

“IZZAT” AND THE SHAPING OF THE LIVES OF YOUNG ASIANS IN BRITAIN IN  
THE 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

“Izzat” is a phenomenon which confers status and respect, is fluid enough to shift from the individual to the collective domain, and which through its relationship with “sharam” (shame) commands conformity to acceptable norms of behaviour in Asian communities.

A chronological approach in this thesis to the mining of research on Asian communities in Britain since the 1960s gradually revealed an emerging discourse on the concept and found that it was considered significant and yet given limited focus.

Through empirical research this study uniquely places the concept at its centre. The research involved 25 in-depth interviews with young British Asian men and women who were also Youth and Community Workers, aged between 18 and 35 and explored how “izzat” and the equally important concept of “sharam” shapes their lives.

This research identified the multi-layered and nuanced nature of “izzat” and discovered how young Asians learn about it through immersion in family and community-life. It discovered how it can be maintained and/or enhanced by members of Asian communities by generally ‘Conforming to Acceptable Norms’, and in line with established notions of ‘achieved’ and ‘ascribed’ status, through ‘Achievement’ and by virtue of ‘Inherited Factors’. It explored how “izzat” can be lost through attracting “sharam”, and examined the close relationship between “izzat”, “sharam” and gender. It also demonstrated how both “izzat” and “sharam” are significant in curbing behaviour through the process of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” which in turn influence individual and familial reputations in Asian communities.

The conclusion to the thesis also includes inferences drawn from the empirical research regarding implications for Youth and Community Practice.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Asian population of England and Wales, according to the most recent estimates from the Office of National Statistics (2011) is one of the fastest growing ethnic groups and constitutes 5.9% of the total population. Therefore any research that can contribute to the growing body of knowledge and information on this sector of the British population is no doubt welcome. In this case this research aims to explore the concept of “izzat” and its significance in shaping the lives of young Asians in Britain using both secondary and primary research.

My motivation to research “izzat” started some years ago with reflections on my personal and professional life (as an Asian Youth and Community Worker) in Britain. The research for this thesis began at the turn of the millennium with my search through the existing research on Asians in Britain. In the twelve years it has taken to complete this thesis the socio-political landscape has changed significantly, resulting perhaps in a greater focus on young Asians, especially Muslims in Britain. This research is undertaken in the wake and midst therefore of ‘Ground Zero’/9/11 and London’s 7/7 (see Abbas 2007), and more recently the ‘Arab Spring’ (Manhire 2012). These events, among other political shifts in Britain (such as the governmental change from ‘New’ Labour to the Coalition Government), has resulted in this greater focus on young Asians (especially Muslims), and in particular in the emergence of the anti-terrorism agenda (Hellyer 2007; Nellis 2007; Kazmi 2007). These socio-political ‘shifts’ provide the backcloth for this empirical research, although the focus is primarily on how the concept shapes the lives of young Asians.

“Izzat”, is usually translated as personal or family honour and pride by those who have researched Asian communities, both on the Indian sub-continent and in Britain. “Izzat” is important because it is a means of conferring status on individuals and their families leading to the notion of ‘standing’ within the community (Werbner, 1990; Ballard 1994; Shaw 2000). However I think that this translation does little justice to the complexity and nuances of meaning that can be ascribed to the concept of “izzat”, which is an underpinning force that I believe helps to regulate life in all Asian communities.

The word “izzat”, from Urdu, possibly indicates that the concept has its origins in the Islamic cultures and communities of the northern regions of the Indian sub-continent (Wilson 1979). Over time it has been adopted by and been influenced by the cultures, which have co-existed with the Islamic communities of that region. This means that the concept is now understood by, and in use in the communities of the Indian subcontinent in general. In Punjabi, therefore it is known as “ijat”, and so for Sikhs and Punjabi Hindus, has the same meaning concerned with pride, status and honour. It is interesting, however, that in Hindi, Gujarati and in Bengali, the other main languages of the northern Indian subcontinent communities, the word “lajjaa”/“laaj” is considered an equivalent. “Lajjaa”, in fact means shame, so the inter-relationship between honour and shame is enshrined in the usage of corresponding words in the languages of these cultures originating from the Indian sub-continent. My experience and observations as an Asian living and working as a Youth and Community professional in Britain, within the three main religious Asian communities of Britain (Muslim, Sikh and Hindu), indicates that the word “izzat” has gained acceptance, as also has the Urdu and Punjabi equivalent for shame – “sharam”. The two concepts are implicitly understood, and are alive in all three communities.

“Izzat” is important for Asians because it is a force or phenomenon, which confers status on individuals and their families, and this in turn helps to sustain a family’s good name, standing and reputation within the Asian community concerned. Status can be affirmed through approved conduct, and earned through acts that are considered by the community to be meritorious. The on-going process of “izzat”-affirming helps to establish and sustain a hierarchy within communities which are based on a complex network of relationships influenced by factors such as kinship, caste, regional and national associations. A good position in the hierarchy of families that is established over time is considered advantageous because it ensures that members of that family find themselves in a position of relative privilege. An example of the potential benefits of such a position of privilege includes having a greater choice when the family is seeking spouses for its dependents of marriageable age (Wilson 1979; Bachu 1985). The quest for “izzat” is therefore desirable and ties every family into a complex network of relationships within the community, from which it is very difficult to escape, and within which the behaviour of its members is regulated through an implicit understanding of “izzat”, and the fear of a loss of “izzat” or of attracting “sharam” (shame).

As an Asian, Hindu woman who has lived in Britain since the age of nine, and who has worked extensively within Asian communities as a Youth and Community professional, I have personal and professional experience and knowledge of the concepts of “izzat” and “sharam” (Soni 2006 - appendix 1). In fact my previous study (at Masters Level) also focused on Asian communities settled in Britain. It was important therefore to make use of this prior

knowledge and experience in my explorations of both the secondary and primary research for this thesis (Moustakas 1990). For as Grix (2002:179) points out:

...for all research necessarily starts from a person's view of the world, which itself is shaped by the experience one brings to the research in the first place.

Both the concepts of “izzat” and “sharam” have been the focus of much attention in recent times, but ‘everyday’ life in Asian communities is not exclusively defined by experiences of murder or child abuse. However these two extremes of behaviour regarding honour-related violence/killings and the shame of sexual abuse have been the focus of much media attention recently, encapsulated by two key ‘events’ – the murders of Banaz Mahmood (McVeigh, 2007) and Shafiea Ahmed (Carter 2012; Hundal 2012; Khan 2012), and the collective shame attached to the Rochdale paedophile ring (Carter 2012; Orr 2012). These ‘events’ have drawn much attention to Asians in Britain, but the focus on honour-related violence in fact long predates Shafiea’s murder. As Wilson pointed out in 1979 this fascination in the West with sensational behaviour within Asian ‘culture’ helps to invigorate the dynamism of “izzat”, and to keep interest in it ‘alive’ in the wider society:

British society serves in fact to keep ‘izzat’ alive. The contempt for Asian culture, the constant shadow of racial hostility and the disregard for family and group identity provide an atmosphere in which ‘izzat’ is constantly charged and recharged. (p. 32)

The significance of this in regard to my research is that although I believe the perpetrators of such extreme behaviour as identified above should be exposed and their crimes rightfully prosecuted, such attention on these extremes of behaviour in Asian communities fails to develop real understanding of how “izzat” (and “sharam”) shape the lives of Asians. My interest in this research is not on the sensational but uniquely on the far-reaching effects of “izzat” (and “sharam”) in the daily lives of young Asians living in Britain. This research

therefore aims to put “izzat” and its corollary “sharam”, at the centre, exposed not through sensational acts of depravity, but explored as the mundane substance of Asian community-life, lived by individuals and their families. For far too long researchers have candidly agreed its importance to Asians and their communities, but it has remained marginal in the literature on Asians and Asian communities – this research will bring it ‘centre stage’ not through a focus on the sensational, but as a force that shapes lives.

