and internal migrants with ‘good’ jobs were often indifferent to it.

The town’s physical appearance had a profound impact on peoples’ views, and changes in its appearance were synchronous with changes in its socio-economic infrastructure. Facilities and amenities were much discussed, underscored by an individual’s personal fashioning of their sense of place and their locating this in a past-to-present temporality. During one Sunday lunch, the Harding family started up a conversation about the railways. They had made me vegetarian pasta whilst they ate chicken, and we all drank coke. The Sunday omnibus edition of *East Enders* ran on the television in the background. The family mourned the loss of the old railway factory when it was turned into an outlet village, taking away the ‘railway identity’ and ‘tradition’. Andy said the town had ‘lost a lot of its personality’ due to rapid expansion: ‘there’s not many Swindonians, if you get what I mean.’

The other sign of negative change was physical dilapidation linked to a sense of loss. Whilst some people acknowledged prosperous areas, the scruffy decayed appearance of the centre and low-income estates were much discussed, leading to observations of: ‘so much rubbish’, ‘rat problem’, ‘no emphasis on litter collection’. Other complaints noted were cosmetic and cultural: ‘no policy of preserving the past’, ‘a lack of character’, ‘ugly concrete things [*buildings*]’, no ‘sense of identity about the place’, poor facilities, especially shopping, ‘no major ecclesiastical place...no major academic centre...’, ‘not as stylish or smart as other places’, ‘no cafe culture’ and nothing cheap or free for children.

Informants were resigned to the neglect, cautious about physical regeneration, and felt pessimistic about building developments bringing any improvements. 'All they do is put up more houses, don't think about the community...' sighed Sarah Bajwa. It was hoped that a new library and square in the centre would improve its look. Colleague David was optimistic in interview: '...now they are finishing it, so there's a bit more fibre, and people are associating more with Swindon as a place rather than a place to live...' However, more common was the view that regeneration efforts always fail.

Those with a defensive attitude towards the town held antithetical opinions, which included: the town's history being 'as good as Oxford or Bath', defence of attractive areas like Old Town and awareness of less deprivation than elsewhere. It was 'nice' and 'clean' with 'great facilities', 'a good range of activities if you have money', 'good services', 'a better opportunity here now than at most state schools in London', and until the recession, prosperous with a wide range of employment options. As Gurbax put it: '...if you're able to communicate well and you present well, then you can get along in this town.' Overall, residents had a strong sense of place, whether or not they liked or disliked the town's urban environment and facilities, in which awareness regarding the physical dilapidation played a strong role.

#### **4.5.2 Ethnic Composition**

When asked 'What kind of people live in Swindon?', most respondents referred to old and newer migrant nationalities, and the perceived increasing ethnic and religious diversity of residents and workers. The other major population group mentioned were the derogatorily characterised 'white trash' "English". Most people favoured the multi-ethnic mix. During one of my visits, Steven Buxley advocated for ethnic cohesion passionately from his sofa, whilst at the same time attending to his stepsons and muzzled dog. One son was cleaning his

boots with an electric brush. Wife Dinah made tea in the kitchen. Steven was one of several “English” informants who proudly listed constituent groups in interview:

We’ve had in Swindon a Polish community...an Italian community, an Irish community since the last war – and the Irish even before because of the railways – and an Indian and smaller Pakistani community and smaller Chinese community for decades and they’re integrated very very well.

Overall, the “English” were more interested in listing ethnic groups across the town whilst “Poles” and “Sikhs” were more focused on their own ethnic networks there. More than any migrant group, the ‘Swindon Poles’ were seen by all as embedded in the town’s history, a long-standing ‘fact of Swindon’, home-grown foreigners born and bred there. “English” informants saw them as thoroughly integrated, leading Martin Shore to comment: ‘...the Polish will probably fit in a lot easier because of the history of Swindon Polish people more than people from Yorkshire.’ I interviewed David one lunch hour in an empty meetings room and he enthused about meeting “Poles” at his local pub.

Something of an armchair anthropologist, he analysed their identity:

They’re particularly Polish. They’ll support Poland against England and all the rest of it, but when they’re put against other people who might endanger their income [e.g. *New Poles*], they are Swindonians so they’re Polish in nature and Swindonian in attitude. Nationally very Polish, but if you talked about them they’re from Swindon and they’re Swindon born and bred and they’ll stick to it – they’re the most Swindonian people I know.

He rightly identified the local-disaporic identity that “Poles” articulate throughout the thesis, grounded physically in the first town of settlement, with diasporic ties to Poland, skipping a profound national-level attachment to Britain.

Informants absorbed the presence of the wider ethnic mix in different ways, from seeing ethnic food sections in supermarkets, through the memory of Irish

pubs, to seeing people on the streets. Straight-talking, matrimonial incomer Gurbax Ghalal, whom I usually interviewed separately from husband Mohinder, articulated the link between ethnic diversity as part of a process of change:

...Swindon's make-up has definitely changed. There's the Polish community... I mean down the road is the local Polish delicatessen. You notice it on the school run there are some Polish parents. Something that's interesting, of course, we've got Brazilian parents which surprised me because I didn't think that Brazil, Swindon go together.

#### **4.5.3 Perceptions of Racism at the Level of the Town**

"Poles" and "Sikhs" in Chapter 3 reported experiences of racism from when their parents arrived, when they were growing up and occasionally in the present. Most felt it was more of a problem in the past. Regarding the impact that the town's ethnic mix had on its social life, informants of all backgrounds felt that minorities and migrants integrated well, and most shrugged off the town's overall levels of racism as being at 'normal levels'. Unenamoured of Swindon, Steven spoke glowingly about the distribution of the 'black and ethnic-minority community' throughout the town, lack of ghettos and overall cohesion. Neither did he think, as he'd read in the press, that the mosques harboured 'dark satanic forces'. Also when I visited Amarjit's home to drop off questionnaires, her husband joked with me that at his workplace, the BMW factory, the language of swearing united Indian, English and Irish workers alike.

Nancy, who held shifting views on the volume of migrants, was still proud of the town's track record:

I don't think we've had lots of prejudice. We haven't had like you see in other parts of the country. I think we're like anybody else how we say, "Oh blinking foreigners. They've got all the jobs." We're just like anybody else. But there doesn't seem to be so many tensions and clashes as other... I think it's [*racism*]

only just happening to Swindon that we're getting... You know what I mean, it's like London and Bristol always had it, even at Gloucester, always had loads of people from away but Swindon it's just beginning so what it will turn out like you don't know.

Only househusband Mohinder Ghalal, himself a victim of racism (which he located in name-calling and violence from other men) verbalised any tensions about the town overall, firstly some minor tensions in multi-ethnic Manchester Road. He also liked to frequent a working men's club and was regularly the only Asian, sitting quietly at the bar, cradling a beer, looking to chat to the men there to get a wider perspective on the way people were thinking. From his living room he told me:

...we're lucky in Swindon, we don't get that many major incidents...in terms of Asians against whites or Asians against blacks or whites against blacks or anything like that. And, OK, there probably is racism... and it's probably lots to do with how the week's been at work or how the week's been at home with the kids and the missus, so they turn it on somebody else...

Some Englishmen at his club had made anti-Asian comments within his earshot. He was the only person of sub-continental appearance present. He witnessed 'friendly tension' between people of other ethnicities too:

...it's something that I can pick up from other people – how people feel about what's going on in the world, especially since 9/11. There are certain characters – when they've had too much to drink – they do voice their opinions. They'll say things like "Muslim terrorist" because I look the same colour and they don't know the difference between a Muslim, a Hindu and a Sikh... Then, you know, you get the Irish, you get the Scots, all those lot – that goes on – or the Italians or the Polish – that goes on anyway – there's a bit of tension between them. But it's sort of all in good sense – you know, bit of banter and all that.

In spite of this consensus, several informants outlined a situation of ethnic group insularity. David observed that the "Sikhs" and the Caribbeans stuck together socially with family and friends of shared ethnicity. Community-minded Tomasz Witmanowski saw that ethnically separate community centres could reinforce insularity, working against the "English":

I think where you get the stronger communities is where it's the Hindu or Punjabi community, the Polish community... but I don't know whether that's that brilliant because it sort of polarises groups... but I wouldn't really know...how English people live now because, I mean, years ago they used to have these working men's clubs and things like that, but now those are closing down....

#### 4.5.4 New Migrants

More than ethnic insularity, immigration was a sore point for a few "English" informants even if they were positive about ethnic cohesion, such as my Cumbrian colleague Sally:

I have to be careful I don't say something racist but...quite often I walk from the bus station and sometimes it's hard to find someone who looks English. Sometimes I think it's nice if people get on together but I think Swindon is overloaded sometimes.

Some "Sikhs" and "Poles" held similar views (see Chapter 5). Being overloaded with strangers threatened cultural change, and a loss of social control threatened their ontological security (Giddens, 1991) at local and national levels. Using Giddens's terms (1991), it threatened their 'self-identity' as the dominant ethnic group, 'social and material environments of action' and continuity of systems (as the example about school places for children below shows) (see also Skey, 2010). The Hardings, resettled in Swindon for two years after a fifteen-year absence in Germany, and Nancy, were worried by the sound of unintelligible foreign languages on the street, highlighting the English language as a national symbol that contributed to feelings of secure belonging. 'Ressentiment' encapsulates Nancy's feelings:

Nancy: ...I'm not being funny but you walk through town some Sunday afternoons – and this is not prejudiced – and you see all these white people and when they open their mouths they can't even speak English! I think we're being taken over by – but then that's anywhere isn't it?

CB: Is that the eastern Europeans?

Nancy: Yes.



CB: How about the Poles in Swindon? Is it very obvious that there's a lot of Poles?

Nancy: They do a lot of taxi-driving but it is true with having the foreigners over here, they will work the hours and we've never been in a culture that we've had to work the hours, but they'll work anything. Like I disagree with them getting family allowance like some of them and sending it home to their children over there. I must say I think that's terrible. We've paid our stamps and they just come in and take over...on the other hand, when the taxi picks us up there's a nice white shirt and didn't he look the business? But you just couldn't knock it for that.

#### **4.5.5 Case Study: "English" Working-Class Attitudes to Ethnic Difference**

This case study also demonstrates 'ressentiment' at play and personal senses of ontological security being undermined by the presence of migrants. By the time of my second interview with the Browns, they had relaxed enough to open up about the subjects of ethnic relations and migrants. I sat on one sofa and they sat on another, separated by a coffee table, whilst *BBC South Today* ran silently on television under the conversation. Jim wore track-suit bottoms and a t-shirt revealing tattoos down both arms, and Jennifer had a gentle appearance with hair pinned up and a floral top. As the minidisc went on, they swung into focused mode and unleashed their feelings. Their four-year-old came in once to show me a photo of his school class. They had both grown up in Gorse Hill, with Jim nostalgic for the ethnic relations of his youth where Italians, Indians and Pakistanis formed a 'close-knit community'. His adult experiences on a new estate in south Swindon were less exemplary, and he blamed the segregationalist behaviour of recent migrants for tensions.

There's a Somalian family who live opposite, and I'm sure they're very nice but I've never seen them to acknowledge them. They keep themselves to themselves. From what I gather it's an Albanian family live a little down there again... I've never seen them to acknowledge them... There's no community, no community whatsoever... Like people of different backgrounds – Somalians will only mix with Somalians – they won't integrate.

He'd heard talk in the media of 'dirty smelly Somalians', which he didn't believe but he sometimes wondered where the rumour came from.

In comparison, Charan Sahota had also felt socio-residential community was in decline with poor contact between neighbours, but as a child of migrants, she was more sympathetic to them:

...the doors are shut to the average British family, forget opening the doors to an immigrant family, so are they already coming into a situation which is already like that, almost becoming hostile, we've lost our warmth, we've lost that hospitality community we used to have back in the 70s, 80s...

It was easier for "Sikhs" with their networks than "English" families, and it was hard for immigrants to integrate, although: '...There are some who defiantly...want to keep to themselves, and ...I think again, unfortunately, it's the Muslim community that wants to segregate themselves.'

The Browns' 'ressentiment' was strengthened by difficulties in getting their youngest son a place at a local Catholic parish primary school.<sup>62</sup> Many generations of the family had attended, and they were also members of the church congregation. Upon application, they'd had to fight for a place due to oversubscription. They saw newly arrived Goan, Polish and African children starting school and interpreted the situation as an unfair competition. Their son would, after all, probably follow in the family tradition, and live and work in the area all his life, contributing to the community. Whilst active in the school PTA's fundraising efforts, they witnessed migrant parents utilising pastoral and extra-curricular facilities without contributing to the PTA, remaining 'strangers'. Recognising the fundraising efforts of all the 'the British kids' parents, Jennifer said: '...there are some blacks, there are some Asians, the British kids...it's the immigrants, they're just not doing it, and it's for their benefit, but they just won't join in the community feel of the school.' In this

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<sup>62</sup> The Hardings had parallel feelings through a similar experience with their daughter.

case, migrant parents threaten the sense of security that the British system was expected to provide when they appear to receive privileges at school.

Fenton and Mann's (2009) work shows that simply framing "English" informants as 'racist' misses the complexity of the situation. Their interviewees' attitudes were inconsistent as they could be positive about ethnic difference and resentful of it during the same discussion. They framed informants' shifting feelings about their nation according to three positions, 'indifferent', 'romantic' and 'resentful'. The factors of: class expectations, life experiences and local changes, would lead informants to produce one of these responses at any given moment, explaining the different responses as the subject and situations discussed shifted. Fenton and Mann argue that 'resentful nationalism' encompasses personal unease and resentment emerging from unfulfilled expectations and status frustrations, immobility, and a 'failure or inability to narrate their external environments with the same sense of autonomy and distance' (2009: 329). The Browns' feelings are a good illustration of this.

Once the interview was formally over and recording had ended, a free-flowing discussion about ethnic differences ensued. Confidence to articulate their innermost feelings had been established. Jim and Jennifer swung between an open attitude to other ethnic groups and nationalities, having grown up with them, and being defensive against being perceived as racist – and a resentment of foreign elements when they posed a threat or represented a loss of control. Both felt unable to express their views in public. They were adamant in their English identity and felt the need to assert it. Their defence of Englishness and expression of victimisation by minorities are exhibitions of the same two inter-related strategies used in conversation by "English" informants in Skey (2010) to 'avoid the taint of prejudice' (Condor, 2006).

Jim began with an anti-racist disclaimer (see also, Condor, 2006) and sought validation that they weren't alone in their views. Both had had Indian and Italian friends whilst growing up, although both were exposed to their parents' prejudices towards mixed-race couples. Jennifer hosted children of different ethnic backgrounds, nationalities and religions at her children's parties. One son had an Italian girlfriend, so she wasn't against friends who weren't 'white British'. Her own mother was Irish but raised in England, fervently English and strongly Catholic. During the years of conflict in Northern Ireland and IRA campaigns, she remembered Catholics being singled out over religious difference, although she wasn't affected. Jim and Jennifer 'didn't have problems with Muslims' but were irritated that, when English people went abroad, they had to follow local customs, for example, cover up in Saudi Arabia whereas immigrant children 'didn't have to take off their veil in British schools'. They were annoyed that, although they considered themselves vehemently 'English', you weren't actually allowed to be 'English' and 'always had to be 'British'. Jim knew that pensioners from the Old Polish community had numbers from war camps on their arms and said 'we' had no idea what they had suffered. He also spoke about 'meeting all sorts' through his own work as a neighbourhood warden: '...like in my work, you have to keep your views to yourself, you have to be professional whatever you think of the people'.

#### **4.5.6 Pan-Ethnic Criticism of Other Ethnic Groups**

Although these "English" informants were the most outspoken, people from all groups expressed views about migrants and other ethnic groups along a spectrum from critical sentiments to outright prejudice. Muslims were treated as a pariah group by some in all three groups (see Chapters 3 and 6). Some 'Old Poles' feelings towards 'New Poles' were discussed in Chapter 3. Even university-educated 'New Poles', for example, Katarzyna Biczewska, were

suspicious of the calibre of Polish warehouse workers: 'Not all of them are really people that you would like to have around you.' Most Polish informants were vocal with critiques of English culture and society (see Chapters 5 and 6). D'Ancona neatly summed up the town's overall tide of experience around racism: 'There is no multi-cultural utopia; nor is it a place where rivers of blood will ever flow' (D'Ancona, 1996: 28).

#### 4.5.7 Low-Income "English" People or 'Chavs'

A 'fact of Swindon' commented upon by all three groups, in which claims of town lethargy and lack of aspiration were entangled, was the emergence of (referencing the BBC television parody) a '*Little Britain*', 'ASBO' ('Anti-Social Behaviour Order') or 'Chav' culture. The second or third-generation offspring of the Londoners, the lowest income sector on some council estates, were implicated in stereotypes of a low-achieving and ignorant town mass. They were an (obese) physical and social embarrassment, and linked to the atmosphere of social degeneracy underscored by the built environment. They were visible around town, and sparked discomfort and pity. Informants made comments such as:

Krzysztof Witmanowska: ...you can walk down into some of the areas down there like even round the Polish club, and you see one or a couple of people walking out their houses, and you think it's like something out of '*Little Britain*' or something...sixteen prams.

Sarah Bajwa: ...the English way is not to push a lot...I think that's when they say "Why do you need to leave Swindon? Everything's in Swindon and you don't need a different life" .... In that sense the welfare state and how it is used is negative, because it's not benefiting those individuals. They're in a little space, but they then can't go on further.

Steven Buxley: It reminds me, Swindon, of a miniature version of America, you know. Every twenty minutes you've got to stop and tell a joke because you've lost their attention... And it's not a criticism, it's their town, they can be whatever the hell they want! But yes, it is somewhere where you're not going to go out to the pub and have a deep conversation, unless it's about football and soap operas...

Social and economic deprivation was widely commented upon, alongside the alleged lack of intellect. Curious paradoxes were also noted, for example:

- 1) Overweight parents without money to pay for the right diet for their children.
- 2) People not problematising unemployment but giving expensive material goods to their children.
- 3) No food in the cupboards (or children in dirty nappies) but a huge plasma screen TV in the living room.<sup>63</sup>

Charan Sahota commented on British people living off the state, the inverse of the Browns' complaints about migrants abusing benefits:

...you have that resentment against, not just immigrants, but anyone, be it British or an immigrant, who are just living off the state, 'cos that's where the frustrations lie, that there's a lot of English British people that are complaining about immigrants, and there might be a lot of immigrants, second-generation first-generation, second-generation that might be complaining, that they themselves are not doing anything. Not participating in the community. Not participating as a British citizen.

#### **4.5.8 Safety**

Social degeneracy was embodied in and represented by trouble-makers, such as youth under the influence of alcohol and drugs posing a risk to personal safety and ontological security in the 'social and material environments of action' (Giddens, 1990: 92). Safety was a recurring theme in reflections on national societal changes. Intoxicated people turned the town centre into a 'no go' area after 5pm, especially after the pubs and clubs came out. Calling in at the

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<sup>63</sup> Gurbax Ghalal made the observation about food whilst volunteering on a council estate, which made her consider her own priority of meeting basic needs over acquiring material possessions. There is a chance that the family she encountered would have eaten take-away food rather than keeping their kitchen stocked, so members were not necessarily malnourished. Jim Brown had noted the nappies in Penhill.

Swindon Conservative Club Halloween Disco 2008, I met Stacie, a 34-year old in t-shirt and jeans with a handful of gold rings, hooped earrings and chains, accompanied by her 18-year old daughter. She told me that because of rough drunk people, she didn't feel safe leaving her house at night but loved coming down to the club because it was safe, she liked the mix of people. She hated Swindon, didn't know why, but repeated that she liked the club.

Safety was also flagged up as a major problem on several old council estates by families I visited there, namely Park North and Penhill, among the most deprived in the country (Swindon Borough Council, 2003). Park North comprised desperate-looking box council houses perched alongside tall, overbearing 1960s blocks of flats. The Hardings had befriended a non-Swindonian on holiday in Lanzarote who knew it as '...that place that you don't go if it begins with P, you don't go there. Penhill, Pinehurst, Park North, Park South...' Jean Witters and her daughter Angela were long-term Penhill council tenants, and were attached to it, but besides its obvious poverty, suffered problems with anti-social neighbours, juvenile offenders, substance abusers, and 'ASBO kids' throwing bricks and eggs through windows. Jean suggested that when the council put all the 'problem families' in one area, it became a ghetto: 'You can take the people out of the estate but you can't take the estate out of the people.' Both, however, preferred Penhill at night than the town centre for safety reasons.

Anti-social behaviour was also a problem on newer estates. The Brown family reported children knocking on doors and running away. Jane Harding had had eggs and tomatoes thrown at her house by sixteen-year-olds on Halloween and found the police unhelpful, and again when her daughter Hailey was approached by a strange man. Her husband linked this to a national problem and wanted to see more trustworthy policemen back on the beat, feeling this would improve England.

Thus far, the built environment's dilapidation was linked to local and global economic changes, although the latter were rarely discussed. Social degeneracy, including worsening conditions for personal safety, was linked to national social disaffection.<sup>64</sup> Internal 'national' problems included a lack of self-sufficiency, self-control, dependence on the welfare state and an inability to be a citizen. Whilst many were positive about ethnic diversity, others linked perceived increasing migration with an externally imposed loss of social control. Economic change has moved from local to global, and alongside international migration, both are causal factors in the 'individualisation' thesis (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992). National changes and disaffections resulted, as the next section shows, from the loss of communal ways of life, 'old bonds of common fate, mutual dependence and trust' and commitments to 'neighbourhood, class and nation' as brought on by 'individualisation'. National despondency can also be linked to post-imperial decline. However, most residents did not think deeply about the international causes, just the impacts perceptible in their locality.

#### **4.5.9 Socio-Residential Communities**

A culture of 'selfish individualism' was blamed for breakdowns in neighbourly relations. Whilst "Poles" had the strongest experience of an organised community, and different networks proved more meaningful for the "English" and "Sikhs", all viewed socio-residential communities as inherently weak. During my time at my host company, colleagues of all ages, and key informants in their 30s to 50s were nostalgic for a variety of bygone ages of perceived supportive communities in their neighbourhoods and on their estates. The kind of community mourned for was the ideal model described by Baumann (1996: 15): 'interpersonal warmth, shared interests, and loyalty' (see also Bauman,

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<sup>64</sup> See Chapters 5 and 6 on Poles' views of the lack of morals among the English.



2001: 1). Like in small-town Lancashire (Edwards, 2000), it comprised neighbourhood areas with the least change and a smaller number of recent immigrants.

In 1995, D'Ancona's (1996: 16) informants were nostalgic for the GWR community spirit said to have existed in the railway era. Nancy recalled that in the 1960s, Swindon was close to Edward's model:

Like when I used to live at Gorse Hill, that was a lovely community to live in – that was a real old-fashioned community and when the children were little I'd get up and there'd be lettuce and tomatoes – all that – left in a little box outside the front door because somebody'd pick it from their garden – you never knew where it had come from. And when one of my lads set fire to the bedding upstairs – little so-and-so – they rallied around and I had all bedding and that given me. That was a brilliant – that *was* a community.

Steven Buxley agreed that it ended with the railways, as did Tomasz Witmanowski, who used to recognise people in Old Town pubs, but things had changed. Steven also attributed the overall weakening of socio-residential communities to the influx of Londoners and other incoming workers in this era onwards, noting that where bonds were stronger on council estates, they had formed around the:

...older Londoners...but I think there were still a lot of East End values on the estate here. Very close-knit, very welcoming, very self-policing, but what's happened is that as the town's developed a new focus, it's not been around the original Swindonians...

A few informants reported snatches of the old-fashioned community in the present, such as Jim Brown who told me: '...you can always walk down town and bump into someone you went to school with or you work with.' His opinion, however, was less common than the view that things had largely changed. It appears that for long-term residents, nostalgia stemmed from real past experiences.

#### 4.5.10 Relations with Neighbours

It was a pan-ethnic concern that a public loss of interest in the wider community had resulted in a lack of neighbourliness. This had a range of effects on informants' lives and threatened their ontological security whilst relationships within the socio-residential communities no longer provided stability in daily-life. Jane Harding was infuriated that on her new cul-de-sac:

...we're on a drive, and there's five houses that are quite close, and nobody speaks to anybody. Which is strange. You know, you think to yourself, well, the lady across the road will come out of her house and she'll sort of look and look away, and I just think, "Oh, OK" ...

People worried about whether they'd have a parking space. The only friendly person was the postman and Jehovah's Witnesses who had knocked on the door for a chat, pleasantly surprising her visiting elderly parents, until they'd revealed why they were there, when the door was shut again. The Hardings had experienced more community working in an army base in Germany through a Jubilee party for the Queen, regimental barbeques etc. Moreover, residents in their new neighbourhood had no interest in frequenting the community centre because life was 'too fast'. It had burnt down after an electrical fault and wasn't being rebuilt. Andy Harding was the only person in my research to comment on neighbourhood identities, and he had noted less association with them than was once characteristic of Swindon. The day before an interview, he'd heard in the pub about lads gangs named after their local area, the first time in years someone had mentioned where in Swindon they came from.

The loss of neighbourliness around Swindon meant no playmates for children, fears of child abuse due to non-communication, and an overall loss of safety. Mandip had fond memories of playing with neighbours' children when she

was young, but her own children were missing out on her modern estate.

Things were better in other places and other eras:

Klara Witmanowska: ...in Poland I think you get much stronger straightaway, the camaraderie and the community sense... I think years ago the English were like that, because you'd have everybody, sort of, talking at the fence to each other, and everyone...whereas now... people tend to keep to themselves and...you just don't get, sort of...the friendliness as you do.

Charan Sahota: ...it's a shame the situation we're in now that we feel we can't speak to a neighbour without them either being cynical, dubious or you know... it's just strange, it's just changed, you know. We had such lovely relationships with ours when we were young, and they were English. There was an English family on one side and I think a Muslim family on the other side actually.

Some exceptions of pleasant relationships with neighbours surfaced but still did not lead to strong community bonds:

Kamal Sahota: Around this area they're quite friendly... [*but*] there's no – how do you say it – where neighbours get together – nothing like that.

Sarah Bajwa: Along here my mum's neighbours are very close in terms of they look out for her and she – they know what's going on with her and she knows what's going on with them. ...both are English...before when we lived on [*their old street*], we were a bit more involved in what was going on in the road – in with what the community were doing because they were petitioning for the changes that were happening – the new buildings that were going to happen and the road changing...

Mrs Bajwa: Not [*active in the neighbourhood*] at the moment because when you're doing a full-time job and on Sundays we just go to *gurdwara* and that's how we mix up there and do things. But I think if you're not doing work you can get involved into other community yourself because then you have more time.

The places where the hankering after the 'traditional' experience of communities was still strong were the long-established London overspill estates such as in Park North, Park South or Penhill where residents stayed for years and built up long-term connections with their neighbours. The Buxleys, who lived on one such estate and had a small back garden, had had a touching

experience a few days before I visited them one September day. They were focussed interviewees. Steven always talked more than Dinah, who often fell silent, and veered between switching off or listening intently to him. On this occasion, she was jubilant:

Steven: ...our neighbours are brilliant!

Dinah: We all live in each other's houses, Cathy. We'll be over the fence or anything anytime...I feel in the community here, Cathy, I mean I was on the phone the other night to mother-in-law and, to my surprise, a hand suddenly came out over the fence... "Here's a cup of coffee for you, love" ....

As I left their house, two of their kids raced outside to buy icecreams from the Mr Whippy Van that had enticed them out with its tune.

Over the noise of clattering offspring and television, Jean Witters, sitting in the kitchen of her box-shaped council house, said that Penhill residents were friendly with strong ties. They didn't move away for generations. There was community art, Indian cooking and allotments locally, but the same few people went to everything and it wasn't that easy to make friends. Similarly I heard that the old railway neighbourhood of Rodbourne had maintained its historic community spirit. Local mothers got together for children's activities at Halloween, and one of the corner-shop owners brought customers together by chatting and adding them to his *Facebook* account. Hannah, a young professional from Rodbourne told me: 'He's such a warm, friendly guy. I think he's a sort of community spirit unto himself.'

#### **4.5.11 Social Change and Selfish Individualism**

Most were highly aware and critical of changed dynamics in social relationships. The local manifestations of 'individualisation': changes in the town's economic infrastructure, the diversification of its economy, and the waves of incomers all provide reasonable explanations for change. The pace and scale of Swindon's expansion was another source of social change. Andy

sighed, 'I think it's just got too big...' As already indicated, commuters and incomers were resented for not living locally or for short-term residence and blamed for the breakdown of the socio-residential community. Anthropologists have uncovered a similar dynamic in numerous British villages and towns where 'incomers' and 'commuters' who travelled to work in big cities were resented for not participating in the local economy and community, and blamed for a loss of identity (Strathern, 1981; 1982; Rapport, 1993; Jenkins, 1999; Edwards, 2000; Charles and Aull Davies, 2005).

Cuddling her son on the sofa, busy mother, teacher and long-term resident Gurbax Ghalal, who skilfully juggled her various roles even during interviews, told me that established families and transient residents lived in separate areas, the latter in recently built temporary accommodation. Even incomers themselves found the social dynamic unsatisfactory. Charan Sahota, who had once worked with a team of incomers at a mail-order company, said that because they were in a majority of residents: '...they never felt comfortable in Swindon because they felt there was no community'.

Following Mrs Bajwa's observation regarding the lack of time to get involved in the community, Nancy blamed socio-economic changes at household level:

...I think as years go on everybody's working. I've lived where I'm living now at Park South for 34 years, but I only know the neighbours either side of me because I've always worked. And now I'm not working and you haven't got young children going to school, to be quite truthful I wouldn't know any of their names and they wouldn't know mine. So that part of it is gone in Swindon, but then I think it's gone anywhere.

Her comments mirror Charles and Aull Davies' findings in Swansea (2005: 673).

Changes in social structure were underscored by changes in culture. Blaming incomers, Jane Harding thought: '...everybody seems to be in it to make money. They don't care about the whole community thing anymore. It seems to sort of

like, lost its way...' People moved to Swindon from Reading or London for cheaper houseprices but were too busy to care about the community. An introspective and materialistic 'me culture' where people were too busy, self-focused, and disinterested in social relations beyond the home unit weakened socio-residential communities. Lives were so busy with going to work, coming home and then shutting off, meaning no community spirit. Mandip, a petite woman with a kind face and easy-going nature, linked these changes to England and the world at large:

...there's less of a need to go and knock on someone else's door and if anything you don't want to feel that you're intruding or in their way and I think because of that there was more solidarity within the community and I think again it's down to money and materialism, which has meant that people haven't got the time because they've got to work to get that and I think there's more of a 'my my' society now, whereas before you would share more... And I think with that you're communicating less and in a different way than you did when we were younger. And I don't think that's dependent on where you're living – I think that's society as a whole.

CB: Is that Great Britain or other countries as well?

Mandip: I think it's growing everywhere because, even in India – when I visit – I go back every couple of years – you see people are different – they're becoming more materialistic.

Informants then attributed the culture of selfish individualism to changes at national and international levels, but it is hard to connect specific factors abroad as directly impacting on the individuals interviewed.

#### **4.5.12 Alternative 'Communities'?**

Despite these complaints, informants maintained personal networks of social ties, mostly through activities and personal relationships. For most, these seemed to substitute for communities, demonstrating the relevance of 'personal communities' to life now. D'Ancona found the same in 1995, reporting that these replaced community-directed networks. Swindonians are: 'less likely than ancestors to collaborate in the name of a street or a neighbourhood; they

interact instead whilst pursuing a hobby, playing a sport, attending a luncheon club or helping out at school' (1996: 26). Helena Sosnowska, a fashionably dressed lady with an extremely lively toddler, felt that community was to be found in individual activities, 'little communities'. Although social networks were more common than neighbourly ties, this didn't preclude the nostalgia for those who'd once experienced socio-residential communities in Swindon, or elsewhere and joined in with the local discourse of mourning.

Finnegan's 'pathways' also captures the way that Swindonians maintained ties over the physical distances imposed by the dispersed geographical layout, but encompassed familiar travel routes that become an active part of an individual's cognitive map (1989: 317). Networked 'pathways' were commonly maintained when friends from school or university met in pubs or clubs. As a social institution, pubs themselves harboured either a coming together or loss of collective bonds. Martin encountered regulars in Old Town pubs but anonymity in new estate pubs. David met people from all over the British Isles in his local. Friendly and bubbly, Jane Harding told me during a midday interview near her workplace in Old Town:

...We've joined the Conservative Club, I suppose really because I'm working [*near*] there. But it's a friendly place to be. I don't know if I'd have joined it if I wasn't working [*near*] there, but then, if I hadn't, I would have missed something...I know we can come up here, and there's people to chat to. If you go to a normal pub, I don't think that you'd get that. Not as much as you used to.



**Figure 38: A Community Space?**

Civil society groups and leisure activities by informants participated in included the Labour Party, Conservative Club, the church, church playgroup, a dog-dancing class, school PTA and football team, a cancer charity, the choral society, and a *Tae Kwon Do* group. Perceptions were divided about the numbers engaged in civil society, as were experiences of strong collective bonds there. Charan Sahota felt part of the community on the committee of a local cancer charity. Leokadia Kuczyńska suspected that evening classes, amateur dramatics groups, historical societies, the campaign to build a new canal were *the* places to ‘find community’, but she wasn’t interested. Local events like the Pride Festival<sup>65</sup> and the Indian *Mela* gave some a sense of local belonging.

Widely commented upon was the prevalence of solitary activities such as going to the gym and watching television, a product of the ‘me culture’. Leisure activities were primarily about individuals’ self-interests rather than socialising with people living in the immediate physical locality. ‘Community’ on a face-to-face basis became a more structured experience for those who participated in an organised ethnic community, and in lives that were structured around regular sociable activities. Overall, there was no set pattern for the ways that people interacted and forged relationships. This was partly attributable to the

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<sup>65</sup> A yearly festival celebrating pride in lesbian and gay sexualities.



anonymised and dispersed social character typical of urban living and the layout of the town, but was also a symptom of contemporary socio-economic life.

Although the memories of closer neighbourhood relations in Swindon were real, the current of nostalgia constructed a culture of deprivation in the present, as Pahl (2005: 633) suggested. It was used as a coping strategy to mitigate change. This sprang from 'individualisation', and the memory (real or imagined) of a previous time when communal bonds and commitments were stronger, and there were fewer threats to ontological security in daily-life. Face-to-face contact with other residents created security, which had been destroyed by transient populations, more foreigners, lack of time, and anonymity. The primary community: the socio-residential community as 'a model of authentic, and 'human scale', social relations' (Macdonald *et al.*, 2005: 597) based on face-to-face interaction encompassing the feeling of collective bonds had become a fragmented experience in an individual's personalised network (or *community*) of habitual contexts. *Community-as-town-networks* still existed and *community-as-a-feeling* could exist in various face-to-face situations if people created it, but wasn't always found where/when desired. Baumann's (1996) dominant discourse on *ethnic communities* was present in articulations, and ethnic networks/organised ethnic communities could supply *community-as-a-feeling*. People invoked their own strategies to create mental communities that overlapped with *community-as-a-feeling* if it wasn't present in their locality. This supports Fog Olwig's (2002) definition of community now as 'shared fields of belonging'. Pahl argued that the idea of a '*community-on-the-ground*' based on materialistic attitudes should not be conceptually privileged by social scientists, but found '*communities-in-the-mind*' more powerful than imposed notions. He suggested that '*communities-in-the-mind*' (a defensive shield expressing what people would like to find) may endure more powerfully' and 'have more

power to act than what have appeared to be transitory communities of fate or common economic experience' ... (2005: 622-3), which is borne out in this case.

#### 4.5.13 'Swindonian' Identity

*'...I guess that's the terminology out there, whether or not you say it.'* (John, English male, 30s, Rodbourne).

Taking a bird's eye view of the town's overall social identity, Michael Wills, MP for North Swindon, told me over tea in an interview room in the House of Commons: 'It's not that there is no Swindon identity but it's not particularly strong'. He regarded 'workplace identity' as being the strongest collective identity over 'neighbourhood, faith and football'. I did, however, observe pan-ethnic recognition of the category 'Swindonian', an identity used by all in conversation to describe locals according to different criteria.