The thesis therefore begins in Chapter 1 with a review of the literature on Asians in Britain from the 1960s, corresponding with the first large wave of migration from the Indian subcontinent (Dahya 1963; Wilson 1979; Ballard 1994), and ends with the research on Asians in Britain in the millennium. I decided to use a chronological approach (as far as was possible) because it helped to trace the largely marginalized and submerged concepts of “izzat” and “sharam” through mainly the ethnographic research on Asian communities settled in Britain. This chronological approach to the literature in the first part of this thesis begins the research process by mining the literature on Asians in Britain to explore the two concepts, demonstrating how researchers candidly agreed their importance to Asians and their communities, although they remained marginal in the literature. Through such a chronological approach I was in fact able to uncover the emerging discourse on the concepts. In short I was able to show how over time a much more confident and explicit discussion about their role within Asian community-life in Britain has emerged.

In Chapter 1 of this thesis I therefore explored the extent to which “izzat” was explicitly named as a concept by researchers studying Asians in Britain from the 1960s onwards. I also

noted the extent to which it was inferred or evoked, although not explicitly cited. A cursory examination of the words encapsulating the term “izzat” in itself and a range of others which capture its nuances of meaning, including, “sharam”, honour, shame, status, respect, family reputation and pride, in the subject index of each of the texts or research I reviewed, provided a good indication about whether the concept was explicitly or implicitly discussed in the text in question or not.

Chapter 2 of this thesis includes a discussion about the research journey that has led to my interest in this subject, and also explores my choice of methodology, methods and the sample for the primary research on the topic. I also discuss the ethical dilemmas, including the dynamics of gender and power and the issues raised by researching a potentially sensitive subject with others.

My primary research is divided into 2 chapters. I begin Chapter 3 of the thesis with a description of my sample of interviewees, and go on to present my key findings and analysis in relation to “izzat”. In Chapter 4 I move on to focus on “sharam”. This chapter ends with a discussion that triangulates the data to explore the extent to which the concepts of “izzat” and “sharam” continue to have resonance in the lives of young Asians in Britain.

The final chapter of the thesis brings together my key conclusions from the secondary and primary research undertaken, and reflections on the research journey as a whole, especially in regard to the possible advantages and disadvantages of my subjective knowledge as an ‘insider’ to Asian communities in Britain.

## **CHAPTER 1: “IZZAT”: EMERGING ‘MEANINGS’ THROUGH RESEARCH**

### **LITERATURE**

#### **1.1. Background**

In this, Chapter 1 of the thesis, I will mine the existing literature on Asians in Britain from the 1960s onwards to explore how the discourse on “izzat” emerged over time. I have decided to undertake a chronological review of mainly ethnographic research on South Asian communities, and been guided in my ‘choices’ by Government reports, meaning that I have explored the work of those researchers featured in Government commissioned reports such as the *Swann Report* (1985), and extensive reviews, such as Madan’s (1979), and Taylor and Hegarty’s, (1985). I have also adopted the technique of “snowball sampling” which Saunders et al. (2006:205) suggest in “secondary literature can be performed by using the author’s list of references...” I have therefore used this notion of cross citation as an indicator of particular research/researchers being worthy of some degree of attention.

Research that was completed after the dates of the major government reports and reviews cited above was often the later work of researchers previously cited in these reports and major reviews. Examples include the work of Roger Ballard (1973; 1975; 1976; 1977; 1982; 1994), and Mohammed Anwar (1976; 1979; 1986; 1998) amongst others. As these researchers’ earlier work on South Asian communities was generally accepted and regarded as being important by academics and policy makers, I assumed that their later work could accrue the same credibility. In fact such research, often on a particular Asian community, over time provided interesting points of development both, with regard to changes within the



communities researched and in the insights of the researcher. Roger Ballard, for example, made interesting observations in his earlier work with regard to leadership and status (Ballard 1973; Ballard and Ballard 1977), without evoking the concept of “izzat” explicitly. It is only in his later work, *Desh Pardesh* (1994) that he explicitly discusses “izzat” as a concept linked to status, prestige and reputation. I will return to Roger Ballard’s work later in this chapter.

‘Newer’ researchers emerged after the major government reports and reviews cited earlier (Saunders et al, 2006), and gained credibility because they were often cited by the earlier researchers such as Anwar and Ballard, and also by writers of later reports and reviews, such as the Runnymede Trust’s (1997) report on Islamophobia. Examples include the work of Bachu (1985), Modood et al (1994, 1997), Shaw (1988, 1994, 2000), Ghuman (1994, 1996, 1999), and Werbner (1990, 2002). The Cattle Report (2001), concerned with community cohesion following disturbances in Britain’s inner cities, is a later example of a comprehensive report that makes references to research on Asian communities. This review therefore aims to chronologically mine the literature on Asian communities settled in Britain to explore the concepts of “izzat” and “sharam” and to understand how they have come to be defined over the period under review.

This chapter is divided into sections by decades – the first, starting in the 60s, to coincide with the first large wave of migration from the Indian sub-continent (Desai 1963; Wilson 1979) to the end of the 1970s, then the 1980s, followed by the 1990s and finally the period into the millennium and beyond.

## **1.2. The 1960s and 1970s**

I will start in the 1960s with Desai's (1963) work, featuring the first generation immigrant Asian communities from the Indian subcontinent. It is clear that "izzat" is a lurking phenomenon, helping to preserve the social behavioural norms of family/community-life as it was lived on the Indian subcontinent, in the British context. For example, in her description of the "immigrant household" she notes:

The norms which govern behaviour here are those prevailing in the extended family household in India. An atmosphere of fraternity between men is coupled with strict formality in contact between men and women. In order to ensure this (as in India), privacy between a man and a woman is discouraged to the extent that even the husband and wife practise avoidance in the presence of others. It is therefore impossible for an immigrant to develop contact with a white woman inside the household without incurring censure. (p. 122)

Even though Desai goes on to discuss the notion of "ritual purity" and "ritual impurity" with regard to "casual extra-marital sex relations" and "sexual contact with the outsider", and the strong censure that this attracts from the family and community, she does not directly refer to the concepts of "izzat" or "sharam". (p. 123)

With regard to "izzat" as a status ascribing and reputation enhancing force, it is interesting that early on Desai (1963) indicated that for migration purposes, kin groups often revolved around one leader who was influential in helping immigrants to reach England and find housing and employment. This accrued prestige for the leader, reinforcing his reputation based on existing relationships of a traditional caste-based society of the village.

By the 1970s as immigrants from the first large wave of immigration from the Indian subcontinent, in the post-war period settled in Britain's inner-cities, more researchers began to study the relatively new arrivals (Ballard 1973, 1976; Ballard and Holden 1975; Roger and Catherine Ballard 1977; Ghuman 1975; Khan 1976, 1977, 1979; Anwar 1976, 1979). Dahya's (1972-73, 1973, 1974) work indicates how improved economic and occupational status in the British context affected traditional caste hierarchies, enabling low caste families to claim equality by way of working and gaining relatively greater economic wealth in Britain. This in turn helped to improve the status of British-based families in relation to their previous standing within the community, both in Britain and on the subcontinent.

As the patterns of settlement in Britain, influenced by employment opportunities, were in particular geographical areas, and broadly mirroring national and regional differentiation on the subcontinent (Desai 1963), it enabled researchers to concentrate in greater depth on particular communities.

The Asian community context by the mid-1970s is very different from the early patterns established when only the men migrated to Britain from the subcontinent (Desai 1963; Dahya 1965; Dahya 1973). By the late 1960s and early 1970s, some significant shifts occurred in the 'psyche' of the initial, predominantly male migrants. The first is the acceptance that they were here to stay for a longer period than initially expected, and therefore a gradual abandonment of the 'myth of return' (Dahya 1973; Anwar 1976, 1979; Ballard 1979). The second was the wish to bring wives and children to settle in Britain - an important step in establishing community-life in Britain, largely on the patterns of the subcontinent. This was

an important factor in enabling communities to invoke the spirit of “izzat” as a ‘norming’ force within the British context.