"English" informants commented upon it the most, followed by "Poles", then "Sikhs" the least. The "Poles" articulated their local-diasporic identity for themselves which was separate from the wider category of 'Swindonian', but used 'Swindonian' to refer to the townspeople overall, sometimes including themselves. My friend Jasvinder confirmed a suspicion I had long held during a phone-call. She told me that older "Sikhs" didn't have much of an opinion on Swindon, and younger people would dismiss 'Swindonian' as a silly idea. Younger peoples' opinions would be about the temple and organised community rather than town, although they were involved in its life and would be appreciative of Swindon's facilities. Local/national "Sikh" networks were more important. The absence of "Sikh" comments doesn't indicate that 'Swindonian' was a racially exclusive identity, it just reflects a lack of focus and interest.

The historical association of 'Swindonian' with the railway works was evident, and had been recently reshaped, as d'Ancona noted (1995). He described a 'railway nostalgia' used selectively and strategically by old and new 'Swindonians', including incomers who 'compensate for their rootlessness and suburban anonymity by protecting a heritage from which most of them are in fact disconnected' (1996: 21). He found that the railways persisted in the collective memory of the town but predicted that this would recede in time. In 2007-9, I heard some acknowledgements that 'real Swindonians' were those who could claim descent from an 'old' family who had been employed on the railways. This reflects the trend for 'old families' with more genuine claims to belonging than 'incomers' due to length of residence in local areas in British ethnography, (e.g. the 'real Elmdon families': Strathern, 1981; also in Bacup: Edwards, 2000; and Swansea: Charles and Aull Davies, 2005).

Three to four generations of Emma Thorpe's family were railway-workers:

...it's on both sides [*of the family*] – and now my sister works for the railway – she works for Great Western...they [GWR] put their [*her family's*] names up on a plaque in the Railway Village – this wall of names if you worked for the railway. And my mum and dad still live in Rodbourne not far from the Railway Village. Yes, I do feel really tied to Swindon.

However, *Adver* journalist Nigel, a seventh-generation 'real Swindonian', told me in his kitchen on a pre-fieldwork location visit that: '...if you got 100 people in Swindon now, then you'd find only a fraction of them would be proper Swindon families.' D'Ancona's prediction had already come true. Instead of the old railway identity, 'Swindonian' had acquired a more flexible meaning based on criteria of birth or accent, or length of residence leading one to become 'almost local' (see also Edwards, 2000; Charles and Aull Davies, 2005: 685) like Stoke-on-Trent-born Anne, 40s, resident since she was one. Other views:

Jean Witter's younger daughter: ...my husband's family are true Swindonians – they've lived here all their lives and my husband has an attitude – and they talk different – Wiltshire, proper old Wiltshire.

James, 25, work colleague: ...Swindon born and bred. I just don't have the accent...I think Swindon is a place where you can kind of blend in...

Long-term resident Sarah Bajwa identified her community as the "Sikh" temple, not a wider town community. She thought that long residence and participation in local networks plus an interest in local affairs were essential for a person to label themselves Swindonian, or just being born there, as in the case of her "Sikh" niece and nephew.

Several informants confirmed that a Swindonian identity could no longer be claimed exclusively by those with a railway family heritage. Emma Thorpe suggested:

I would just say a Swindonian is anyone that lives here – I wouldn't be precious and say that there are any rules and – because I do think of that old-school kind of Swindon Railway Village community but I don't think that is Swindon any more. I think it's grown in so many directions...

Several work colleagues were proud of their local identity – one would 'Totally admit to being Swindonian.' However, a widespread trend among the "English" and "Poles" was reluctance to admit to a Swindonian identity out of embarrassment:

Leokadia Kuczyńska: I have to because I was born here...I am. I've lived here all my life and I grew up here, so I am [*a Swindonian*]. But I wouldn't readily admit it to anyone.

The identity had an exclusive dimension, and some incomers experienced the sense that they would never acquire the right to belong, whereas for others, belonging was a matter of choice. Many have rejected the notion of 'belonging' to Swindon out of disconnection with it, despite their having a strong sense of place. The process of demarcating insiders from outsiders dates back to the

GWR days when being 'on the inside' meant working for the company. The distinction has evolved over time and been applied to all incoming groups since the 1950s, whether overseas or internal migrants. In 1986, the Londoners were resented by railway-era residents for a loss of community and 'taking all our jobs' despite the fact that only a third of town residents at that time had been born there, the children of migrants (Boddy *et al.*, 1987). Then and now, any incomer representing change was cast as an 'outsider' as opposed to a Swindonian. My workplace, a modern complex on the edge of a new industrial estate, with a shop and cafeteria for employees, was full of incomers who communicated the outsider/Swindonian divide. All incomers raised symbolic boundaries to identify themselves whilst constantly interacting in the 'community' between kinship and society (A P Cohen, 1985). In the first quote, 'community' refers to a social network rather than a geographically-bounded socio-residential community:

David, 50s, work colleague, 'outsider': ...you have to get into the community and then the community you get into tends to be full of outsiders. I think Swindonians, you get to know them and they're great, but they do stick to themselves a bit.

Gary, 40s, work colleague, 'legal alien to Swindon': ...I don't think I'll ever say to anyone that I'm a Swindonian.

Martin Shore, 30s, home interviewee, 'outsider': I know I'm not a Swindonian – I don't feel passionate about the football team.

Swindonian identity was a buffer against change, providing some temporal continuity linking up the town's various eras.

There was a spectrum of opinion on the character traits of Swindonians. As with Edwards' (2000) findings in the Lancastrian town of Bacup, I found no agreement on the content of 'Swindonian', with "English" people passing the most comments. I was told that Swindonians could be shy but once you knew them, they would do anything for you. Swindonians could be insular to an

‘outsider’. Alternatively they could be quite or very friendly and warm, and would stop and help someone on the street.

#### **4.6 Conversational Themes, Local Affairs, and the *Swindon Advertiser***

Swindon residents had a strong sense of place, whether they liked or disliked the town’s urban environment and facilities. They were widely aware of the multi-ethnic character of the town, which was perceived to be growing, and demonstrated a range of culturally and personally specific stances on recent migrants. Socio-residential communities were weak with the exception of long-established estates and an old railway area, and had mostly been replaced by fragmented but select personal ties. A discourse of nostalgia was a buffer against socio-economic changes, along with Swindonian identity: both the ‘railway’ version and a more modern flexible usage provided a thread of continuity, although some experienced ‘Swindonian’ as exclusive. These core concerns – the town’s environment, ethnic relations, and decline of communities – were clearly reflected in the six stories from the *Advertiser* that were most discussed between August 2008 and April 2009.

This second part of the chapter explores informants’ consumption and usages of the paper. It links the major conversational themes with media consumption by analysing pan-ethnic reader responses to these most discussed stories, grouped together by theme, and by asking how far these scenarios were vehicles for the articulation of deeper feelings on sense of place, community and identity. When did media prompt deeper thoughts and when did other sources of information predominate? How can we detect and evaluate the media’s influence? Interview questions began with ‘Have you picked up on anything of interest in the local media?’

#### 4.6.1 Stories 1 and 2: The Built Environment

##### *a) Story 1: Building on Coate Water Country Park*

Between August 2008 and August 2009, the *Adver* devoted ongoing coverage to residents' battles against developer plans, publishing readers' letters, debating all points of view, and outlining the following scenario. Coate Water is a popular country park encompassing a reservoir and nature reserve. A *Save Coate* campaign had overturned previous council plans to build on it, but in 2007 and 2008, the Swindon Gateway Partnership, a coalition of building companies, filed two applications with the council to build 1500 homes and a university campus. Residents' objections included the destruction of a beautiful area, adversely affecting wildlife, reducing the park to an urban park, destroying the town's history, and wasting resources when there were already empty developments. Mirroring my informants' concerns and championing the beautiful landscape, lead campaigner Jean Saunders was quoted as saying: 'All the building in Swindon has led to faceless communities with no character.'<sup>66</sup> Another objection echoing my informants was that many modern housing developments were not socially appropriate. One resident complained: 'Swindon is growing too fast and in the meantime they are failing to create community spirit along with it.'<sup>67</sup> The campaign against attracted 52,000 signatures, including those of celebrity television presenters Ant and Dec, and won the intervention of MP for Swindon South Anne Snelgrove, who lobbied cabinet ministers. After a public enquiry in February 2009, the plan was eventually rejected in August 2009. Although pleased by the outcome, informants and campaigners still felt mistrustful after previous occasions when developers had been given the go-ahead to build on green-belt land in spite of residents' objections. This led to a local sense of powerlessness and redundancy in shaping their town despite their victory in this case.

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<sup>66</sup> 22/09/08, author: Jeremy Grimaldi.

<sup>67</sup> Same article.

Informants who brought up this case all engaged with it emotively. Gamson's 'spotlighted facts' presented in the *Adver* such as the campaign's celebrity endorsement were articulated by most informants, indicating that they had an awareness of *media discourse*. Individual articles were never referenced but a body of knowledge about the issue was accumulated through ongoing reading, dipping in and out of the paper's coverage, alongside other media sources such as the BBC. This trend is discernible in all the stories discussed. In my research, I knew that people had obtained some of their information from the paper as I asked directly. As with Gamson's informants, the influence of *media discourse* was detectable through my informants' references to communicative tools used by the paper. As he pointed out, it is often impossible to separate out exactly which media source has penetrated an individual's understanding unless it is mentioned directly, but communicative gimmicks like 'spotlighted facts' and 'catchphrases' are a solid indicator of influence (Gamson, 1992: 117).

The following substantial responses to the situation were aired. In March 2009, Gary's response was an exact reflection of general concerns. Swindon had grown too fast and it had to stop when developers wanted to build on an area like Coate. He could appreciate the upset even as an incomer. The Brown family, initially adamantly against the plans for the same reasons, were glued to the letters pages, and slowly had a change of heart as the recession set in, echoing editor Dave King on the paper's power to change opinions. One of their children was unemployed and seeking work in the building trade:

Jennifer: It's going to the council at the moment, planning permission. But I haven't heard... I think they should do it. It's good for Swindon.

Jim: Well, yeah.

Jennifer: It will mean extra jobs in the building [*trade*]...Now that the recession's here, it would be really good for Swindon. And of course, with, sort of, teenagers and the possibility that they want to go to university. I'd have them go. Save their money and go. [*laughing*]

CB: Oh!

Jennifer: Yeah, yeah. Big shift in my opinion on that, yeah.



CB: Have you been reading the *Adver*? ...has it been discussed in there recently?

Jim: Yeah, it was in there the other day.

Jennifer: A big news story filed recently in the papers has brought it all back up again.

CB: Was it on the BBC?

Jennifer: Yes, yes it was. Yeah. Because I signed a petition to stop it going away.

CB: ...I remember that you were quite unhappy with it.

Jennifer: Yeah, but, obviously, because of the recession, and, um, it's not actually going to take any of the current water [*from the reservoir*] away, just because Swindon is quite close to it, but the recession and that and for the town. With two children looking for work, or possibly looking for work...it would just help with that.

In February 2009, I chatted to Ryszard and Zofia Ciechanowicz, seated at their dining-room table. Their son was off school and the interview stopped at one point so that the family could examine a fox in the back garden, which they photographed. This couple were a double-act, talking over each other, but constantly validating each other.

The adults reflected on their mistrust of the council as discussed in the *Adver*'s letters pages. Beyond surface-level frustration at not having a say in shaping their town, it had triggered a culturally specific reaction, one of the Swindon "Poles"' main concerns about and fears for British society: that it signalled a wider loss of citizens' control and liberty. This mirrors fears expressed in Chapter 6 about British society being 'controlled' in a way reminiscent of communism. In the following extract, these "Poles" construct an 'injustice frame' in conversation, with 'they' sometimes representing the council and at other times all authority. This story triggers the use of *experiential knowledge* to bolster their view of what is happening in society.

Zofia: ...51,000, people are against it, have signed a petition against it, including me. And, uh, they're still going to go ahead and build it. So it just shows that they don't listen to anything that you say.

Ryszard: No they don't. They just plough through. Yeah.

CB: Is it the council who told you the plans?

Ryszard: Yeah, it is. It is. They just plough through. They'll get it through one way or the other. Although we think that we live in a democracy, in fact we

don't.

Zofia: That's what I think.

Ryszard: We don't at all. We're very controlled in lots of different ways, in, as, that you control through the back door.

Zofia: Yeah, I think they're telling us what to think.

Ryszard: They control your telly, they control, you know...that was built [*points to a large outhouse in a neighbour's garden*], not in accordance with planning permission, but the planning committee overruled it, because the counsellor said that "It doesn't really matter if it is one meter this way or one meter that way"...

They continued by explaining how they had objected to the council's planning committee but the neighbour's application was resubmitted twelve times until permission was granted after the Ciechanowiczs interpreted the counsellors as having been worn down by it. The Coate Water scenario triggered the same mistrust of the planning committee.

This story had 'issue proximity' as all used the park, or had unemployed children or bad experiences of council planning decisions. All informants had a personal hook to the story and their own specific response, but the affair was underscored by the strong awareness of 'sense of place' in Swindon. Informants were reliant on *media discourse*. Although the story had 'issue proximity', it was about the actions of state actors outside their immediate lives.

#### ***b) Story 2: General Impact of the Recession***

Informants were inundated with local and national media coverage on the recession (see Chapter 5) or 'the credit crunch', as the 'media catchphrase' ran. Coverage varied in emphasis, but it helped informants to construct 'the credit crunch' as a negative phenomenon clouding society. Informants commented that it was all that was in the news. The *Adver* followed the recession locally through articles on subjects such as a rise in volunteering, a careers advice event at an FE college, building developments modified or halted, businesses affected, empty shops, cuts to services, entertainments and opportunities, rising unemployment and divorce rates, and many speculative pieces. Its continuous

presence in the paper created a constant awareness. Informants didn't refer to individual articles but commented on the trends that were reported, repeating the catchphrase 'credit crunch'. The following comments demonstrate that the main ways of perceiving Swindon's recession were either from the paper, through what was seen whilst walking through town or from what was heard from others. Informants commented but were not particularly emotive or opinionated about its general impacts, and discussions appeared to be looking for visible evidence so as to make judgements on the unseen 'credit crunch', on how bad it was and how much it affected them.

The *Adver* supplied Gurbax Ghalal, clutching a wriggly toddler during interview, with visible evidence of the recession:

...the *Adver* does it in its own way, doesn't it? And really dramatic sort of headlines... You know, it does something that catches your eye. And you know it registers with me so well that I can't remember, although I see the *Adver* every day at work...it's been quite keen on the housing market. It's made a big sort of impact, and you know, there's been photographs of various housing developments and saying they're folding, and so many people have been laid off.

However, after a council-funded fireworks display to relaunch Christmas shopping, the recession wasn't visually perceptible in the town itself: '...a few of my friends did [*attend the display*] and they said you wouldn't think there's a recession in Swindon. ...and just talking about shopping, I mean, House of Fraser was converted to an outlet building, an outlet store....[*but*] There's no shops I can think of that have shut down in the city centre...' She knew Swindon was hard hit from unemployment figures, but '...I don't notice a recession in Swindon. I've been out a few times and I still see people spending a ton of money...' Several others were of the opposite opinion, that it was highly visible. Katarzyna Biczewska commented: 'Banks closing down, shops closing down, and you can see even if you walk down the main street in Swindon, you can see jobs axed or cutting down in everything...'

Several informants, including Hannah and John, found evidence of the recession in the paper's advertising, which provided an indicator of its different impacts on the town. They were living in their first house: dishevelled from the outside, painted dirty yellow with a net curtain over the front window and familiar council bins outside. Inside it had a 'fun' atmosphere with soft toys and a plastic moosehead on the wall. Both partners were sharp and talkative. They had spotted sales ploys advertised by retailers in the paper. However, they used their own *experiential knowledge* to assess the situation.

Hannah: ...they had a New Year's Day sale, and it was in the *Adver* where they were saying that the stores were just giving away merchandise.

John: It was big splurges, wasn't it, before it all goes to the end of the rails.

Hannah: And it was up to 70% off, and they gave an example of a television that was £1000 and it was down to £500 a month, something like that. But we were actually looking for something special, so we went in every shop looking for the best item that we could. And we did go to Curry's, and ask about this television, and the only one that had the kind of savings was just...

John: Just a bog-standard normal thing.

Hannah: It wasn't anything. And they said they had sold out ages ago... And it's not a big splurge or anything like that. It's what they do in every sale. The store will have one thing which they'll make an absolute drastic drop in, and they'll put in all the papers to get people in. And then you walk in and go, "Well, that one's sold out", and they go, "Oh, there's another one and there's £100 off." Yeah, it's just PR.

Gary had noticed an increase in car dealerships advertising, for the benefit of local drivers commuting to work, and was worried the local Park-and-Ride might be cancelled. At work he was being assessed for his ability to do different jobs if any roles were axed and '...I've noticed a decline in job opportunities in the *Adver*'. He found there was more competition for jobs, people were spending less on socialising and more on staying in with friends to drink and watch films. He used the *Adver* to mediate his experiences of recession, with information from the paper and his own experiences mutually influencing each other.

Overall, the *Adver's* role was to contribute to a climate of awareness alongside walks through town and chats with friends from which people contextualised what they saw. No-one was immediately affected emotionally or engaged on a personal level, although the affair was close to their lives, so its 'issue proximity' was increased. *Media discourse* was a secondary source in this case, with people prioritising their experiences to evaluate the visible impact of the recession.

#### 4.6.2 Stories 3 and 4: Ethnic Relations

##### *a) Story 3: Bid to Build a Muslim Primary School*

Parents in Oakhurst, North Swindon, had campaigned for a new primary school for years as there weren't enough school places there. Many drove their children to schools in different parts of town. Between November 2008 and January 2009, the *Adver* reported the following story. The council had secured government funding for a new school and by November 2008, a Schools Adjudicator had received bids from the council and a surprise bid from the 'little known' Al Habib Islamic Centre.<sup>68</sup> The council proposed a community school, while the Islamic Centre proposed an Islamic faith school offering 50% of places to Muslims from a wider catchment area who would potentially be bussed in, with the other half for local pupils of any faith. The national curriculum would be taught and the school would 'promote cohesion and inclusion with all cultures' alongside education in Islamic faith and culture.<sup>69</sup> Michael Wills MP and other councillors opposed this bid, and local residents campaigned against it. At a public meeting, 114 residents voted against and 32 in favour. Other local Muslim organisations were not consulted before the proposal was submitted, and various Muslim spokespeople opposed the plans in the paper, suggesting it wouldn't be convenient for the town's centrally-based Muslim community and that there weren't enough Muslim children to merit a separate school. Chair of the Swindon Muslim Initiative, W. Ahmad, published an open letter making a strong bid for sympathy:

Like the rest of Swindon, I only learnt of this intention through the newspaper and feel very disappointed that there was no discussion or consultation forthcoming from this fringe group within the Muslim community.... This ill thought out bid has only served to sour the relations between us and the rest of Swindon. I can only imagine the utter shock that the residents of Abbey Meads [*the wider neighbourhood*] must have felt at this news. They are in dire need of a

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<sup>68</sup> 14/10/2008, author: James Wallin.

<sup>69</sup> Al Habib chair, Mr Shahid Sahu, interviewed in paper, 17/10/08, author unknown.

school to serve all of its residents and a bid of this kind has only caused trouble and distraction.<sup>70</sup>

This backs up Dave King's statement that the paper sets agendas, and acts as a stage where local affairs are played out. Mr Sahu refused to withdraw his bid, suggesting he had the support of local Muslims, but more than three hundred letters of objection were received by the council and none in support. The adjudicator awarded the tender to the council in February 2009 on the strength of its prior experience, but it also praised the Sahu bid for its vision of educating Islamic pupils with those of other faiths in a tolerant environment.

Michael Wills was impressed that there were no undercurrents of racism in the paper or among parents, compared to nine years before when the proposal for the "Sikh" temple brought racist responses. This reflects King's sentiment that the paper must behave responsibly and unite the community. Several "English" and "Polish" informants brought up the episode and discussed the overall scenario, rather than individual articles. Discussion unfurled deeper opinions on the place of religion in Britain and relationships with non-Christian faith groups, particularly migrants. Ethnic relations has close 'issue proximity' to peoples' lives, as they are tied up with personal identities, one's place in society and the kinds of people that one shares society with. Much *experiential knowledge* was drawn upon here; as informants pointed out, opinionated *media discourse* about other ethnic groups is a taboo subject in today's sensitive climate. Responses were reflective of informants' positions on British identity and the 'integration' of migrants.

Emma Thorpe and Martin Shore's discussion illustrated a pragmatic response. During interview, they sat together on the living-room sofa and cross-checked their opinions. Both had previously showed a relaxed and tolerant attitude towards migrants and cynicism towards national identity. They commented on

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<sup>70</sup> Letter published: 17/10/08

the paper's coverage without being involved, noting that the National Front used the affair as a chance to put up signs. Emma asked me if I had seen on them on the estate, and took me to photograph one. They felt that the bid's overall effect was to unite 'the community' (as a social network with a civil/moral overlap), and sympathised with local parents worried about places prioritising Muslims from further afield, not local people. Living in the area, their responses were shaped by their own encounter with the situation:

ET: ...I don't know if you noticed when you came around the corner just on to our estate, there are little card National Front signs...On the way in I'm sure it said '*Rights for Whites*'... but the *Adver* seemed to put across arguments about bus lanes...[...]

MS: ...it seems it's taken two years to get the school and now the people have a local school, all of a sudden they're saying "Right, 50% local, 50% Muslim." And now they're worried about getting their kids in there, because there's a big catchment area of the Muslims going to come in, and then they've got to bus their kids out, when there's a school next door! So it's sort of...for all the people to get the school in there, then at the eleventh hour for it to be designated for something else is worrying for those kids, or those parents...there was the news article and underneath it there was the comments sections. So I was just reading through the comments. And there were far more sensible people making sensible suggestions, but it just seems now, with the signs going up...

ET: ...it didn't feel kind of like a race issue when you read the article...

MS: It's just people concerned about children's practical education...

ET: There were a few comments, you know, where people were saying, don't you think people should get their religious education from the mosques and churches rather than from schools? Rather than it being a one-religion school. It didn't feel kind of nasty, did it?...from the community side, it seems to have probably brought people together a little bit, because you know, that many people turning up for a meeting were never going to make anything else, would it?!...

[subsequent interview] ET: I had a look and it turns out that the Muslim school has been rejected in favour of a community school. So there will be no more BNP [*National Front*]<sup>71</sup> posters, and things have just gone back to normal.

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<sup>71</sup> It was a common tendency for people to confuse the two far right parties, the BNP and National Front.





**Figure 39: National Front Sign in North Swindon**

Practising Catholic Klara Witmanowska, sitting in her dining-room in a pleated skirt with her hair loose, mentioned the school bids without discussing the facts in detail. She had a more emotional response coloured by her migrant background, illustrating a position on 'integration'. Using Billig's (1995) deixis, she constructs a symbolic boundary between an 'us'/'them': a 'we'/'us' meaning non-Muslims in England, and a 'they' as Muslims everywhere:

...England is still more tolerant of different nationalities and races...I mean, you've got mosques built here and...they wanted a Muslim school, and there was a bit of opposition about that. And, I mean, in that respect, you know, I'm not surprised, because basically, I mean, I suppose that England is a Catholic country, although we've got...well Christian, because you've got the Church of England, not Polish Catholic, but it's Christian, and I mean, I don't think Muslims would be quite tolerant for us to go in and start to build Christian churches and Catholic churches and things like that. So what do they expect here, you know? And I do think that sometimes, some of these nationalities, they go beyond expectation.

The Browns, migrant-sceptic and hungry for a stronger English identity, again not entering into a deep discussions of 'the facts', vented a point of contention about 'integration'. Jim constructs a symbolic boundary using object pronouns: 'we'/'us' and 'they', with 'they' standing for unnamed authorities, Muslims or the BNP:

They're building a Muslim school in Swindon, or want to. You know, which is OK, that's fine, but...oh God, I sound really racist don't I... if you go to a Muslim country, our women would be expected to put a veil on. Yet, if you come over here, they don't necessarily have to take it off to go into our schools... They was on about the BNP party on here the other day, and I think, probably...a lot more people are going to start voting for them because they're taking away the identity of the people...you know, they have got a lot of bad points about them, it's not necessarily what I believe in...but, if it's to keep your identity or anything like that, then you know...it's coming to there aren't enough jobs, because of opening up the border to all countries.

This story had near 'issue proximity' to all lives via visual evidence on lampposts, or strong personal views on the integration of migrants. The facts of the story were less important than its deep implications about the role of religion and cultural integration in Britain, which provoked an engaged and emotive set of responses. Informants raised symbolic boundaries between 'we'+us/'they' oppositions between community/nation and Muslims or unnamed authorities. W. Ahmed's letter also shows the pivotal informative role that the paper can play as a central node of information in breaking the story and connecting locals to a critical community affair such as this.

***b) Story 4: Suspension of Production at Honda and BMW***

The car industry is embedded in Swindon's economic identity and pride with Honda and BMW employing thousands of workers. From October 2008 onwards, the *Adver* featured many articles reporting on the worsening plight of both companies due to the recession and slow European sales. Honda announced the loss of 1000 jobs in December 2008 following a drop in production. Workers were offered the options of a redundancy package or a six-month sabbatical with 50% of wages. 750 staff had taken these options by the end of January 2009, including migrant workers. Production was suspended between February and June with 1000 workers at work while 3700 received full pay at first, then 60% pay with hours owing to be worked off for free later. Paul Ormond, general manager of PR and corporate affairs at Honda, commented in the paper that it 'had been a difficult time for the 3700 people

working at the plant who had been influenced by bad news and rumour upon rumour since the credit crunch began.<sup>72</sup> More job and pay cuts were proposed in March 2009. Smaller companies in the firm's supply chain were also affected. Honda refused to accept a government bail-out, stressing the company's independence. Similarly, the BMW Mini plant shut down over Christmas 2008, and the company announced further shut-downs in 2009. It tried to entice workers to move to its Oxford plant, where many jobs had already been axed. Both Conservative leader David Cameron, who wrote a leader in the *Adver*, and Prime Minister Gordon Brown were quoted articulating sympathetic sentiments.

Several articles reported on workers' distress, including the case of one Honda employee who phoned Gordon Brown to ask for help meeting his bills. Workers' stoicism was covered, with local companies offering cut-price services. New dealerships and local customer support for buying 'Swindon built-cars'<sup>73</sup> were also reported. The volume of coverage suggests that the *Adver* considered the issue to be a major crisis. Dave King commented:

Economically we're looking at what's happening over at Honda because there are 5,000 associates who work there drawn from all over the community. And in turn, there are a number of service industries that feed into that. So the ripple effect of Honda, you're talking about tens of thousands of people in Swindon. Enormous. Even ourselves. Because if people are not working at Honda, they're not going to buy a newspaper.

In general, informants were distressed and worried for family, friends and the community (as social network with civic/moral responsibility) at large because everyone 'knew someone working there'.

One informant, Martin Shore, felt there wasn't any in-depth reporting in the *Adver* [interview by email from China]: 'I see the local effects of the *Adver* website reporting local industrial plight. Often with a sensational angle, I feel that the

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<sup>72</sup> 31/01/10, author: Leigh Robinson.

<sup>73</sup> 03/02/10.

journalists making news copy are from the tabloid school of journalism.' He was, however, well informed about the 'facts' of the story. Emma Thorpe was in the minority by being unmoved:

...Honda shutting down for a couple of months has been in the news for a very long time, and jobs, but no, I do feel quite separate from it. And quite unaffected. We don't really know anyone directly that works at Honda or any of these car companies. And I don't generally think that the front page of the *Adver* has many interesting things to say...

However, all the other informants had a personal connection, and were emotionally engaged, resonating with Dave King's observation that it was a 'whole town' crisis, discussing the 'spotlighted facts'. Here is a selection of comments:

Gary: I know people who have got husbands that work at Honda and it's evident that they're concerned for the future.

Mandip: ...everyone knows somebody that works at Honda or the BMW group...

Gurbax: ...Honda's caught my eye, we got friends working at Honda. And then they're using a site at Wroughton to put all of their cars there, you know, and ... I thought, well that's alright because at least they're not saying that we're going to close down permanently, they're just on a go-slow, and there's been no overtime for a few months and then the closure for two months....

Charan: My nephew works for Honda, and they've been told January, February and possibly even March, they may have to sort of close down, not even guaranteeing any pay, so there's no guarantee of pay, and some of them are being asked to take six-month career breaks. But you're not allowed to go into any other employment.

Sarah Bajwa felt that all the speculation in the *Adver* and on television news had led to a silence over the subject because people were so deeply affected: '...the fact that everybody knows about Honda and if you know somebody and you ask them, usually they don't want to talk about it. And because of what they're telling you on TV, no talking.'

Kamal Sahota worked at BMW and was unaffected in December 2008. He commented:

Well, BMW are still alright because at the moment, we're not being laid off, we're only being stood down, because BMW is in agreement with the unions that they flex up or flex down. Flex up means you go putting your hours you can through the company, and when they flex us down we take time off, maybe a month off...

Wife Charan was moved by the support offered by 'the community':

Interestingly enough a lot of the pubs and other community services have been a bit more creative in offering their services for people like the Honda victims, as we like to call them. Just offering reduced [*price*] drinks and all sorts, which I think is quite nice. So it has, it's nice when the community all sort of chips in and tries to help out, knowing that these people are not going to be on full wages.

Two families were directly affected by the cuts, and in both cases, their main response was 'emotional', to firms' treatments of local workers versus migrants. At around the same time, a story ran in the national press about Italian migrant-workers being hired at an oil refinery in Yorkshire when many local workers were unemployed. This had created an awareness of the potential for a replica situation in Swindon, showing the merging of national and local coverage into a general *media discourse* on the issue. Similarly to the Islamic school story, these families discussed their *experiential knowledge* of the situation from both sides, not focused on the facts but its effect on them. The Witmanowski family had Polish migrant relatives working at Honda. During the interview, Tomasz, still dressed in his work uniform, broke away from the conversation to reply to a text message from a Polish relative at the airport in Poland asking if the weather was affecting flights to the UK. He was tired and remarked it had been a long day. Klara was lively and defensive:

...I think a lot of these people, they are sort of working through agencies, and I think the problem is that, they'll be the first ones who are then, you know, cut, like one of our cousins...who got a job in Honda in the end, and then, um,

through an agency. He didn't even get a month's notice, they gave him an hour's notice. And it works both ways, you know, it's just the standards of the agencies here, they [*the workers*] are treated badly. And it was already starting to get difficult to get another job, and he went back [*to Poland*] earlier than I think he would have planned originally to.

Representing the opposite point of view, the Brown family perceived the situation through the lens of 'resentful nationalism'. In this extract, Jim Brown, wearing black *Umbro* shorts and gripping his dog between both knees, articulated in a soft Wiltshire accent his 'ressentiment' that migrant-workers appeared to receive preferential treatment:

...90% of the work-force are coloureds, Polish, or whatever. And that's fine, that's not a problem. But when I took my daughter into the agency, and...she asked about a job, and they said, well, quite despairingly, "Have you got any warehouse experience?", she said, "Well, no", and they said, "Well you need to have experience." And I thought, well, hang on a minute, how do you jump on a plane in wherever, get off at Heathrow airport, and get experience to work in a warehouse? You don't...

His main objection wasn't that it was 'a black/white' thing but that short-term migrants didn't contribute locally:

They openly admit, "We're here for the short-term, we send money back home to Goa", then they leave and move back home. I think, I said in a letter "...but you won't give me a permanent contract, but you'll give them a permanent contract." Now here on the other side, me, I'm here, in the longevity of it, 25 years down the line, I still rent, mortgage, whatever, that, you know, should be a priority. And that's, and I think that is the feeling in Swindon, that they are coming over for the short-term, taking the jobs...

As the editor's decision, the input of political leaders, and the response of informants suggest, this was a big crisis for the town and a big story for the paper. Unlike articles on the general impact and appearance of recession in the town, it provoked an almost universal, emotionally involved response due to its 'issue proximity' to informants' personal lives. In Dave King's words, the paper contributed to 'galvanising the community' in a shared response. Reportage portrayed a crisis that pulled the community and local organisations together, although several commented that media coverage had heightened

anxieties, questioning its 'responsible behaviour'. Although informants identified the *Adver* as a critical source, most had heard about it through their own contacts, pushing the paper into second place as an informative source.

#### 4.6.3 Stories 5 and 6: 'Galvanising the Community' and Local Pride

##### *a) Story 5: The Big Weekend Music Festival*

In March 2009, the *Adver* confirmed that BBC Radio 1 was considering holding 'The Big Weekend', a two-day free pop music festival in Swindon. DJ Chris Moyles was quoted: '...we always try to bring it to places that don't normally get big events like this. The people of Swindon are going to love it.'<sup>74</sup> The council embraced the festival, scheduled for May 2009, particularly because of the recession. Phil Young, Swindon Borough Council's cabinet member for culture, regeneration and economic development, said:

As soon as Radio 1 approached the council we were determined to make this happen in Swindon, and when the eyes of the world are focussed on us for the weekend we will have a great opportunity to leave all of those who attend, watch and listen a positive impression of our thriving town and borough...<sup>75</sup>

Twenty thousand free pairs of non-transferable tickets were given away through a stringent online lottery by postcode on the Radio 1 website, prioritising those living in or near the town. Sixty percent were won by Swindon residents. The festival was endorsed in the paper by stars like Swindon-born actress Billie Piper, and the *Adver* ran a four-page special and a huge wave of coverage in advance of the event.

All informants mentioned it as a story of local interest reported in the *Adver* and other media. Those with children also heard about it from them and were highly appreciative that something was happening for the benefit of Swindon residents. For example, the Browns and Charan Sahota had heard about it from the kids and also the BBC. Klara Witmanowska [*interview by email*] said with a

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<sup>74</sup> 17/03/09, author: Sarah Hilley.

<sup>75</sup> 17/03/09, same article.

rare articulation of identity: 'The coverage in Swindon for this coming *Big Weekend* made me feel proud to be a Swindonian as the events were laid on free of charge and tickets were obtained by a lottery so everyone has a chance to attend.' Charan reported: 'My daughter told me about that, and I went by to check, and something of interest to us all. And hopefully they get a good line-up for that, and that will be something to look forward to.'

Child-free Emma Thorpe and Martin Shore had a different response. As working tax-payers, they felt a little perturbed to be funding other people's free tickets, and the event made them feel old and disconnected. However, Martin was positive about the personalised ticketing scheme because: '...the tickets are for local people, and you want them to actually go to local people at the end of the day.' Emma, who read the front page of the *Adver* in the shop at work every other day, commented that recently she had also found out about a Matisse exhibition that had been held in an Old Town gallery via a clipping from the paper. It had seemed odd as Swindon was a manufacturing town, not a place of culture. Both events had restored her faith that things did happen and without the media; she said: 'I do feel like I am in a kind of vacuum...' Overall responses suggest that the 'local patriotism' (Franklin and Murphy, 1991) invoked by the council in the paper was reflected in a similar response from informants. Something interesting was happening for the benefit of local people in Swindon, usually otherwise a cultural desert. The *Adver* and children were the main sources of information.

***b) Story 6: Repatriation of Soldiers' Bodies Through Wootton Bassett***

During fieldwork, the *Adver* published regular articles about the military repatriations of soldiers killed in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, whose funeral corteges travelled from RAF Lyneham through Wootton Bassett, six miles south-west of Swindon, to its war memorial. These processions passed down its high street, and triggered by word of mouth, crowds of up to a



thousand regularly lined the streets to pay their respects. During 2008, 61 bodies were repatriated, and the townspeople received accolades for their public displays from the armed forces, bereaved families, and the government. The Ministry of Defence organised an Appreciation Parade on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2008. MP for North Wiltshire James Gray spoke in parliament, saying: 'I wish that more people across this nation and across the world paid that sort of tribute to the services that our armed forces give to all of us'.<sup>76</sup> The *Adver's* reporting was patriotic in tone, and as well as documenting individual deaths, great emphasis was placed on saluting the town's devotion: 'Their overwhelming displays of patriotism and respect were recognised in an appreciation parade in October...'<sup>77</sup>

The paper's patriotism rubbed off on informants for whom the repatriations they'd read about invoked local and national pride. Again, their accounts of the story were basic in detail but the overall message was clearly reflected. Dutiful Klara Witmanowska, whom I quoted as disconnected from Englishness in Chapter 3 said: '...When I see the reports of the people coming out to honour the soldiers killed in Afghanistan and Iraq, it makes me proud to be British, and whenever people there fight for human rights.' For Jim Brown, it cemented a local connection: '...makes you feel sort of Swindonian, or part of this area , depending on how you look at it, when they repatriate all the soldiers that get killed or what not, they go through Wootton Bassett which is five to ten minutes drive from here. So you sort of feel that you are on the map all of the time, because there are so many of them coming through.'

In a conversation on the recession, Steven Buxley vented his opinions on the UK government's response to US military decisions to go to war, linking them

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<sup>76</sup> 22/01/09, author: Katie Bond.

<sup>77</sup> 25/12/08, author unknown.

to the local economy, and forces families living in the area, also bringing in the paper's coverage:

...the more you need your military bases, the more the local economy benefits. But it also means you tend to lose local people as well. Well, we've had one national story about Wootton Bassett honouring war dead and things...which has done the area no harm at all. So yes, that's another thing which has had a lot of local coverage, and has gone national. And affects us locally as it puts the area in quite good light, I think!

These responses mirror the somewhat contradictory view of Swindon that although it was wanting in a number of areas, informants were glad when it was given a positive association in the media. Perhaps this was because of the generally dismissive attitudes it regularly received otherwise.

## **4.7 Conclusion**

General conversations demonstrated informants as constructing four versions of the term 'community' but the dominant Swindon discourse was nostalgic for socio-residential communities in the past. Likewise, Swindonian identity discourses were in circulation but designating oneself as 'Swindonian' was a highly subjective act, as was conveying a sense of belonging. It was not an all-round feeling, despite conveyances of an all-round, strong sense of place. Substantial conclusions on ethnic differences in response are discussed in the thesis conclusion. More detailed accounts came from my asking, 'What do you think about Swindon?' than through commentaries about town affairs following the question, 'Have you picked up on anything of interest in the local media?'

Informants did not need the media to tell them how to conceptualise their town, as their personal experiences had set up their own lenses on it. The paper triggered reflections on the town's public affairs, and informants from all three

'groups' brought up the same stories followed by the paper over time. It did act as a local public sphere<sup>78</sup>, particularly where discussing the council was involved. The strong sense of place held by residents had a deep influence on the subject matter they responded to from the paper's agenda. The most discussed concerns - built environment, ethnic relations and weakening communities - surfaced in a mirroring effect as key themes in the most discussed stories across the three 'groups'. Stories which sparked the themes of ethnic relations and town unity or pride triggered informants' reflections on community, belonging and identity. However, their deeper views and connections to the town were unearthed through general conversation rather than thrown up by media commentaries.

Echoing Gamson (1992), the combination of sources of information that people drew upon when making sense of a story varied by issue. The *Adver* was the most consumed and discussed of all local media but sometimes other sources were referenced. It was the most cited for a specifically 'local' perspective, with television news seeming 'further away' from town affairs. Somehow the *Adver* was a part of them. It provided a stage for the playing out of town affairs, scope for different voices in debates and a critical beacon for the relaying of information such as W. Ahmed's letter during the Muslim school affair, thus playing a role in developing the scenarios themselves.

Moreover, although the paper's reputation for factual accuracy was questioned and attitudes towards it were cynical, it was still consulted and referenced.

Informants trusted in its constant availability, and familiarity with it provided a

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<sup>78</sup> As discussed earlier, Habermas' (1989) original theory hypothesised that people came together informally to debate the affairs of the government. A comparable process was seen at work when Swindon residents critically discussed the affairs of the local government with me and with each other (as I observed at my host company), but also drawing on information from the *Advertiser*. This process was an amalgamation of what Habermas described, and Anderson (1983 [1991]) suggested in his work on newspaper readers imagining a community. In the Swindon case, the newspaper's content helped them to envisage the locality, and not always a unified community, as this Chapter has unearthed.

license to be ultra-critical of its content and 'care structures'. Specific articles were never discussed, and informants simply reported that they'd 'read it in the *Adver*' or 'the *Adver* said...', pointing to a trend of its being consulted on an ad hoc basis by informants dipping in and out of coverage of an issue played out through many articles over time. It played a crucial role in delivering information and influencing people's understanding of a scenario when facts were relayed without challenge, in spite of readers' cynicism. Informants were more reliant on it when the story involved official agents that they did not know personally, as in the Coate Water case. More *experiential knowledge* was invoked in informants' responses when the story had an immediate impact on them or people they knew and it had closer 'issue proximity'. In the case of the recent recession, they were able to evaluate the local situation 'experientially' when walking through town. *Experiential knowledge* was trusted over *media discourse* where available, but *media discourse* was believed when there was no other information, despite the ongoing critical discourse on another level. *Experiential knowledge* was the more dominant resource overall when informants fashioned their sense of place.

Generally the paper was a vehicle prompting the formation of opinions which diverged from the actual story. It offered a hook for discussions of informants' views on town affairs, and played a key role in engaging them emotionally, as seen in Ofcom research. All engagements with these 'most discussed stories' were 'emotional' rather than 'functional' with the exception of the impact of the recession. As the editor argued, in line with the findings of analysts, the paper could 'galvanise the community' and induce local patriotism (but not many articulations of identity as in the 'civic cultures' theory), but the high volume of articles on a town crisis could also exacerbate anxieties, something of a double-edged sword. This confirms Silverstone's argument (1993; 2005) about the trust/anxiety dialectic that results from news. Overall, its role in promoting

Swindon was much appreciated given the town's recurrent status as a national joke.

## **Chapter 5: *The Conduct of the State and the State of the Nation*: Pan-Ethnic Responses to National News**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the relationship between informants' general articulations about national identities in England - the nation of residence for all, birth for most and British/English ethnic origin for some - and feelings of belonging/exclusion to notions of national 'community' or formal citizenship, followed by pan-ethnic responses to the most discussed stories from the British national news media. In such discussions, informants from all three 'groups' referred to a vast range of *outlets*, most but not all originating in the UK. This confirmed that media content genres, and the sum total of news content across all *outlets* is more significant for consumers of media than the individual *outlets*, especially in the current era of multiple platforms and 24/7 news.

This chapter feeds into the recent debates in theories/studies of the news. In top-down theories linking national media to identity, media consumption bridges the 'public' worlds of national governments and societies, and the 'private' worlds of individuals in the family, home and household (Morley, 2004: 50-51) by connecting them via consumption of news content to government and societal affairs (for example Habermas, 1989; Scannell, 1989; Curran, 1991; Silverstone, 1994; Fitzgerald, 1992; Morley, 2004). Theories hypothesise that this engenders conversations about nationally-relevant content thereby raising awareness of common membership of the home nation, and ideally prompting citizenship consciousness (Dahlgren, 2005). A main weakness is their lack of empirical evidence in demographically diverse local-level social environments, which several contemporary studies (e.g. Liebes, 1997; Madianou, 2005a) have addressed, as does this chapter. The analysis also

uses Gamson’s (1992) conceptual tools and Billig’s (1995) deixis to examine informants’ statements. It assesses Calhoun’s (1997) point about people making discursive claims about nations, and Fox and Miller-Idriss’s (2008) suggestion that people talk ‘with’, not about the nation.

The chapter presents an analysis of informants’ responses to the six most discussed routine national stories or thematic areas of coverage during fieldwork: the British government’s and banks’ roles in the recession, migrant-workers, the police handling of the G20 protests, the MPs’ expenses scandal, media portrayals of refugees and ethnic minorities, and reality television celebrity Jade Goody’s battle with cancer. Through the analysis, I examine whether consumption of and verbal engagements with everyday news stories leads informants to discuss matters relating to the government and society, and articulate notions of national identity and citizenship. Or is there an unpredictable outcome?

## 5.2 National Media Consumed

Informants used a wide variety of news *outlets* across multiple platforms and there was a spectrum of claims over how often and how light or intense an individuals’ engagement with news was. Few claimed total disinterest. Table 26 shows that high percentages of *Swindon Survey* respondents claimed to consume television news alone.<sup>79</sup> The figures for collective consumption (table 27) were much lower.

Table 26: TV Genres Consumed Alone

TV Genres consumed Alone		
		Current
Ethnicity	News	affairs
English (%)	90	37
Sikh (%)	80	32
Polish (%)	86	32

Table 27: TV Genres Consumed with Others

TV Genres consumed with Others		
		Current
Ethnicity	News	affairs
English (%)	68	17
Sikh (%)	41	16
Polish (%)	54	24

Consumption figures for radio news were lower overall. Table 28 shows solitary consumption and table 29 shows collective consumption scored even lower.<sup>80</sup>

**Table 29: Radio Genres Consumed Alone**

Radio Genres consumed Alone		
		Current
<b>Ethnicity</b>	News	affairs
English (%)	40	25
Sikh (%)	43	7
Polish (%)	59	14

**Table 28: Radio Genres Consumed With Others**

Radio Genres consumed with Others		
		Current
<b>Ethnicity</b>	News	affairs
English (%)	22	15
Sikh (%)	20	4
Polish (%)	41	8

Table 30 shows overall terrestrial television channel preferences, with BBC1 scoring as preferred channel with all three groups:

**Table 30: Terrestrial TV Channel Preferred**

**Terrestrial TV Channel Preferred**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	BBC1	BBC2	ITV1	Channel 4	Channel 5
English (%)	75	44	49	56	9
Sikh (%)	86	38	63	57	36
Polish (%)	76	37	47	41	24

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<sup>80</sup> As it was not known at the outset of fieldwork that the project would focus on news consumption only, the questionnaire did not ask via which broadcast channels news was accessed, therefore these data are not available.



Table 31 shows non-terrestrial television channel preferences:<sup>81</sup>

**Table 31: Non-Terrestrial TV Channels Preferred**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	ITV Channels	Channel 4 Offshoots	Channel 5 'Five Life'	Sky Network	Asianet	Zee TV	Bollywood for you (B4U)	Punjabi Channel	Star India
English (%)	63	62	9	49	1	0	1	0	0
Sikh (%)	32	32	2	50	5	54	46	36	21
Polish (%)	41	41	3	24	0	0	0	0	0
	Sony India	Polonia	HBO	Romantica	Wizja	Travel Polish	Sports Channels	US entertainment channels	British entertainment and special interest channels
English (%)	0	0	2	0	0	0	21	17	68
Sikh (%)	18	0	2	2	0	0	16	13	36
Polish (%)	2	39	3	0	2	5	7	27	36

Table 32 shows overall radio channel preferences:<sup>82</sup>

**Table 32: Radio Channels Preferred**

**Radio Channels Preferred**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	Radio 1	Radio 2	Radio 3	Radio 4	Radio 5	1 Xtra	BBC6	BBC7	BBC World Service
English (%)	45	29	3	26	29	6	7	0	5
Sikh (%)	55	13	2	5	13	9	2	0	7
Polish (%)	24	24	2	27	8	0	3	0	7
	Virgin (absolute)	Planet Rock	Classic FM	Oneword	Talksport	BBC Asian	BBC Swindon	BBC Wiltshire	Great Western
English (%)	8	7	13	1	6	2	9	8	33
Sikh (%)	4	0	0	0	0	36	11	5	21
Polish (%)	2	2	15	2	3	0	27	15	27

<sup>81</sup> Indian/Polish diasporic channels are commented on in Chapter 6.

<sup>82</sup> Diasporic radio preferences are commented on in Chapter 6.

Table 33 shows that overall, national radio stations were preferred over local by all three groups:

**Table 33: Radio Channels Preferred (Categories)**

Radio Channels Preferred (Categories)					
Ethnicity	International	National FM	National AM	Local	Digital
English (%)	5	83	6	45	11
Sikh (%)	7	61	0	30	38
Polish (%)	7	68	3	53	5

As Chapter 3 showed, the *Swindon Advertiser* was the highest consumed newspaper overall. Table 34 shows there were significant ethnic differences in newspaper consumption preferences. Regarding the national papers, the top three consumed by the “English” were tabloids, the *Sun* = 31%, the *Daily Mail / Mail on Sunday* = 28% and the *News of the World* = 17%. These figures for the “Sikh”s were: *The Times / Sunday Times* = 25%, *Daily Mail / Mail on Sunday* = 18% and the *Daily Telegraph / Sunday Telegraph* and other regional or local press both = 14%. For the “Poles”, the figures were: the *Daily Mail / Mail on Sunday* = 36%, *The Times / Sunday Times* = 32% and Polish *Dziennik Polski* = 26%.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> The alone/collective consumption question was not asked of newspapers as it was, possibly wrongly, assumed that newspaper consumption is a solitary activity.

**Table 34: Newspapers Consumed**

Newspapers consumed									
Ethnicity	News of the	The Times or	Daily Express	Daily Telegraph or Sunday Telegraph	Sport or Sunday Sport	Daily Star or Sunday Star	Daily Mail or Mail on Sunday	The Sun	Mirror or Mirror on Sunday
	World	Sunday Times		Telegraph	Sunday Sport	Sunday Star	Sunday		Sunday
English (%)	17	15	5	9	3	7	28	31	14
Sikh (%)	13	25	4	14	0	0	18	9	9
Polish (%)	12	36	7	7	2	2	32	14	5

Ethnicity	Guardian or Observer	Financial Times	Independent or Independent on Sunday	Swindon Advertiser	Other Local/Regional Press	Sunday People	Asian Times	Eastern Eye	Des Pardes
English (%)	16	0	10	53	13	2	0	0	0
Sikh (%)	7	5	11	30	14	0	2	6	8
Polish (%)	5	2	8	51	12	0	0	0	0

Ethnicity	Punjabi Times	Goniec Polski	Dziennik Polski	Polish Express
English (%)	0	0	0	0
Sikh (%)	4	0	0	0
Polish (%)	0	25	26	18

Contrary to academic expectation, tables 35 and 36 show low rates of informants reporting access to the internet at home on an average of less than two computers per household.<sup>84</sup> Many informants explained they had access at work and could check online news there.

**Table 36: Internet at Home**

Internet at home		
Ethnicity	Yes	No
English (%)	22	78
Sikh (%)	13	87
Polish (%)	19	81

**Table 35: Number of Computers at Home**

Number of computers at home			
Ethnicity	Mean	Std. dev.	Base
English	1.3	1.0	86
Sikh	1.4	1.1	55
Polish	1.3	1.1	58

It seems that television news held the top seat in consumption preferences.

Qualitatively, informants reported using the ‘traditional’ media of terrestrial and satellite television, radio and newspapers to access news, and occasionally the internet, but various other devices were also mentioned: wireless devices, DAB, and phones. Broadcast news *outlets* mentioned included BBC television’s

<sup>84</sup> Research was carried out before a boom in home internet usage may have taken place.

6 and 10 o'clock news bulletins and *Newsnight* on BBC1, rolling coverage on News 24, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 news, and satellite television news on Sky, CNN and Fox News. News bulletins on the radio included Terry Wogan's and Jeremy Vine's programmes on Radio 2, Virgin Radio and local radio Fox FM, GWR and BBC Swindon. A range of newspapers were referenced, as shown in table 34. News websites included BBC News Online, and Google News. Only on rare occasions did an informant mention contacting the media themselves. Dinah Buxley, a sharply-spoken woman, was warm and likeable. Interviewed in her lounge, she had distinctive pink fluffy slippers with shiny plastic gems and short, dark hair. Dinah admitted: 'I sometimes phone that Jeremy Vine's programme at lunchtime if I'm in the kitchen and something freaks me out.' Husband Steven retorted: 'Mrs. Angry from Swindon.'



**Figure 40: Satellite Dishes on a Council Estate**

A few informants reported a trend in cross-referencing internet news sources with broadcast sources or occasionally newspapers for an updated rendition of the facts. Less common was being alerted to stories via broadcast sources then cross-checking them online. Most noted a decline in newspaper consumption, for example, Charan Sahota had stopped reading the papers over the past few

years: ‘...I’m probably a typical Asian there...’<sup>85</sup> and only checked the internet and the television news. Husband Kamal pointed out: ‘...nowadays it’s all online, internet – get the latest news from there – I spend a lot of time on the internet. So I don’t get a chance to read the paper really. So you’ve got all the news coming at you 24 hours and you can go online to check anything you want.’ It is hard to assess how commonplace these orientations were overall in Swindon given the low rates reporting home internet access.

Several informants said they liked to cross-check facts from different *outlets* and contrasts perspectives,<sup>86</sup> for example, both Gary and John read the tabloids and broadsheet newspapers at work, and consciously sought both Labour and Tory views. John didn’t think newspapers were a good source of news because they were tainted with an editorial line, hence he preferred the internet. He also perceived television news as more neutral, a good starting point for informing oneself from other sources. Politically-engaged and opinionated, Mohinder also read a range of newspapers at the working men’s club, seeking out the different editorial lines because of his ethnic-minority status:

...that’s just to gauge an opinion of what’s going on – how the editors or the writers are giving biased views on stories – Asian stories or different types of stories, you know? That’s an interest that I have and one of the reasons that we have that interest – something that our parents said many, many years ago – you never know how long you’re going to be here – they may kick you out in a year’s time... Especially, again, since 9/11 or 7/7...

Andy Harding, interviewed in his conservatory, had preferred editorial lines which reflected his views:

...If I want to read a decent newspaper I get the *Telegraph* or something like that, do you know what I mean? But I like to read the *Sun* because they slate people I would slate. And they praise up the people I would praise up. Now, regardless of what your views are on the *Sun* newspaper, if you find a paper that likes people you like and dislikes people you dislike, then hey, you know...

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<sup>85</sup> This claim was made by several Sikh informants and proved quantitatively through lower numbers consuming newspapers than English/Poles.

<sup>86</sup> Not relying on one outlet was a strategy of creating ontological security.

In addition to editorial lines, Mohinder was concerned about the wider influence of media moguls like Rupert Murdoch who owned many papers and 'geared the people at the top level' to offer the same messages about politics to the different audiences of each publication, dictating how people voted or talked to each other: 'I feel that's wrong –people like Rupert Murdoch - or even Maxwell in those days when he ran the *Mirror* - they're dictating. It's not a free world really where you're thinking for yourself and you're deciding – you're actually being told what to do.' His meta-commentary about the media he consumed was quite common in Swindon, demonstrating high levels of 'media literacy' (Livingstone, 2004), as this Chapter will show.

A variety of informants trusted the BBC more than other news sources because it was publicly accountable and had a 'good reputation' on subjects such as daily, political and business news although Martin Shore found it a bit bland compared to Channel 4. Other informants had a variety of reasons for their news preferences. Gary liked a lighter style of news which he discussed with work colleagues: '.... 5 News can be interesting because they tend to be a little bit more light-hearted. Whereas BBC 24 can be a little bit heavy. But they're generally more factually accurate.' Mandip preferred to dip in and out taking quick snapshots from Fox News: '...because it's on at any time.' Jane Harding was one of the few who commented: '... I tend to not watch the news, 'cos it's full of doom and gloom at the moment. So it tends to be about the recession. And it's like I said to you... I love this country under a Conservative government [*Labour were still in power*], and like I said, it's not the same.'

### **5.3 “Sikh”, “Polish” and “English” Responses to British National Identity**

It provides useful context to recap the ideas about identity articulated in general conversation in Chapter 3 by the three ‘groups’, so as to be able to examine whether these appear in news talk. The “Sikhs” had lively discussions about the meanings of national identity. They rejected colonial Britishness and were ambivalent about Englishness as an exclusive ethnic identity but shared a daily-life affinity with the native “English”. They held similar feelings about Britishness as a lifestyle and identity which was more inclusive, but sometimes had an ethnic component. Most were ambivalent about New Labour’s political Britishness, but proud of aspects of British life (e.g. multiculturalism and equality), and stereotyped national traits (e.g. good manners). Positive achievements in the name of the nation (e.g. sporting successes) were also a source of pride, but embarrassment was expressed when the national reputation was jeopardised by badly-behaved, drunk people. Informants’ British birthplace and citizenship gave them a sense of belonging to the nation, protection and security overseas, and concomitantly, a feeling of insecurity due to terrorist threats against Britons. Most expressed an affinity to hybrid British/Asian cultural identities.

Most “Poles” rarely discussed British national identity, and professed a diasporic identity which was at times Polish, at times English or British, though more often British than English. They articulated joint identities but not hybrid Polish/English identities. Their birthplace and citizenship in Britain were accidental as it was the country where their ancestors ended up through limited choice. There were few expressions of pride or even interest in the nationality, but occasional emphasis was given to British nationality and pride expressed over, for example, military heroism. More often disappointment in the country was heard and a very critical disposition towards it seemed normal.

Emotionally orientations leant unmistakably towards Poland and national pride was also orientated there.

“English” informants rarely discussed national identity in public but clear ideas were expressed on a one-to-one basis or with people they knew intimately. Some were unsure what ‘having an identity’ meant, and most conflated cultural identity and citizenship, not having a conscious need to separate them discursively. Some were afraid of defining identity in case that meant being racist in politically correct discourse, but all perceived a common British bond among Britons from the different home-nations. Consciousness of identity was raised when encountering foreigners or minorities, particularly when their presence appeared as a threat. There was a general conflation of ‘British’ and ‘English’ even by those with pronounced hybrid identities taking in England and the other Celtic nations. Englishness and Britishness were defined by a variety of indicators including birthplace, blood descent, native language competence, objective traits, behaviours, institutions and traditions. A loss of pride was expressed in the once powerful but now disappeared ‘Great’ Britain of the past with its clearly defined national identity. There was pride in contemporary Britain’s multiculturalism, liberalism, and welfare state, and the sense of home. For those who preferred being British to English, the Celtic countries were a favourable part of the British mix as they had stronger communities than England and didn’t have as bad a reputation for drunken behaviour abroad.

#### **5.4 Opinions of Britain Expressed in General Conversation**

A few informants of all backgrounds passed general comments in interviews away from news talk on the quality of life in contemporary Britain and its current identity. They are worth considering before analysing the media



commentaries to see if they are reflected in news talk. Emma Thorpe told me: 'Britain feels to me like a very neutral place, but that's because I live here. It's really hard for me to get any kind of perspective on it, not living anywhere else.' Despite their ready criticisms (see Chapter 6), the talkative Ciechanowiczes were convinced that:

Ryszard: It's still a good country to live in.

Zofia: Yeah, it's a lovely country.

They liked the fact that police didn't carry guns, and were polite: '...they'll call you sir or madam....' (Ryszard). His wife said: 'I think our health service is brilliant...' and he agreed: 'Health service is second to none. There should be more money into it, because it is the envy of the world...' Zofia also beamed: 'I like the fact that you can discuss things. But then...more and more you can't now.' In particular, it stood out that:

ZC: ...it's such a tolerant country, England, you know, we let anybody in from the whole world, and, you know, we tolerate. But, it's just been proven that they don't now.

RC: No, too tolerant sometimes I think. They need to draw a line somewhere, you know, they...

ZC: Yeah, I think they've started doing that now. Maybe public opinion's going like that now, I don't know...

RC: ...I know we're in the EU, but they should look after the residents of the UK, yeah? [...] They should, you know, this is our home, so we should come first. Not people from abroad, they should come second.<sup>87</sup>

Ryszard left the table several times during this chat to exchange words with his children and catch the news on TV Polonia. Their remarks alluded to immigration and the perceived overstretching of tolerance towards the presence of 'too many' foreigners. They raised a symbolic boundary, using the object pronoun 'we'+ 'our' to describe an unnamed national public or populous that they included themselves in, unusual for "Poles". 'They' inferred either

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<sup>87</sup> She told me she didn't mind Poles from the EU coming in because she was Polish and the New Poles were good workers and paid their taxes.

unspecified authorities or foreign migrants, using Gamson's (1992) 'injustice frame'. They utilised the same strategy as the newspaper content analysed in Billig's survey (1995), proving Fox and Miller-Idriss's (2008) point that people talk 'with' the nation without naming it. Klara Witmanowska made a similar linkage: 'England is still more tolerant of different nationalities and races....' [*and discussed the English tolerance of non-Christian places of worship being built*] and then said in reference to protests over migrant-workers during the recession (see Chapters 4 and 5): '...you have these protests now, but it's something that you can appreciate because of the circumstances. But basically I think it's still a tolerant country, and everyone sort of tends just to get on with one another.' Without referencing immigration directly, Charan Sahota articulated similar feelings, which were reiterated every time she returned from foreign holidays using the object pronouns 'we'+ 'our' to invoke an unnamed national group, and talk 'with' the nation:

I think we're quite a soft country. I think our rules and regulations are quite soft and lenient ...We're quite a benevolent country... I think we're starting to learn that, I think, though it might be a bit late for that, we're starting that actually we do need to tighten up a bit. And that's of course not just in Britain...I know wherever I go I always want to come back. And there must be something good [*laughing*], despite being in a lovely hot country. I think communication plays its part as well. If you can't communicate with your neighbour, your colleague whatever, it's a little bit...you know, I mean you go to other countries and that communication barrier is always there. So that's a thing. But I think it [*Britain*] has got a lot going for it...

Several people connected tolerance and multiculturalism with national losses. Klara said: 'I think it's [*England*] just starting to lose its values and... it's getting very much, well a little like America...' Things like removing the religious content from nativity plays and Christmas cards smelt of political correctness gone mad. She was unusually sympathetic to the English without describing herself as English:

...it's starting to...lose its own identity, really...I think it sometimes gets a little too much, yeah. Trying to please everyone. I think the English have always

been like that... but I think that sometimes you've got to draw a line, you know, this is their country after all, and they should, sort of, stick up for their own country....I think, England has the problems it has, is because people have lost faith...

Jane Harding thought the answer to the breakdown in a distinctive cultural identity in England was that: '...it really needs somebody to think about tradition, it needs somebody to think about the whole area, not just Swindon, the whole country.' The general impression was that the country was tolerant, legally lenient, caring, had too many immigrants and was losing its own distinctive national identity.

## **5.5 Swindon Residents' Consumption of Routine News Stories: Reflecting on the Conduct of the State and State of the Nation**

### **5.5.1 Stories 1 and 2: The Recession**

#### ***a) Story 1: The National Recession***

The 'credit crunch' was reported on incessantly at national level across all media between July 2008 and April 2009. From the British government's encouragement of a culture of borrowing and spending on credit pre-recession, through to the property market crisis in the US, the collapse of banks, and bail-out measures taken by the government for businesses and perceived feeble attempts to assist the public such as freezing of VAT, it could not be avoided. Informants were mostly vague about the source of news but commented on aspects they heard from 'the press', 'the media', or 'the news'. Consumption sparked much meta-commentary about the reportage itself

Most informants felt it was over-reported in the press, saying they needed to know how they'd be affected, were worried about their finances and blamed the media for causing a panic. Gary, a stocky man who wore pressed shirts, explained: '...you hear it's going to take ten years or more to get out of this

slump and they're very careful not to use the "R" word [*redundancy*]...You instantly worry when someone says it could take ten years...' Rather than referring to the media directly, he invokes an 'injustice frame' with 'they' representing an unnamed authority that was causing panic which was against the best interests of 'us', the public, who would prefer to stay calm. The continuous stream of information about 'stocks going down and whatever firm is shut today', as Sarah Bajwa and the Browns noted, just rattled nerves, and didn't give an accurate picture of the social impact. Another colleague pointed out that the coverage was only focused on England, 'not the rest of the world', naming the nation directly as home of the story. Many were angry at the negative coverage such as a colleague who felt it was 'being reported like it's the end of the world.' Gary engaged in meta-commentary on the papers' styles of reportage:

...Because something like this recession doesn't happen overnight so they're more likely, like *The Times*, *The Financial Times*, *The Guardian*, more broadsheet-style papers probably have a more detailed approach to how things have happened, who might be to blame, if they've [*the government*] broken any laws or any reasons for things happening. Whereas, without generalizing too much, tabloids tend to pick an easy target and then milk that target for all it's worth.... when you're in a time like this I think it is important that they all convey an honest, genuine message. And really try not to sensationalize too much. I think if you're talking about people who have got quite genuine concerns about their futures, money worries, to try and not to provoke a base, instant sort of response that can cause riot or mob mentality...

He spoke about a public he didn't appear to include himself in and rationalised media behaviour, in a strategy of preserving ontological security (Silverstone, 1993 *et al*; Ostertag, 2010). Continuing with the 'injustice frame', boyish-looking John reasoned cynically: '...they've got to sell their papers. So in reality they haven't got any sort of code of conduct. They don't have to be told by the government to calm the masses or not print stories. That comes too close to censorship. So I guess it is up to them to print whatever they think people want to read...'

Here he resorted to prior *experiential knowledge* about what the media normally do, to rationalise why they were operating as presently, and create a sense of ontological security around the anxiety-inducing lens they provided on the recession. Passionately-spoken Sarah Bajwa had a different angle on the government and coverage, saying: '...it's a scam to get Labour out.... They got rid of [*the*] Conservative[s] because the media basically hyped it up.' She used the 'injustice frame' without any hint of who 'they' referred to.

The volume of coverage also upset various informants. John had observed coverage across the BBC and all other media and explained how the papers impacted on his family, using an 'injustice frame': '...the front page is a recessionary thing, and then you've got eight pages telling you how you are doing. And it's the same with my parents, that's all they're getting, so they're thinking, "Oh, well, we're all screwed."' Sarah Bajwa agreed that: '...the news at the moment isn't helping. Like some of the programmes on BBC1 on the news or the debate shows, they're very much like "Oh this is terrible, this has to happen." You know we had a whole week's worth telling us about the man who had however many million pounds or whatever. And it was like, well, do you think that's really useful for anybody to hear right now?' She invokes the 'injustice frame' through the use of 'they', and an unnamed national audience through the object pronoun 'us', another example of talking 'with' the nation.

Sarah, her mother and I had returned to their home after a Sunday visit to the temple and both women changed out of their *salwar kameez* before I interviewed them. The television showing *East Enders* was switched on immediately. Sarah said that she knew people who had even heard about their own job losses from the media: '...like all the people who got laid off from *Woolworths*, a couple had been in the Sikh community.' They got more information from television than their employers.

Gurbax was worried that coverage was neglectful of race issues. Kamal thought 'the media' didn't prioritise galvanising people: '...the media's got too much to concentrate on at the moment, they're looking more at the financial side.' His wife Charan was speculative, using her *experiential knowledge* and invoking a national 'us' which included her, and an unnamed national 'people' from which she was more distanced: 'I don't know what the government can do to bring us all together, you know. I still think there *is* probably plenty of jobs out there, it's just making people aware of that perhaps, you know...' She also talked 'with' the nation.

Conversely, several informants thought that the media's coverage had been balanced and fair. Arriving at the Buxleys, I noted the large 'Beware of the Dog' sign and doorbell which never worked. Steven let me in after I phoned. He articulated: '...Politicians, trade union colleagues and media all been saying same thing. Normally one side of the press is having a go, the other side saying something different, this time it's so large, they haven't had a chance to gerrymander it.' He used his prior *experiential knowledge* in the same way as John above to instigate ontological security about the media's antics. He also invoked *experiential knowledge* to speculate that people weren't over-reliant on the media and got information from:

...Mostly from what they see around them isn't it?...it's just what happens in their lives, if their money doesn't go as far, if a friend of a friend is made redundant, if they hear of a factory that's closing, that tends to be, and I don't think necessarily that they get that through the media, a lot of that's through networking.

Inside the house, their daughter played a game of climbing in and out of the dog basket and three Siamese cats climbed over the beige leather sofas whilst we chatted.

As for the specific issues raised, many conversations began with references to media, then commentaries ran quickly away to critiques of the government and

financial sector without many details of reportage. In all the examples, 'we' and 'us' refers to a national public that individuals see themselves included in, and 'people' and 'they' appears as a 'public' they locate themselves outside of and are not suffering from the same impacts as, strategising to preserve ontological security. Informants firmly blamed these institutions for the recession and felt it could have been anticipated years ago. As Emma said: '...the government had let this happen all the way along...' Some located the cause in America, such as Steven Buxley. Kamal resented bearing the burden of the impact: '...whatever happens in America affects us...cos we rely too much on America.' However, Gordon Brown's government were blamed for getting carried away with a culture of borrowing. Informants wanted them to accept responsibility at home. As Steven said: '...people are talking about it on the streets, and they're saying... that the current government has taken no steps, has been happy to ride the gravy train, and has taken no steps to put in stronger...protections, like reinventing the mutuals [*industrial and provident societies, e.g. building societies*]...' Klara Witmanowska wanted independent statistics on growth and unemployment and told me: 'I do get annoyed when Gordon Brown kicks in that it's a global problem....yeah, he's a politician. It does turn my stomach a bit, when...he just keeps trying to keep fob people off.' Gary commented: 'I guess he was... trying to create an environment for a lot of people where we could feel comfortable about spending. And that probably spiralled out of control...' Stan knew that 'It was all greed really, and careless lending.' 'The bubble had to burst' he said, and thought a major problem was: '...there's no manufacture in this country. Not like there used to be.' He makes a 'claim about the nation' (Calhoun, 1997) and refers to it as 'this country' without being specific about which of the different nations he means.<sup>88</sup> Like most informants, Hannah was angry with the government for not having foreseen the recession, and here

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<sup>88</sup> See Condor (2000) who found the same phrase was often invoked by his English informants in an article, the title of which contains the phrase to show its prominence.

equates them with 'the British': 'I'm so cross about the British reaction...' while John added: '...it's a British tradition to moan about it.' His reference to 'British' appears to mean 'the public.'

Informants such as Emma and Martin, the Buxleys and the Witmanowskas were angry about the hypocrisy of bankers getting bonuses when people were out of work and hungry. Several "Poles" including the Ciechanowiczses complained about cronyism in British society and compared it to communist Poland. Ordinary people suffered whereas those with good connections 'were OK'. Distancing herself from the affected group through the use of 'the public', Mandip was impressed, however, that: '...finally – the public are always crying out about the bonuses of these big corporates and the banks and things – even the utility companies. So it's about time that the government are now taking it seriously.'

A few informants weren't bothered by the recession, feeling it hadn't impacted upon them. However, most were worried and the news coverage unleashed concerns about unemployment, alarm at local losses and fear of not being able to pay mortgages. Concerns aired were the number of unemployed professionals, not enough for families and small businesses, an ineffective VAT cut, lethargy towards saving-up and too much instant spending, and worries for graduates with debts and unaffordable house prices. Gary worried about people with debts and unemployed school leavers engaging in anti-social behaviour:

...they might start just being on the streets longer, making people more uncomfortable. I'm not trying to generalize too much, but you can get into that environment and there usually is quite a high level of crime in most cities and towns these days and it can probably only get worse if you've got more and more teenagers on the job who can't get jobs to go to keep them occupied... Having got a new car and quite a new property, will society spiral so far down, you know, that everyone is at risk, or more of a risk of having property damage[d] ?...



Although most responses referred to an ethnically unidentified and unnamed public, showing talk 'with' the nation at play, two responses identified a specific cultural or national group's response. I met Mandip at home with her two under-fives. We made tea and convened in her living room. Mandip said of the "Sikhs", speaking on behalf of those within the ethnic frame which she included herself in through the use of object pronouns:

I'd be surprised to hear that...if there are a lot of Sikhs probably that you've been talking to that have gotten themselves in a financial mess...I think generally as a community, that we're more careful still. And I don't know if maybe that's from our upbringing...whereas our parents haven't borrowed, so we've learned not to borrow. Whereas I think that Western culture's been more, borrow, borrow.

Emma Thorpe, friendly and open with her broad smile and fashionably black-framed glasses, was vocal on the national reaction, naming a national group that she belonged to via object pronouns, and in the next extract, the nation itself:

...the credit crunch, it feels like it has kind of united people a bit more. A bit of a leveller, everyone down, and everyone in the same boat...Yeah, I think it's giving people something to focus on and worry about....I think we're very much a kind of island. We keep ourselves to ourselves. I think we'd like to think that we're self-sufficient, although I think that we're probably not. I think the credit crunch might be shaking that a little bit...When I think of British people I think of people like my grandparents who just seem to go on forever, and very stoic, and putting up with things, suffering things and getting on with it.

She used her *experiential knowledge* about the British people to characterise them and explain their behaviour, proving Fox and Miller-Idriss's (2008) point that the nation can be a 'culturally available scheme' used to explain predicaments. She also expressed her disappointment in the nation, named directly: 'I think I've become quite disengaged with the state of Britain...'

Other more tangential fears about the state of Britain were sparked by complaints about the impact of recession on the country articulated by

informants from all 'groups'. Complaints included: people living off social security, lethargy among young people, fears for children's happiness, standards of higher education and behaviour. Klara Witmanowska made a 'claim about the nation' in the context of perceived change, as she told me:

...I'm very disappointed, really, in how the country's going, in how the youngsters are behaving nowadays, education... I wonder whether our parents would have chosen to come to the country as it is now, than how it was before... I mean, people just behaved differently, there was more politeness, you had your sort of English gentleman and ladies, and I think it's just completely deteriorated now.