It is in the work of Ballard and Ballard (1977:36) that one of the first explicit references to “izzat” appears, briefly in the context of the shame (“sharam”) attached to Sikh men liaising with white women, resulting in the loss of “izzat” for the individuals concerned, and by association affecting the reputation of the individual’s family. They also referred to “honour” in the context of immigration being seen by the early Sikh migrants as something temporary, “to earn money to buy land and hence to maintain the family’s honour” (p. 26). This is reiterated later in Ballard’s chapter on South Asian Families in Rapoport et al’s (1982) *Families in Britain*, where the idea of ‘competition’ between family-members is also introduced – a theme that Ballard later develops further. Here the concepts ‘of ‘honour’, “izzat”, and “sharm”, “shame” are revisited briefly, and the distinction between how the “izzat-sharam”- relationship is played out by men and women is made. Thus the men need to portray themselves as ‘fearless’ and independent to the outside world, while exerting “close control over the female members of their family” (p. 183). Women, importantly need to behave “with seemly modesty, secluding themselves from the world of men”. So, early on the idea of two distinct worlds for men and women in Asian communities is established and as Ballard suggests, “...ideas of honour and shame thus reinforce the hierarchy of relationships within the family” (p. 183).

In other major research on Asian communities in the late 1970s, such as Khan’s (1976, 1977, 1979) and the CRC report (1976), the concept of “izzat” is implied lurking in descriptions about family networks, the choice of partners for marriage, (especially the unsuitability of

partners), and the ensuing threat of community condemnation and censure. However, Khan (1976; 1977) does not explicitly ascribe any of this to “izzat”, and the focus of the CRC report (1976) is on intergenerational relationships, with approval and censure implied through the patterning of peer networks, but “izzat” is never explicitly mentioned.

Khan (1979:42) discusses the benefits bestowed on the family and clan (“biradari”) in terms of prestige by association with the success of an individual, alluding particularly to financial benefits. The notion of reputation is also powerfully invoked, although, the term “izzat” is not explicitly used. As she (1979:45) points out when describing the Pakistani family:

The independence and warmth of relationships buffers hardships and external threat but the stability and control exercised by the unit demands a restraint on individual initiative and independence which the more independent of mind are likely to resist. Those who voluntarily or involuntarily deviate from the norm (for example widows, the physically deformed) are subject to particularly severe reprimand or control. Those believed vulnerable (for example young unmarried girls) are controlled and those who by force or choice, do not fulfil the expected life-cycle course (of marriage, bearing children, for example) lose esteem and influence. In both these cases it is not only the individual whose reputation is blemished, but he or she jeopardises the reputation of the whole family or kin group. Those who deviate from the norm thus place themselves in potentially stressful situations.

By the late seventies the focus encompasses firstly the second generation, (Ghuman 1975; CRC 1976; Taylor 1976; Ballard and Ballard 1977; Ballard 1979; Weinreich 1979), including the effects on the young people of “socialisation in two very different cultures” (Ballard and Ballard 1977:43), and on ‘identity conflict’ (Ghuman 1975; Anwar 1976; Weinreich 1979). The resulting ‘tensions’ were largely ascribed to inter-generational conflicts and those arising from the demands of the ‘host’ society and the expectations of Asian communities, for example with regard to dress, friendship patterns and freedom (in pursuit of careers, education and social activities etc.). Secondly women are also studied including the differential

treatment of young men and women, and their parents' expectations of them. The fear generated by the censure, loss of security and contact with the family, when young people strayed too far from parental and community expectations are discussed.

In her chapter on 'Conflict, Continuity and Change', Ballard (1979:122) explores how young Asians straddle their 'Asian-ness' and their encounters with the host society, concluding that, "Most young Asians are able to participate in both cultural systems".

Although central to these intergenerational and in-community/out-community discourses is the concept of "izzat", (and therefore its 'flip', "sharam"), the concept was generally still not explicitly discussed in these studies. For example although Ballard (1979:116-117) eloquently describes the role of gossip as "an important sanction against non-conformity", and discusses "a girl's reputation" and the importance of reputation for the "status and prestige of the family as a whole", she does not ascribe these to the concept of "izzat".

Wilson (1979) discussed "izzat" in relative depth regarding the situation of women in Asian communities. This remains one of the few 'early' texts that refer to "izzat" in its subject index. In reviewing Wilson's work, Taylor and Hegarty (1985:88) concluded that,

...despite their diverse linguistic and religious backgrounds and migration patterns, the women's lives, as in their home villages, are dominated by three main concepts: the ego of the male, especially the household head whose function to nurture, preserve and increase family honour is vital; a sense of hierarchy, synonymous with the existence of the family; and the closeness of relationships – the bonds which provide consolation.

Wilson (1979) remains one of the few researchers from this period, to explicitly identify the role of "izzat" in circumstances alluded to by the women she interviewed, including the

importance of modesty in dress, the role of conformity and reputation in ascribing status to families affecting their position in “the hierarchy of their particular community” (p. 39), the importance of “sharam” (shame) in securing conformity in behaviour and the potential ultimately of “killings in the name of honour” (p. 35).

She examines the concept in some depth, but only devotes two pages to a discussion of it (pp. 34-35). Therefore, although there is explicit acknowledgement of the impact that “izzat” has on the lives of Asian women it is marginal, and not a central focus of the work.

Thus by the end of the 1970s, all the ‘main’ Asian communities had arrived in Britain from the Indian sub-continent and from East Africa (Wilson 1979), and the focus on the second generation was beginning to emerge. In relation to “izzat” or honour, with a few exceptions the concept was generally inferred, and not explicitly discussed. This was particularly in relation to gender dynamics, and women and censure in regard to behaviour perceived as ‘unacceptable’. The growing focus on the second generation and especially on the different paradigms emerging in relation to the discourse about their lives in Britain also perhaps meant that the research focus was ‘elsewhere’, other than on “izzat” or honour.

### **1.3.The 1980s**

The eighties saw a general decrease in research focused specifically on Asian communities. Reduced funding for social science may have influenced this, triggered by the change in government, as the Thatcher period and her policies took hold. As a result of the changing social conditions and the political responses to these, the research emphasis regarding South

Asians seems more on race, inter-community dynamics and on education specific subjects, rather than research of a more general nature, examining the patterns of community-life in Asian communities. This was a period of significant social unrest, and riots in inner-city areas, where many Asian communities lived. General disillusionment with a life of deprivation found expression through open revolt as young people rioted in the major cities like Birmingham, Bristol and Liverpool (Gilroy and Lawrence 1988).

In response to these expressions of unrest, the Conservative Government commissioned research by the Rampton Committee (1981) to review all the research on children and young people of West Indian origin. A little later the Swann Committee published *Education for All* (1985) and Lord Swann, its Chairman, went on to commission a research review on children and young people of South Asian origin, (Taylor and Hegarty 1985).

Again this comprehensive review does not explicitly list “izzat” or (family) honour in the subject index, although the concept is generally evoked, implicit in descriptions of family life and community networks. For example it appears in discussing Wilson’s (1979) work and in relation to Ballard’s research (1977:37) into the Sikh community where “izzat” is referred to regarding the patterns of social obligations set up by the chain of migration of men, and which needed to be satisfied to “maintain family honour”. Thus “izzat” is implicit and not generally explicitly mentioned.

A few studies in the 1980s focused in any real depth on the now settled communities in Britain, including the work of Bowen (1981a, 1981b), Jackson (1981) and Knott (1986) on Hindu communities and Bachu’s (1985) work on the East African Sikhs. Barton (1986) and



Eade (1987) focused on the Bengali/Bangladeshi communities in Bradford and Tower Hamlets, while Anwar (1986) developed his earlier work and Shaw (1988) researched the Pakistani community in Oxford.

Although explicit discussion of “izzat”, “sharam” (or its Hindi equivalent, “laaj”) is absent in much of the work cited from the 80s above, Bowen (1981) suggests the importance of Hindu religious mythology to establish standards of behaviour for men and especially for women in Bradford’s Hindu community. In describing the importance of Lord Rama and his wife Sita, he says:

Just as Rama was the dutiful and obedient son, expressing the perfect form of filiality, so Sita is submissive to her husband, expressing a devotion which has left its mark on the pattern of Indian womanhood. (p. 39)

Although the notion of devotion and submission of women in Hindu communities may not have an obvious link to “izzat” or “sharam”, the dishonour or shame resulting from women behaving in ways which do not conform to the expected norms of devotion and submissiveness can be envisaged. Bowen (1981) merely implies the importance of such mythological figures in regulating the behaviour of men and women – a point also emphasised by Jackson (1981:75) regarding the Gujarati Hindus in Coventry:

... for Rama embodies the virtues of truth, honour and bravery, while Sita expresses the ideals of Indian womanhood by her faithfulness and devotion.

Jackson also implies the differential expectations of boys and girls with regard to educational achievement:

Education is highly prized, and there is generally strong support for young peoples’ (especially, but not exclusively, boys) ambitions for higher educational opportunities. (p. 57)

This relates to the idea of “izzat” as a status conferring influence, and the implication is that educational success will result in greater attainments with regard to career and spouse-selection.

With regard to inter-generational relationships, and in his focus on young Hindus in Bradford, Bowen (1981:60) uses the term “bi-culturalism”, referring to the “tensions and dissonances” arising from their encounters with Western society:

As a British Hindu you can only live fully if you live in two cultures ... young people appear to be discovering that bi-culturalism is not only a potential way forward but a rich and attractive possibility, although fraught (like every other creative way of life) with tensions and dissonances.

Knott (1986) concentrates on the structures and systems in place for religious practice amongst the Hindu Gujaratis and Punjabis in Leeds, emphasising the implicit link between religiosity and the establishment of traditional mores for family-life. He does not discuss the mechanisms for establishing traditional family and community-life, choosing instead to focus on structural aspects such as religious practices at the temple, and in Hindu groups and families. The only indication of “izzat” and “sharam” being implicitly present in community-life comes from a brief discussion on caste, including in relation to the relative status and prestige assigned to caste-affiliation. He emphasises the importance of caste-related expectations regarding spouse-selection, warning of “a great deal of antagonism” (p. 44) when these are ignored.

Barton’s (1986) study of Bradford’s Bengali Muslims also focuses on religious observance, and there is no overt reference to “izzat” or “sharam”. However, the implicit presence of both

is captured by a description of the practice of “purdah” (literally meaning ‘curtain’) within the home of the imam, in an effort to respect appropriate behaviour with regard to gender:

When the imam has male visitors to his home in Bradford, a curtain is hung across the sitting room so that his wife can pass from the kitchen to the staircase unseen.  
(p. 11)

The inference that can be drawn is that failure to observe “purdah” could result in shame/the loss of honour for the imam and his family.

Moving on I would like to focus on Bachu’s (1985) ethnographic account of the East African Sikh community. This is an example of research dedicated to the study of an Asian community as a whole. Although “izzat” is absent from the subject index and the glossary of Punjabi terms, Bachu does examine the importance of status within the community, distinguishing between ascribed status, which is reliant on family history, wealth and well-being over time, and achieved status, which is dependent upon personal and family achievements with regard to the acquisition of wealth, through education, business acumen and career choice. The associated importance of reputation that is so significant for “izzat” is also discussed. She also examines in some detail the process of choosing marriage partners, the dowry system, and the differential attributes of the bride and groom. As she points out:

In most cases, brides are less qualified than grooms. The greater emphasis is on their personal qualities and the moral characteristics in comparison with those of the grooms, whose status is judged by their earning potential and education, i.e. socially defined criteria of achievement. (Bachu 1985:91)

The concern with the personal and moral qualities of brides, and the acquired and/or ascribed status of grooms are indicative of a community alert to the dangers of “sharam”, and the importance of the prestige and status ascribing potential of “izzat”, even though the only two

explicit references made to it in the text are in relation to the dowry (“daaj”), when Bachu (1985:108) says,

A marriage without a ‘daaj’ could also reflect badly on the ‘izzet’ (honour) of the khandan’ (the extended kinship group, but also the nuclear family, referring to its ancestry) of the bride.

She goes on to point out that, “A marriage without a ‘daaj’ is considered to be the least status-bestowing, since it reflects badly on the ‘izzet’ of the family” (p. 133).

Both Anwar (1986) and Shaw (1988) also produced research in this period, but their later work has greater relevance to “izzat” and so will be discussed further on.

By the end of the 1980s the attention paid to “izzat” was limited, with the focus being largely on religious observance and organisation in Asian communities. In relation to “izzat” and behaviour and expectations, ideal notions of ‘womanhood’ are emphasised through religious iconography, and the different expectations of boys/men to succeed in particular in education and employment begin to be recognised. Bachu’s (1985) distinction between ‘ascribed’ and ‘achieved’ status is useful in drawing attention to how status and prestige could be accrued, resulting in influencing reputations in Asian communities. This distinction was generally accepted and adopted by others undertaking research on Asians in Britain (such as Shaw 1988 and 2000 and Ballard 1994).

#### **1.4.The 1990s**

By the 1990s there is relatively greater focus on Asian communities, and a return to consideration of intergenerational relationships (Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990), and on young Asians' experiences of schooling and their experiences of contacts with Western social/cultural practices (Werbner 1990; Ghuman 1991, 1994, 1995, 1999; Modood 1992; Ballard 1994; Modood et al. 1994, 1997; Anwar 1998; Bhatti 1999; Shaw 1988, 1994, 2000). The 1990s focus on young Asians ascribes their experiences much less to the 'caught between two cultures' models of the 1970s, exploring instead the emergent culture of young British Asians, who definitely know that they are British, yet different from the 'host' society. All those cited above will be discussed in this section, legitimised through the process of cross-citation (Saunders et al. 2006). Again "izzat" is largely absent from their subject indexes. The exceptions are the work of Werbner (1990), Ghuman (1994, 1999), Ghuman and Dosanj (1996), Ballard's *Desh Pardesh* (1994), Shaw (1988, 1994, 2000) and Bhatti (1999).

In Stopes-Roe and Cochrane's (1990) work, "izzat" is discussed only in the context of the family, with particular regard to status, prestige and reputation. Their research involved taking two family members as the unit being studied, one each from the first and the second generation of newcomers. Like Bachu (1985), they focused in some depth on the importance of reputation of the family, including potential areas of congruence and difference between representatives from the two generations, with regard to spouse-selection. Thus, when discussing the process of spouse-selection, they point out that young Asians' consideration of prospective spouses suggested by parents is tempered by the fact that,

...the good name of the whole family and its individual members will be put in question by repeated refusals of eligible spouses. (p.30)

Stopes-Roe and Cochrane emphasise the focus on the “supreme importance of the family and its position and honour in the community” (1990:40) as significant elements for all Asians. They suggest that, “As Asian young people grow into adulthood there is a pressure towards conformity, obedience and the support of the family” (p. 42). Although there is no explicit reference to “sharam”, (often a consequence of non-conformity), the reasons why young Asians generally choose to conform is discussed, as is the differential treatment of sons and daughters. Here, Stopes-Roe and Cochrane echo Wilson’s (1979) view that the burden of guarding a reputation lies mainly with women. This is captured by a Muslim father’s views regarding his daughter’s potential marriage to someone white:

It might be accepted for the boy to marry (though not liked). But it would never be acceptable for our girls. It’s a delicate relationship we have with a daughter. We would feel dishonoured, the family would be dishonoured if this happened.  
(Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990:51)

It is under the sub-heading ‘The Reputation of the Family’ that Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990:75) explicitly use the word “‘izzat’”, thus linking ‘reputation’, to the “prestige, honour and good name” of the family. They usefully draw a distinction about the meaning of “‘izzat’” for both, the white, British respondents and for the Asians:

They (the translations of “‘izzat’”) are common in British use, but in daily life are currently more likely to refer to the individual rather than to the family. The British may be concerned with individual reputation, and, at a day-to-day level with ‘what the neighbours will say’, but the impact of the family’s reputation on its position in the social network, on its status in the kin group and on the marriageability of its children, is not a major concern for British families. (p.75)

Their research includes a list of the questions posed to their respondents, and although “‘izzat’” was not explicitly asked about, there were questions about the reputation and “good name” of

the family. Stopes-Roe and Cochrane therefore view “izzat” as a repository of the family domain. As they state:

A greater pressure may, as Wilson describes, be laid on women to guard the family honour, but there was no difference in either generation in the frequency with which they and the men rated “izzat” to be important. The respondents’ generation, however, did make a difference. To 94% of both fathers and mothers, but only to 57% of sons and daughters, was “izzat” very important. (p. 76)

They are the only researchers to explicitly indicate a possible shift in how young Asians perceive “izzat” and its relative importance, and their definition of “izzat” is grounded in the domain of the family and to a concern with personal and family reputation. I hope to explore this in some depth with Asian young people.