She doesn't name the nation directly but does identify a national group that, as Chapters 3 and 6 show, she doesn't include herself in.

This story shows how informants articulated criticisms of the media, government and financial institutions in their responses to news coverage in public sphere-like manner. It exemplifies talking 'with' the nation, several 'claims about the nation', and uses of object pronouns to speak on behalf of a rarely named national public that they are sometimes and sometimes not part of. This supports Fox and Miller-Idriss's (2008) point that people and scenarios become 'national' when national frames are invoked. Although many uses of the media may have been 'functional' in the first instance, to obtain factual information on the economic situation, responses were mostly 'emotional' due to the extreme distress that the reportage and institutional actions caused. *Media discourse* and *experiential knowledge* were engaged with equally by informants to make sense of the crisis. Although for most, the reportage wasn't close in 'issue proximity' because few were personally affected by what was going on, it came closer because informants articulated a sense of expectation towards the institutions at fault which were part of their personal lives at the level of the nation. They were supposed to serve them as British citizens and had failed in their duties.

***b) Story 2: Migrant Workers During the Recession***

In February 2009, a story ran in the national media about the hiring of migrant-workers from Italy and Portugal at an oil refinery in Yorkshire by foreign companies with a UK presence, during the recession when many local workers were unemployed. Protests were attended by hundreds of workers, and unions claimed that Britons' wages were being undercut. Ordinarily there was a wide spectrum of opinions about migrant workers but this story elicited an underwhelming response. However, the theme of migrant-workers was the source of passionate articulations during the interview period in conversational threads away from talk about specific stories. "Polish" and "Sikh" informants had more comments about the issue at national level than local, as this selection will show. Throughout, informants talk 'with' the nation.

Mandip had seen the protests on television. She said:

We haven't experienced it [*similar protests in Swindon*] but we have seen it in the news with the people in the north ...those jobs that have always been there but people traditionally haven't wanted to do them and now people are in the situation where they'll do any job – it's come to life. So I disagree with those protestors to some extent because those people – if it was an issue before they shouldn't have been given those jobs in the first place and people have got their families set up and their livelihoods set up now. Just because the economic climate's changed you can't say, "We don't want you anymore." ...they've got children and they've got their own individual circumstances. But I can see where the bitterness comes from but it is unfair because they're not being objective.

She twice identifies a local 'we' that represents people like her, variously identifies 'people' and 'they' to mean British workers unlike her, and uses 'we' to represent an unnamed public.

Charan was also sympathetic to migrants:

...they [*the British*] live outside of their means and, you know, that's why we've got ourselves into this situation. People are going to blame the immigrants and say, "We are in the situation because of them, because they're taking over all our jobs, there's no jobs for us..." which is absolutely incorrect...

She moves between a national 'they' and 'people' that she doesn't include herself in, switches to a national 'we' which she appears to be part of and back to a 'we' who blames migrants, which she includes herself in, but which her opinion seems to try to exempt her from at the same time. The migrants remain 'they' and don't enter a national 'we'. Charan saw herself as passionately British but there were aspects that she didn't identify with, perhaps shown here.

Several informants hadn't heard anything among their social or work circles. Gurbax said, however: '...I think people are aware when people are working. People don't necessarily notice whether it's a brown face, a white face or that sort of thing.' People still resented migrants whether they were Caucasian or not. She used 'people' to distance herself from interlocutors and the racially undifferentiating public. 'People' in Swindon were more conscious of shut-downs locally. She also commented, naming the national group: 'I can think of two different types of British people.' She outlined these as being people whose jobs were under threat who were happy to take career breaks and others with good professional jobs who weren't finding an equivalent replacement. She discursively categorised the nationals (Calhoun, 1997) but seemed to distance herself from the 'British' of these types. Furthermore, she hadn't heard any negative remarks among the "Sikhs": 'I've been to the Temple a few times and nobody sort of commented.' Gurbax seems to be avoiding a close identification with the nation, reflecting her more cautious approach towards Britishness.

During the interview period, general discussions around the recession and immigration produced a variety of responses. Many were contextualised locally in Swindon where people's experiences of migrant-workers were the "Poles" and Goans. As a second-generation "Pole" with migrant-worker relatives, Klara was sympathetic to companies who would rather pay cheap wages to "Poles" and Goans on short-term contracts than wages and benefits to Britons. Third-

generation “Pole” Helena, who was emotionally attached to Poland, had strong opinions concerning Polish migration, distancing herself from it nationality-wise and adopting an identification as a British person, a rare example from an informant of Polish descent. She invokes a national ‘we’ and refers to the ‘country’, then names the nationality and nation directly, using Britain and England interchangeably:

I could be, might be wrong for saying this, but of late there’s been lots of different of immigrants coming in because of the EU opening up, etc., and ...we are in a situation now where ...the country is in a dire way and there is a recession etc. etc., and you do sometimes sort of wonder, is that anything to do with the amount of nationalities and communities coming in, and has that had an effect?... I do think from, sort of, a British perspective that I don’t think there is anything there on the news that kind of highlights Britain for all it’s good, I mean everyone always comes here, do you know what I mean?

She continued: ‘...I have to admit of late, with all of the Polacks coming to England, I have to say that I’m not rocking and rolling about that.’ She found the ‘New Poles’ an embarrassment when they appeared to be from insalubrious backgrounds and behaved accordingly. Her information was gleaned from both media and local *experiential knowledge*.

Once when I went to interview the Bajwas, Mrs Bajwa was upstairs praying. Sarah and I chatted until she came down. The Bajwas had encountered migrants searching for jobs. They had been party to Indian-resident “Sikh” relatives of Swindon-domiciled “Sikhs” asking the locals to help them find jobs. Sarah described the scenario:

...It’s usually at the Temple. They’ll come and whisper, whisper. They’ll find out, “Oh that person, where does she work, you know, what does that company do.” Then they’ll make a bee-line for you the next week and start whispering about, “Oh can you get me in there or can you get me a job...” or whatever.

She explained that they hoped to bypass the agencies used by Polish migrants and arrange work through personal contacts due to family pride, and not wanting to be ‘like the other migrant-workers’, meaning the Polish. Her Indian-

born mother didn't want to give the impression that Indians were prejudiced against the "Poles". She had worked with some of them, so she explained with a direction articulation of Indian national identity:

There's nothing wrong with the Polish, but the thing is, they just speak their own language...the boys, the men and all that. And the girls are qualified and all that, but they don't speak English. We Indians, we are working in the workplace, we sometimes don't talk in our own language. To us it seems like it's rude because [a] person will, maybe you're not talking about each other or yourself, but the person will think they are talking about us. And to us it's rude. They don't think that way. They shout. Talk and shout. We thought we are loud people, but they're more louder there.

She flicked between television channels to show me what they received including a Pakistani channel. Other "Sikh" informants, whilst generally sympathetic to migrants, voiced occasional frustration. I visited the Sahotas in their large, stylish house. Charan looked relaxed, sporting long hair, fitted jeans and a zip-up top. Kamal has a distinctive southern English-Asian accent mixing south of England-isms with Indian-isms. Both are friendly and he made tea before I interviewed them as a couple. They are opinionated and refined their remarks as they discussed the answers to questions together, a different dynamic from when I met Charan alone. During a general discussion on immigration, I had explained that some "English" informants had vented their frustration, feeling there were too many migrants.

Charan and Kamal responded:

CS: ...Yeah. So that's exactly what my brother, his sentiments were the same, and he was like, you know, "All these immigrants that are coming through," and I sort of laughed, I said, "It's interesting, now we consider ourselves British," and we do! You know, because ...

KS: Imagine when Turkey joins the EU!

CS: But it does make you... and you do get frustrated, and I get frustrated where...I've been a taxpayer for all my life and as long as I know, and if I find out the next... but you know, how many English people are there that you know, have just been living off the state?

Charan identified as British but differentiated herself from the “English”. Later she had iterated that most migrant-workers weren’t looking to stay in Britain in the long-term but Kamal replied: ‘...Which is wrong if you ask me, ‘cos they’re not giving back anything to the country.’ Of Polish people, he said:

They come here, work for five years, they earn enough money that they can live happily after. Which we can’t. We still got to carry on paying our bills. And that’s where the problem is, basically. And then you go back into deeper, then you got immigrations which are people coming here, getting jobs without permits, and that’s why they need to sort it out. You got the Eastern European and any country like that, it should be two years before you can even get a job. So girls get a job first, then two years, he can get a job.

He placed himself within a national ‘we’ through language usage and the critical nature of his opinions on migrants, and invoked an ‘injustice frame’, ‘they’, to refer to an unnamed authority regulating migration.

In their responses, several “Polish” and “Sikh” informants were at pains to name themselves as British in order to differentiate themselves from the troublesome migrant-workers they vocalised complaints about. As Chapter 4 showed and these responses show, migrants threaten the ontological security of citizens within the nation, and articulations of national identity can serve to reinforce feelings of ontological security. Informants used a mixture of *media discourse* and *experiential knowledge* to make sense of the issues. The story had near issue proximity as feelings about migrants ran deep and responses were entirely ‘emotional’.

### **5.5.2 Stories 3 and 4: Loss of Trust in the State**

#### ***a) Story 3: The G20 Protests***

A summit of the G20 group of countries and international institutions was held in London on 2nd April 2009 to discuss the world’s financial markets and economy, attended by heads of state including newly-elected American President Barack Obama. The UK’s Gordon Brown was seen on television news

hosting the dignitaries in elaborate style. Meanwhile, public protests ensued on 1st and 2nd of April in various locations in central London to voice opposition and anger at concerns including economic policy, the banking system and bankers' bonuses. Most were peaceful but violence erupted between protestors and police during a rally outside the Bank of England where protestors broke into a branch of the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS). A bystander, Ian Tomlinson, died after being pushed to the ground by a police officer. A video of the incident was shown in the media and news coverage followed in the weeks after. Informants' articulations contain very few references to media but a few exclamations of things they 'saw' and 'heard', so we can glean that informants learnt the details from the television images that were relayed, as none were present.

Several "Sikh" informants vocalised a sense of national pride at the summit, naming the nation directly and frequently referring to 'the British' as a nationality and a public within which they included themselves:

Charan Sahota: I felt very proud. I was all like, "Oh, look at Gordon Brown, he's the host." And him being the British host...And I was so almost in awe and star-struck that Obama was actually here in England...I thought he was going to send some other United States representative.... And when I heard he was here, it was quite nice knowing that England was hosting something like that, an event like that. It felt quite important. And I felt quite privileged. And, 'cos I don't know how other people feel, I feel very proud to be British, British Asian, and always have and always will do.

Sarah Bajwa: ...I think that made me feel a bit of pride. Like, you know, British people can put their point across without being ignorant. And also how the British public have responded to someone like President Obama. You know, normally we don't really have a lot of time for the Americans but when he came people genuinely seemed excited for him to be in this country and recognised that he was a person bringing change to that country. So that made me feel quite good.

Pride over the nation seemed to result in willing articulations of national identity and belonging. Regarding the protests and violence sparked by police crowd control actions, sympathies mainly lay with the public but some were



unsure. Before knocking on his door, I had seen a group of under-12s wearing 'hoodies' hanging around outside Jim Brown's house. Feeling slightly apprehensive, I had parked there, as intended. Safely inside, Jim told me some protestors were hypocrites:

...you tend to sympathise with the ordinary person who's good. And then you get the ordinary person in the street protesting and causing violence, you don't, well we don't, sympathise with that, not from my point of view...I think there's a lot more rotten things to be worried about. You take the protestor, if he comes from Edinburgh, all the way down to London. And the next day he's saying, "I haven't got any money, I can't afford to live, I can't get a job", yet he spent £150 on a train fare perhaps to get to London, just to smash a window. He ain't redressing his priorities. Is he going to make a difference staying at home looking for a job, or coming to London and smashing a window of RBS...?

Jim responded to the scenes depicted in the news, but also used a wider bank of *experiential knowledge* to reach his position. Eating ginger biscuits and watching her small son run around the living room, Mandip thought it was hard to judge who was in the wrong without evidence but that the death was tragic. She commented:

It's really difficult to say, because they probably could have done better with the protestors, isn't there? And it's hard to know really, you know, what are the police to do? Because it is unacceptable for the protestors to go into the *Royal Bank of Scotland* or doing any vandalism anyway, because that isn't a peaceful protest. So whether it was that that caused the violence that followed, I don't know. If it did then the protestors are at fault. And with the police, they're not great either, they've probably got their own agenda.

She also reached her point of view by reasoning what was acceptable from her wider *experiential knowledge* although basic information was provided by the news.

Most were outraged by police actions and worried about corruption in the police force. Charan and Kamal Sahota only felt able to base their assessment on the television footage of Ian Tomlinson's beating, but were utterly disgusted by what they saw. Others agreed, such as media-junkie Mohinder, whom I met at his home: 'It's all over the news, either in TV or in the papers, but again I

think what happened was totally and utterly wrong, it was out of order... Especially about the guy, yeah. I mean, it's like somebody made a remark on TV, "The police is there to protect us, not to batter people or kill people". In a rare reference to the coverage itself, his remarks reveal how he used information from the television to inform his response to the police behaviour.

A few informants considered the wider meanings of the protests and drew upon their *experiential knowledge* to make comparisons with other police tragedies in the UK and abroad. At the Ghalal's, Mohinder had ushered me to the garden where Gurbax was hanging out the washing. She brought tea in plastic cups to the garden table and I kicked a football with her small son before we talked. Her child interrupted and was instructed to say hello to the old English lady in the neighbouring garden. Gurbax was worried about police corruption particularly with the Olympics coming up and insisted that public servants shouldn't be using bullying tactics. Afterwards, I interviewed Mohinder, who had noted problems with police over the preceding years including when an innocent man, Jean Charles de Menezes from Brazil, was mistakenly shot by police who believed he was a terrorist. About the recent protests which he thought were justified given the recession, he responded comparing them to a tragedy in China and making 'claims about the nation':

...it's just sad the way this country's turning out to be like. It's no different to Tiananmen Square, twenty-odd years ago. You had protestors on the road and you had the army or the police really trying to break people basically. And that's the saddest part... it makes you realise, are you in a Third World like Africa or China or Indian? I mean, do you really want to see that on your streets in England?

Sarah Bajwa also thought that the scenario a sad reflection on the state of the world:

...it just shows that whatever democratic society we're in it's all bosh really, because when it comes down to it everyone's still got that same, 'I'm in a position of power', thing. I thought that was quite bad.... I would like to have

known what instruction the police had that they acted out in that way. I don't know if the pressure was because President Obama was here, and we must show London off, or England off to its full potential...

Charan thought that looking to other nations presented a possible solution to a tradition of peaceful protest which was becoming violent. In Singapore, for example, there was more respect for the authorities partly due to National Service, which should be brought back. In this extract, she uses object pronouns to include herself in an unnamed national 'we':

...I don't think it's going against our traditions, I think we've got to move with our traditions like anything... A lot of the rest of the world is expected to move, a lot of the Third World countries, a lot of the eastern world is expected to move almost in line with the western world. So why doesn't the western look at their own backyard, and think, "Well, you know what? We're not coping, and we need to also move with the times." So traditions are traditions, but if they're no good, then you know we do need to move on.

Martin Shore also relayed that videos of the protests showed how soft the English riot police were compared to coverage of riots in Thailand and China.

In this story, several "Sikh" informants made proud declarations of national identity and belonging when the nation was shown positively as host to Obama. The rest of the story concerned the protests, and most informants' commentaries revealed mistrust in the police and fears for 'the country' and democracy. There was no need to invoke 'injustice frames' as the enemy authority was overtly known. The story did not have near 'issue proximity' to their lives with all relying on the news for information, although it came closer as one hoped to be able to trust the police as a state citizen, and informants drew on wider *experiential knowledge* to evaluate the immorality of police conduct. It had violated public trust in agents of the state. Responses were 'emotional' with much hypothesising over what was wrong and needed rectifying.

***b) Story 4: MPs' Expenses Scandal***

If trust in the state was already low, a major political scandal broke in the news in February 2009 when home secretary Jacqui Smith was revealed to have claimed expenses for a second home she wasn't living in, and a claim for two 'adult films' made by her husband came to light. After that, a string of MP's were exposed for making inappropriate claims for personal expenditure and the *Daily Telegraph* published a document disclosing MPs claims over several years. The scandal persisted for months in the media and provoked wholesale public anger over loss of trust in politicians.

Informants' responses were split between wry amusement and disgust. Jim Brown was nonchalant about Smith's actions: 'All she's done is proved that she's human. She wanted to do something, and she's done it.... Basically she's no different than 85% of the country.' Emma and Martin cooked me a Thai curry and chatted whilst they chopped the ingredients. They too were amused with low expectations of politicians and invoked one claim about a national characteristic within which Emma included herself:

Emma: ...£20 worth of porn on the front of the paper, that's the important thing.

Martin: That is so British.

Emma: We only care about the porn, so what.

CB: Why is that so British?

Martin: Well look at Sarkozy. He's just filling his cabinet with incredibly beautiful women.

Martin talked also about how Italian premier Berlusconi had a facelift paid for to look good for women. Emma mused: 'I don't think other nations care about affairs or things like that as much as we do. It's like, "So what, that's his private life, let's get on with it, let's get on with the country." And I like that separation.'

Sarah Bajwa had the opposite reaction and was dismayed by the revelations:

...They know it's wrong. They know that whilst other people are suffering, and they're public servants supposedly, elected to the position to represent common people, and they're taking advantage. I think they should be taken out of politics. I think that's their morality. It's a reflection on how they think about the common people. They don't care, they are happy they are in their position... And none of them have lost anything. I mean that bloody Home Secretary, she's a nutter. How many times does something have to come out about her before she's lost off the scene?

Klara Witmanowska had similar feelings:

...It has upset me to keep reading about the abuse some children still suffer in England and also constant abuse, torture and poverty suffered by millions of children on a daily basis in other countries such as Haiti and other Third World countries. I feel sick therefore when I read about the rich trying to claim even more by abusing the expenses system in the UK...

Her reference to 'the UK' was less uncommon in terms of national labelling than 'Britain' and 'England.'

Mohinder, who was equally sceptical, was mindful of the modern technologies which allowed such information to come to public attention:

... it's been going down for years, but it's the fact that they've been caught on the internet or the email, whereas before there wasn't that, it was all done behind closed doors sort of thing. Plus now you have BBC Parliament, so you've got that as well, you can see what they are contributing. There's hardly anybody there sometimes, in the House of Commons or the Lords, and you're thinking, "Yeah they're getting £100,000 plus expenses and yet you don't see them on TV and such unless they specialise in certain topics or whatever."

From his sofa, Kamal, dressed in an Airtex top and jeans and cuddling a scraggy-haired grey cushion, was pleased to notice that arrangements for expenses claims were changing although he didn't openly chastise the MPs:

Oh, the Chancellor's thing, he wants to stop the Members of Parliament getting too much money. They want to do one sort of payment, instead of having all different allowances which is even better. People know what they can have and what they can't have. This way nobody knows what they can have.

Usually quieter than his wife, he sometimes responded to her comments or occasionally raised a different point, but letting her be the 'chattier' one, endorsing her, laughing or being ironic. Sometimes when prompted for a reply,

he agreed with what she said. He was firm but fair in his views and attitudes. Charan had heard the same news: 'I think that's better actually. Yeah, I've heard it just now, because I don't watch telly much, but I listen to the radio, either when I'm working or when I'm driving. I love the Jeremy Vine show on Radio 2...'

Informants had no need of an 'injustice frame' in this example as the 'they' (the MPs) who had wronged the public was overtly known. The responses show a concern with deliberating on the morality of politicians' behaviour, engaging in the critical debate over the conduct of the state à la public sphere. Most responses were 'rational', but most also verge on the 'emotional', laced with moral disapproval of MPs' actions. The issue proximity of the story was remote from daily lives but came closer because citizens needed to be able to trust the state. *Media discourse* and *experiential knowledge* of folk conceptions of 'right' and 'wrong' were used to make sense of the story.

### **5.5.3 Stories 5 and 6: Media Representations**

#### ***a) Story 5: National Identity and Media Coverage of Refugees and Ethnic Minorities***

Rather than breaking one big story, the subject of asylum seekers and refugees appeared as an ongoing notoriously controversial topic in the news. Informants acknowledged that these people were under constant scrutiny for perceived swift state help with housing, school places and access to social services. Some regarded this as a competition where resources were scarce, and allocations felt unfair, threatening ontological security. Although in Chapter 4, some "English" informants took issue with Somali refugee families who didn't initiate neighbourly contact and appeared to get priority in public services, other informants were acutely aware of unfavourable portrayals in the news media, particularly the tabloids, and were horrified. They engaged in meta-

commentary about media behaviour, and several viewed media as disgracing their national identity as British. Hannah, shaking her long blonde pony tail, responded with a direct articulation of national identity and naming of the nation:

...as far as identity is concerned, if I have an emotional identity, I would say that I am British, and I am proud of that fact... the media tends to be one of the things that makes me shy away from it, because I'm very torn by how they portray a lot of the stuff, and especially for somebody from another country, you know, I read the things in the paper kind of like somebody who was a refugee, or something like, who is coming over here and is trying their best to make a life for themselves, and is usually doing the crappy jobs that nobody in the UK wants to do, and I feel what it must be like for them coming over here and reading and getting that kind of imagery.

Her partner John agreed: 'I try to strip away the concept of identity from news, so if I'm reading a story, just trying to throw in a racist slant or to talk about ethnicity...' Second-generation migrant Charan agreed and had first-hand experience of refugees:

...the media does exploit, and totally twists and turns everything that's going on with, you know, the immigration scene. I think a lot of it is blown out of proportion. I think there are the few cases...where they do get handouts, and those are just it, you know. Those are the ones that are brought to our attention. I've got friends, not friends, yeah, acquaintances that have been here for about three years now, as refugees from Afghanistan, they were going to be shipped out, weren't they last year? And they tried, they're both working hard, their children are studying aren't they, and, you know, they're such lovely people and we know that they are going to be in danger if they go back. So there's a lot of genuine people...

These informants spoke about the media's behaviour as a combined authority causing injury to the refugees, without needing to invoke an 'injustice frame', because the wrong-doer was known. Informants were not the victims themselves, rather they articulated the injustice caused to a third party, a category of people within the nation who didn't properly belong to it. In these articulations, the refugees were not portrayed as an external source of

competition for resources, but a group deserving of empathy, unlike migrant-workers.

Sarah sat on her sofa, looking smart in a maroon and brown flecked cardigan, hair highlighted and face framed by gold earrings. She observed, over the background flicker of *Hollyoaks* on ITV, that negative coverage of immigration and refugees made 'people', implying the white British, more hostile towards non-Caucasian looking people like herself who belonged to the nation legitimately. She engaged her personal *experiential knowledge* to report the media's effect:

...people are thinking when they see you on the street, and they don't know whatever you are, so they take you as they want to. So when they hear the news, any sort of snippet that tells you. Like a few weeks, or maybe a month back, they had the thing starting again of the Sangatte [*migrant camp*], over on the French side [*of the Channel*], and they kept showing the camp, where it's not an official camp, but there are immigrants waiting trying to get on, and all you saw were Asian males trying to get on the trucks, and so for me, I thought, "Oh god, it's starting again" .... Well, I think to the common person they would just look, "Oh, they're all Asian, all Indian of some sort, or Muslims", that's probably what they think.

She was anxious about the impact of such coverage on English people in Swindon whose knowledge of ethnic minorities was based on the few brown or black faces they saw working in cleaning jobs:

...It's the same I think for the English population in Swindon. If your family was born and raised here, within Wiltshire, you only know about that, and you think that the whole world is like that. And then when you hear things, or you see in the media, that's why you can easily get brainwashed, because really you don't have your own independent thought... So when, for example, the media shows you about immigration, the reason that you feel more of that here, is because you know that people really take on all that the media is telling them.

Coming at the subject from a very different angle, the Browns were sensitive to short-term migrants including refugees, but knew that the tabloids scapegoated them:



Jim: ...they [*the papers*] stir a lot of hatred I think. That woman from Afghanistan living in a 1.2 million pound mansion, you know, they have a massive hate campaign going on about her, for two weeks or something in the paper [*the Sun*]. Well, put it in the paper and make sure somebody deals with it and that's it. Don't drag it out because all you're going to do is get people start bricking their windows and ... well you would do! Well, at the end of the day, she's in this country, she's obviously got here legally, whether she should be in that house or not is another matter, but to drag one person through the papers week in week out, I think that's disgusting.

However, he questioned his sympathies when he thought about how she was living in a huge house for free.

It wasn't only refugees who received a raw deal through their treatment in the press. Many "Sikhs" didn't believe that ethnic-minority perspectives were sufficiently integrated into mainstream media portrayals. We heard from Mohinder in section 5.2 regarding buying tabloids to see how they covered 'Asian issues'. Mandip, a calm personality, suggested of television: 'I think it still portrays itself as more of a still right UK person, even though they have got reporters that are of different or diverse backgrounds. I still think that it's still there, I still get that feeling....' Gurbax said firmly: '...they haven't got the black man's perspective yet – you're mindful of what they show on TV – whether it reflects your identity or your part of the community. It's obvious that there should be the black perspective in there more often.' These comments provide evidence to support critiques of Britain's mediated public sphere that it is not yet fully multi-ethnic.

The refugee reportage had different levels of 'issue proximity' as it wasn't close to everyone's experiences, but some had encountered refugees personally and either felt protective towards or in competition with them. Responses were 'emotional', whether it was empathy or 'ressentiment' (Fenton and Mann, 2009) that was being conveyed.

***b) Story 6: Jade Goody and the Cult of the Celebrity: A Discredit to the Nation***

In early 2009, the high-profile reality television personality, Jade Goody, famed for her appearance on *Big Brother* and racism scandal whilst participating in *Celebrity Big Brother* became the subject of a mass wave of media publicity following the progress and subsequent terminal diagnosis of cervical cancer in February and her death in March. Images of her frail state filled gossip magazines such as *OK* and *Grazia*, tabloid newspapers such as the *Mirror* and the *Sun*, less regularly BBC news programmes and its online news site, and she gave a series of interviews on UK satellite station TV Channel Living. The haunting images were everywhere. A high-profile wedding took place with her boyfriend Jack Tweed who was on early release from prison but allowed by the Secretary of State to break his curfew to get married. By Jade's own admission, she wished to make money for her two young sons through lucrative interview deals and also to raise awareness of cervical cancer in young women.

Informants were sympathetic but uncomfortable about the amount of coverage and found irony and hypocrisy in her story. Again, the story unleashed much meta-commentary about media behaviour. Sarah Bajwa thought the media were only gripped because of her populist appeal:

I find it uncomfortable seeing her. Not because she has cancer and not because she's dying, but I just find...She's on there for commercial benefit. The only reason is because Joe Public know her and like her and think they can affiliate with her... Every time I'd see that it bothered me. I don't buy the newspapers anyway, but if I see it on anything I won't read that newspaper.

Mandip was similarly overwhelmed by ubiquitous images of Jade and underwhelmed by her celebrity CV:

...you want to kind of escape but you can't! ...You just can't get away – either on the TV, or when you're logging onto your email, or when you're walking to the shops or somewhere and, you know, it's the headline on the outside of the newsagent... you don't want that to happen to her but some of it you hear is self-inflicted... And it's as if it's not happened to anybody [*else*]. I mean, what

has she achieved? She hasn't achieved much except she did *Big Brother*. And she seems to want to be portrayed as some heroine...

Emma Thorpe had seen the coverage in the *Mirror* and the *Sun* and had debated the ethics of the case with her friends:

I think it's terribly sad, and she's having a hideous time. I don't think I want to know about it. Um, I can see why she's doing it, I think she's trying to get as much money for her kids before she goes, and you can't really argue about that. What I can argue with is her getting Jack Straw [*Secretary of State*] to spend time on her particular case to let her husband have time off to with his... and get out of his curfew.

At the Sahotas' house, I was greeted at the door by Kamal and a yappy, white terrier dog. Kamal's mother was lying in a hammock in the garden. From their all-enveloping leather sofa, cancer fundraiser Charan was also impressed by the awareness-raising that Jade's case had contributed to the work of charities and the NHS, and was sympathetic yet sceptical. She noted the story had gone international and was concerned by what the intense media interest revealed about contemporary Britain. As with her other commentaries on British affairs and later comments on this story, she located herself within the national 'we', reflecting her identification with British identity:

It's almost become a national debate, hasn't it?...yesterday, I just switched over to one of the Indian news channels, and it was on discussion there...it does show that we have become a society of voyeurism and all we want to do is look into people's lives, it doesn't matter if it's good or bad. But it's car crash TV. We enjoy what we see. We probably all got the pleasure of seeing this woman rise and fall...

As well as revealing a morally dubious facet of modern society, various informants questioned what the story revealed about the media. Its priority placing on the news agenda was an embarrassment. John was annoyed by the fact that it overshadowed what should have been a key international story, the testing of a Korean satellite that might be a cover up for nuclear plans. Several commented that this was symptomatic of a consumer-led media. Emma and Martin were outraged at a time of global financial crisis, 'people' were more

fixated with the likes of Jade and other celebrities, and found it hard to believe these stories were engaging the entire country. Emma remarked: '...I just feel very, very separate from a huge chunk of media and television.' After Jade's death, John's partner Hannah said:

You can't get away from the funeral of a minor celebrity who is only famous because she was on a reality TV show which overshadows quite an important issue [*the Korean satellite*], that could be the end of all mankind. But never mind (*laughter*). Some girl that took all of her clothes off on television and talked about being a minger and all...I feel myself just becoming an old, cranky woman. It is, you sort of feel like, hold on a minute, where is the news? And it does seem that a cross-section of the media is going down that road.

Her partner John replied: 'You all get the papers, and their paper isn't to sell the news, it's to sell papers, so they know a lot of the demographic wants to read about Jade, so that's what they cater for.'

The Hardings, Buxleys and Browns all reflected on other celebrity scandals such as BBC presenter Jonathan Ross's prank phone call to comedian Andrew Sachs. The media prioritised the wrong stories, which brought down the name of the nation. Andy Harding sighed: 'They [*the papers*] just seem to be more interested in celebrities don't they.' As I arrived at the Browns, a neighbour dropped in to lend Jennifer a copy of *Heat* magazine and another 'trash magazine'. She didn't stay to chat but slipped out via the lane at the end of the garden. In interview, Jim couldn't believe that Jonathan Ross had made the headlines when: '...that's going on, but people are getting killed in Afghanistan and it don't make front page headlines...' It put the world into perspective and showed that 'people' had the wrong priorities. The door rang again as we talked. They joked that it was their dog's date as he had a baby-making session planned with a Jack Russell up the road.

Informants were embarrassed by the rise of celebrity culture and wider area of reality television. As will be seen later in Chapter 6, "Poles" Kaz and Stan were embarrassed that Jade was being portrayed as a national icon, and was the best

famous person Britain could deliver. Charan Sahota told me that cheap reality television shows such as *Katie and Peter*<sup>89</sup> made her embarrassed to be British because ‘...we have so much to offer in terms of what we can provide the world, and we’re coming out with crap like that.’ As part-time overseas worker Martin confirmed: ‘Countries tend to show news media from the UK which is to do with the cult of celebrity.’ Usually mixed in her feelings of pride and disdain for the British nation, Sarah Bajwa was also embarrassed that Jade’s story was being followed in India after she insulted established Bollywood actress Shilpa Shetty, an Indian contestant on *Celebrity Big Brother*, and to make amends appeared on India’s version of *Big Brother*. She articulated her national identity in the process, demarcating herself from the sub-continental Indians:

...how cringe-worthy, she is what they think white British people are like...because she is the most well-known white British person in India...I felt embarrassed to be British at that point because I thought, “You see the talent that they are showing, and the whole world will be watching because she’s a world-wide star, an Asian Queen, and this is what they are representing us as.”

Here Sarah differentiates herself from the white British as an ethnic group that she doesn’t belong to, but switches to an ‘us’ to convey the stance that she is still British in a wider sense, part of the same package.

This story provoked widespread responses, meta-commentary on media, and reflections on the state of the nation. Informants who were conscious that reality television stars could be a measure of British icons, culture or behaviour were strongly embarrassed that media audiences abroad might form impressions of the nation and its nationals on the basis of what was presented. It had close issue proximity as a measure of their fellow citizens’ and society’s behaviours, therefore responses were ‘emotional’. Mediated information provided the sole basis for discussions.

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<sup>89</sup> The show broadcast on ITV2 in 2009 followed glamour model Katie Price (stagename Jordan) and her pop singer husband, Peter Andre.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Taking the lead from the national media / identity theories of media consumption (e.g. Anderson, 1983 [1991]; Cardiff and Scannell, 1987; Scannell, 1989; Dayan and Katz, 1992; Billig, 1995), I interviewed national and political editors of some news *outlets* accessed in Swindon in order to get an empirical view about whether these *outlets* had an explicit mission to unify national audiences in a cohesive collective bound by pride in the nation and its identity. Four out of five agreed they did:

Daniel Pearl, Deputy Editor of BBC national television news:<sup>90</sup> ...the *Six* [*o'clock news*] has a remit and always had a remit to boot...it tends to be slightly more domestic focused and also tends to reach out and try and bring different communities together in terms of its traditional function.

Robin Esser, Managing Editor of the *Daily Mail*: I wouldn't say we feel we have a duty to do it, but it is our belief and the *Mail* has always had a strong affinity to this country. It is of course owned by a British family...and I think that has always helped that attitude and certainly the impetus for that is strong that British tradition as well as family traditions make up the most important part of its readers.

George Pascoe-Brown, Political Editor of the *Sun*: The *Sun* is nothing if it doesn't present a powerful and unequivocal sense of Britishness. You can see that in our support of the British military, traditions and conventions of family, the Royal Family, support for our national sports teams, the Olympic heroes, but also in our focus on Brits from ethnic minorities, plus our celebration of the absurd and eccentric, which is also uniquely British. On a serious level, our support for British sovereign independence as opposed to surrender to an EU super state.

Ian Kirby, Political Editor of *News of the World*: ...I suppose identity is conveyed by addressing readers' concerns firstly. Which would be things like campaigning... It's also in terms of sort of celebrating a sense of Britishness that is commonly found. So it would be, for instance, through things like football, sport...and that also has a regional [*slant*] as well.... We're supportive of the idea that there is a British identity, that it is very strong and that it is defined in terms of national identity...support for troops in the armed forces would be an extremely strong part of that. And support for police, the NHS, things like that... I think the paper believes that political correctness is wrong and that

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<sup>90</sup> Not to be confused with the American journalist executed by militants in Pakistan.

British people do, they believe in a kind of sense of fair play and justice and the rights of the underdog.

George Brock, International Editor of *The Times*, was the only one to disagree:

I think it would be misleading to say that on a paper like *The Times*, we think explicitly about that issue day-to-day. It would be very hard for me to recall any conversations about editorial tactics or decisions for the day's paper where anybody has thought in quite those terms. However, in most organisations there are assumptions which frame what you talk about and think about and do... I think the extent to which newspapers are the national conversation obviously underwent a gigantic amount of change in the course of the twentieth century. When the twentieth century opened, newspapers WERE the national conversation because they were virtually the only national, well they were the only national media. Clearly they weren't that by the end of the century.

Following Habermas (1989), he did agree, however, that newspapers had a role to play in equipping citizens to monitor the conduct of the state:

GB: I would say that when you select things you try to illuminate the world that the voter should know. You're not always imagining the reader as somebody immediately poised to vote. You don't, we don't go and vote very often here. But it is always in the end tied back to the citizen's power to peacefully turf out the people in charge. But, you know, there are many other uses to which the reader can put the information.

CB: Would you say that's one of the paper's main goals in terms of equipping its readership to be in the position to try and...?

GB: Yes! Well not to challenge for the sake of it or particularly to challenge, but to be able to make an informed decision about where they have the power to hold people to account.

As classic media theories suggest (Anderson, 1983; Cardiff and Scannell, 1987), the combination of *outlets* from across the ubiquitous and all-round news media environment brought the 'public' worlds of the British government and society into the 'private' lives of my informants. Consumption of national stories unified these consumers in a collective of cynical critics about the conduct of the state and problems in society: *the conduct of the state and the state of the nation*. Informants did become self-conscious of a national collective through consumption, their awareness detectable through their raising of symbolic boundaries, using object pronouns or terms such as the 'public' and 'people' to

depict the populace or citizenry. They talked 'with' the nation (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008) and nationality more often than naming it directly. Whether they imagined themselves included in a national group, articulated using deixis (Billig, 1995) like 'we' or 'us', depended on their personal experience of the situation under discussion, or the desirability of being included. If they sought distance from the national group at times, it became a 'they', a strategy of creating ontological security (Giddens, 1991; Silverstone, 1993 etc). The main 'we'-'us'/'they' oppositions constructed were informants vs. unnamed authorities or migrants.