However in spite of an indication of this ‘shift’, they suggest a level of acquiescence from the young, although the reasons are not discussed in any depth:

Young people who discarded traditional family honour thus could come into conflict with parents, none of whom felt that it was other than important. In fact a third of family dyads were in this position, but over half of the young people agreed with their parents about the importance of “izzat”, and the rest were prepared to respect it for the sake of others. (p. 76)

Their acquiescence is a result of the fear of sanctions triggered by the impact of “sharam” on the individual and his/her family regarding the loss of face generally. As a youth worker I understand the notion of ‘losing face’ and ‘respect’ is of importance for young Asians especially within their peer networks, and that an understanding of “izzat” may mean that for them its significance perhaps becomes much greater.

Moving on, Werbner’s (1990) work on the Pakistanis in Manchester describes in some depth the intricate and complex friendships and kinship relationships underpinning the process of

“lena-dena” (gift exchange). She is especially concerned with issues of status, particularly in regard to the practice of ritual exchange (as featured by Bachu, 1985 ). As she points out:

Gifting is thus not simply personalised – it denotes social distance, juniority or seniority, dependence, trust and long term or short term obligation. Our concern is thus not with isolated or idiosyncratic exchanges between particular individuals, but with a set of expectations, a customary ‘system of exchange’ in Mauss’s terms’. (Werbner 1990:205)

Therefore ‘gift exchange’ is a central aspect of customs and traditions which contribute to determining the status of both the givers and receivers of gifts. Werbner (1990:131) asserts that “lena-dena” (taking-giving) is predominantly the domain of women, used to affirm and massage the social relationships within the community, suggesting that the key focus for this “system of ceremonial exchange” is the daughter, who “...derives her status within the new household from her control over these resources” (p. 241).

The ‘ritual’ (of “lena dena”) sustains the relationship between the giver and the recipient, whilst also ‘show-casing’ the wealth of a family within the immediate and wider community. This happens ostentatiously during the “wedding cycle” including in the giving of a dowry, when “underlying hierarchies are reified and publicly proclaimed” (Werbner 1990:231).

In line with other researchers, Werbner (1990) acknowledges that marriage provides a good opportunity to cement and enhance a family’s status and reputation. For the Pakistanis in Manchester the guiding principles for marriage lie within the “localised caste group” or “between castes of somewhat similar status” (p. 231), thus cementing the relationship between caste, weddings and “izzat” which,

...reflects a more pervasive Pakistani concern with honour, reputation and status (“izzat”), a concern they share with other south Asians. (pp. 231-232)



She recognises the competitive aspects of “izzat” and its status-acquiring aspects, noting the subtleties of relationships defined through the opportunities for “local status manoeuvrings” (p. 232) provided by the wedding cycle. Importantly, women become pivotal in the conferring, acquisition and withdrawal of “izzat” through “lena-dena”. She asserts that it is with the arrival of women, that differences of background, “which remained united between men” (p. 143), become both established and contested.

“Izzat” has the power to confer prestige and status, but the deference shown for acquired status is achieved through the ‘giving of respect’ to the deserving individual or family. Thus it is not surprising therefore that the giving of respect in both Punjabi and Urdu is “izzat dhena”. Respect is therefore often the tool by which honour is conferred on individuals and/or groups. This concurs with Bachu’s (1985) and Werbner’s (1990) ideas about gift-exchange, because implicit within the giving of a gift to an individual is respect for that individual.

As in the case of other South Asian communities, Werbner found that “zat” (p. 81), caste and class played a significant role in establishing inter-community networks, underpinned by notions of reputation, prestige and status – the driving forces of “izzat”, which were embedded “spanning both Pakistan and Britain” (p. 90).

For Muslims (and therefore Pakistanis) although caste loyalty is important, it is practised differently to the Hindus (who invoke notions of purity and pollution, which are generally not relevant in Islam), since “Islam denies the validity of caste-like distinctions and all Muslims

are equal in matters of law, worship and religious conduct” (Werbner 1990:85). So, although Werbner (1990:82) stresses the significance of caste-affiliation she also suggests that:

Most Pakistanis in Manchester condemn the ‘zat’ system while practising it and assert the basic equality and brotherhood of all Muslims.

The notion of ‘brotherhood’ seems one that is attractive to young Muslims and will be discussed more fully later in this chapter.

Women’s important role in establishing relationships through “lena-dena”, is confined to the domestic world of the neighbourhood, which means that, “women come into little status-threatening contact with the indigenous society” (Werbner 1990:130), that can result in attracting “sharam”. Werbner however does not use the term “sharam”, being more concerned with a loss of status. She draws an important distinction between the private, domestic domains of women which can extend beyond the family, but is still restricted to the caste and neighbourhood and the contrasting public sphere of the men:

...By contrast to women, migrant men might necessarily examine their status in the wider context of the receiving society... Even within the Pakistani community, however, class status is defined by objective criteria – education, wealth, pedigree and Islamic scholarship. (p. 130)

Therefore she too emphasises the importance of wealth, education and occupation, (like Bachu 1985; Shaw 1988; Ballard 1994), to the acquisition of status, and therefore as the competitive underpinning of “izzat”:

In Manchester these criteria – wealth, education and occupation are the three most central for determining social status among the elite. (Werbner 1990:107)

Men are therefore expected to function and succeed outside the family networks through their involvement in the ‘outside’ world. Here they are expected to enhance the status of the family including through the acquisition of wealth, which in turn may be the result of a

successful education and career, but also through an extension of the principles and practice of giving “towards communal ends”, which extends far beyond the “personal yet public” and “brings honour and status” (p. 296).

The shift, from the personal/familial to the public domain, signalled by the status-conferring property of ‘charitable giving’ significantly can move the act of giving from the individual to the level of the group or community, which has the potential to enhance the status-acquiring effect of the act of giving. However this can also give rise to struggles for leadership within the community, as

... Power struggles in the public domain thus fit the incremental and hierarchical tendency characteristic of social exchange in domestic and inter-domestic contexts. (Werbner 1990:305)

Thus, the act of giving both in the private and public spheres has the potential to acquire and confer status, in the process moving the underlying mechanism of “izzat” from the personal to the public domain – from the individual to the family, the community and society beyond.

In all of the South Asian religious communities the notion of alms giving, sacrifice and service remains important and provides a religious basis (especially for men) for status acquisition, through demonstrations of piety, generosity, religious scholarship and fervour. In Islam the concept of sadqa (alms) and zakat (sacrifice) are important aspects of ritual alms giving and sacrifice, and provide the religious underpinnings to the whole system of charitable giving and therefore another means by which status and respect, and therefore “izzat”, can be acquired and conferred.

For Werbner (1990:130) status acquisition is an important aspect of the social lives of both men and women in the community and therefore it is only logical that:

...Men participate vicariously in the active statuses built up by their wives, just as women participate vicariously in the active statuses their husbands build up.