"Sikh" and "Polish" informants included themselves in the national 'we' at times, positioning themselves within a national symbolic communicative space (Schlesinger, 2000b), and if they located themselves outside it, they usually did not name alternative cultural spaces, unlike at international-level (see Chapter 6).<sup>91</sup> No informant constructed the nation as a 'community', suggesting that although Anderson (1983) used the term 'community' to denote a national collective, it was not the British public's chosen term. All informants also made discursive claims about the nation (Calhoun, 1997) mainly in relation to the conduct of the state or typical behaviour of the nationals.

Consuming, digesting and discussing news stories created empathy with fellow nationals being mistreated by the state and mistrusting it rather than unifying them in simultaneous and homogenous pride and attachment. As Habermas (1989) and Dahlgren (2005) hypothesised, informants monitored the conduct of the state through discussion of news stories. They also engaged in meta-commentary about the media to criticise its actions and engaged *experiential knowledge* about 'typical' media behaviour to rationalise it and sooth the anxieties it could cause, threatening the individual's ontological security (see also Ostertag, 2010). Reportage provoked opinionated commentary referring to

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<sup>91</sup> The one exception was Mandip's remarks on Sikhs' habitual financial management.



undefined news sources, named as 'the media', 'the press', or 'the news', on the state of government and society around a set of themes: anger at the state and financial institutions, fears for the future of society and a loss of national standards (such as quality of life in a range of infrastructural areas and standards of social behaviour), pan-ethnic attitudes towards migrants, and demographic change, racism and racial inclusion/exclusion. Of the themes discussed in general conversation, talk about migrants and loss of identity also featured in news talk.

Informants used a mixture of *media discourse* and *experiential knowledge*, largely of national institutions including the government, media and banks, to make sense of scenarios reported. National-level incidents that seemed far in proximity gained a nearness because they concerned state and financial institutions that played the roles of national representatives in their lives as British citizens, and took on personal relevance when contemplated from the citizens' perspective. News stories themselves created anxiety but the constant availability of news (cf. Madianou, 2009: 333) led people to return for updates to reassure themselves they were well-informed, which connoted being empowered, as did criticising the news.

Informants largely engaged with the news as British residents and citizens rather than from another position. Informants from all 'groups' made occasional references to other countries, but commentaries were largely focused on events in present-day Britain. Despite different strengths of daily orientations and feelings of belonging in Britain, informants had similar concerns across the news agenda. Ethnicity played a limited role in shaping reactions – the "Sikhs" were more conscious of racism and explicit around the subject of national identity, the "English" did not differentiate between long-established ethnic groups within the nation and used 'British'/'English' interchangeably around identification, and the "Poles" were mostly critically

distanced. Some informants had senses of national identification, attachment, pride and belonging reaffirmed through discussions. There were a few declarations of British (and English) national identity from “English” and “Sikh” informants, and very occasionally “Poles”. Unlike in Dahlgren’s (2005) theory of ‘civic cultures’, informants didn’t specify whether it was citizenship or cultural identity or both that was reinforced, so I am unable to say if discussing the news reinforced a sense of citizenship. Articulating national identity was a defence strategy of affirming national belonging given the presence of migrants. In addition, all three informant groups articulated value judgements on behavioural or character traits of ‘British and English people’.

## **Chapter 6: *The Mumbai Attacks, Polish Independence and Britain on the World Stage: Consumption of ‘Extraordinary’ International News Stories***

### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter examines what happened to informants’ national attachments and identities, and feelings of exclusion/belonging when other nations besides Britain were brought into the conversational frame of reference; also the kinds of ‘conceptual communities’ or ‘symbolic communicative spaces’ (Schlesinger, 2000b) that were constructed by the raising of symbolic boundaries between a series of ‘us’/‘them’ oppositions. This arose through discussion of events abroad of ‘national’ or ‘international’ significance beyond the levels of individuals and families, mainly in relation to talk about media consumption of headline stories in the Indian, Polish and British news on satellite and terrestrial television stations. Likewise, Ofcom research (2007: 2, 12) found that television news is the main news source for most UK residents, including ethnic minorities. This chapter builds on Madianou’s (2005a) groundbreaking study of media consumption among both national and diasporic audiences, who were exposed to a range of information resources beyond national TV, including global channels, foreign press, the internet, and personal experiences accumulated whilst travelling, working or studying abroad. Madianou suggested that consumption studies should take the ‘wider global media structure’ into account (2005a: 2), as with this chapter.

Informants’ broad feelings about national and diasporic identities and belonging were articulated when discussing ethnic networks, on their own initiative or in response to direct questioning (see Chapters 3-5). “Sikhs” and “Poles” occasionally shared anecdotes about family and events in India and

Poland at the level of their personal networks, which rarely led to articulations of identification, but such anecdotes were never of local, regional or national significance in Britain or abroad. Likewise, “English” informants told me about personal experiences abroad when on holiday or working, which occasionally threw up statements of identity, but none moved beyond short anecdotes with no impact at the societal level.

At international/diasporic level, the news prompted the most reflections and *experiential knowledge* of the key reference nations: India, Poland and Britain. Informants utilised the news as the main information source for major events abroad involving these nations: in this context, Britain’s role in international politics and conflicts. Due to the geographical distance, the news media was a first port of call because personal contacts were rarely available or up-to-date with details, unlike local contacts in Swindon.

Local and regional affairs in India and Poland were rarely discussed to the same extent as national news stories. In the “Sikh” case, the regional satellite television station Channel Punjabi was discontinued in the UK during fieldwork and no stories from the Punjab made international news headlines in this period, unlike in Gillespie’s (1995) study. Informants who engaged with Polish media tended to bring up events of national significance only in interviews, if at all, although several local channels were available via Poland’s network of satellite channels for the diaspora, TV Polonia, which broadcast some regional programming on its main channels.

## **6.2 Three Case Studies**

This chapter presents informants’ responses to international affairs in three separate case studies, unlike in the previous chapters where voices were merged in the text in presenting the same stories. This is because of the foreign

news sources and locally and transnationally produced *diasporic media* (Georgiou, 2005; 2006) that ‘multilingual households’ (Gillespie, 2006: 903) had access to, unlike “English” families, as well as UK terrestrial broadcasters and press, UK and international English-language satellite media, and internet. Moreover, in her team’s research on diasporic families’ responses to coverage of 9/11 (2006: 906), Gillespie argues that access to relevant and reliable news about events “back home” is crucial for many migrant families, whether long-term residents, British citizens or recent arrivals including refugees and asylum-seekers. From this, it might seem conceivable that people of migrant origins would prioritise stories concerning their countries of origin from the international affairs agenda across the range of sources. Ofcom research (2007) has highlighted what it describes as this ‘preference’ among ethnic minorities. This Chapter tests this proposition with my “Sikh” and “Polish” informants.

### **6.3 News Talk about International News Stories**

Both “Sikhs” and “Poles” made more references to overseas stories than “English” informants, although domestic stories took up a large proportion of all news talk. As second-generation migrants (and the occasional migrant spouse) with a worldview that was partly orientated towards a nation outside the UK, they sometimes drew on media from different nations to cross-criticise and evaluate coverage and styles of reportage. However, their orientations towards the British media are unpredictable and are explored here in comparison with the attachments and identity orientations they expressed more generally. Alternatively, “English” informants utilised UK- and occasionally US-sourced news such as CNN International, although they were

critical of both. They were more focused on domestic than international news,<sup>92</sup> and inclined to reflect on British governmental affairs and society alone, through discussion prompted by questions about the media, since most had worldviews rooted in one nation of ancestry, birth and residence. The major exceptions were discussions of Britain's performance in 'extraordinary' international affairs such as war and sporting tournaments. Ordinarily references to other countries were rarely invoked with the exception of comparative talk on how US actions affected the national recession, the domestic story which dominated the headlines during fieldwork, and occasional comparisons of British stories to foreign affairs. These included, for example, the police handling of the G20 protests in London (see Chapter 5) compared to police behaviour elsewhere. Here, *experiential knowledge* of other countries came via anecdotes of previous engagements with news media themselves rather than firsthand encounters with the countries at hand. The major exception of a news subject at the intersection of the UK and international socio-cultural spaces that provoked commentary from all groups using domestic news sources was interethnic relations in Britain and migrants. These reflections are found throughout the thesis.

## 6.4 'Extraordinary' News Stories

The case studies here explore consumption of news stories that belong in the realm of the 'extraordinary': human catastrophes and emotive nationalist ceremonies. Due to the low level of international stories on the domestic news agenda that informants observed in comparison to other countries' media, both they and I felt that overseas stories had a better chance of receiving coverage in Britain if they were 'extraordinary'. I hoped to see if any of the international

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<sup>92</sup> Exceptions were fleeting comments made by three individuals on an Israeli offensive in Gaza, US elections, the G20 summit and the testing of a Korean satellite.

stories that occurred during fieldwork prompted a large number of responses regardless of the sources used, particularly stories critically involving India, Poland or Britain. A tragedy taking place in India broke in the news on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008, when over ten co-ordinated shooting and bomb attacks were carried out by terrorists in Mumbai. Prompted as well as unprompted, my “Sikh” informants reported consulting British and India news sources televising a ‘disaster marathon’ (Liebes, 1998), and discussed it. The story was barely mentioned by “Polish” or “English” informants, with one “Pole” referring to it as ‘the war in India.’ Whilst there was ongoing discussion of routine news stories from diasporic satellite channel Polonia viewed by informants, a few families flagged up a ‘diasporic media event’ (cf. Dayan and Katz, 1992). On 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008, a coachload of ‘Swindon Poles’ attended a patriotic parade in London marking the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Polish independence, later broadcast on Polonia. The same week a commemoration of the end of the Second World War was also broadcast on the network. These patriotic broadcasts unleashed stronger responses than routine news. “English” informants’ comments on international affairs were scattered across the news agenda, reflected individual interests and various countries, wherever a story of interest occurred, rather than orientations towards an ancestral country. As well as war and sport, they commented on the UK news agenda and were embarrassed by unflattering portrayals of the UK in foreign media. The “English” case study is therefore brief. Conclusions from all three case studies are drawn at the end.

## 6.5 Case Study 1: Sikh Responses to the Mumbai Terrorist Attacks: *Indian Heritage, British Daily Lives*

### 6.5.1 Consumption of British Versus Indian Diasporic News Media

Responses to the televising of the Mumbai attacks roughly reflected a situation of greater interest in UK stories as the country of birth (for most) and citizenship/residence (for all). The data on national media consumption preferences was examined in Chapter 5. The focus here is on satellite channels. All informants had home access to UK terrestrial television, with BBC 1 and ITV1 being the most discussed sources. Figures in table 37 show high ownership of the equipment necessary to receive international channels:

**Table 37: Ownership of Non-Terrestrial TV Equipment among “Sikh” Respondents**

#### Ownership of Non-Terrestrial TV Equipment

Ethnicity	Satellite TV	Cable TV	Digital Box	Base
Sikh (%)	84	23	80	56

Table 31 on p281 showed that a wide variety of US and UK channels were viewed in all, with 50% viewing the UK’s Sky Network, and US entertainment channels receiving low viewing rates at 13%. Sky News and CNN International were the most discussed English-language satellite channels. When the questionnaire was devised, it did not account for the various US television networks available on satellite, so no viewing figures are included. The survey shows the numbers that viewed channels from India: India-wide Hindi language Zee TV (regional Punjabi-language variant is available in India only) = 54%, the film channel, B4U (Bollywood 4 You) = 46%, a UK version of Channel Punjabi (36%) (discontinued in July 2008), India-wide Hindi language, Star News = 21%, Hindi language entertainment channel, Sony India = 18% and pan-Asian entertainment channel, Asianet = 5%.



Qualitative data revealed that many considered Indian television to meet their parents' needs, not theirs. Some did not receive it at home but watched it in the parental home or if they had it, when their parents came to visit. It was used for keeping a vague eye on what was going on in India, viewed on special celebratory occasions, consulted for information such as exchange rates when planning a visit, or during crises. Kamal Sahota had two television sets, one for English-language television with his wife, the other for his mother to view Indian channels. Conversely, Ranjit's aunt Balbir had one for her children to watch English programmes, and another for her and her husband's consumption of religious programmes from the Punjab.<sup>93</sup> Informants with an Indian-born spouse were more likely to have Indian television at home than couples born outside India. Gurbux also thought that the 20-something generation were more interested in Indian and diasporic media than the 40-something second-generation because they had had access to them growing up, unlike those growing up in the 1980s. Of UK-produced diasporic media aimed at local "Sikhs" (among others), 36% of respondents listened to the BBC's Asian Network radio station and a UK-based radio station Punjab Radio was mentioned (see table 32 on p281). Low numbers consumed diasporic newspapers and magazines produced in the UK and beyond (see table 34 on p268).<sup>94</sup>

None of my 30-40-something informants read these publications, with Sarah Bajwa explaining that she knew middle-generation people who did if they had been born in India and had better Punjabi skills and those from families with a more traditional, Punjabi community-based outlook. The diasporic press

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<sup>93</sup> See Ofcom, 2007, on use of Indian television by the older generation in multi-generational households.

<sup>94</sup> Punjabi weekly *Des Pardes* = 8%, pan-Asian newspaper *Eastern Eye* = 6%, national weekly *Asian Times* = 2% and international diasporic publication *Punjabi Times* = 4%.

mainly appealed to the older generation, whereas her generation tended to prefer mainstream British national news because:

...it very much affects what they do in their everyday life as a professional, as a job – they're very much into what goes on in the British news, and the British culture. Because, you know, you're interacting with that every day...so you need to have a proper handle on it.

### **6.5.2 The Mumbai Attacks: A 'disaster marathon'**

'The facts' were constantly contested and altered during news reporting.

Various sources presented information at the time and in later coverage following up anniversaries and investigations. English-language sources provided the following account, though it should be realised that it is hard to secure complete accuracy. These 'facts' are less important than the analysis of "Sikh" informants' responses which follow. Deputy Editor of the BBC's *Six* and *Ten o'Clock News* bulletins, Daniel Pearl provided additional information on the BBC's news operation in interview in January 2009.

Between 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> November 2008 in Mumbai, 10 young men from Pakistan armed with guns and grenades carried out a series of well-coordinated attacks on over 10 sites, killing around 173 people and injuring at least 308, including about 28 foreigners from 10 countries. They targeted a railway station, Chhatrapati Shivaji terminus, the Oberoi Trident Hotel, the Taj Mahal Hotel (known locally as the Taj), the Leopold Cafe, Cama Hospital, an Orthodox Jewish centre, Nariman House, the Metro Cinema, a lane behind *The Times of India* building and St Xavier's College, and Mumbai's port. Rumours spread that the gunmen had specifically targeted US, British, and Israeli citizens.<sup>95</sup> At least 100 Britons were said to have been caught up in the attacks.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), 27/11/08. Quoted author: Rakesh Patel, Sky News; [www.longwarjournal.org](http://www.longwarjournal.org), 28/11/98. Author: Bill Roggio.

<sup>96</sup> [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), 29/11/08. Authors: Randeep Ramesh, Vikram Dodd and Daniel Pepper.

News of the atrocities spread quickly to media audiences around the world, with events unfolding on television through Indian stations such as NDTV, Alpha ETC Punjab, Star India and Zee TV, and via news organisations such *The Times of India* and *Press Trust of India*, and foreign news media including Associated Press, CNN, Sky, BBC, and Reuters. My informants focused on broadcast sources. People also followed the development online on social-networking websites such as *Twitter* and *Flickr*, and blog sites. Media organisations, for example the BBC, found that social networking sites provided faster updates and more eyewitness testimony than their own reporters so drew extensively upon them, supplying audiences with 'live' update feeds on its own site, and enabling them to follow events.<sup>97</sup> Pearl told me:

Well, for example, our reporter Damien [*Grammaticas*] was over at the Oberoi Hotel. We were in there and I had *Twitter* up and somebody had heard that the fighting had started in the Taj, so I rang him and told him to go there then. Now he was being directed from here. He didn't know what was going on. His producer on the ground wouldn't necessarily have known. So there was a lot of involvement between London and that. Everybody has got Blackberries now, so we're all in contact.

Further comments from Pearl illustrated the contested 'facts' and characterise the contemporary multimedia environment. Liebes (1998: 83) has suggested that new technologies and the speed at which disasters unfold mean they develop too quickly for journalists to deliberate over their consequences, as Pearl confirmed:

...in this world we live in things change very quickly... *Twitter*, which I had on the whole time, was saying one thing which might be different from what Sky was saying or what the news channel was saying. I was reading reports on the *Guardian* website which were completely different. And we had Indian TV up as well. And trying to kind of find your way through that huge amount of information without looking... On the one hand you don't want to look slow and lead-footed and taking too much time and [*be*] standing back. But on the

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<sup>97</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 04/10/09.

other hand you don't want to get it wrong. And so I would always err on the side of only saying things that we knew to be true...

Guests hiding inside the hotels phoned and texted the media outside, providing harrowing accounts, and also to receive outside information. Pearl recalled:

DP: There was a lot going on. We did that whole thing where we phoned that guy who was in the hotel.

CB: The one who died in the end.

DP: No. This guy came out. But we phoned him and it was a terrible piece where the piece ended... And they had been telling us there wasn't anyone left in there. The siege was supposed to be over and then our reporter rang him that night and, it was just about 10 to 10 and it was terrible, the piece didn't make it. We got into conversation with him and then we saw him come out the next day. So we had all of these incredible dramas. It was a very compelling story.

Dramatic rescue operations were launched by the Mumbai Police and the Indian military. One terrorist, Ajmal Kasab, survived to admit that he and his accomplices were members of the Pakistan-based militant organisation *Lashkar-e-Taiba*. In the immediate aftermath, the Indian government pointed the finger at Pakistan-based terrorist groups and training camps.<sup>98</sup> There were fears of retaliatory attacks against Pakistan or Indian Muslims. Angry Indians criticised their government for not doing enough to prevent such attacks. Whilst compliant in the initial investigation, the Pakistani government later contested the nationality of the culprits, but after receiving evidence, accepted them as Pakistani in 2009.

### 6.5.3 "Sikh" Views from Swindon

Liebes' notion of the 'disaster marathon' fits the broadcasting, which was laced with uncertainty, drama and human stories. This section presents an analysis of informants' responses to the UK and international news agenda between a

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<sup>98</sup> [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk), 29/11/08. Authors: Randeep Ramesh, Vikram Dodd and Daniel Pepper.

week and ten days after the attacks. Most informants used the old English name 'Bombay', as well as 'Mumbai.' Below I explore initial reactions before considering in-depth responses. I compare the use of information resources by informants with personal links to the attacks/those with none.

*a) Initial Reactions: Those with Links to the Attacks*

Arriving at their home for a post-Mumbai interview, I found the Bajwas watching a cookery programme on BBC1 where a Punjabi woman in Edinburgh was showing a white Scottish lady how to cook Punjabi food. Mrs Bajwa was planning to cook a Punjabi dinner later but both ate breakfast as we talked. She had been on holiday with daughter Sarah in Mumbai two days before the attack and flew back from Amritsar to the UK on her own on 26th November. When I asked about news stories of interest that week, Sarah, a nursery teacher, mentioned two domestic British stories, and then Mumbai. She had seen reports on 'the news' on television. From the week's news agenda, she first brought up 'Baby P', a child who had died from abuse whilst under the observation of Haringey children's services, and then the case of Shannon Matthews, a teenager abducted with the connivance of her mother. Sarah said of Shannon's case: '...that for me is more poignant. You know, I'm upset that all those people were killed, for no apparent reason, but in terms of everyday relevance...' highlighting the point that her daily horizon was focused on Britain.

Mrs Bajwa had seen the attacks reported on Sky, CNN, across the Indian news channels and in the newspapers. However, the atmosphere on her plane was more blasé than might be expected from the 'disaster marathon' theory that the public will be drawn in and gripped in a state of panic by what they have viewed. Mrs Bajwa remarked: '...people wasn't panicking when we was in the flight or anything like that. It was a normal check-in, normal everything. Not

like, because this has happened, they ...it's not the same as here.' Sarah commented:

Every time it happens in one part of India, the people just go, "Oh right, yeah, it happened", over there. But it's too far for them to kind of, be affected. In England, if it happens in London, everyone starts feeling, "Oh yeah, it's happened and ...we're all in trouble." In India, it's not like that... if it happened in that district, or in like, that state, then it would be different.

Still, it was a shock because they had been there, staying near the railway station, and was also reinforced by the news coverage. Mrs Bajwa:

And when we saw that on the news... "Oh my God, we was there!" 'Cos that's a tourist place. People go there, and nobody missed that thing. And when you saw on the television this is happening, "Oh my God." My relative was, "Oh, you was lucky you came back."

Although informed of events by the media, both relied more on their *experiential knowledge* of India and the UK to make sense of them. Both women responded equally to how the attacks would seem to people in India and England, positioning themselves in a 'symbolic space' between both countries, having physically moved between them around the time of the attacks. Of greater interest were the many religious programmes they viewed on holiday televised across India to celebrate three hundred years of the Guru Granth Sahib in October 2008. Sarah summed up their feelings, having used a combination of a media prompt and *experiential knowledge* to reach a position on the attacks:

...everybody knows that the Taj is like, an icon thing isn't it? That it's there and it's part of the sight-seeing. I think it's just the fact that it's in India and most people will have been there, that there's a link. I don't think that really it's something that people have taken into personal... or that it's really going to affect Sikhs as a whole. I don't think so. It's just something when you see that you think, "Oh, that's really bad isn't it?"

Showing an orientation towards UK stories, Charan Sahota first brought up financial crises affecting UK banks during recession from the week's news agenda, then in second place the terrorist attacks, which she and husband

Kamal viewed on Sky News, CNN and the BBC news website. However, her husband's distant personal link to a victim meant it had more of an impact. Kamal's nephew's wife's cousin's wife, a food critic with *The Times of India*, had been at the Taj on the night. Charan: '...she was asked to critique some food that evening, and of course she got caught up in it all and she was texting her husband wasn't she, and she died in the fire.' Charan said that this link had 'brought it home more to me' because her children might choose professional roles that could leave them vulnerable to being caught in attacks. She was also shocked because her brother was scheduled to travel to Goa and her manager to Kerala, and she wondered if they would go. Her thoughts were also with the culprits and with India because she had been there:

I don't know if it is Pakistan in general that's got this grievance with India, and that's what caused it, or if it's just a group of terrorists that's, you know, trying to cause this mischief... It's just very sad, it's just a waste of life... I mean, I suppose it hits a little bit more home when it's India, you know...

The personal link and her contextual knowledge dominated her response.

***b) Initial Reactions: Those with No Links to the Attacks***

Two informants with no direct links to Mumbai were initially underwhelmed by the attacks and responsive to UK stories first, but when pressed, the story opened up wider reflections. Gurbax Ghalal's son sat restlessly on her knee on the sofa one chilly morning, as she told me she'd spent ten weeks in India in her life. The large television wasn't on, unlike in other households. First she mentioned the 'credit crunch', the criminal trial of a famous footballer, 'Baby P', incest in a family in Sheffield, Honda cuts in Swindon, then Mumbai when prompted. She had seen it on Sky and 'a little bit of it on Indian TV', which she didn't receive at home. She had only discussed it with family members. Mohinder was due to visit India over Christmas, her boss had been there before, and her father had reported that Indian public-service television Doordarshan's regional Punjab station was presenting different facts to the

English media, for example, over the number of deaths. She speculated about 'Islamic fundamentalists' as culprits, saying: '...my dad's in Punjab in India, and the media, it's a Muslim problem, it's the Pakistani government that have done it.' Liebes (1998: 74) wrote: 'From the media's point of view, stories of disaster invite a hermeneutic search for the culprit, someone to whom to assign the blame.' This feature of coverage is reflected throughout informants' discussions. As with Gurbax, informants' forthcoming criticism of the Indian, Pakistani and British governments show that even in diasporic symbolic communicative space, news talk functioned in a public sphere-like manner.

Gurbax's main reflections in the context of her father's location were speculation over Pakistani involvement, and fears for the Indian economy. When linked to her boss, a contact from daily work life, she talked about how many English people were familiar with India as tourists and would be shocked given its reputation as a multi-ethnic state, albeit one which had ceased to function well. Speaking from a position of being at home in the UK and referring to the capital, her overriding response was that it could happen anywhere: '...you could be at the Hilton in London, or at one of the Mayfair hotels, and someone could just walk in with a petrol bomb.' Gurbax moved between three symbolic spaces, Indian, England and 'home UK' in her response.

At Mandip's, we had a friendly dialogue whilst her children vied for attention. They listened to some recordings on playback whilst we 'talked serious'. Mandip's perception of major news stories that week was the recession and property repossessions, Shannon Matthews, then Mumbai. She had heard about it through her Indian husband and then followed it on BBC television news and Star News, not seeing as much coverage as she would have liked. She was among the most involved, having a partner who regularly turned to Indian news, and unusually relayed a mass of information gleaned from the television.



She hadn't been to Mumbai but wasn't surprised because it was a selfish city where people looked out for themselves. She was shocked by the advanced plotting, engrossed in the media detail and reportage, in disbelief at the carnage, speculative about Pakistani involvement, and disturbed by the cowardice of terrorists resorting to violence in retaliation for grievances. However, she was underwhelmed and fatigued by the terrible events:

I think just like everybody else, it was very shocking, and hard to imagine that it happened, um, without anybody knowing that, you know, there was a such plan... I mean, for me, it's the same as probably watching even like 9/11. For me it's been another horrific terrorist attack, unfortunate terrorist attack affecting innocent people.

The reference to 9/11 recurred through these interviews as a point of comparison, showing that the media genre of 'disaster marathons' was already in informants' minds. Previous experience helped them to make sense not only of the attacks but also of the media coverage. Mandip's scrutiny of the situation in India revealed an extra connection to the country but she placed herself in a 'home' symbolic space by positioning herself as being 'like everyone else.'

The analysis has shown that so far informants both with and without personal links to the attacks were not greatly interested in this story, listing British news stories first, either mentioning Mumbai last or needing prompting to bring up the attacks. However, the fact of their taking place in India brought out a wave of *experiential knowledge* that was used to make sense of them. Informants were sympathetic but dispassionate, feeling the attacks could take place anywhere, and speculative of Pakistani involvement. They positioned themselves simultaneously in Indian, English and UK symbolic spaces.

### *c) Indian Versus English-Language Television Coverage of the Attacks*

Next I look at different ways in which informants perceived Indian and English-language coverage of the attacks. Mrs Bajwa viewed coverage once she

got home from India whilst they were still occurring, and didn't perceive much difference:

MB: I saw on the same news here, oh God, I can't remember which channel it was. It was English channel, maybe BBC1? I saw on that one, they were showing that that was happening. But because I already seen there, so it was a similar thing they were saying here as well. No difference.

CB: Really?

MB: What happened and how it happened, and things like that. How many killed and all that.

She switched back to Indian television but found that coverage of Mumbai had ended, with British news coverage continuing for an extra day.

Gurbax, who had dipped into the coverage from both countries, suggested that in their search for culprits, the Indian media had linked it to 'Islamic fundamentalists'. The UK media also linked it to Pakistan. She felt there were issues about 'how they deal with soft intelligence' but conflict in India was inevitable because of a contrast in lifestyle, cultural and religious expectations.

Mandip, who regularly watched Star News with her husband, was vocal on the differences between Indian and British news styles but knew that there had been media coverage everywhere: '...that was one time where, um, it was high profile news for I think anywhere. I think every country was probably reporting, 'cos it affected so many people...' This supports Couldry (2003) that, when combined, multiple and scattered media *outlets* could still create the feeling of a social centre for audiences further away. Despite her '*multiple media literacy*', Mandip found Indian news hard to follow because of the language, fast speech, and constant repeats of the same images, even when the commentary had moved on to another item. She got lost and had to wait for items to finish to understand the crux of them. 'Western news' was more direct and it was easier to pick out the main points from the headlines without having to watch a full bulletin. Inevitably her linguistic and stylistic familiarity with UK media made her literacy stronger in her country of birth and residence.

Star's and the BBC's coverage of Mumbai were very different, Star's being more graphic, taking the viewer inside the hotels with more follow-up commentary and reporting. It focused on the plotting, speculations about Pakistan being culprits, historical background, the police, army and resignations in government. The BBC focused on the safety of Britons and Americans, not why it happened, unlike after 7/7 where British news had looked at who was to blame and why, as with the US news after 9/11.

Mandip was reliant on the media for information, yet her '*multiple media literacy*' enabled her to glean the differences between media emphases in the grieving nation and a foreign nation that was home to a large Indian diaspora. Her previous experiences of 'disaster marathons' also helped her to make sense of the coverage. Paralleling Aksoy and Robins' (2003) Turkish informants, her difficulties in penetrating the Indian coverage made the BBC's coverage more accessible which may have contributed to distancing effect from the grieving nation's messages. More likely, because her daily life was played out in Britain, she felt a step removed from events.

Several informants had only seen the coverage on UK channels. Kamal Sahota had tuned into the UK's Punjab Radio for his resident mother, and coverage went on for two to three days, although he didn't hear much himself. He mainly viewed Sky News. Whilst visiting, I noted the largest flat screen television I have ever seen on the wall of their lounge. Kamal compared Mumbai to 9/11 in conversation with wife Charan:

KS: It was brilliant. As soon as it was happening they were showing the car, it was. I mean the whole thing, there was full coverage of it whilst it was going on.

CS: It did take over, didn't it?

KS: Yeah. But that's what's happening and everybody wants to know exactly. So yeah, it was good.

CB: No complaints?

KS: No. I think it's pretty good, Sky. Anything that happens, they get it on as fast as they can. Especially with live coverage. Even the 9/11. When it

happened. Remember, you were at work?

CS: Yeah.

KS: And I just came back from my shift, and I sat down and watched it and saw the next plane live, going into the building.

CB: That must have been so shocking.

KS: And I couldn't believe it, I thought it was a rescue plane, and the next thing you know, straight into the building.

His last comment suggests that the live epic genre of the 'disaster marathon' had registered in his mind following previous viewing experiences. He engaged critically with what he had seen on television, criticising the Indian military operation, feeling its special forces weren't properly trained, suggesting that if they had been, fewer lives would have been lost. He was also worried about the country's border security with Pakistan. Liebes has written: 'The extent of blaming the leadership depends on the extent to which these attacks were perceived as inevitable' (1998: 74), concurring with public criticism of the Indian government reported in the Indian media. Kamal was also impressed that Sky covered the Mumbai attacks from different angles with different perspectives (including a British Indian radio presenter commenting from Mumbai), responding that he generally looked to Sky for information in preference to the BBC, echoing findings in Morley (2000) and Ofcom (2007).

Mohinder Ghalal had been showering when I arrived for the post-Mumbai interview and came downstairs to deliver an impassioned response. He was of the view that the Mumbai story had dominated all the media he'd encountered, having watched it on Sky News and BBC News. He engaged with it in 'disaster marathon'-style, watching updated bulletins every fifteen minutes, and glancing at the headlines of newspapers, which he didn't often read through. 'I mean, suddenly they've forgotten about the recession!' he said. He immediately seized on the rumours in the media that '...a couple of them [*the terrorists*] are from Bradford...' and 'You think, "Hang on, hang on, slow down there, how do you know that?"' When I asked which media, he said 'You know, I think it

might be on the BBC news?’ Unlike Mandip, he was aware that the British media were delving into the angle of responsibility for the attacks, mentioning rumours from the intelligence services, speculating that the culprits could be Afghani, Pakistani or Middle Eastern, and reiterating vox pops from India: ‘...So now, you know, just, comments are made by people on the streets of Bombay saying, “Look, we’ve got to go to war with Pakistan.”’ As Liebes has written: ‘The less possible it is to point to the actual villain, the less the chance of satisfactory resolution, and the more powerful the role of television in providing the framing’ (1998: 74).

Sensitive to personal experiences of racism, Mohinder displayed the strongest response, suggesting that the coverage had impacted on him. He speculated over responsibility for the attacks, and the possible impact on Asians in Britain, also worrying about whether Pakistan had nuclear weapons and fearing for safety in the Punjab, speculating on Pakistani disillusionment towards the West, hostility between “Indian Sikhs” and Muslims, self-ghettoisation inside an Islamic way of life by some Muslims in the UK, Asian/white racism since 9/11 and a defence of “Sikhs” keen to ‘integrate’. He moved between what I describe as ‘facing’ the UK as a British Asian, Indian and “Sikh”, and a British citizen with opinions on the ‘less well-integrated’ Muslims, and then ‘facing’ India as a member of its diaspora abroad. Rather than being drawn in by the ‘disaster marathon’-style coverage, he was critical of it, feeling that repetitively calling in intelligence experts to comment exacerbated the impact of the atrocities. His response mirrors Liebes, who identified as an effect of ‘disaster marathons’ the fact that television takes over and puts impossible pressure on governments to take immediate action (1998: 83). The criticisms launched by members of the Indian public at their government were reported in media coverage, as already noted.

*d) Wider Impacts for India and for "Sikhs"*

Next I examine what informants perceived as the wider impacts for India, and for "Sikhs" as British passport-holders. Gurbax, Charan and Sarah had concerns for the Indian economy. With her distant personal link to a victim, Charan had spoken to relatives by phone: '...Like I said, the family in Florida. We spoke to them about it. And [Kamal's] sister who lives in India, she lives in Delhi, she's in Florida at the moment. And we had a good old discussion actually, because we said how this is really going to set India back with the trade and the tourism.' The personal link had prompted family members separated by the Atlantic to discuss the events together and speculate on the outcome as a result of their *experiential knowledge* of India. Sarah had perceived support and condolences in the British media and put it down to business links in India, commenting of Mumbai: 'I think it wouldn't be that great for the Indian economy, 'cos obviously tourism is what keeps Bombay - apart from the city industry - but tourism is a major part of it'. Both 'faced' India in these comments.

We have already seen how speculating on Pakistani involvement in the attacks was in the forefront of informants' minds, given their ancestral home in the border region of the Punjab, the known *Lashkar-e-Taiba* presence on the Pakistani side (Tankel, 2009: 29), and their own families' experiences during partition. This was also due to concerns about communal politics and violence in India, differences in lifestyle, cultural and religious expectations between the two countries, conflict in contested Kashmir, India's recent history of terrorist attacks, and relations between people of "Indian Sikh" and Pakistani Muslim origins abroad since 9/11. It is not possible from the interview data to conclude whether the media's hypothesising or already existent feelings about Pakistan prompted these ruminations, but clearly mutual reinforcement was going on.

The next set of responses reflects Baumann's (1995) dominant discourse, showing the demarcating of 'ethnic communities'. Mandip didn't think the attacks would affect ethnic communities outside India but felt that Pakistanis outside the Indian subcontinent could be affected. All the political speculation on television had made her suspicious, fitting Liebes' point about the powerful impact of television:

...I think it is suspicious, or does make you think, could it be them again? Because it's not only been the Indian government pointing the finger at them, and saying that they've got these camps in Pakistan and they're not going to explain, expose them. Because the whole world would be after them. But, you know, but there's no evidence, I just don't think...But, it is, you kind of believe it a little bit when there is, like, more than one government or more than one country or group of people pointing the finger at them.

Charan and Kamal, both firmly attached to their identities as British citizens, and speaking from the position of 'well-integrated' "Sikhs", were more certain it would affect UK Muslims:

CS: I think it's going to affect the Muslims...they're almost segregating themselves from the world, aren't they? The way they're carrying on. And it's a shame, because we have loads of lovely Muslim friends and again, you know, we're tarnishing them all with the same brush, and that's totally, totally wrong. But they just don't do themselves any favours, and I just think the divide is getting wider and wider between the Muslim world and the rest... I won't even say the Western world, almost the rest of the world. India's, you know.