The above invokes the notion of 'reflected status', a feature of Asian communities, which was initially identified as being significant by Wilson (1979). However, whereas Wilson asserted that women carried the burden of the reflected status of their men folk, through notions of the "male ego" (pp. 34-35), Werbner (1990) is suggesting that women and men can influence each other's chances of acquiring status, and therefore "izzat". The notion of 'reflected status' ties individuals into relationships in such a way that escape from these inevitably invokes the loss of respect and potentially attracts shame.

Moving on to the work of Modood et al. (1994, 1997) again there is no direct focus on "izzat", but the concept is invoked through their discussion about the importance of the family, including the extended family, as they point out:

For such respondents the extended family system was the central institution through which mutual support to each member of the family was given. In addition, it was here that particular codes of behaviour based on religious and cultural values were passed on to members of the younger generation. (1994:24)

If "izzat" has a cultural and religious basis then it is reasonable to suggest that it is in the domain of the family and its wider networks that an understanding of it is transferred to young Asians. How they learn about it is hinted at by Modood et al. (1994:26), as he states:

The family as a social institution would be responsible for instilling morals and ethics into a particular individual...

They signalled a shift in young Asians' perceptions of family whereby they were less likely to focus on extended versions of family and saw family as "the immediate family, meaning

parents, siblings and probably grandparents” (p. 31). The religious basis for “izzat” clearly imbues it with a sense of morality and therefore its importance for young Asians is significant, as it provides some indication of how they use “izzat” as a force for regulating their social behaviour, particularly in their interactions in the wider world. Modood et al. (1994:35) also state that:

The subjective experience of racism, including perceived racism and anticipated racism, is closely bound up with preference for members of one’s own group and with the desire to affirm one’s origins and cultural heritage.

Thus although a decline in the importance of the extended family is suggested, the experience of racism is resulting in young Asians turning inwards, looking for support from their community and peer networks. This point is made in relation to intra-community dynamics by Parekh (2000) who suggests that in intra-community relations members of a community naturally turn inwards when they face external hostility.

In regard to spouse-selection Modood et al. (1994:77) suggest young Asians are still relatively conservative and parental wishes remain an important consideration:

...the most important perceived constraints on the choice of marriage partner are parental wishes and parental authority, the latter not being without its negative or fearful side.

Implicit within this may be a concern for preserving the “izzat” of the family, through appropriate, ‘normal’ behaviour and through avoiding behaviour which attracts shame, including not respecting the wishes of parents, which would rank high within the category of ‘shame-attracting’ behaviour. They suggest that although young British Asians flirt with the relative “freedoms” they are exposed to in their ambivalent encounters with the host society, especially with regard to “selecting” a partner for marriage, the power of “izzat” and “sharam” implicitly continues to be an important force for conformity:

As we have seen with our sample these freedoms are becoming desirable for some Asian young people, and if all who are attracted to them in some degree or other do not take them up, this is because parental authority and the desire to avoid conflict within the family and disgrace within the community are still powerful forces in maintaining cultural practices and ethnic boundaries. (1994:80)

As racism results in young Asians turning ‘inwards’ towards their own communities, the development of larger peer networks distinguishing between the ‘in-group’ and the ‘out-group’, becomes important amongst them (Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990; Modood et al. 1994). Besides, as the definition of ‘family’ narrows to include the immediate family and ‘new’ peer-based support networks, and exclude the traditional notion of the ‘extended’ family (Modood et al. 1994), it is possible that new indicators of status and prestige acquisition develop, giving new meanings to the concept of “izzat” and to being Asian in Britain. For example amongst young Muslim women, I have observed an emerging expression of identity and therefore of gaining respect, through a keenness to wear traditional items of clothing such as the “hijab” and the “niqab” (head-scarf and veil), indicating that in the face of tension and external hostility young Asians develop ‘new’ expressions of defiance, (Morris and Branigan 2004; Anthony 2005; Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert 2007; Macey 2007; Khan 2011; Griffiths 2011; Abbas 2011).

A collective response by young Asians to this tension may be the reason that leads to the establishment of identities that are distinctly Asian and British. An interesting development and example of this may be the growing numbers of internet-based marriage agencies, such as *shaadi.com* and *muslimmarriages.co.uk*, that young Asians of marriageable age are using, in their attempts to find suitable partners for marriage, with regard especially to religion and culture. Thus these young people are rejecting the ‘traditional’ arranged marriage, and yet

looking for life partners who would still satisfy the expectations of the family and the community at large (Smart and Shipman 2004).

A cursory glance at the nature of the personal data displayed by these agencies about the clients registered with them, shows some concern for religious and cultural backgrounds, the client's physical attributes (such as their height and shade of complexion), and the educational background and choice of career. It is therefore easy to conclude that notions of status and prestige, especially with regard to personal and acquired attributes (Bachu 1985) have been transferred into the domain of independent action by young Asians regarding spouse-selection. Therefore it seems that the "stigma and shame that would be brought to bear on the family if one's daughter or son married a person who was not of one's religion or ethnic group" (Modood et al, 1994:70), remains an important concern even for the independent-minded young Asians. The role of "izzat" therefore as a force for conformity remains unchanged here in the face of clear shifts in other areas of the lives of young Asians.

An important distinction made by Modood et al. (1994:61) regarding young people from the three main religious groups concerns Muslims who,

...Stress that the brotherhood/sisterhood of Islam embraces all ethnicities equally (regardless of any ethnic hierarchies that may in fact exist at any one time or place. Sometimes this is developed into a conscious anti-ethnicity approach in which it is insisted that not only the requirements of Islam but also the 'imagined community' of Muslims (ummah) takes precedence over what are regarded as merely ethnic and national heritages.

Another development as a result of responding to what Modood et al. (1994) describe as an "imagined community", is collective action by young Muslims, especially young men, in response to global events which they perceive to be targeting their 'brothers and sisters' around the world, such as events in Afghanistan, the Gulf wars and the Palestinian-Israeli

conflict (Morris and Branigan 2004; Cowen 2004; Abbas 2007; Roberts 2011). This is seen as an affront to the “ummah” (trans-ethnic community of Muslims), triggering a collective reaction, and/or a ‘turning inwards’ of the community under attack on itself and a closing of ranks as Parekh (2000) suggests. The rise in Islamophobia and following the events of September 11th, 2001 in New York and 7<sup>th</sup> July 2005 in London, has resulted in providing further impetus to this and to the significance of “ummah” in the lives of young Muslims (Shaw 2002; Butler 2003; Barnes 2006; Usborne 2006; Noueihed 2007; Shaw 2007; Abbas 2007, 2011; Gest 2011; Khan 2011; Amed 2011). In this context, although it is disturbing to find news reports about young Muslims fighting for the Taliban in Afghanistan, or planning to attack British interests in Yemen or at home in Britain, it is also not entirely surprising (Butcher and Weaver 1999; Dhondy 2001; Shaw 2002; Morris and Branigan 2004; Barnes 2006; Morris 2006; Abbas 2007; Hellyer 2007; Mukhopadhyay 2007).

In this arena of identity-related politics “izzat” plays an important role as an expression of collective, ethnic, identity-based pride. For young Muslims it is a case of fighting against the perceived injustices suffered by the “Ummah” (Roberts 2011), and also a general response to the rise of Islamophobia (Runnymede Trust 1997, 2002). Here “izzat” operates in a public, collective domain, injecting a sense of pride in a particular group’s religious-based identity.

I now want to consider Ballard’s later work, on the Sikh community in Leeds. Ballard’s earlier work, identified leadership and status as important aspects of life within the Sikh community. However, in *‘Desh Pardesh’* (1994), this is developed and stated as an important aspect of “izzat”. Ballard in his relatively earlier work recognised the importance of “izzat” as a force for conformity, enabling the community to recreate the social and political networks



of community-life in the British context, and fuelling developments because of the underlying competitiveness engendered by “izzat” as a status-conferring force.

Significantly he recognises the part played by “izzat” in the lives of Asian men as a force which encourages implicit and explicit rivalry through competition (also discussed by Werbner 1990). This became especially important as families settled, with women and children joining their men-folk:

Hence the emergence of Britain as an arena for status competition soon brought about a radical transformation of sojourners’ lifestyles, because an ever high premium gradually began to be placed on moral conformity. This changed everything... because of a growing confidence that it was possible to recreate a fully moral social universe in Britain. (Ballard 1994a:15-16)

The establishment of what Ballard describes as “a fully moral social universe” (p.16) was important in aiding the emergence of “izzat” as a force for conformity because,

All of a sudden conformity mattered – as when lonely men sought comfort and relief with local prostitutes – ceased to be regarded as reasonable. Instead a very different tendency emerged. As conventional norms were re-established, deviance invited criticism and ridicule. Those who mimicked English ways too closely began to be accused of being “be-izzat” – without honour. Desh Pardesh was beginning to emerge. (p. 15)

The notion of reputation and standing, which could be vied for through good, moral behaviour and through material gain (Bachu, 1985), and which had both a personal and familial aspect, became important as the communities settled and “became an arena within which honour could be sustained”. In fact now the “maintenance of personal and familial honour was of great concern to every migrant” (p. 15). Most importantly he identifies “izzat”,

...not as something fixed and permanent, but as a matter of relative standing which generates constant competition, both between individuals and even more between closely related families. (p. 15)

Thus with the emergence of settled communities including a “fully moral social universe” (p. 16), the underpinning aspects of “izzat” became complete, fuelling the communities’ enthusiasm for what he describes as “‘izzat’–competition” (p. 18). The contradictions captured in his description of early male settlers and/or “patrons” (Ballard 1994:105) becomes a patent for relationships between individuals, between families and even between communities co-existing in a British context:

The underlying contradictions built into these networks between equality and hierarchy proved to be most important in the longer run. Thus, although the ability of patrons to provide support for newcomers helped to promote networks of reciprocity – and thus social cohesion – within the nascent community, this did not presage the emergence of social unity. Quite the contrary, once patrons acquired positions of prestige, the logic of “izzat” came into operation. Rival patrons soon became competitors, with each constantly seeking to outshine the other.

Therefore it seems that material, resource gain and enhancing respect remains the domain of men. Perhaps compared to young white people this underlying competitiveness, coupled with the impact of racism drives young Sikhs in Ballard’s study to succeed in education, training and employment. Unfortunately as he (1994b:103) points out:

However, formal education qualifications provide no guarantee that one will gain access to professional employment... Sikh students are overwhelmingly concentrated in technical subjects such as medicine, science and engineering, finding a suitable job proves far more difficult than for their white counterparts.

With regard to the second generation of Sikhs, Ballard also reiterates the earlier themes of young Asians finding the experience of negotiating between two cultures “bewildering” (p. 113) and like others he indicates the underlying power of religion to demand conformity from members of the community, suggesting that religion continues to execute a hold on the young.

Ballard is unusual in turning the focus onto the native, white community, and presenting what he sees as the Asian communities’ perspective on their hosts. This is interesting because he

suggests that rejection of the culture of the host community is an impetus for the establishment of '*Desh Pardesh*' in Britain (- Asian community-life, which mirrored life on the subcontinent), and also perhaps a barrier to harmonious co-existence between the two communities:

Not to maintain a sense of "izzat" (personal honour) was to ignore an essential aspect of human dignity, while to ignore the emotional and material reciprocities due within the extended family was to pass up one's most fundamental obligations. Yet the native English appeared to have no such concerns. As the sojourners saw it – and most of those who have since settled down permanently see little need to change their opinions – people who expected that their sons and daughters should become financially self-supporting (and therefore socially autonomous) the moment they left school lacked any serious sense of family life. It also appeared that their children were never taught to believe in any sense of honour or respect – hence their tendency to behave like farmyard animals flaunting their bodies, and kissing and cuddling on the street. (Ballard, 1994a:13)

The above description of life in 'white' communities is an affront to the sensitivities of both "izzat" and "sharam", in the eyes of Asians. If young members of the host society are seen 'to behave like farmyard animals' (Ballard 1994a:13), then it is logical to assume that association with them would inevitably attract 'sharam'. The experience of racism clearly plays a part in informing the views of young Asians about white, British society, but it is also true that they have been exposed to negative views of white people, from their families and communities. "Izzat" as "respect" and "honour", as Ballard shows is often used as a way of presenting such negative perceptions of white people, and he further points out:

As for "izzat" the English seemed to lack all comprehension of what it meant. From all of this the sojourners drew the obvious inference. This was not a culture worthy of emulation, nor one to whose corrupting influence their nearest and dearest should be exposed. (1994a:13-14)

While Ballard focused on the Sikhs in Leeds, Nesbitt (1994) was writing about the Valmikis in Coventry, (a community combining Hindu/Sikh traditions). Significantly when discussing the second generation and in relation to "izzat" and its relationship with marriage/spouse-

selection, she emphasises the importance of caste-affiliation and also indicates that this is an area of emerging tensions between the generations:

The issue of marriage is also crucial to the future structural cohesion of the community, for 'zat' boundaries have long been maintained through endogamous marriage. But already a number of young Valmikis have contracted non-arranged "love" marriages, either with non-Asians or with higher-caste South Asian partners. While in the latter case the spouse is likely to be cut off from his or her family, young Valmikis also risk parental displeasure for marrying "wrongly". (1994:140)

She too, therefore signals the role that censure can play when young Valmikis marry against the wishes of the family, once again implicitly invoking the power of "sharam" in commanding conformity from the young.

It is in Kassam's (1997) collection of young Asian women's personal stories that again you glimpse the power of conformity and the constraints placed on them by the fear of what others might think, say or do. As one Asian young woman says, "... The worth of an Asian girl is defined by how she conducts herself and who her family is" (p. 117), and,

I did not want to be a target for gossip and stick my neck out at the expense of my family's 'izzat' .... Asian girls have to shoulder this responsibility, however unfair it may seem. (p. 119)

Although Kassam (1997) collected her stories nearly twenty years after Wilson's (1979) account, the impact of "izzat" and "sharam" and their hold on the lives of Asian women remains unchanged and intact.

Like others before him, Ghuman's (1975, 1981, 1987, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1999, 2000 and 2001) emphasis on "izzat" is marginal to the main focus of his work, appearing explicitly only occasionally in his texts. "Izzat" is briefly mentioned in the context of family wealth, well-being and reputation in 1975, and this is reiterated in his work in the 90's (Ghuman 1996:64).

In 1994, “izzat” is mentioned on four occasions, and in 1996 it appears on three occasions, and then in 1999 it only appears twice. The discussion about the differential treatment of girls and women with regard to them being safe, and being responsible for good behaviour, including constraints on their lives with regard to relative freedom, are the main reasons for “izzat” appearing in Ghuman’s work (1994:3, 71-72; 1996:150; 1999:103,106). Other contexts in which “izzat” appears include the discussion about individuality versus collectivism (1994:32), and the notion of “izzat” as respect especially in the way Asian children behave with elders of the community (1996:51).

Distinctively Ghuman uses an “acculturation scale” based on his earlier work, “to assess the students’ opinions on English and their home culture” (1994:26), and developed from the much earlier work of Likert (1932). As such Ghuman (1994) sets out to measure the views of young Asians and/or students concerning ‘English’/Western culture and their own culture. He defines ‘acculturation’ as “...The degree to which they [young Asians] are taking up the norms and values of the British or Anglo-Celtics”. He believes that by gauging “youngsters’ opinions on a range of social and educational matters”, you can assess the impact that these have on “their personal and social identities” (1994:29). “Bi-culturalism” appears consistently in his work (1994, 1999), and is reinforced in his conclusions in *Coping with Two Cultures* (1994:148):

My overall impression is that young people in the study were making determined efforts to achieve a working synthesis of two cultures.