Several "Sikhs" were fearful of retaliatory racism, including Mohinder. Moving between multiple symbolic spaces – British Asian, Indian and "Sikh" – he was afraid of skin-colour racism and sympathetic towards Pakistanis, but keen to differentiate "Sikhs" from them. He also admitted that 'Western' ways weren't always ideal:

...it has a knock-on effect on all other Asians. Because we're all brown, and nobody [*white people*] knows any difference between Muslims or Hindus or Sikhs.... there already is hostility between Sikhs and Indian Muslims, and people do, I mean...I take stuff from my [*British Sikh*] cousin, and stuff to do with what happened, making jokes about the Pakistani community, and it was to do with the bombing, uh... And it's sad, because, you know, a lot of these

people [*his cousin*] don't even have good Muslim friends... And the other thing is, uh, we [*Sikhs*] are more, more geared up to being more and more westernised, whereas the Muslims are saying, "Hang on, hold back here, we want to hold on to something of our culture", which might be their religion, or their way of life. They don't want to go totally the other way. Which is a fair thing. Because if you look at Western communities or the Western way of life, things ain't a 100% right...

Suddenly positioning himself as 'British' or 'Western' in a cultural alliance with America (having viewed another documentary on racism and criminality in the US on BBC2), he pondered on the legitimacy of 'our' focus on problems abroad:

...you look at what happens in London, I mean, and these sort of gangs, black gangs or white gangs, white on white or white on black. You know, something's not quite right in *our* [*own emphasis*] own back garden, and yet we're worried about what's going on in India and Pakistan and the Middle East. But what about this country? Why don't you focus on that? You know, why don't you put that on 24 hours? You know? Or what happens in America? I mean, in the inner-city slums, you know, Los Angeles, Philadelphia...

The discussion continued, Mohinder saying he understood the 'ressentiment' among white people in Bradford:

...I can understand why the white community is upset, because some of the Asian community really get priority over the white, by saying that, "Okay, we were born, our, you know, we're white" ...the same thing with the Asians, you know, they could say the same thing, if they were born in Britain and raised here... They [*white people*] feel...they should be looked after first before the Asians.

Since 9/11, he had noticed that interethnic relations had worsened: '...people don't understand each other's culture, and just learn to live with each other.' However, he thought that Britain would always be a 'white country', and referred to Gordon Brown's famous statement about British jobs for British workers, meaning white Britons, as one of many constant reminders about ethnic exclusion from the nation. His views contained contextual shifts. He switched between positions of allegiance from India, which involved suspicion of Pakistanis, to a diasporic position in Britain, where, from a pan-Asian vantage point, he was sympathetic to Pakistanis facing racism, but fearful of



being mistaken for Pakistani and keen to differentiate “Sikhs” as a separate ethnic and religious group. From the same position, he felt excluded from Britain as non-white and non-English and, as the next section will show, was ambivalent about his citizenship, while sometimes including and allying himself to the nation as a Briton.

Conversely, some informants feared being perceived as ‘British’, a foreign citizen, rather than ‘Indian’ in India. Newly returned from holiday, Sarah commented:

...My mum’s a bit in a better state, though, because she can still get away with blending in and being Indian, because the way she speaks Punjabi or Hindi is much better than me. But if I was there, which we had when we went to some of the tourist places, you will still get singled [*out*]... they will still spot you, and you’ll still be treated very differently... It’s just, “Oh, you’re from England, you’re British.”

Similarly, Charan joked that an association with ethnically English people could be dangerous:

...my cousin was going [*to India*] with Martin, his friend who’s English, and they were going off to Goa, so we were having a little laugh, and he said, “Just make sure you don’t walk with Martin,” he said, “I’ve told Martin, “You’ve got to walk over the other side of the road.”

Mohinder commented: ‘I think for me, being a British Indian is important. I mean, then again, it could be bad. As you saw on the news last week, these government, or bombers, they were looking for people with British passports or American passports, so is it a good thing to have a British passport?’ All of these responses point to ambivalence over their status and the associations of being a British citizen.

# 6.6 Case Study 2: “Polish” Consumption of Politics and Patriotic Broadcasts on TV: *Officially British and Emotionally Polish*

## 6.6.1 Consumption of British Versus Polish Diasporic Media

Unlike my “Sikh” informants, who rarely spoke about Indian television during routine viewing, several of the “Polish” families I visited regularly talked equally about both the British terrestrial news, mainly the BBC and occasionally ITV and Sky, and Polish news on the Polonia channels, the focus of this case study. Table 30 showed that BBC1 was the preferred channel for 76% of respondents, with ITV1 in second place at 47%, and Channel 4 at 41%. Table 38 shows a lower take up of non-terrestrial television than the “Sikhs”:

**Table 38: Ownership of Non-Terrestrial TV Equipment among “Polish” Respondents**

Ownership of Non-Terrestrial TV Equipment				
Ethnicity	Satellite TV	Cable TV	Digital Box	Base
Polish (%)	61	22	54	59

Whereas more of the older generation received TV Polonia, not all the second-generation received it, which seemed a matter of individual preference (see Burrell on Leicester, 2003: 331). Additional calculations on survey data showed that 31.6% of respondents in 30-44 age group viewed Polonia, with 46.7% in the 45-59 group and 53.3% in the 60 and over group, showing that viewing figures were higher with older people.

UK satellite channels on the ITV network scored the highest viewership of the non-terrestrial channels = 41%, with Channel 4 offshoot channels attracting the same percentage. This reflects a “Polish” preference for the factual programmes and historical documentaries shown on that channel. Tables 38, 39 and 44 in

Appendix III show the popularity of documentaries. Documentaries were the second most discussed genre after the news, which alongside British and Polish politics, was a main topic of general conversation, whether prompted or unprompted. Informants stipulated their hunger for information on what was happening at governmental and societal levels, as Burrell (2003) observed among her interviewees in Leicester. Of the satellite channels, the various channels broadcast on Polonia such as TVP1 and TVPInfo, a rolling news channel, followed close behind = 39%, followed by Sky = 24%. US entertainment channels = 27%. Other Polish channels had minuscule viewing figures, Travel Polish = 5%, entertainment channels Romantica and Wizja =2%. Of the diasporic press available, some interest was recorded but publications were rarely mentioned by second-generation informants. More were read by 'New Poles'. See table 34 on p283.

In discussion, Polish news from the Polonia network, the international channel of public service broadcaster Telewizja Polska (TVP), dominated. Funded by TVP and the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it broadcasts output from domestic channels plus news from diasporic communities around the world. It has a greater focus on cultural content and traditions than the domestic output, which is more similar to UK terrestrial output, with its specific intention of fostering links with the diaspora. Its intended impact was successful, as Tomasz Witmanowski told me: '...there is a very strong sense of belonging to the Polish nation, which I mean, you can tell with the satellite channel, you know, they try to project so many programmes to "Poles" around the world...yeah, it's almost like as if it's two nations, and get that from the news as well, there's a lot for "Poles" abroad, which builds a huge togetherness.' He uses the term 'nations' rather than 'communities' to describe the diaspora. Informants cited keeping up their Polish language, interest in traditions and cultural programmes, its educational value and following current affairs in Poland as reasons for

viewing. Kaz, a construction site manager in his late 40s whom I met at the Polish Club several times, told me that he used Polish television to get a Polish view of what was happening in England. Polonia was accessed either via satellite or a card inserted into a digital box, and subscribers received a package of channels including religious, history and cultural channels. Most people watched Polonia at home although it was also available in the bar of the Polish club (see also Burrell, 2003: 329). It was consumed to different degrees in each family, ranging from occasional to attentive nightly viewing. In several of the families I visited repeatedly, it was often playing in the background when I arrived for interviews and ran unobtrusively underneath the conversation. Otherwise, it was switched on for my benefit, with informants keen to explain what was being said and referring to visual examples. A common habit was to flick between TVP and the BBC news bulletins at 6 and 10 o'clock to obtain contrasting viewpoints on news stories, and conversations were rife with comparisons of both nations' media and political cultures. Embracing her '*multiple media literacy*', Klara Witmanowska told me that: '...it's good because you can get a different perspective – you can see two sides of the stories, whereas if you didn't have the other language you're limited as to what ideas you get...' The Polish diaspora was hungry for news and historical and religious programmes because Poland's own media had been repressed and censored for so long, and there was a shortage of information from Poland during communism (see also Burrell, 2003: 329). The opening-up of Polish media has allowed the diaspora to become re/acquainted with the country, 'reducing the cultural gap of 60 years' (Burrell, 2003: 330) for exiles and the second-generation.



**Figure 41: Polish Satellite Dish**

Polish news was mostly discussed with greater excitement than British news, which was the source of gripes during home interviews (see Chapter 5). Unlike the previous case study, where a single ‘extraordinary news event’ prompted “Sikhs”, who usually focused on UK media, to use their ‘*multiple media literacy*’ to reflect on two countries’ media and politics (three if Pakistan is included), this was routine conversation on visits to Polish households. Although informants’ feelings crystallised during a ‘media event’, this case study also follows routine comparisons between British and Polish news, particularly international affairs, prompting a critique of the British government’s conduct in public sphere-style. Also, the graphic, honest and uncensored style of Polish reportage in comparison to British reporting unfurled a cultural critique of UK society as repressed by the climate of political correctness, which was compared unfavourably to communism. It was seen as hindering expressions of nationalism and patriotism in England, these being highly valued as cultural ideologies in the Swindon diaspora and in Poland (see Garapich, 2008). The high profile given to coverage of ceremonial and commemorative events on Polonia such as a celebration of the Polish constitution, and religious festivals, stimulated greater interest in Polish culture and society than comparable British occasions. I explore this through the example of responses to a Swindon community outing to the patriotic parade in London broadcast on Polonia.

Historical programmes with a tone of reproach for inadequate recognition by the British of Polish troops' contribution during the Second World War and resentment for Allied actions during the Yalta Treaty (see also Burrell, 2004; Garapich, 2008: 9) were also championed, reflecting refugee attitudes inherited from the older generation.



Figure 42: Diasporic Television?

### 6.6.2 Politics and International Affairs on British and Polish TV News

Offering comparative points of view, informants raised a string of points to critique British news for being 'too politically correct', a defence strategy against the perceived negative effects of social change for the worst. These critiques aimed at reaffirming ontological security. These included verbal and visual representations of international affairs, the news agenda itself, politicians' self-presentation in the news, warning of critical events given to audiences, and journalists' interview techniques.

Relaxing at the dining-room table, Zofia Ciechanowicz was one of many who said (in a soft Swindonian accent): 'I think that the British media is very censored...and you only get one side.' She often found herself switching from 'English news' to Polonia because she expected to get more information there. During the recent Iraq conflict, she and husband Ryszard preferred Polonia's coverage because it showed different points of view, unlike British news, even though Polish troops were fighting on the Allied side. It was less biased towards the Polish government's point of view:

Zofia: Well, Poland was the only European country that went in with them, so they were backing the British and the Americans, but only because they thought it would be good for international relations or whatever. But, I mean, they've lost a lot of soldiers there as well. But what they did show, I remember watching a lot about the war, they showed it from a Muslim perspective, they showed it from the local Iraq perspective, and you know, all these people criticising it and saying how bad it was and they don't want the British and Americans there, and you wouldn't hear a word of it on British telly.

She was one of several who valued the multiple view-points on Polonia. During the conflict, Zofia had seen perspectives offered from Israel, from reporters gathering local opinions in Chicago, New York, London and other locations around the world, daring to present a global and not just national opinion base.

On one visit, the entire Witmanowski clan was hovering in the kitchen cooking. The TV was showing the *Olympics*, and the parents plus mature 17-year-old son Krzysztof settled around the dining-room table to talk before he had to leave for Tae Kwon Do. Klara and Krzysztof began before I requested Tomasz' participation too. Their younger daughter remained in the kitchen. At first Tomasz dominated before the family fell into a discussion and listened intently to each other. As well as offering more viewpoints, Tomasz said 'It's [*Polonia*] more interesting.' Klara and Krzysztof agreed that the headline stories changed every day, whereas a single story such as the disappearance of toddler

Madeline McCann would dominate British news for weeks, which could overshadow key global stories unfolding. 'There's so much going on in the world and that's all they can focus on – I realise it's a big story. It's not that I'm not sympathetic, but every day?!'

Of Polish news, Zofia said another time: 'Their current affairs is worldwide and it's a little bit more liberal than ours.' Her use of object pronouns 'they' and 'ours' suggests that she saw herself as rooted in Britain but bound by affinity to Poland, watching its television from a distance. Polish television supplied more in-depth, 'media event'-style coverage during major international crises such as Iraq and 9/11. Zofia had seen rolling coverage of the twin towers on mainstream Polish news for days whereas the British terrestrial broadcasters interrupted coverage with ordinary programmes.

Many raised the point that the English news focused on a greater proportion of domestic stories in comparison to Polish, and that international coverage was dominated by US affairs reported in a subservient manner, particularly during the Presidential Elections of 2008. Informants thought that the UK was too friendly to America and under its influence. Krzysztof said:

Makes you feel like...like they were saying that Britain is the last state of America...I think it makes you feel that way because there is more coverage of the election in America than of any other thing, which some people in living in Britain or England might feel more important than the presidential election.

Coverage became boring and went on too long, focusing for example, on a series of ageing black activists. Polish news reported on the elections but didn't allow them to dominate the news agenda, and made clear the positive outcomes for Polish-American relations. These included the Star Wars anti-missile programme, with Poland supplying the US with planes. English news didn't reveal what it meant for Britain. Tomasz said: '...it doesn't talk about that an awful lot, apart from that Gordon Brown sent his congratulations!' Polish



media, according to Tomasz, was 'more balanced...' US stories were told at the expense of stories from other parts of the world. Hurricane Wilma overshadowed: '...an earthquake in Kurdesia [*Kurdistan*]. I never heard it on the news last week...' (Roman Wilowski), and an earthquake in Pakistan: 'British news totally ignored it' (Tomasz). Many found Polish news more diverse and informative.

It was generally agreed that British news coverage of international stories reflected and endorsed the government's position in international relations. Krzysztof felt that this was because of what he saw as Britain's desired position in the world: 'I think they portray themselves as this power and they're big and all great because politically, they are. Because they've got status in the world. And they've got their friends. It's just America.' His use of object pronouns suggests that he saw himself outside the 'they' of establishment Britain with his Polish affinities, touching on Gamson's 'injustice frame' (1992) where an uncertain 'they' is in opposition to 'us'.

The Witmanowskis were highly conscious of the differences in the self-presentation and rhetorical styles of UK and Polish politicians. Polish politicians were more ready to admit fault, were 'less big-headed about themselves' and their portrayal of Poland was 'more realistic' (Krzysztof and Tomasz). British politicians would never admit anything was wrong. Tomasz explained:

Here, the politicians, whatever you ask them, Gordon Brown or the Chancellor of the Exchequer, they will drum out the same old mantra about we've had ten years of constant economic growth, we've invested in schools, we've put roofs on thirty thousand ... they give the same statement every time, whereas in Poland they will quite readily admit they've got problems with the economy. They need to improve particular social policies, you know, maybe their social services isn't good enough.

However, British media produced better investigative reporting and more documentaries showing grim social realities.

These important omissions of fault riled the 'Swindon Poles'. Tomasz explained that the 'truth' was important to "Poles": '...because for all this time Polish people have received what the communists wanted them to know. It's only just over the last few years that the news and the programmes are coming out – current things and the way things were – they're bringing out the truth.' The issue of trust in media and government was of consequence for informants. Tomasz and Klara trusted the BBC and ITV but felt there was a 'better balance' on Polish television. As Wanda Wilowski asked: 'Well, England doesn't really tell the truth, or who tells the truth?' Husband Roman answered: 'It's all biased really. Everybody says it from their point of view and here for what is politically correct....' Wanda was the calmer of the two. Roman tended to 'entertain' with animated smalltalk whilst waiting for his wife to prepare tea and cake pre-interview.

Polish politicians were less image conscious on television. Tomasz remarked:

I've noticed in England they tend to chase politicians, don't they? And in Poland, if they do the same, the politician doesn't care if he's on TV, he'll swing around and say "Excuse me, bugger off"! You'll see it. Whereas in the British news, the next day it would be in the paper, "Minister swears on TV."

Klara pointed out: 'For a long time, Poland was restricted very much as to what we could broadcast, what they could say and everything. But they are loosening up a bit....' She switched to an inclusive 'we', positioning herself in line with Poland, but then reverted to 'they'. The diasporic position, it seems, was to be both included in a national 'we' and at the same time, excluded from the more distant nation's 'they'.

More open debates were being televised in Poland, it was felt, showing issues discussed in depth. Political conflict was shown on TV, politicians calling each other 'village idiots', 'real down-to-earth stuff, honest and refreshing' (Tomasz), whereas on the British news, any interviewees whose articulations contained

conflict were managed politely and non-confrontationally. The Witmanowskas appreciated British journalists' such as Jeremy Paxman's confrontational, terrier-like interview technique if it meant a chance to get at 'the truth'. It instilled greater confidence in a journalist but it also created a style of blame before the discussion had even begun.

Lack of freedom of expression was flagged as a major irritation in the British media. Alternating between standing in the doorway and pacing around his through-front-room, casually dressed Ryszard Ciechanowicz explained:

...the difference between current affairs there – well, basically between the West and Poland – is they haven't got the political correctness there. They will tell you exactly how it is and they don't care who they offend. And here people think, "Oh, I can't really say that because it's not politically correct."

He gave the example of a vote in the European parliament where the Polish prime minister responded to Germany having more votes by quipping that they had a bigger population due to the murder of thirty million "Poles" by the Nazis during the Second World War. People were scandalised but the Polish media didn't care because it was the truth uncensored by political correctness.

As already indicated, the issues of the influence of the British government on the media and trust in the media, particularly the BBC, was much discussed. The Ciechanowiczes didn't trust the government or media, claiming it just reported what the government said, but they did trust the BBC. It was in general harder these days, with 'censorship of the media' due to political correctness. During an interview, Krzysztof and Tomasz were also unsure:

KW: I've always been a bit cautious. I'm a bit cautious about the validity of what you hear. Because a lot of it is, what the government allows it to be in the news. And I think...

TW: The government doesn't control the news.

KW: Maybe not control it, but they influence it. I believe they influence it.

TW: They influence it by, maybe by they release a limited amount of information...

KW: But that's what I mean.

TW: But what the BBC relays is that information. And it's factual. That's the trust bit. I'm not saying do we get the whole story or not, I'm saying that if the BBC verifies something they tell us, do we believe them?

They felt that overall the situation was probably satisfactory although the BBC tried to influence the British public with establishment views.

On the subject of information-sharing, Poland's media had changed direction since communism, becoming liberal. Britain, on the other hand, perceived itself as a liberal society, though in fact information was strictly controlled. Several informants, including Roman and Wanda, pointed out that the British media hadn't reported much on swine flu in the early days in a government attempt not to scare the public, but that there had been too much reporting of it later on. The Wilowskis each told a long story while the other waited for their turn and I often acted as moderator to make sure each got to say all they wanted. They made the point that Russian and Polish television gave audiences more advanced warning of events of global significance. For example, a scientific experiment being carried out in Switzerland to replicate the Big Bang was reported several months in advance, whereas the British news informed the public one week ahead.

Finally, the visual presentation of images on Polish news was perceived as more graphic than on British news and this again was associated with a quest for the 'truth'. At our first meeting, Ryszard had loitered in the kitchen and signalled that Zofia should be interviewed. She sat at the table alone, ready. I asked him to join in, and after Zofia and I started to chat, he quickly participated. They commented on the 'watershed' on British television, with Ryszard explaining that he wished to control what his children watched rather than have it imposed by the media. He acknowledged that representations should be managed but felt that Britain was more restricted than Poland. He put it down to UK experiences of child abuse and cruelty and the need for preventative measures. Polish channels more readily showed disturbing images

and 'gory details' such as bodies covered in blood, whereas when the BBC broadcast coverage of Israeli attacks in Gaza, 'the Gaza war' as Zofia put it, a warning was issued to viewers before the 10 o'clock news to alert them to the 'distressing images'. Zofia reacted saying:

... when my kids watch the telly, they'll watch the Polish telly and they'll see all the people starving... or they'll see a war situation where there's lots of bodies, dead bodies and stuff. I don't mind them seeing that, because that is the truth. Yeah? That is what's going on, and you can explain to them, "This is happening because of that." And, you know, "This is really serious," right? Where in England they'll say, "Well there's a war here", but they won't show any how gory and how horrific it is.

For a moment, she appeared to step outside the English frame as if looking in from the outside, somewhere where 'they' [*broadcasters*] did things that 'she' wasn't a part of. Being exposed to graphic images was necessary to cultivate a real sense of empathy with victims and an understanding of conflicts. She thought that children found it hard to tell the difference between fantasy and 'truth' from the English media. These views run contrary to Aksoy and Robbins' (2003) Turkish informants in London who condemned the Turkish news for showing more explicit scenes of violence and bloodshed than British television, which demeaned their viewing experience.

The positions informants spoke from during these discussions reveal diasporic consciousness at work, with informants shifting between senses of exclusion and inclusion in Poland and Britain, and a continuous awareness of 'there' and 'here'. These shifts are found throughout this ethnography.

### **6.6.3 Society Controlled by Political Correctness**

A common trait of conversations comparing Polish and British news and bringing up issues of censorship and control was that they led into deeper

discussions on the state of society in both countries. All were underscored by the same theme that Britain had become a more controlled society than Poland. Less affected by a politically-correct climate, Poland was a freer and less strict society, but in a more old-fashioned way. At the Ciechanowicz, Polonia was switched on during the interview. Zofia said: '...they are a bit behind in some ways, aren't they? I'm thinking of – we're on the beach [*on holiday*] and loads of kids are running around naked, which is fine by me but you wouldn't have it in this country.' This time, 'they' represented another nationality among whom she was holidaying. She described 'them' as twenty years behind but didn't know whether it was better or worse. She also felt English people had less respect for each other than "Poles". She'd seen a memorial for Jewish Holocaust victims in a Krakow street standing freely with flowers and candles. Had it been in England, all the items would have been stolen off it. Locating himself as a UK resident, Ryszard said: 'We live in a different world now, don't we?', adding 'We've sort of moved on a little bit and people don't say certain things because it's not politically correct.' However, materially speaking, England was in a better state than Poland, and they still preferred living here.

A few informants highlighted the mass of CCTV cameras in British towns as a sign of social control. Chatting to me at a table in the club bar, Kaz cynically including himself in a British 'we', said: 'If you actually look at this, we're now more of a police state than the communist system ever was. You saw a book about it...there are more cameras walking around the UK than the rest of the world combined.' Speaking from her dining-room, Zofia didn't mind the cameras if they protected her personal safety, but Ryszard pointed out they didn't: '...you had your purse taken...in the middle of the [*Swindon*] town centre, and they couldn't tell you who it was, because that camera wasn't working. So that's pathetic.' These informants drew attention to other modern ways in which they perceived the establishment to be imposing social control.

Adopting an 'injustice frame' to discuss a vaguely-defined establishment, Kaz's mate Stan, sitting across the table, told me: '...they're using this terrorism now to scare people so they can get all these laws through the back door. They're even on about checking people's *Myspace* today.' Kaz added: 'They've been checking emails for ages anyway so hey, it's ridiculous.' They were suspicious of plans to introduce ID cards and thought that 'they' were monitoring use of Nectar cards to keep tabs on personal spending and check that people were paying the right taxes. 'They' were also 'collecting' more public computers. Volunteer Polish teacher Zofia sighed: '...I suppose it's just a sign of the times. So many rules for rules' sake. You know, Health and Safety, you have to fill in a form before you cross the road with the children. They don't leave it up to common-sense anymore.' Kaz and Stan likened these state interventions to the presence of the KGB in daily-life.

Informants' biggest irritant was the impact of political correctness on freedom of speech. Stan told me: 'There's no freedom. You know, people are actually scared to...even talking to you.' Some Polish and "English" informants (as discussed in Chapter 3 and 4) were unwilling to express their views of different ethnic, racial and religious groups for fear of being branded as racists. Ryszard told me: '...we haven't got freedom of speech because you know, with someone of colour, if I said "You're black", then that's racist, but if he said "You're white", then that's OK.' His wife agreed: 'It is a bit of a double standard.' I had found Kaz and Stan at a folk activity I'd attended to search for interviewees. No-one had volunteered but out of pity, they stepped forward, and I met them soon afterwards. They were vocal with anecdotes to illustrate the perceived hypocrisy such as a white man beaten up by Asian men in Rotherham barely mentioned in the news, but when the incident was recorded as racism on the BNP website, the news spread quickly. Stan sometimes consulted its website for an 'alternative perspective' as well as following the BBC, *Google News*

website, *The Times* newspaper and Classic FM radio. 'I just try and get everybody's point of view,' he said. He thought that if the victim had been Asian, the British media would have blown it 'sky high'.

Like the "English" informants in Chapter 4, these men's views surrounding other migrants and racism were complex and contradictory. In spite of these "Poles'" frustrations at the reporting of white and Asian racism, both had complained that their refugee parents had suffered racism at the hands of the English and both were defensive of racism suffered by recent Polish migrants (see Chapter 3). By way of explanation, these findings reflect Garapich's research (2008) in London with the first-generation and community leaders who rejected the term 'ethnic-minority', seeking rather to maintain a self-image of themselves as distinct from other ethnic groups living in the UK. One leader told Garapich that being called an ethnic-minority: '...puts us on the same level as Hindus and blacks.'<sup>99</sup> Certainly my informants were often keen to stress how their parents and grandparents 'never asked anything' of the English, and were therefore not a drain on public resources as they perceived of other migrant groups. On balance, however, Kaz and Stan were also aware that the BNP would report selectively on crimes giving weight to their cause, and were interested in the way that an Asian postmaster who lost his job for refusing to serve customers unless they spoke English had been labelled a racist. They felt sure that political correctness played into the hands of the BNP. Stan said: '...for people like that to actually exist is frightening. But they're going to grow stronger and stronger because of those liberal-minded people that are so politically correct.' Kaz felt that political correctness wasn't liberal at all:

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<sup>99</sup> As further explanation, Garapich (2008: 19) wrote: 'Historically, Poles in the UK were well connected to the Conservative Party and successfully used their white, middle-class, pro-Empire and pro-monarchy and anti-communist status to gain access to power. Emphasising ethnicity too much would have meant having to share the multicultural pie with others on an equal footing.'



'They're [*pc liberals*] actually looking at the other people and turning around and saying, "This is what you've got to think."'

Numerous informants pointed out that "Poles" were widely perceived as racist, however. Zofia thought it was because Poland's population was overwhelmingly white and Catholic, unlike multi-ethnic Britain. Their position was somewhere in between, influenced by Polish conservatism but moulded in the context of multi-ethnic Swindon and Britain.

Sipping from his pint, Stan remarked that he'd observed, from reading comments posted on British news websites by people in other countries, that internationally, political correctness had made the UK a laughing stock. He had seen a news item on television where British people had been demonstrating against British soldiers for fighting in overseas conflicts and the soldiers were heckled by 'Asian people, Muslims.' He was outraged at the lack of patriotism and had overheard some Englishmen discussing it, saying: '...two guys were talking and one goes "What did you think of that?" And the other says "I can't tell you, I'll carry on outside". That is like living in a communist state. That says it all.' He felt disconnected from his country of residence because of its lack of patriotism. Kaz also commented, reluctantly seeing himself in a British frame:

...you've got our ministers going abroad and turning around and saying they're embarrassed to be British when they should play *Hope and Glory*... How can you be a minister and be embarrassed of your own country? You shouldn't even have to think it in the first place.

Political correctness stifled patriotism and was more totalitarian in its impact. People in Britain had no guiding force or modern idols greater than themselves to look up to. Kaz and Stan were dismayed by the choice on offer:

Stan: Jane Goody. Yeah. We believe in Jade Goody. I swear by.... That's what it's got to. Exactly. How the media is so corrupt.

Kaz: Yeah, but she's been sanctified. First off she came out she's a foul-mouthed, basically a racist.

Stan: We don't know for sure because that could have been put on.

Kaz: Whatever. Even so, you know, she's now our saint. It's like, what was it, George Best the footballer, you know, he played for about a year in the Premier League. Alcoholism. And now he's got an airport named after him.

Stan: Poor Jade. We love her really. On the news today it says "The nation mourns".

Stan: That shows the state of this country. That says it all. That sums it all up.

#### **6.6.4 Reporting of Ceremonial Events, Patriotism and Retribution**

##### ***a) 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Polish Independence: A Diasporic Media Event***

If political correctness, the lack of patriotism and unimpressive national idols jarred with the 'Swindon Poles', then the frequent ceremonial broadcasts on Polish television whet their inherited appetite for patriotism. Better still, Polonia provided an opportunity for them to participate in a ceremonial broadcast, a '*diasporic media event*', held on British soil and transmitted to the diaspora around the world. On Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2008, a coach load of first- and second-generation 'Old Poles' left their club in rainy Swindon. I had flu so was unable to join them. They were bound for Whitehall to celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the foundation of the modern Polish state at the end of the First World War, on 11<sup>th</sup> November 1918. It had all the ingredients of a classic 'media event' (cf. Dayan and Katz, 1992): aimed at recharging national identity, celebrating the nation, renewing loyalty to the establishment and commemorating the end of a crisis (war). The group included gentlemen from the Polish Ex-servicemen's Association in uniform with medals and red-and-white sashes to represent the Polish flag, Scouts and Girl Guides in uniform, and other lay enthusiasts. Fitting the criteria of being pre-planned in the TV schedule, a media presence had been established beforehand. Two weeks ahead, Klara whooped: '...we've got a very big event coming up here in London to which all the Polish people are going to, and in fact it's been publicised a lot on the Polish TV, and they're actually coming!...they've been talking about it

every day really for the last couple of days.' Krzysztof added: 'Yeah, they're going to have cameramen there and everything recording it!'

Informants told me that on arrival in London, the "Poles" were dropped off at Victoria ready for a mass at Catholic Westminster Cathedral. They were joined by coachloads from Polish parishes up and down the country but disappointingly few 'New Poles'. Polonia cameras were evident inside the cathedral where Poland's Primate, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, and 'guardian of the diaspora', Archbishop Szczepan Wesoly, led a Mass of Thanksgiving. Afterwards, crowds poured from the packed nave, before Polish flags were distributed and also handed out to passing Chinese and Japanese tourists who waved them in support as the "Poles" began a march. 'That really made our day', my assistant Krystyna smiled. The parade, led by the Polish Navy band, featured various Polish organisations in uniform and lay people singing patriotic songs. They marched down Victoria Street, past Westminster Abbey, up Whitehall past the Cenotaph and Downing Street then on to Trafalgar Square. Krystyna remembered that the Duke of Edinburgh had laid wooden crosses with poppies in the grounds of Westminster Abbey as they passed, with the British Remembrance Sunday parade the next day. Klara described the parade: 'I think every town had their own banner with the name of the town on it and everything. And there were people there in national costume, and it was a good event. Very friendly.' 'The atmosphere was lovely – there's no doubt about it,' Krystyna said. Once in Trafalgar Square, a rally, organised by a coalition of Polish organisations, was held and a festive spirit ensued. From a stage, dignitaries such as the ambassador to London, the Cardinal and leading clerics, the last émigré President of the Republic of Poland, British MPs in London constituencies with large Polish populations, and the deputy mayor of London addressed the assembled crowd with speeches in Polish and English. Taking Dayan and Katz's (1992) conceptualisation into diaspora territory, it

was orchestrated by state institutions in the diaspora (see Garapich, 2008 on how these are officially tied to the government in Poland). The Polish speakers offered stirring messages to the diaspora drawing attention to Polish roots and identity no matter what the country of birth, expressing pride at standing 'side by side with British friends' after fighting 'side by side' with the Allies during the Second World War, and praising the bravery of the pilots who gave their lives for the British, as well as general declarations of patriotism.<sup>100</sup> A Polish choir, orchestra and dancers performed patriotic songs, some from the Second World War, and a famous rock star from the Solidarity era, Grzegorz Strozniak, also performed. TV Polonia cameras filmed the rally. '...they were supposed to have a little stand and be giving away T-shirts and hats. And I saw one or two people wearing hats, and umbrellas with TV people on them,' explained Tomasz. Krystyna recounted: '...at the end of that, they sang the Polish national anthem and then they sang the British – or English – national anthem 'God Save the Queen'. Is that an English national anthem or British? But it was so nice because we sang the Polish national anthem and 'God Save the Queen'. Many people filmed the event with video cameras, and footage was uploaded on *You Tube* afterwards. Krystyna was quite overcome: 'It was an extremely interesting day – quite an emotional day, I think as well, when you think about why we were there.' A bus returned the "Poles" to Swindon, and after that, informants viewed the broadcast on Polonia, responding to the media coverage and the event in interview.

#### ***b) Responses to Patriotic Broadcasts, History and Retribution***

Some time afterwards, I visited the Witmanowskis. Klara offered me a herbal tea and home-made cup cake with a cream topping. Their children were upstairs. Polonia was on low in the background and didn't interfere with the

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<sup>100</sup> See Burrell (2004) and Garapich (2008) on how the 'Polish diasporic imagination' is dominated by accounts of forced migration, political exile, struggles for independence and the Second World War.

interview. Tomasz told me that the television broadcast had featured a lot of interviews in the days beforehand, and his family thought that it was 'good' and 'fantastic' without describing it much. More noteworthy were the wider commentaries on history, patriotism and other media representations that it triggered. Brought up more was annoyance at the lack of coverage in the British media. Klara was disappointed that the parade hadn't made the 'English central news' given the large number of "Poles" migrating into Britain. Her husband may have seen it in the papers, such as a small piece in *The Times*. At her house, Krystyna 'thought it was strange' that there was only a small item on the BBC news website but not the broadcast news, and it affirmed that 'I always think that the BBC's a bit biased anyway.' First marginalised in wartime commemorations, now the "Poles" were being marginalised in the media.

Because Krystyna was Swindon-born to refugee parents and 1918 was a long time ago, the march hadn't meant much to her in one respect, but she was happy to celebrate it on her parents' and Polish-born friends' behalf. It led to thoughts of Remembrance Sunday, about which she declared, while loitering in her kitchen: 'Oh, I watch it every year.' Her late husband, British born of Polish ancestry, had been an ex-RAF serviceman, and one year he'd seen "Poles" marching in the parade and 'actually had tears rolling down his face...' She was more emotional about this parade, saying: '...to me it's very important because it's history and it's what's happened in the past and when you see all these veterans marching or in their wheelchairs I just get so emotional.' I asked whether she felt more for the Polish or British, and she replied: 'Both, no distinction for me. You know, people suffered either way. "Poles" fought for the British and the British went to war because of Poland being invaded. Works both ways for me.' Her balanced position was unusual.

The Witmanowskis' emotions towards the event were also marked by historical meanings. Shifting between 'we' and 'they', Tomasz told me in a proud manner

that simply ‘...we gained independence’, then went on to explain that it meant freedom from three superpowers, Germany, Russia and Austria-Hungary. He felt that the occasion had been political for “Poles” in Britain because after the war:

Poles weren’t allowed to march in the Victory Parade with the soldiers. And yet, you know, they had two squadrons in the Battle of Britain and the Polish Free Army which fights in Poland. They were denied that opportunity. So a lot of people saw that as a bit of a poke in the eye, and yeah, we are actually here fighting.

‘New Poles’ spoke of the hunger in Poland for information from the media about the war, which loomed large in the Polish psyche for its suffering and also because concentration camps were located there. The preoccupation was just as intense in the diaspora. Back in the bar, Kaz explained that he viewed the Historia channel via Polonia which delved into issues that had been censored under the communist regime. They broadcast information about the Polish and British forces that hadn’t been disclosed in Britain either, despite the lack of formal censorship. Kaz was angry that the Polish weren’t allowed to march after the war and faced racism on arrival in Britain. He said: ‘It was lack of information maybe, the lack of knowledge that people didn’t understand what contribution the Polish made.’ His friend Stan was of the opinion that he needed Polish and British television because: ‘...I’ve always said that history is really a distorted view of the facts because it depends who writes the history. And that’s why you need the whole picture because you don’t know.’ The Witmanowskis were also enthusiastic about documentaries viewed on Polonia revealing a ‘true’ picture of what happened. Seeming to attach himself to neither Poland nor Britain, Krzysztof equated Polish media constructions of wartime history with ‘the truth’, perhaps showing where his affinities lay:

...I would say you see it from the most accurate perspective – because I find reading about them in the English media or watching it in an English historical programme that they don’t cover – they always – not being mean – I just find that if it’s an English programme on, say the Polish effort, they’ll glorify

themselves and they'll kind of say "Yes, I guess the Poles did this." But then I find the British and the Americans they're more glorified because they did play a more central role but then you do see, if you look, actually they had their faults...

Zofia and Ryszard hadn't attended the London parade but had viewed it on television and made direct comparisons to patriotic public occasions and broadcasts in Britain. Zofia's mother had gone, and her parents also took part in Remembrance Sunday marches. Labelling herself a "Pole", Zofia said: 'See we integrate, we integrate with other nations.' During a morning interview on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008, Ryszard, concerned that I hadn't yet seen the coverage, switched on the television to show 'live' Polonia coverage of another 'media event', a patriotic ceremony in Warsaw. It marked the End of the Second World War and he translated the verbal relay into English for me. The director of the Polish War Museum was being interviewed and the Prime Minister was on hand. The Polish army marched up to their Cenotaph with different flags and dignitaries stood watching in the main square in Warsaw. The commentary comprised a discussion between guests explaining the precise history for viewers, army protocol, and facts and figures. According to Zofia, this made the event accessible and interesting for all.

The programme inspired her to tell me that Polish television was much more successful at promoting social bonding than the British media. Zofia could barely recall any events televised on British television that could compare except Remembrance Sunday and possibly *Trooping the Colour*. The Wilowskis also commented that Polish television was better at screening large-scale 'media events', for example, the more spectacular and flamboyant New Year celebrations. They were a reason to stay home, unlike watching Big Ben strike 12. The Ciechanowiczses also liked its festive religious programmes about, for example, Christmas, '...because I think it reinforces what the family traditions and values are all about...' said Zofia. The depth of explanation made viewers

feel included. Zofia: 'I think actually Polish telly really promotes social bonding and really tells people what's going on. Maybe that's why people like the news. They like to know what's going on and feel a part of it.' By contrast, there weren't enough 'live' 'media events' on British television. She listed the switching on of the Christmas lights in central London as a ceremony which would make nice live television. She said: '...in England, everything's censored, and then they're too scared of people saying the wrong thing. Here, they can come out with anything they like, because it's all live, and they're not really that bothered about it, getting into trouble about it.' She acknowledged with minimal interest that British television showed fly-pasts, coronations, and royal weddings. She watched sporting events such as the *Red Bull* air show, the *Grand National*, and *Grand Prix*, occasionally stayed in for the New Year coverage, and kept tabs on political events and elections. By contrast, she didn't watch patriotic events on British television such as Remembrance Sunday, and wouldn't watch Prince Charles' coronation as and when it occurred. '...I just think it's all sold out fashion, and pompous.' She wasn't a fan of the Queen or royal family, saying: '...they're getting a very bad press... They're creaming the system, you know. They've got enough of their own money...' With husband Ryszard, she had, however, viewed Diana's funeral. He commented: 'That was gripping. Because she was a very nice woman.' Zofia continued: 'That was a major thing. But that's the type of thing Poland would do more of. Anybody famous, really.' The regularity of stirring occasions aimed at unifying the public on Polish television appealed to her patriotism. In one of few articulations of identity during news talk, she couldn't think of what British events would draw in her interest: 'I've been brought up here...as English as anybody else, you know, went to an English school...but I don't know what English traditions are. I can't put my finger on any English traditions.' Being raised as Polish, she said: 'I know more about Polish history and religion than about English history and religion. But then English history doesn't grab me.' Her identity orientation



shifted during the conversation. Her husband agreed with her. It was hard even to define English culture. Between them, they listed Morris dancing, drinking beer in pubs, nightclubs, tea, driving on the left, the Royal Family, sport, and football hooligans behaving badly abroad. She didn't differentiate herself from her English friends, though: 'They take me as I am.'

The Witmanowskas preferred Polish culture. Klara said: 'Poland has got so much to offer – the culture and the traditions and thing – they're wonderful.' Tomasz admitted of Britain that: 'I suppose it has a very rich cultural history here.' However, it was obvious from British television that it was a 'strong independent nation' which Poland wasn't. They were disappointed with England. Klara: 'I think England has lost a lot of its fineness.' "Poles" were more patriotic and the English had no pride in their nation. "Poles" were at least self-aware. Tomasz:

...you see all the football things and the English flag and the cross of St George, but I don't think these people actually know what that means. They would say they are huge patriots, but I wonder if they know that that involved having a pride in your community and in your street, and you know, having an input, a commitment, contribution. Not going to football and beating up a load of French guys when you are drunk because they are not English...

Kaz and Stan, who were frequently vocal on the loss of patriotism, liked 'old Britain' and British history. Kaz said:

It was different. People had values. And there's still a load of people with good values, but now, of course, the latest buzz word now. If you've got an opinion against things you don't like, they call you a bigot. You're a bigot. And that really gets up my nerves. When somebody holds something dear, you know, values, and I [*was*] just thinking the other day, watching '*Remembrance*' [*Sunday*]. And I thought to myself, just imagine those soldiers that went and fought for this country and died. If they only knew what it was going to be like now...they must be turning in their graves.

He was horrified that the occasion had received criticisms for 'glorifying war'.

### 6.7 Case Study 3: *Britain on the World Stage: “English” Views*

The subject area where “English” informants’ scant comments on international affairs clustered around a common theme were reflections on Britain’s reputation outside the nation-state, with informants looking outwards to the global horizon and contextualising their country on the ‘world stage’. These remarks are the focus of this section. The breadth of terrestrial and non-terrestrial news sources consumed by the “English” was detailed in Chapter 5. Like the “Sikhs”/“Poles”, ownership of non-terrestrial devices was high:

**Table 39: Ownership of Non-Terrestrial TV Equipment among “English” Respondents**

Ownership of Non-Terrestrial TV Equipment				
Ethnicity	Satellite TV	Cable TV	Digital Box	Base
English (%)	56	39	61	87

Again television news was the most discussed source. One informant passed a comment on his preferred media for accessing international news. Self-professed English patriot Jim Brown utilised BBC1 and Sky News for ‘serious’ news and the tabloids for light relief. He said:

If it’s world news, you know, fighting in Afghanistan or Iraq or whatever, then I like to see and know exactly what’s going on... If it’s something to do with this country, ‘cos I’m very much wear-me-heart-on-me-sleeve, so if it’s something where one of our soldiers has been blown up or we’ve done well at something, then I’m a bit of a pat-on-the-back man. But if it’s something like celebrities, I don’t mind who says what.

Several people had views on the importance of international news. Mine worker Martin Shore, who had watched and waved from the doorstep as I parked pre-chat, was the most internationally-orientated news consumer because he worked abroad part-time and sought news in relation to politics in regions he was posted to and where the prices of mined goods might be destabilised. John, a scientist, had been the only person to say: ‘...my main

interest is international news.’ He was outraged that the Jade Goody story had eclipsed coverage of a story with global implications, a test being run in North Korea to send a satellite up into space, which he perceived as a cover up for their ‘inter-continental ballistic mission’ which might spark a nuclear war with Japan. He said:

...British news is all about small potatoes. ...English news, minor sort of things, in itself a sense of things going on in England 2009 doesn’t matter from what happens in England in 2000. Conservative parties come, Labour parties come, whereas the world thing is quite a lot more...well I’ve got a historic overview of it, and they’re historic events, and today if the missile had landed in Japanese air space they would have shot it down, it would have been a lot more historic. And I just think that’s more important really, and more exciting...

His partner Hannah agreed that it was more important to know about the state of for example, Africa, than reality television stars’ private suffering.

In contrast to concerns with international affairs in the British media, several people were frustrated by the negative way in which Britain was portrayed in the foreign press without mentioning the sources. Highly articulate Steven Buxley, adjusting his visual impairment-friendly mobile phone, said: ‘I do see Britain shown in a bad way in the foreign press...’ Echoing other remarks in the thesis on the poor reputation of one sector of the British and English public, Steven said:

I see sports fans and holiday makers abroad demonstrating attributes to which I cannot relate, such as violence and disrespect...’ illustrate the reasons for coverage, as do national level factors such as ‘...’’hate’’ voting in Eurovision over the past few years because of regional groupings, and as a result of the “war on terror” ...

However, being pro-British government military interventions, he was at pains to defend his home country: ‘Even if there is controversy around our involvement, we have got involved, which other nations have not, and should be seen in a better light because of this.’

From his top-floor living room, Martin, well-built and muscular, who viewed CNN and BBC World when possible in China, also disdained negative coverage: 'When something is badly reported on international media about the UK, I find myself wanting to defend the UK.' His Scottish colleagues, with whom he joked about national identity, had 'a very strong sense of nationality' that 'most Brits don't have'. Surprisingly however, he personally became more aware of expressions of nationalism at home: 'Mostly I don't think about Britishness at work, I am an ex-pat and trying to get my job done. I find more flag-waving at home than I do abroad.' He noticed, however, that other ex-pats were 'more English than anything' needing 'something to cling on to', whereas the English at home only got fired up about their nationality by international sporting events. The media played a key role in this: '...the amount of interest that a match of England versus sort of Germany or France is so far disproportionate to the amount of media coverage of England being in Iraq or Afghanistan, which is quite a large political decision.' He was annoyed that the English were politically apathetic, when politics was a greater reason for the nation to receive positive acclaim on the world stage than sport, complaining that: 'I think it's [*nationalist fervour*] more relevant to [*the*] sporting prowess of the nation than the political prowess of the nation. Or the trading prowess of the nation...it just seems a shame.' His comments mirror remarks in Chapters 3 and 5 lamenting the loss of pride in the institutional activities of Britain and England.

Several others spoke about the link between media coverage of international sporting competitions and nationalism, but more positively. Hannah thought the media tried to 'get a national spirit' with sports such as rugby, which made her think 'Yay, the rugby's on, go England' when she was usually uninterested, except during the Olympics. Here she might think 'Well done UK' and had no problem if people were interested as long as it didn't cause 'problems'. She

seemed to be referring to violence and hooliganism linked to sport. From the lounge of his tall, red-brick town house, moated by wheelie bins, Jim held a more passionate position on the link between sport and nationalism, that public service media such as the BBC had a duty to bring the country together by making English matches of, for example, test cricket and football accessible by broadcasting to 'the whole nation' and 'whole public' on mainstream channels, not subscription-only satellite stations such as the now defunct Setanta Sport. He said '...the things that are international for your country, everybody should have a choice or be able to watch it.' One only needed to watch fans on TV to see their national ardour. Jim continued: 'When it comes to football, international football, it's the English people that sing the anthem louder and better than any other country. It's something, isn't it?!' Nevertheless he shared in others' embarrassment over representations of hooligans, which made him think: 'Oh God, it's the British again'.

Jim and his wife Jennifer were stirred up by media coverage of sport and soldiers' sacrifices abroad, which reminded them of their Englishness and made them feel patriotic. They wanted to be able to express their national identity without shame or fear. They were proud of British soldiers' generosity at helping those in nations that 'we' are at war with: 'You know, Iraq and Afghanistan, and all that... what other country in the world would have their soldiers lending a hospital bed left to somebody who's just tried to blow them up and kill you?' quipped Jim. The British followed the rules and soldiers didn't seek revenge. They were also proud of home-grown rescue efforts in natural disasters abroad ('*British*' was used interchangeably with '*English*' here): '...I think that the English are looked up to, apart from everything, by the rest of the world...you take, if there's an earthquake or something, who's the first ones to take it all on, and get over there and do it...' Also in crises: 'English people are very sympathetic and caring' and are the first to put their hands in their

pockets to donate money to ‘pledges and disasters’, even with countries that ‘we’re at war with’. Other countries didn’t do things like that and ‘...it makes you wonder if we have a serious catastrophe in this country, who would actually...’ he trailed off. But more positively, he enthused: ‘People like that and charities and things make you feel good to be British.’ Several “Sikh” informants were also impressed by British generosity when it came to donating to international and domestic charitable causes, including themselves in the definition of ‘British’.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

### **6.8.1 “Sikhs” and “Poles”: Mediated Experience Versus *Experiential Knowledge***

The Mumbai attacks had less ‘issue proximity’ (Gamson, 1992) than might have been imagined, even for “Sikh” informants with personal links to them. Informants were sympathetic to victims, as for any terrorist atrocity resulting in loss of life. The events seemed far away, and most, whilst feeling concern for India as their ancestral country that they sometimes visited, were more rooted in the domestic UK news agenda and in stories affecting them in their country of birth, residence and daily-life. This case study suggests that they gravitated towards British stories even before a major crisis in India, showing that these members of the second-generation were less hungry for news from their ancestral country than those interviewed by Gillespie *et al.* (2006). As has been illustrated, these “Sikhs” sometimes felt marginalised and wrongly portrayed by the domestic media, but they depended upon it whilst keeping a critical distance from it. They were also critical of the Indian media, echoing the high levels of ‘media literacy’ found throughout the thesis. Rationalising media behaviour could reduce the anxiety it caused. Regarding the attacks, the media

were the first point of information, used for 'the facts' and government reactions. However, *experiential knowledge* prompted by enquiries in interview was the dominant resource used to speculate on the wider meanings and impacts.

The "Polish" case study shows a different relationship to diasporic television. With their intense appetite for current information from Poland and around the world, the media did form more of an all-round 'social centre' (Couldry, 2003), an international horizon for "Poles", who used it as their gateway to the international world. With a daily outlook rooted in diasporic space and Polonia connecting them to diasporic 'communities' elsewhere, as Georgiou (2005: 44) suggested, they engaged with TV Polonia to reach beyond the limited perspective that British television was perceived to offer in the nation their parents had not chosen and to which they had limited attachments. Because of their regular engagements with Polish television, they articulated more critical commentary about Poland's and England's media than the "Sikhs" about India's, and there was more talk about Polish, British and global politics and societal issues as reported on television. However, in a similar way to the "Sikhs", *experiential knowledge* of Poland was used in tangential comparisons of Poland and Britain which followed in discussion after references to television content. British news triggered culturally-located anxiety when the media/government behaved in ways reminiscent of communist institutions. Criticisms of state/media behaviour were strategies of re-establishing ontological security through a technique of distancing themselves from Britain, while expressing disconnection from it through location in a diasporic space.

### 6.8.2 “Sikhs” and “Poles”: Articulations of Identity and Symbolic Communicative Spaces

Among the “Sikhs”, news talk included few outright articulations of identification, but the pattern was for informants to shift positions and affinities frequently as they chatted about the meanings of the Mumbai attacks as British citizens of Indian origin with diasporic ties to India, aware of themselves as foreigners in India, and ‘at home’ in Britain with a “Sikh” identity. There were few outright expressions of ‘community membership’ with informants consciously identifying themselves as members of a diaspora or non-physical ‘community’, their identity orientations being quite individual. Certainly the conversations reflected the sense of Schlesinger’s (2000b) ‘symbolic communicative spaces’. In particular, an undercurrent of ‘New Asian racism’ experienced since 9/11 (see Chapters 3 and 4) and now feared in relation to UK Pakistanis in the aftermath of Mumbai led to different expressions of belonging to and exclusion from the British nation. Pre-existing reservations and prejudices based on historic animosities when sparked by media speculation on culprits brought forth a tide of suspicion towards Pakistan and other representative of the nation, its government, nationals, Muslims and ‘Islamic terrorists’. Conversely, several other news events mentioned by two individuals during fieldwork – an attempted terrorist attack against the Sri Lankan cricket team and an alleged plot by Pakistani students to blow up a shopping centre in Manchester – resulted in almost identical responses, suggesting that in this case, ‘media events’ trigger pre-existing orientations rather than create them.

Similarly with the “Poles”, although most articulations of identification took place away from news talk, Polish/British news comparisons revealed a constant sense of being caught between Poland and Britain, ‘they’ and ‘we’, and ‘there’ and ‘here’, not quite belonging to either. Their expressions of diasporic



membership were stronger and more definitive than among the “Sikhs”. However, there was no articulation of diasporic ‘community’, just one of (diasporic) ‘nation’. The same cultural thread ran through general accounts of their affinities to Poland and Britain and identities with them, as well as orientations towards the two countries’ media. Polonia’s content was of greater interest, reflecting their emotional orientation towards Poland, or to borrow Burrell’s (2004) phrase, ‘emotional transnationalism’. As in Chapter 5 and in the “Sikh” case, news talk prompted more reflections on politics and society. Under the influence of their parents and the diaspora, the second-generation were hungry for honesty and ‘truth’ from the authorities and media alike. As informants grew comfortable with me and the interview process, they became more critical of Polish media and society, reflecting the need to defend it less once I had understood their feelings. After all the praise and preferential commentary on Polish television, when asked which nation’s television informants preferred, I was amazed to be given an almost unanimous answer of British. Wanda and Zofia preferred it for the language, as Polish presenters spoke too fast and voice-overs over non-Polish content jarred. Zofia confessed: ‘I prefer English because I was born here.’ Her husband chimed: ‘Yes, I prefer English because it’s more relevant...just because you live here so you need to know what’s going on. That’s the only reason I can think of.’ As for the “Sikh” case, the “Poles” daily-life orientations played a role in shaping their media preferences. However, their actual articulations showed greater enthusiasm, emotional longing and hunger for their ancestral country, once kept at arm’s length from them, all characteristic of those identifying with a diaspora. They also reveal the ease of being more critical about their taken-for-granted country of residence.

### 6.8.3 “English” Conclusions

In contrast, the “English” case study showed that general news talk not focused on a particular story resulted in several articulations of identity, where the identities ‘British’ and ‘English’ were conflated, and informants oscillated between feelings of national pride triggered by war and sport, and embarrassment at home and abroad, resulting from brawling fans and unpopular military interventions. *Media discourse* was relied upon for information about all of these. These declarations seem related to the subject matter, as both sporting competitions and war overtly place the names of the nation and nationalities into an international context where they are highlighted and where the “English” are used to using labels to differentiate themselves from other nations. Comments also reflect several different attitudes to nationalism (Fenton and Mann, 2009): 1) a flexible approach to issues of nationality and critical disposition to Britain’s position on the ‘world stage’ that seemed to go hand-in-hand with a more cosmopolitan openness to international affairs; and 2) a more inward-looking traditional patriotism linking British actions abroad with a narrow concern for pride for the benefit of British and “English” people at home.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

### 7.1 Overview

This thesis has moved beyond a historical discourse of Britishness defined by the dominant white “English” ethnicity by taking the Britishness of three different ‘groups’ as its starting-point: the “Sikhs”, the “Poles”, and the “English”. Since the 1980s, a dominant public discourse has bolstered ethnic-minority expressions of collective identity. As Baumann’s (1996) research showed, it had the effect of entrenching a fixed and essentialist discourse on minority identities into policy discourse and public vocabulary. Many “English” people have claimed that the supposed enforcement of political correctness by left-wing political and public authorities had also reduced the legitimacy of ‘majoritarian’ expressions of identity and culture, and created a situation where the ethnic majority were afraid to articulate their identities and attachments. Academic post-colonial and race-relations approaches to the study of identities have followed suit by treating white English identities as homogenous. The thesis has picked up the baton presented by Hall (1992a) that everyone is ‘ethnically located’, and ‘ethnicity’ must be split from its associations with ‘nationalism, imperialism, racism and the state’. It began with circumstantial connections between informants before letting differentiations emerge, connections of British citizenship, residence and possibly shared culture at national and local levels (see below). National identity was treated as the experience of all three ‘groups’. This moved my academic analysis beyond the demarcation of majorities from minorities that excluded minorities from national belonging, and majorities from identity discourse and individual/collective cultural pride. Examining Polish experiences of racism in Chapter 3 moved beyond the post-colonial discourse of racism as a black

experience. Exploring diverse identities among the white “English” in Chapter 3 contributes to countering the ‘ressentiment’ that overlooking them can breed, as demonstrated in Chapter 4.

Nationalism and patriotism were not fashionable in England for many decades before the tremors of the 1990s. In Chapter 1, I showed how the dominant British discourse on ‘belonging’ revolved around socio-residential communities and their decline due to global economic, demographic and social change with local effects. The ‘individualisation’ thesis captured these effects. Because of this historic importance of feelings of ‘community’ as ‘interpersonal warmth, shared interests, and loyalty’ (Baumann, 1996: 15) in the residential locality, the study found a second way of approaching informants on a level playing-field, beginning with shared experience. It differs from previous approaches to multi-ethnic inhabitants in urban locations by studying them at town level in Chapter 2, with potential shared experience of residence in the same physical locality. The theoretical literature discussed in Chapter 1 showed how notions of ‘community’ and ‘belonging’ have also been linked to ‘nations’ and ‘diasporas’. Chapter 3 and 6 showed how “Sikh” and “Polish” informants engaged in ‘small-scale transnationalism’ (Burrell, 2003) with relatives and society in India and Poland through visits, electronic communications and media. A perspective on diasporic identities is followed from the local context in Chapter 4 to the international one in Chapter 6 to analyse how diasporic attachments and social fields relate to the positions in which “Sikh” and “Polish” informants find themselves in local and national society. A quantitative survey introduced a larger-scale perspective on identities, demographics and media consumption throughout, thus setting my small-scale ethnographic findings in a wider context.

The thesis made no assumptions about what Britishness might mean to these three ‘groups’. It avoided predictable strategies of researching nationalism,

patriotism and national identity, such as taking a top-down approach to how dominant political discourses of 'nation' might influence informants in the broadcasting of scenarios that illuminate the 'nation' such as ceremonial events, or broaching the subject of Britishness 'head on' in interview. Instead the research strategy employed was an anthropological one of mapping local manifestations of 'ethnic cultures'; then situating the study of identity constructions in informants' general talk in daily-life, and talk about local, national and international news. The news can be a rich source of information about events and happenings of social and political significance, and as classic theories discussed in Chapter 1 suggest, talk prompted by it can call for reinforcement of one's position as citizen, resident or member of an interested group. As research developed, the role of the media in the thesis decreased. Interview questions about the news acted as a methodological tool to unlock broader discussions on issues of public concern, and to elicit a range of life experience drawn upon in opinion formation. Chapters 4 and 5 explored responses to the most discussed routine local and national news stories during fieldwork, and Chapter 6 explored responses to the televising of 'extraordinary' news events in the international context. As Chapters 4 -6 showed, news stories offered people a series of scenarios around which to develop social commentaries that often ran away from the reportage itself, define self and collective identity, feelings about belonging and different kinds of communities/social fields. The analysis borrowed Gamson's (1992) *media discourse* and *experiential knowledge* to show how different information resources come into play when people make sense of the world. The theoretical approach used was termed *discursive constructionism*, drawing inspiration from ethnographic studies of 'news talk' (e.g. Gillespie, 1995; Bird, 1998; Madianou, 2005a) and new nationalism research which analyses how national identity or the nation is discursively 'constructed, undermined and subverted in daily-life' (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008), what claims are made about it (Calhoun, 1997),

and how 'the nation' can be 'an unselfconscious disposition' (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008) that helps people to make sense of the social world, and orientate themselves in it with regard to other 'groups' of people and available identities. In Chapter 1, I argued that *discursive constructionism* combined analysis of talk with analysis of the mental style in which social fields are envisaged and constructed. The approach allowed interview and observational data to emerge revealing how adult informants subtly engage with notions of 'Britishness' and other identities.

Here I set out the general conclusions about identities, ethnicities, and notions of community, the processes by which these came to be constructed and articulated, and the nation as a context for these; also how diasporas worked, and what feelings of 'belonging' arose overall. Then, I review the specific conclusions from each chapter about how identity discourses interlaced with general and news talk. Ethnicities and experiences of diasporas were culturally-specific whereas some experiences of locality and nation were shared by all three 'groups'. Of special interest to the thesis in the way that *discursive constructionism* operated, are the ways in which notions of 'nation' were verbally constructed and articulated. These are evaluated in section 7.3.3. I also consider the themes of discursive importance at local, national and international/diasporic levels, and a series of 'us'/'them' oppositions that informants used in general and news talk to situate themselves. Uses of *media discourse* and *experiential knowledge* are also assessed.

## **7.2 Conclusions: Identity, Ethnicity, Community, Nation and Diaspora**

### **7.2.1 Local Level**

Chapter 4 found that although socio-residential communities characterised by 'interpersonal warmth, shared interests, and loyalty' (Baumann, 1996: 15) may be more the exception than the rule now in Swindon, 'community' still holds great importance in the pan-ethnic British social imagination. When talking about their town, informants' language was saturated by many different versions of 'community'. Although the term did not automatically designate the mourned socio-residential community, this is not to say that other uses are invalid, or that various kinds of communities do not exist anywhere anymore. 'Community' could be based on the local and physical, an ethnic group or organised ethnic-minority (as per Baumann's 'dominant discourse'), an ethnic, social or residential network of any size up to town level with civil or moral responsibility, a public policy term, and a feeling of belonging to a collectivity that could be found or created in a range of places and situations. People still wanted to experience the associated feeling even if they didn't find it in their neighbourhoods. Some pro-actively looked for alternative communities through activities or networks of personal relationships. Nostalgic 'communities-in-the-mind' (based on real or imagined past experience) acted as a defensive shield against a lack of 'communities-on-the-ground'. Fog Olwig's (2002) definition of modern communities as 'shared fields of belonging' is appropriate here.

In general conversation and news talk, the "English" were the most concerned about what went on in the town and changes because it was the main social and physical arena available. Most didn't have the option of alternative

physical spaces in other towns or countries, and socio-residential communities were the places where a sense of belonging was expected. There was no organised ethnic community to fall back on, so they turned to a variety of alternative spaces. The “Sikhs” were moderately involved in the town and had plenty to say about it in general and news talk. Although the first-generation came from nearby districts in the Punjab, they didn’t come to Swindon with their own institutions intact so had to engage more with the town networks than the “Poles”. They shared “English” informants’ sense of loss and nostalgia about socio-residential communities, and found ‘community’ in various town-based networks. Most had some involvement in their organised ethnic community even if its importance was symbolic, for social/family reasons and their children’s benefit. As Chapter 3 showed, many were also disillusioned with it. The “Poles” were the least involved in the wider Swindon networks, although many were born there. Few passed comments on the town and the lack of socio-residential communities, although they read the *Advertiser* and engaged in limited news talk. Their main discourse on community in Swindon was their own ethnic and structural community at the Polish centre. The refugee generation came to Swindon with its own miniature society intact from the resettlement camps, and transplanted it at the centre. There were ongoing attempts to cultivate it among the second and third-generations. Overall, there was a shared discourse of declining ‘communities’ and ethnically-specific discourses.

Anthony Cohen’s (1985) theory of identity construction in the places and spaces of ‘community’ is applicable to the construction of Swindonian identity. Many of the traits of theorisations of *ethnicity as process* (e.g. Jenkins, 1997; Wimmer, 2007) were also observable, showing their applicability to theorisations of other kinds of identities too. As Cohen (1985) suggested, between family and (national) society at local level, were the estate / street, workplace (my host



company being the main one discussed), the Polish Centre or *gurdwara*, pubs, leisure groups etc and the locality of Swindon itself. In these locales, discourses of Swindonian belonging were recognised but not perceived uniformly by informants. For those informants who engaged with Swindonian identity (mostly “English” with few “Poles” and even fewer “Sikhs”), symbolic boundaries (Barth, 1969; Cohen, 1985) were still drawn up between Swindonians / non-Swindonians (insider / outsider) and classificatory struggles of inclusion / exclusion occurred (Wimmer, 2007) with the town as the common field of interaction (following Eriksen’s (1993) ‘complementarisation’). Both closed discourses of belonging (e.g. ‘railway families’ are the ‘real Swindonians’; being a Swindonian depends upon birthplace in Swindon etc) circulated alongside open discourses (e.g. flexible criteria of belonging that could be self-defined) showing that the referents for identity are always in flux and never static (Hall, 1991). Both types of discourses could be invoked with self-definition and external imposition of the Swindonian category, revealing that internal / external classificatory processes worked in the same way at local level. However, it was noteworthy that the external imposers of the label of ‘Swindonian’ were likely to be other individuals in the town, and never a ruling authority, unlike when governments create ethnic categories in processes of nation-building. Swindonian identity held no political or instrumental value (Abner Cohen, 1969; 1974) unlike ethnic or national identity, and no legal consequences. In another context, locality and ethnicity did interact at times when according to Eriksen’s (1993) analog scheme for evaluating difference, some ethnic groups were seen as ‘more local’ (e.g. Poles) and others ‘less local’ (e.g. Somalis, Goans). Overall, locality was never linked predominantly to one ethnic group – majority or minority.

Belonging to Swindon was complex for pan-ethnic informants as many freely vocalised their dissatisfactions and didn’t openly admit great attachment to it.

However, when discussing events that promised to bring people together and hallmark the town and surrounding area positively (e.g. the Radio 1 Big Weekend Festival and military repatriations in neighbouring Wootton Bassett), there were subtle expressions of pride from all 'groups'. Swindonian identity could be both ascribed and achieved, but most importantly, denied or rejected. The "English" gave most recognition to Swindonian identity, although some were ambivalent about whether they wanted to be included. Because the town was their primary social arena, they were the most concerned with the historical Swindon discourse of demarcating insiders / outsiders. Although the "Sikhs" were more involved in town networks than most "Poles", there were no expressions of belonging to it. This was not out of embarrassment, but because the town was the least important of all the social fields they could belong to – local, ethnic, religious, national and diasporic, which overlap with Georgiou's (2006) concept: the 'layers of diasporic space'. In the "Sikh" case, the layers of diasporic space were: home, organised ethnic community, town, nation, Punjab/India, and transnational (e.g. relatives in other nation-states). Sections 7.3 and 7.4 evaluate the construction of 'the conversational space' as a layer that overlaps with 'the public'.

Local, national and international "Sikh" networks were of greater importance than pan-ethnic town networks. Some individuals came to Swindon for marriage, and many were born outside the town. "Sikhs" could be appreciative of the facilities, lifestyle or quality of life available in Swindon, but there was scant interest in Swindonian identity or admissions of belonging to one. Their diasporic identity was national and international – 'British Asian' (or 'British Indian' or "Sikh"), not related to a particular locality in England. If any physical place commanded their affections, it was their ancestral home in the Punjab, which overlapped with a regional cultural heritage in India.

Among the “Poles”, there was a different and stronger sense of belonging to Swindon and participating in events happening in the town, but amongst their own community rather than the wider one. Their diasporic identity was local and international – ‘Swindon Polish’ (rather than British Polish). Their unique community was shaped in Swindon (although similar ‘communities’ operate in other parts of the country, e.g. London and Leicester). National Polish networks were of some importance for those participating in dance competitions and scouting activities etc., but played less of a role than national “Sikh” networks, which served to bring together matrimonial partners. The “Poles” sometimes invoked the ‘Swindonian’ label to describe themselves as members of town, but more often than not, it was invoked to mean their ‘Swindon Polish’ identity.

### **7.2.2 National Level and Diasporic Level: Hybrid, Joint and Conflated Identities**

Here I present the general findings about identities, ethnicities, cultures, the nation as a context for identity construction, diasporas and feelings of belonging from across the thesis.

#### ***a) “Sikhs”***

Diasporic “Sikh” culture and identity were shaped in ‘diasporic space’: locally in ethnically-specific physical spaces (home and the *gurdwara*) and non-ethnically-specific physical spaces (e.g. the streets of Swindon, the workplace, the working men’s club, the nation as constructed through talk in response to news stories etc); and transnationally with networks of social relationships in India and other nations where family resided. Locally, the “Sikhs” inhabited a hybrid space of native British and Indian behaviour, habits and values, with orientations depending on individuals and families. This local diasporic Sikh culture was ‘a site of difference and contestation’ (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997a),

between what was learnt in families and in the organised community, and what was acquired by interacting more widely.

The culture was acted out at home and the temple. Informants interacted with British/English contacts in a 'British' behavioural style. Sometimes Indian culture was conflated with 'Asian' culture. In one account, 'Asian culture' was seen to be 'restrictive' with Western culture representing 'freedom', but the values of family and community were strongly emphasised. The gossiping and unwanted scrutiny of one's personal business was disliked. Sikhism itself was a way of life more than a devout religiosity. Most informants had respect for positively appraised Sikh 'values' such as equality of all people in the temple, and voluntary 'sharing' and 'helping'. However, the religious identity overlapped with a cultural identity from the Punjab, and in turn, an ethnic identity.

Diacritica of global Sikh ethnicity (given the overlap of the faith with an ethnic group) and identity were set externally to the local organised ethnic community in the Punjab 'homeland', and negotiated in interaction locally. However, the regional differences in 'host society' cultures in the nation-states where "Sikh" migrants settled contributed to a situation of shared ethnicity but cultural differences among diaspora members, for example, "Sikhs" in Swindon and "Sikhs" in Australia. This example proves Barth's (1969) proposition that ethnic identity can arise between geographically dispersed people and over cultural boundaries. Locally, Eriksen's (1993) analog strategy of ethnic differentiation was conjured up among those who viewed their Sikh ethnicity as visibly weaker than others', e.g. Mr Grewal, who felt 'less Sikh' than other men for not wearing the traditional religious / ethnic markers of a beard and turban. Also, there were different degrees of conformity to active practices in the organised ethnic community that might be seen to express Sikh ethnicity and belonging, e.g. levels of adherence to religious worship, amount of time spent at the

*gurdwara*, and degree of acceptance of the dominant ideologies of the 'community leadership'. The "Sikh" case study proves that there are many internal divisions inside an ethnic/religious category, in contrast to the static face presented by the ethnic categories found in state-harnessed classificatory mechanisms, such as the UK Census.

In the British context, Sikh ethnicity was racialised in historical colonial and recent past discourses of external classification. The role of history and past experience in constituting the contemporary situation (Jenkins, 1997) of ethnic self-categorisation among the "Sikhs", and their external classification by some of the white British was clearly observable. Informants constructed themselves as racialised brown-skinned beings along with other 'Asians' (sharing 'race'/phenotype and broader sub-continental cultures, but not faith, regional culture or language). This was part of a dichotomised (Eriksen, 1993) schema constructed with reference to 'white people' (meaning "the English" or the 'British' without direct reference to white-skinned migrants and their descendents) within the British nation-state and cultural nation. In this case, the category imposed 'from above' is the same as the one constructed organically 'from below'. With 'race' created and experienced as a significant marker of Sikh ethnicity, and the interweaving of racial categories and power processes in the creation of British national identity discourses, it is clear that the cultural content of ethnic categories is of great consequence for an individual's quality of life experience, when racism is at stake. Moreover, 'race' has remained stable as a diacritica of the British categorisation of "Sikh" over time, through the experiences of colonialism, migration, settlement in a new society, and birth of the second and third-generations. However, there has been a categorical shift in external and personal British identity discourses, as national categories have opened up, and more "Sikhs" are identifying as British than before.

British society was a common field of interaction or 'complementarisation' (Eriksen, 1993) shared with white British and "English" people, and other minority ethnic groups. The "Sikh" case shows that nation is *not* always an 'unselfconscious disposition' that helps people to make sense of their being in the world, and evaluate those around them, as suggested by Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008). Diaspora members have special heightened national awareness at times, due to their shifting diasporic consciousness of their connections to two or more nations. This was particularly so when drawing boundaries of self and other's inclusion / exclusion in the British context. With their racial consciousness, "Sikh" informants engaged the analog strategy (Eriksen, 1993) to position themselves as 'less British' than the white British in the traditional internal racial hierarchy of belonging within the British nation-state. However, the main 'other' in "British Sikh" lives were Pakistani Muslims, coming from a tradition of animosities. As noted in Chapter 1, all Muslims had become the government's and public's most prominent internal 'other', reinforcing this common "Sikh" position. Comparisons were used to show that the "Sikhs" were 'more British' and part of the nation than Pakistani Muslims who were 'less British', perceived as 'ghettoing' themselves away from mainstream British society. In the context of acceptance into and allegiance with British national identity, "Sikhs" viewed themselves as closer to the white British, and in the context of racial exclusion, they were closer to the Pakistani Muslims. In this context, "Sikhs" had racial 'nearness' and cultural and religious 'farness' (my terms) in relation to Pakistani Muslims. Further away still in degrees of belonging to Britain were short-term migrants and refugees. "Sikhs" also communicated a sense of superiority over low-income English and 'chavs' in terms of being better British citizens.

The "Sikhs" were positioned along different axes of cultural influence and identity in relation to significant ethnic boundaries and power relations,

proving that ethnic boundaries and hierarchies inside the nation-state are, as argued by the theorists (Barth, 1969; Cohen, 1969; 1974), context-dependent: situational and relational. Revealingly, in my analysis of the significance of 'race' in contemporary British identity, despite their treatment as non-British by some of the ethnic majority over the years, the "Sikhs" regarded themselves as more British than the white-skinned ethnic-minority 'group' in the thesis. Their personal attachments led to a stronger bond with the British nation than the possibility of racial inclusion open to the "Poles". 'Race' does not prohibit personal inclusion, just sadly sometimes external inclusion.

Overall, "Sikh" informants experienced diaspora members' characteristic ambivalent belonging in several places of the diaspora. Outside of the nation-state and national cultural space of residence, the Punjab and India more broadly were constructed as 'homelands'. The second-generation had moderate emotional ties to India as their country of ancestry and heritage, and sometimes made emotional appeals to it. This 'homeland' was seen more as a place of the past, not a place of everyday belonging in the present.

During their everyday lives, the "Sikhs" were 'British' by birthplace, citizenship and residence, and partly by culture and lifestyle. As a discourse, Britishness could be racial, historical, political, cultural (especially as a lifestyle), and legal. They identified with cultural and legal Britishness, and occasionally political Britishness. Englishness could be racial and cultural, also a particular lifestyle, and they identified with some aspects of lifestyle Englishness. Despite colonialism and racism from the host society, most "Sikhs" felt a sense of belonging to Britain and saw themselves as wholly or partly British, feeling proud and patriotic at times. Their ancestors had come here for a better life and with a positive outlook. Individual informants exercised their agency in constructing their own degrees of relatedness to different versions of the nation: disassociation with the colonial nation-state, but attachment to the

ethnic diversity of the modern cultural nation, or rejection of association with Britain by citizenship if personal security was threatened abroad. This confirms Anthony Cohen's finding (1996a and b) as informants constructed the nation(-state) and its multiple meanings through the medium of their own experiences and circumstances.

Despite informants' periodic emotional turn towards India from Britain, when they visited it, they were constructed as 'other' and their Britishness (or even Englishness in the eyes of some Indians who couldn't tell the difference) was reinforced by family/locals. This example shows that external ethnic categorisation (Banks, 1996; Jenkins, 1997; Wimmer, 2007) is not always done by powerful bodies, but by individuals too. However, for most, despite their British citizenship and attachments, there was also an underlying anxiety that they could be denied belonging to Britain and being British by those with native ethnicity, because of their skin colour and phenotype. The "Sikhs" were simultaneously at home and strangers in both nations of ethnic origin and residence / citizenship, and thrust into the 'here, there and inbetween' of the diasporic condition (Georgiou, 2006).

In spite of their continued racialisation in Britain, the "Sikh" individual's presence in the diaspora subverts a neat fit between external classification and a complete internalised self-identity. The variety of shifting descriptive categories used by informants resulted from the many identities available to them. These labels included 'British Indian', 'British Sikh' or 'British Asian' in British contexts, and "'Sikh'", 'Indian' and 'Punjabi' in sub-continental contexts. As postulated by the postmodern theorists (e.g. Gilroy, 1993; Brah, 1996; Sharma, Hutnyk and Sharma, 1996; Alexander, 2010), there is informal power within diasporic networks as diasporic identities challenge the essentialism of the 'ethnic minority' or 'ethnic community' (R Cohen, 1997 [2008]), and static visions of identity. Most of the time, the labels were used interchangeably when



talking to me, and there was no great self-consciousness of when a term suited special circumstances. The “Sikh” case also supports the theory of identity stated in Chapter 1. It is a process which remains incomplete (Hall, 1991) in relation to ongoing group formation and transformation (Wimmer, 2007), and is experienced in relation to significant diacritica.

*b) “Poles”*

‘Swindon Polish’ culture, ethnicity and identities were shaped in the locales of diasporic space (Georgiou, 2006): the ethnically-specific locales of homes, the Polish Centre and national Polish networks; at the intersection with the local and national spaces and places of multi-ethnic British society; in diasporic networks with friends and family in Poland, and other ‘Polish communities’ mediated by TV Polonia. “Polish” informants perpetually inhabited diasporic space, with emotional affinities to Poland and their Swindon community, and ties of birthplace, citizenship and residence to Britain, which evoked varying degrees of attachment and distance. Few evinced a profound level of belonging to Britain. They saw identity links to the country as ‘formal’ or ‘official’ and did not connect with all aspects of British or English society. However, when they were finally able to visit their ancestral home regularly, some were displeased with post-communist Poland and its ‘New Pole’ representatives in Swindon. They also faced exclusion there.

The Polish facet of their diasporic identity was based on a national referent outside their nation of residence. From the perspective of non-“Poles” in Britain outside the diaspora, homeland Polish national identity discourses and diasporic Polish identity discourses appeared the same. Both featured a neat overlap between ethnicity, the Catholic religion, language, and national identity. Catholicism was synonymous with Polishness, being the backbone of its distinctiveness during communism, although it was not always equivalent

to religiosity among informants.<sup>101</sup> Religious identity was never a primary descriptive label although intrinsically linked to the “Poles”. However, there were internal differences in homeland and diasporic national identity discourses not perceptible to outsiders.

Like the “Sikhs”, the “Poles” experienced ambivalent belonging in the former ‘homeland’ (and in Britain, as shall be seen). In Poland, national identity rested upon birthplace and native command of the language. The ‘Swindon Poles’ experienced subtle informal exclusion by Polish-born “Poles”, who erected a symbolic ‘us’ / ‘them’ boundary by not accepting them as ‘true Polish’ on home soil. Again, it is clear that external classification (Banks, 1996; Jenkins, 1997; Wimmer, 2007) is not always delivered by powerful bodies, but also by individuals. These criteria of belonging, that could only be acquired by ‘fortune’ of circumstances of birth, show the importance of authentic being in the homeland territory, with ‘blood’ links being of insufficient value to merit total inclusion. Territorial belonging is the major axis of dichotomisation (Eriksen, 1993) (and exclusion) between “Poles” in Poland and the diaspora, despite shared ethnicity over cultural boundaries (cf. Barth, 1969). Blood, often the internal signifier of ‘race’, had less importance than the framing ‘race’ received in colonial British discourses of national identity.

Despite sharing overlapping internally perceived diacritica of belonging with territorialised Polish identity, thus demonstrating the interplay of ‘homeland’ and diaspora, diasporic culture and identity developed differently. Diasporic Polishness involved being born and raised abroad, intense historical and political consciousness of the ‘homeland’ and separation from it (R Cohen, 1997[2008]), as well as Catholicism, culture and language. At home and abroad, different strains of Polish ethnicity are situational, and relative to

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<sup>101</sup> See Garapich (2008: 9) on the link between territory, religion and language and Polish national identity.

circumstances. This perhaps had led to the framing of 'homeland' and diaspora as two separate nations by Polish authorities (Garapich, 2008: 12). Furthermore, Poland's own national identity was relatively stable, whereas Swindon Polish identity was not, and was challenged by the waning interest of younger generations and the presence of 'New Poles'. As the Polish experience also shows, diasporic cultures are not static, and the 'Swindon Poles' experienced the state of 'here, there and inbetween' (Georgiou, 2006).

In the internal British context, the Polish language was the primary boundary marker of ethnicity, constructed at will by "Poles" to express their differences from the ethnic majority. Within the organised community, the focus was on speaking Polish and enacting traditions as a way of reinforcing shared ethnicity. Outside the community in wider British society, ethnic differences, e.g. membership of the Polish community and religious orientation, were selectively communicated to other Britons when it was permissible and desirable to do so. For example, among friends, one could confidently articulate one's Polishness as a source of pride, but perhaps it was less instrumental (Abner Cohen, 1969; 1974) to do so as confidently in an English workplace.

As with the "Sikhs", British society was a common field of interaction or 'complementarisation' (Eriksen, 1993) shared with white British and "English" people, and other minority ethnic groups. Similarly, "Poles" displayed more regular heightened consciousness of 'nation' when evaluating their two national positions than Fox and Miller-Idriss (2008) supposed. When focused on the domestic British context alone, this was less the case, as section 7.3.3 will reveal. When engaged with affairs of concern to the whole of British society and all its constituent 'groups', Eriksen's (1993) analog strategy of differentiation was used in an instrumental way, as shall be described. When constructing themselves as a closed diasporic community at the Polish Centre in relation to

external British society, Eriksen's digital strategy of differentiation was engaged, e.g. 'us' "Poles" are different from "all others" who are not like "us".

Regarding acceptance as part of the cultural nation, the second-generation blended into British society physically with their white skin, European phenotype and Western day-clothes. They hadn't experienced the same degree of racism as, for example, second-generation "Sikhs. However, the British and "English" were the primary 'other' from which "Poles" would differentiate themselves on a digital (Eriksen, 1993) 'us' / 'them' basis, when critically evaluating their position within the nation. Their ethnic and racial belonging might have superficially appeared less contentious after the first-generation had established themselves. However, the ancestral legacy of forced migration, and perceived cultural and value differences, e.g. lack of religion and strong family values among the white British, had created a sense of emotional distance from the ethnic majority. "Poles" sometimes sought voluntary exclusion from the host nation-state and dominant ethnic group, and preferred to be an independent national / cultural diaspora. They harboured resentment that the sacrifices of their ancestors hadn't been given due recognition. Their relatives hadn't chosen Britain and it hadn't always treated them well. Their efforts to avoid eliciting material and financial resources as a minority in Britain hadn't been appreciated.

The "Poles" and the "English" may have shared 'race' in the colonial British sense, but they did not share ethnicity. This example shows that in white-skinned majority / minority dichotomies, the minority can privately choose to differentiate themselves with no public recourse, should they choose not to publicly articulate their ethnicity (although this was not possible for long as Polish names were perceived by some in positions of authority as a sign of difference). Relegating their ethnic differences to a low profile and attaining economic autonomy in order to blend in and avoid negative ethnic evaluation

by the British had, ironically, led to Polish resentment over lack of positive ethnic recognition.

The “Polish” case (and also the “Sikh” and forthcoming “English” case) illuminates how the context of ethnic differentiation affects the strategies (e.g. Eriksen’s analog / digital) used and boundaries drawn. Given their shifting national orientation, when the “Poles” were not focused on their ‘homeland’, they would sometimes recreate themselves as ‘more like’ (as in Eriksen’s analog strategy) or ‘ethnically near’ (own term) the white British or “English”. This occurred when they themselves constructed Britain’s internal ethnic / racial hierarchy, and when there were benefits to identifying with the British. These included, for example, occasions when British representatives had generated a reason for national pride. In relation to other minority ethnic groups, “Poles” represented themselves as ‘more like’ the “English” and ‘less like’ or ‘ethnically far’ (own term) from groups that they had negative feelings about, for example, Muslims, and short-term migrant groups.

Identities were constructed in a middle space between Poland and Britain. As for the “Sikhs”, identities shifted and were never complete. (Hall, 1991; Clifford, 1994). Informants moved between describing themselves as ‘Polish’, ‘British’ and ‘English’ depending on context. The second-generation described themselves as ‘Polish’ first in the Swindon context and also when talking about Poland from the outside, but occasionally used ‘British’ if the situation called for it, for example, sometimes when discussing how they were seen by the natives in Poland, or if a news item evoked warm feelings towards Britain. It was a joint identity as no-one formulated a hybrid description such as ‘British Poles’. Instead they were at pains to emphasise their Polish blood ties, upbringing and culture. Nonetheless, quiet expressions of belonging to or identifying with Britain would sometimes emerge, however unwilling they were to admit it. This illustrates the multiple and complex cultural positionings

diaspora members occupy when negotiating their connections to each locale of diasporic space.

On another note, the Polish case also highlights the gap between the homogenous appearances of ethnic / national categories created in formal external classification, e.g. how “Poles” are perceived in public in Britain, and the heterogeneity inside this minority national diasporic group. The differences between its external appearance and internal fragmentation were even glossed over by diaspora members who presented a united front to the external world. For example, ‘Old Poles’ defended ‘New Poles’ against racism in the media to me, but criticised them internally within the organised ethnic community. Also, locally there was a range of discourses about and experiences of different incarnations of the Polish nation-state and cultural nation, as shaped by different historical epochs and political regimes. This reinforced Anthony Cohen’s (1996a and b) findings as before. It reveals that even with many overlapping diacritica of identity, ‘homeland’ discourses can diverge hugely between migrant waves.

Continued from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the elevated status given to the victims of forced political migration in discourses of national identity, who maintained narratives of an independent Poland free of the ideological control of an invader-occupier, shaped the dominant ideology of the war-era refugees. It remained the dominant ideology in the diaspora, and shaped the dominant strain of Polishness among the descendent generations: patriotism stemming from nostalgia for the pre-war era of their parents/grandparents, handed down. However, the courses of history and politics (communism, then capitalism) brought new concerns and behaviours into the diaspora, which challenged the old ideologies. Some older “Poles” refused to be accommodating of the political and material concerns of communist-era migrants and ‘New Poles’, viewing them with suspicion. Their refusal to embrace change threatened to weaken

participation in the organised community. This highlights how diasporas are in a state of flux and whilst retaining common diacritica over time, the forces of history and experience ensure that, as cultural zones, they do not stay exactly the same. Diasporas that arose from one set of migratory circumstances (e.g. traumatic dispersal) may be continued by subsequent generations, but with a different set of values and ideologies (e.g. economic migrants). This example shows the usefulness of R Cohen (1997 [2008]) and Gilroy's (1997) more flexible definitions of diasporas.

*c) "English"*

The "English" acquired culture through interacting in the private spaces of family homes, and in the public physical places and spaces of the workplace, leisure, recreational and civil society arenas, and the conversational context where matters were framed as 'national'. Even though the environment was multi-ethnic in public places and spaces, they formed the ethnic majority and dominant cultural group. "English" informants found referents of their collective ethnic / national identity in both local private and public spaces, and national contexts, not just in the locales of 'community' between family and society, as Anthony Cohen's (1985) general theory of identity formation proposes. Although "English" people shared a public national cultural intersection with ethnic-minority and Celtic ethnic identities, there was less categorical contestation, less negotiation of transnational cultural influences, and less of a need to self-consciously define themselves than "Sikhs" and "Poles" had experienced.

I observed that diasporic and ethnic minority 'groups' have usually developed greater consciousness of the diacritica that mark their 'culture'. This is owing to self-observed differences to the ethnic majority, and external observations of difference imposed by the host society state and public over time since settlement. In the ensuing classificatory struggle (Wimmer, 2007), selected

cultural features become confirmed as 'representative' of minority ethnicity. Thus, "Sikh" and "Polish" informants were comfortable in relating lists of definitive cultural features to me as a white British anthropologist.

However, "English" culture was difficult to pinpoint due to a diversity of lifestyles, a mobile and malleable class system, unarticulated ethnic diversity with the catchall 'white English' category masking manifold hybrid 'blood descent' and family ties, and cultural attachments to the 'Celtic' and other nations. Neither class nor religion provided a shared experience. However, some cultural features that stood out to me as especially 'English' included a discourse of mourning loss of 'community', unfamiliarity with the idea and language of having a national identity and culture, the English language, nuclear families and networks of friends, and interest in hobbies. As before, the British nation was also the discursive field of interaction and 'complementarisation' (Eriksen, 1993) for the "English". On the national level, they exhibited less selfconsciousness than the "Sikhs" and "Poles", attributable to the domination of a single nation-state in their national orientation. Fox and Miller-Idriss's (2008) idea that the nation is an 'unselfconscious disposition' works for some ethnic groups and not others. All "English" informants perceived a common British bond among Britons from the different home-nations which largely included most established ethnic minorities (e.g. Asian and black people). If they engaged in ethnic differentiation internally within the nation-state, Eriksen's (1993) analog schema would be invoked to imply that black and Asian people<sup>102</sup> were 'not us' but 'more like us', than 'ethnically far' groups such as Muslims. They were still 'British'.

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<sup>102</sup> Although Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian Muslims were filed under the 'Asian' category by all in Britain, contextual differentiations were made by a few of the "English" when the broad category of 'Asians' were accepted within the nation, but in other instances, 'Muslims' were excluded.



The historical suppression of English culture and identity, and their fusion with British culture during Empire, has contributed to a long-term vagueness over their contents. "English" informants did not see themselves as having a culture, and thus could not identify its features, unlike the "Sikhs" and "Poles. The "English" took culture and identity for granted, thus finding them confusing to define when asked. Culture and identity-consciousness of either was only raised during encounters with foreigners or minorities, particularly vexing ones, nationalistic events (e.g. sport, Royal Weddings), or British involvement in political/ social or foreign affairs gleaned from the news.

The only internal 'others' used by the majority to construct themselves against, using Eriksen's (1993) digital strategy of absolute difference, were short-term migrants and Muslims, the main 'others' in resentful discourse. UK-based Muslims and overseas Muslims were mostly but not always categorised as one and the same. These 'groups' threatened to change the English/British way of life (thus a 'culture' was recognised) and also the national systems that were supposed to look after the nation's native citizens. Closed and essentialised discourses of Britishness or Englishness were invoked (e.g. 'Us' British and 'Them' Muslims), but the content was kept vague. The main external 'other' recognised was the USA. A discourse of both resentment and admiration was expressed towards the Celtic home-nations, analogically (Eriksen 1993) 'not us' but 'ethnically near' (own term), and established minorities for having public identities and cultural/national pride. A public discourse of political correctness had inhibited English expressions of identity/pride. It was resented, and frustration sometimes increased the desire to think more deeply about and articulate them. Indirect and private expressions of identities were rife. The "English" were becoming more familiar with ways of defining themselves after every other ethnic being in the UK had been called upon to do so.

When “English” people did articulate around the subjects of nation and nationality in the contexts of daily life, they often used the vague and subtle terms of ‘homeland deixis’ (Billig, 1995) inherited from politicians and media. There was frequent talk of ‘this country’, and unconscious boundaries of inclusion / exclusion were drawn up. At other times, very definite identity categories, e.g. ‘British’ and ‘English’, were used, but these labels, although terminologically constant, were slippery. The terms had no contextual consistency of usage, or firmly defined content. The construction of British and English identities was a site of great contestation (cf. Gupta and Ferguson, 1997a) as the fragmentation of traditional identity discourses (e.g. of British institutions and global political standing) had contributed to a general vagueness of meaning. Whilst these older discourses were sometimes invoked, they were knowingly anachronistic, but brought up in conversation for lack of an alternative. Modern meanings (e.g. multiculturalism, the welfare state etc) were also raised, and mixed in, but there was great variability in cultural content. The long-term influence of historical contents imposed ‘from above’ was present and high profile in identity discourses, but its modern impact negligible.

Whilst national pride waxed and waned, Englishness could be about birthplace, and language/speech, culture (including lifestyle especially historical rural culture), patriotic symbols, and American commercial language/culture. Britishness could be legal, political, cultural, ideological, institutional, and sporting. Although some people identified as English/British by ‘descent’, race was never outlined as a defining criteria of either. For an “English” person to mention it would be to commit the ultimate social sin.

Whilst white Britons were not the main subjects of racialisation in historical colonial discourse which highlighted dark skin, they had been racialised by default in modern official ethnic categories. Informants’ primary encounter

with these occurred when they completed ethnic monitoring forms. Informally, “English” people did not categorise themselves racially, or speak with the vocabulary of ‘race relations’ unlike, for example, “Sikhs”.<sup>103</sup> The only exceptions were in the context of discussions about black people (where they were inevitably ‘white’ people), or in recognition of the ‘New Poles’ as non-“English” ‘white people’. However, those with left-wing political orientations sometimes echoed the terminology of ethnic monitoring forms, by labelling themselves as ‘white British’. They understood that they were projecting social sensitivity by demonstrating that they, too, were racial beings. This shows that it is not just those categorised as ‘internal others’ by the state who are subject to influence from the imposition of categories ‘from above’. The power holders within the nation-state demarcate the categorical identities open to the dominant ethnic group.

Most “English” informants conflated cultural identity and citizenship, not having a conscious need to separate them discursively. ‘British’ and ‘English’ were regularly conflated, even by those with pronounced hybrid identities taking in England and the Celtic nations. Hybrid identities were common on a personal level, but in general public parlance, individuals constructed a conflated English/British identity. Therefore two discourses of identity were present: 1) a public one where people felt obliged to enter the official ‘White British: English’ identity option on ethnic monitoring forms; and 2) diverse personal identities that would have felt ‘ridiculous’ on an ethnic monitoring form but nonetheless held emotional significance. As with the “Sikh” case, the “English” avoided an automatic neat fit between external state classification and internal personal identities. A subtle classificatory struggle (Wimmer, 2007) resulting in the second discourse subverted the possibility, via the agency to

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<sup>103</sup> “Sikhs” used terms such as ‘race’, ‘culture’ and ‘identity’, as inherited from public discourses on ethnic-minorities, whereas the “English” tended to use ‘homeland deixis’ (Billig, 1995) or nationality labels.

construct identity according to preference in the informal / private sphere, and the internal cultural diversity contained within the UK and Ireland leading to varied personalised labels.

Personal identity preferences among the “English” included English being a non-identity, English, British, Scots, Mongrel, European, half English/half Irish, born of Scottish parents etc. A variety of cultural heritages were documented in table 5 (p26): national (particularly mixed identities within the UK and Ireland), ethnic, regional, by industry of employment, regional-national, continental (European), ethnic-national etc.

### ***7.3 Discursive Constructionism: Case Studies***

#### **7.3.1 The Role of the Media in the Thesis**

My open-ended approach of letting informants tell me what news media and stories they had paid attention to in order to avoid imposing a research agenda on them let their specific outlet preferences, story selection and responses come to the fore. However, it did not allow me to capture the huge range of media coverage, to analyse specific mediated discourses or their impact on people. Therefore the role of the media became limited here to an exploration of the balance and interaction of information resources used in conversation rather than a study of the contexts of media usage: consumption habits or media practices in homes.

The thesis has revealed how news media presents an agenda and opens up debates in a conversational space, in which it links people to a range of real and envisaged actors, e.g. local authorities, governments, and others internal and external to the nation-state. They can then position themselves relative to them.

It gave informants a sense of locatedness (in Swindon, Britain, and the world), a link to what was going on, and enabled them to articulate a worldview and their place within it.

I have explored the verbal, mental and emotional strategies used by informants to make judgements on different actors, formulate opinions, and to protect their own position/interests or sooth mental anxieties through delivering criticisms. This section reviews the interaction of the different information resources in discussions at local, national and international/diasporic levels, key themes/concerns, constructions of nation and their implications for theory, and the overall relationship between *media discourse* and *experiential knowledge*.

### **7.3.2 Chapter 4: Local Level and The Local Paper**

The trust/anxiety dialectic (Silverstone, 2005) was present with trust in the availability of the *Swindon Advertiser* and its ability to generate unified concern over local crises or celebrations. However, the low quality and sensationalist tone of reporting could create anxiety. “English” informants had the most local comment, followed by “Sikhs”, then “Poles”. People did not refer to individual articles but to ongoing stories and themes in the paper. Informants’ repetition of ‘spotlighted factors’ or ‘catch phrases’ showed the paper’s influence first or second-hand. News talk was highly critical in tone, and demonstrated focused engagements with local political, economic, civic and leisure affairs in public sphere-like manner. Informants relied on *media discourse* when no other information was available or a story involved local bureaucrats they didn’t know. They relied more on *experiential knowledge* when the story had closer ‘issue proximity’ concerning themselves/close contacts, or when they could check out what was reported *experientially* in the town. *Experiential knowledge* was more trusted than *media discourse* when available, but *media discourse* had to

be believed at times, despite the overall critical tone of news talk. Two levels of news talk were present: 1) critical commentary and meta-commentary over media behaviour; and 2) simple discussion of 'facts' taken at face value (and *experiential knowledge* raised as another information source).

At local level, general conversation accounted for most constructions of place, community, belonging/exclusion and identity. Key town concerns in these areas were mirrored in news talk in the selection of stories only. There were two articulations of Swindonian identity and one articulation of British identity in news talk, and a few expressions of pride in the town/nation. Key themes in news talk were migrant-workers and cultural integration. "Poles" were defensive about migrant-worker relatives whereas "English" individuals who witnessed competition for jobs were resentful. Muslims were treated by all as the biggest cultural/religious pariah group of migrant origin, providing a target of animosity for general misgivings about migrant-origin groups not blending in successfully in British society. America was established in this chapter as a key reference point for the British, also continued in the forthcoming chapters, with its military strategy discussed here. There was one specifically 'Polish' reaction to a news story, where individuals expressed their fears about misuse of local authority power.

### **7.3.3 Chapter 5: National Level and The National News Landscape**

At national level, the entire news landscape was utilised across many *outlets*. News talk came mostly from the "English" and "Sikhs", then the "Poles". People rarely remembered the source of a story, they just 'heard it in the news', highlighting it as a 'symbolic system representing culture' (Bird, and Dardenne, 1997[1988]). National news also produced a trust/anxiety dynamic based on its

availability and thematic anguish. Informants engaged in a public sphere-like manner in a series of critical commentaries about national political, economic and media affairs. As described with reference to the *Advertiser* on p275, this behaviour mirrored Habermas' (1989) critical public debates over governmental affairs and Anderson's (1983 [1991]) being connected via newspaper consumption to others in the national space. They proved Fox and Miller-Idriss's (2008) point that 'social actors', 'diverse phenomena' and 'everyday stories' all become 'national' when 'national frames' are discursively invoked.

Informants were self-conscious of the national context when discussing news. Unlike other social formations that can constitute a community (e.g. locality), it did not form a space between family and society as in Cohen's (1985) theory of community/ identity formation. The national context came into existence when people became conscious of others who shared it (e.g. other ethnic groups), when developing consciousness of local scenarios which mirrored a national one presented in the news (e.g. recession), or when discussing national-level affairs. Stemming from this awareness arose a national discursive context.

The nation was created as a discursive construct in the thesis, and the ethnography throughout has shown how the nation or national identity is 'constructed, subverted, and undermined' (Fox and Miller-Idriss, 2008) in daily life. Informants did as Fox and Miller-Idriss suggested and 'talked *with* the nation'. This meant that when they talked about the national context, public or issues, they made these matter 'national', by using subtle 'homeland deixis' (Billig, 1995) such as 'us', 'here', 'our' etc., rhetorical pointing devices that indicated the British nation without describing it directly. Such terms are frequently used by politicians and the media, but I do not have the evidence to suggest whether this strategy for usage of 'homeland deixis' originated in informal or mediated discourse.

Alternatively, informants used vague terms such as 'this country' that do not require precise definitions of the nation in question, or necessitate judgement as to what is referred to, e.g. nation-state, cultural nation, home-nation etc., (although this can be implied). They also made discursive claims about the 'nation' (Calhoun, 1997), particularly in relation to socio-economic changes observed. For example, the disappearance of manufacturing in 'this country' or disappointment about dropping standards of behaviour in 'the country'. Calhoun's idea that nations become meaningful under such claims rings true here.

During conversation, informants raised a sequence of symbolic 'us' / 'them' boundaries to locate themselves inside or outside the nation, depending on the desirability of being included in a specific scenario. However, these boundaries were raised unconsciously by all when focused on shared experiences of the domestic British context. Diasporic consciousness was relegated to the background in this context, proving Fox and Miller-Idriss's (2008) notion of the nation as an 'unselfconscious disposition' in one context. This is an example of the *discursive construction* of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995) at work in daily life.

'Us' depicted 'the British' and 'they' depicted the government, offending companies, media, other unnamed authorities, and short-term migrants such as "Poles", and Muslims. Similar comparisons between 'us' or 'our homeland' and 'others' were made in external framings of Britain in relation to other nation-states or nationals. Examples include the *hijab* having to be worn by all in some Muslim countries but no insistence in Britain that Western clothes are worn by all, UK police behaviour compared to police actions in developing countries, and selfish individualism in Britain and other countries too. These findings confirm Billig's (1995) thesis that people hold a worldview shaped by configurations of 'us', 'our homeland', 'nations' and 'the world'. Even diaspora



members such as the “Sikhs” and “Poles” forged transnational links in a ‘world of nations’.

The British nation (in the abstract) was imagined (Anderson, 1983 [1991]) but never constructed as a ‘community’, just a national symbolic communicative space. Alternative symbolic and cultural spaces were not named. Pan-ethnic informants engaged in a shared discourse as British citizens and residents at this level with other identities having negligible impact. Most statements at national level were not ethnically-specific, illustrating that people perceived a shared context with others within the nation when the focus was national issues of wide concern. Exceptions were when the focus was one’s own ethnic group in relation to others, and internal issues within own ethnic groups.

Where ethnically-specific versions of Britishness coloured responses, they reflected the precise national/diasporic identities that were articulated in general talk. “Sikhs” expressed their keenness to be British in the internal national context and consciousness of racism, “Poles” were critically distant and occasionally expressed a British identity, and the “English” conflated English/British identities and were careful not to highlight the ethnicities of ethnic-minority Britons. National news talk highlighted the relationship between individual citizens, the government or cultural nation. The main unifying factor between groups during news talk was collective criticism of impersonal national institutions such as the state, government, media, and banks, which prompted expressions of disconnection from the nation and the state as well. By default, however, connections to other citizens in the national space / context emerged.

As already noted, informants did not have a unified coherent experience of a single nation. As section 7.2.2 also showed, they experienced the nation-state and cultural nation in varied and individual ways (A P Cohen, 1996a and b).

Nation was certainly the dominant mental schema for making sense of one's identity and belonging, endorsing Billig's (1995) efforts to prove that we still live in a 'world of nations'. The thesis has also demonstrated that defining the boundaries of nation, personal inclusion / exclusion, and the inclusion / exclusion of others, is an emotive business for all. Beyond ethnic belonging, other social groups were also seen as less desirable within the national context throughout and an encumbrance on national pride. These included 'chavs', drunks and substance abusers, and 'benefit scroungers'.

Regarding the 'talk' itself, at national level there were less obvious shifts between the uses of *media discourse* and *experiential knowledge* and both were engaged equally. Informants regularly had personal experience of the national institutions and systems discussed in the news, but relied on the news for information about specific incidents. It seemed crucial to be aware of national news as the nation-state represented the larger-scale physical and ideological environment in which lives were played out (see also Gillespie, 1995).

Key themes continued included responses to migrant-workers and integration. Settled Indian migrants saw themselves belonging more legitimately to Britain than short-term Polish migrant-workers. They had been there for years, were well-integrated and spoke good English. One "Sikh" informant introduced the perspective of 'political blackness', the only time it was mentioned in the thesis. Overall, articulations of Britishness were verbalised in the contexts of President Obama's visit, migrant-workers, and the poor 'un-British' treatment of refugees, all contexts that raised a symbolic boundary with foreignness. "Poles" remained worried about abusive authorities, and did not apologise for being political incorrect whereas the "English" did. The US was flagged as a key reference point and point of comparison for British affairs through discussion of its economy and Obama's visit. The international context outside the UK was illuminated on numerous occasions, mainly by "Sikh" and "Polish" informants

but occasionally “English” informants also, when the national/international overlapped in national news.

#### 7.3.4 Chapter 6: International Level and International News

For international news and news of British involvement abroad, people were completely reliant on *media discourse* for information about particular happenings. However, the “Poles” and “Sikhs” unanimously drew on broader *experiential knowledge* of Poland/India gleaned on visits and in the diasporas to make sense of the wider meanings and impacts of stories taking place in those countries. The “Sikhs” certainly trusted their *experiential knowledge* more than *media discourse*. The “English” were completely dependent on *media discourse* to make sense of British involvement abroad, as international news that interested them occurred in many different countries where they lacked *experiential knowledge*. Media behaviour was criticised and rationalised in all three case studies to recharge ontological security, and to place informants above the anxiety that the news can produce.

“Sikh” preferences for British media and news proved that their daily horizons were located in Britain. News talk about an Indian crisis revealed constantly-shifting diasporic identities at play in constructing a series of symbolic communicative spaces in Britain, India and between, and various cultural spaces. Diasporic identities were the same as those constructed in general talk. In news talk, symbolic boundaries were constantly raised between India/Indians and Pakistan and its representatives, to confirm who the main ‘other’ in diasporic “Sikh” lives is, as in general talk. Both Indian and British societies were criticised, showing that the diasporic lens on India wasn’t a rose-tinted one. Britishness was constructed with more ambivalence at diasporic than national level with the constant discursive shifts, and full diasporic

consciousness at work. Diaspora was never described as a 'community', but diasporic consciousness was raised through various practices: historical and political consciousness, consuming media, communicating with relatives/contacts in India and the US, and travel, all part of diaspora's 'communicative circuitry' (Gilroy, 1997). As active participants in these small-scale transnational practices (Burrell, 2003), informants demonstrated a wider mental horizon than most "English" informants with their diasporic geographical and emotional connections.

The "Poles" were heavily involved in international news consumption, particularly from Poland, exemplifying the intense importance of historical and political consciousness in the diaspora. They were outward-looking at the international/diasporic level despite their inward-facing outlook in local /national life. Again, they evinced diasporic geographical and emotional connections through small-scale transnational activity (Burrell, 2003). News from Poland was more exciting and interesting whilst British news was taken for granted (cf. Madianou, 2009: 330) and criticised. They were excluded from experiencing Poland's daily-life, and viewed it with the gloss of idealism as it had been relatively unattainable for years, despite their sense of belonging to it. The Polish/British news-viewing combination awakened diasporic consciousness and expressions of the same identity unearthed by general talk. There was never an articulation of diaspora as 'community' at this level, although general talk had produced plenty of constructions of the organised ethnic community as one. The Swindon diaspora may have been connected to other diasporic communities via television, again exemplifying diaspora as 'communicative circuitry' (Gilroy, 1997), but it existed as an entity in its own right. The "Poles" articulated strongly against political correctness, and in

worries about Britain deferring to the US<sup>104</sup> in international political and military manoeuvres in order to combat their fears of repressive authorities, and colonial or occupying powers. Connections to Britain were largely denied but were admitted when pushed, showing a partial daily-life orientation to the nation.

The “English” were barely engaged at international level, and if they were, it was usually ‘extraordinary’ affairs that sustained their attention. The occasional individual who paid attention to international news did so for patriotic reasons, out of intellectual interest or because they worked abroad. Events which framed the nation led to overt articulations of national identity and patriotism, and disconnection.

#### ***7.4 Media Discourse and Experiential Knowledge***

*Experiential knowledge* was the pre-requisite for individuals to develop core orientations about individual and collective identities, feelings of belonging and exclusion, and feelings of ‘community’ in physically-located places or networks, and national/diasporic spaces. Many identity constructions involved the raising of symbolic boundaries between an ‘us’ and ‘them’. Discussions of news stories rarely initiated or shaped an individual’s basic orientation. They enhanced and reinforced existing perceptions in these areas. Consuming and talking about national/international news allowed individuals to construct symbolic communicative spaces and cultural spaces. National news talk highlighted the relationship between individual citizens, the government or cultural nation, and disconnection from the state, but connections to other citizens emerged. Comparative news viewing presented a series of events and

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<sup>104</sup> The English also critiqued the British government’s over-dependency on the USA in economic, political and military matters.

contexts which place nations of ancestral origin and upbringing /daily residence alongside each other. Talk raised diasporic consciousness and showed the construction of shifting identities in process. However, symbolic spaces did not merit the conventional descriptions of physically-located 'community'. If community is understood using Fog-Olwig's (2002) definition as 'shared fields of belonging', it could be seen how feelings of belonging/exclusion were projected into these spaces. *Media discourse* could supplement adults' perceptions of the social and political worlds, their identities, 'us'/'them' oppositions, and positions in local, national and international/diasporic contexts with new information, but it rarely changed existing orientations. Therefore, from an informant point of view, media were less at the centre of society (Couldry, 2003) than previous studies have suggested, because although they could influence the ways that people think, they did not create, dominate or control them.

Although Durham Peters (1997) argued that globalisation has demoted the value of common-sense experience, *experiential knowledge* was trusted above *media discourse* on all occasions. *Experiential knowledge* was the dominant resource at local level, but *media discourse* sometimes had to be relied upon when *experiential knowledge* did not exist. Both were equally relied upon at national level, and *media discourse* was completely relied upon at international level although *experiential knowledge* dominated when diaspora members filtered *media discourse*.

The ways in which people used *media discourse* and *experiential knowledge* to construct ideas were discursively similar at the three levels of analysis. Informants' news talk usually led into deeper reflections on the state of the town, society, government or nation, or world. News talk about *media discourse* acted as gateway for the articulation of deeper and broader views gleaned from

*experiential knowledge* that threw up revelations about informants' pre-existing orientations (Lull, 1990: 149).

Although national identity discourses were different for all three 'groups', each had an engaged relationship to Britishness, a site of cultural contestation (Gupta and Ferguson, 1997a). Across the thesis, the substantial finding was that all three 'groups' had shared experiences of local and national 'life' – social and physical spaces, daily practices and values, and local and national systems and symbols, events and ideologies. Chapters 3, 4 and 7 showed shared perceptions of town and community in Swindon. Chapters 4 - 6 highlighted common news media consumed and agendas followed, some shared views on politics and society, and different degrees of connection to the idea of Britishness.

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