The notion of “bi-culturalism” (1994:31, 139, 149) conveys the idea that young Asians are able to navigate through the sensitivities of the two main cultures that they encounter – their ‘home’ culture, and that of the ‘host’, mainstream society.

Significantly with regard to “izzat”, like others he distinguishes between the individualism of Western societies, and the preference for collectivism in cultures originating from the Indian sub-continent.

He asserts that the potential tensions between personal autonomy and family traditions and solidarity can result in conflict for young Asians:

There is a likelihood of inter-generational conflict over ‘going out’, having girl/boy friends, the choice of clothes and friends, ‘curfew’ – coming home by a set time, helping parents in the home and business and a range of other matters relating to personal autonomy versus family traditions and solidarity. (1994:23)

He does not explicitly mention “sharam”, but his list of reasons for causing inter-generational conflict, could be described as “sharam”-attracting. This again demonstrates how the ‘collectivist’ aspects of Asian culture underpin the mechanisms of “izzat” and “sharam”, but these have to be inferred and are not explicitly explored.

The way that collectivism finds expression in Asian communities is through what Ghuman (1994:15) describes as “a primacy of family over the individual”, thus reinforcing the work of others (Khan 1979; Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990; Kassam 1997). He makes a clear distinction between the British and Asian attitudes to notions of family, individuality and collectivism, emphasising the role played by formal education in equipping young people for the road to individualism. In fact, one of the occasions when “izzat” appears in *Coping With Two Cultures* (1994), is in the context of the individualism versus collectivism debate, when he re-emphasises the importance of individual self-sacrifice:

According to some scholars (Parekh 1986, Triandis 1991 and 1994) it is the family and not the individual which is the basic unit in Asian communities. The individual’s wishes and desires have to be harmonised with that of the family. Individual development as understood and aimed for by the western educationalists is interpreted as leading to selfishness and egomania by the Asian

community. Often the individuals are expected to sacrifice themselves for the sake of the family traditions, honour ('izzat') and welfare. (Ghuman 1994:32)

The pull or hold of collectivism perhaps also extends to friendship networks. Like others, Ghuman (1994) concurs that young Asians generally preferred to have friends who are from a similar background to themselves, thus demonstrating an allegiance to their own group including the hold of family values, especially with regard to gender relations. In essence, Ghuman (1994:32) distinguishes Asian cultures from those of the 'West' in two ways: "There are two differences of importance: attitude to sex and women, and the authoritarian structure of the family". He too suggests differences in the way that Asian young men and women are treated and this differential treatment is one of the key points that results in "izzat" being invoked:

...Most Asian girls in our sample feel they are not treated on a par with the boys. Asian parents are more protective towards their daughters and also consider it a question of 'izzat' (honour) that their girls should not be seen in pubs, or going out and loitering, especially in the company of boys. Some parents are very strict and deny further education and/or career opportunities to their daughters. (1994:71-72)

Thus "izzat" is again associated with the notion of conformity in relation to gender, and although Ghuman never discusses "sharam", he is aware that non-conformity can be punished because, "...Some transgressions are threatened with severe punishment to square the family's 'izzat'" (Ghuman 1994:72).

He also hints at what I would describe as 'status-driven' and therefore "izzat"- related expectations that Asian parents have of their sons and perhaps even their daughters:

Some teachers, both in Birmingham and Vancouver, expressed their worries that parents tend to have unrealistic aspirations for their youngsters.... They all want them to be doctors and engineers, even when the ability and potential is not there. (1994:96)

Although he does not explicitly discuss “ummah” (brotherhood in Islam), he consistently emphasises both the distinction between Muslims and Hindus and Sikhs, and is also clearly conscious of the effects of the wider political landscape on the Muslim community and particularly young Muslims, who “turn inward”:

The Muslim parents are keener and more organised in passing on the culture of the family as compared to the Hindus and Sikhs. Also, with the recent increase in negative, even hostile, media coverage of the Muslim attitude to the Gulf War and the Rushdie affair, the Muslim young people have tended to turn inwards. (Ghuman 1994:122)

‘Turning inwards’ is fuelled by the attitudes of those outside the community, and especially ‘White’, society. When Ghuman (1994) spoke to young Asians from Birmingham and Canada, they expressed their awareness of racism in British society and their sense of belonging to their own communities, rather than the wider British society. This is significant in regard to the notion of “izzat” existing in the ‘collective’ domain of group identity, as the young Asians felt that “None of them thought they would be fully accepted by British society” (Ghuman 1994:130).

He is also clear how identity formation is influenced by external hostility:

The emergence of ethnicity is largely attributed to two factors: in-group belongingness on the one hand, and the experience of exclusion from the mainstream, on the other. (1999:81)

Again, although “izzat” is not explicitly mentioned here in the context of young Muslims uniting within the fold of their community in the face of external hostility, their sense of collective pride in being Muslims together is palpable and “izzat” as an expression of group pride is evident.



Although explicit discussion of “izzat”, remained generally marginalized in the research of the nineties, the concept of ‘honour killings’ emerged as a subject of some concern. It was linked generally to the practice of forced marriages, and towards the end of the nineties, it gained some prominence for example through Jack and Zena Briggs’ (1997) plight. Zena, a Pakistani young woman from Yorkshire, fell in love with, and ran away with Jack, a white Englishman. She rejected a forced marriage with a cousin from Pakistan, and in doing so brought shame and dishonour to her family. Her brothers threatened to kill them for what they had done. The couple, who are ‘still on the run’ (Cowan 2004), published their account. Through the dramatic, yet simply narrated account the Briggs (1997), describe the events that led to them being ‘on the run’. Zena, describes the expectations that exist within Asian families/communities concerning daughters, fuelled by a prevalence of rumour and gossip:

With Dad it was generally agreed that when he walked round the corner from the bus stop we’d be back at home. I don’t think he minded that much himself, but he certainly wouldn’t have wanted other people within the Asian community making remarks about his daughters being out and about, talking to men from outside the family. It’s all too easy for Asian girls to get branded as ‘dirty property’, then they may be rejected by their fiancé’s parents and bring shame on their family. A daughter, basically, has to make sure that there is never even the faintest reason for slander against her; she has to be totally pure. (Briggs:37)

Generally, the story is descriptive rather than analytical about their escape and life together. However, Zena is aware of how the concepts of honour and shame, in the guise of “pride and the loss of face” (p. 178), are at the heart of their trauma. Zena’s brothers’ reactions also emphasise the role played by men who see themselves as protectors of “izzat”, which here is threatened by the actions of their sister, who is ascribed responsibility for the “izzat” of the family, as others described it earlier (Wilson 1979; Kassam 1997). As she explains:

My brothers might seem easy going enough on the surface, but I knew all too well how they would react if family honour was called into question. (Briggs 1997:39)

The biographical account helped to bring honour-related violence to a wider audience, beyond the Asian communities of Britain, leading to the publication of other accounts (Sen 2001; Mai 2006; Sanghera 2007).

Moving on Anwar's later work (1998), continues the *Between Two Cultures* (1976) theme that he introduced then. His research, in the 1990s therefore asserts that young Asians find themselves "between cultures" as they negotiate their way through their family's more traditional expectations and the attractions presented to them through exposure to life within the host, Western society. Anwar (1979, 1985 and 1998) in fact follows others (Ballard and Ballard 1977; Weinreich 1979; Ghuman 1994) that prefer this 'caught between two cultures' hypothesis for young British Asians. Given the stance that he ascribes to young Asians, the focus in his later work is inevitably on the family and its importance for young Asians:

The tendency among all three Asian groups remains towards living in a joint and extended family system as far as possible. This is explained by many Asians as necessary but also as continuing religious and cultural traditions. (Anwar 1998:24)

This relevance of the family for "izzat", given its role in the transmission of cultural and religious norms that underpin "izzat" is obvious. However Anwar (1998:106) never uses the term, "izzat", preferring instead to invoke "prestige", "respect" and use "honour":

...the prestige of the family is, also regarded as being sacrosanct. For example, over 90 per cent of young people took the view that the family and its prestige were important and they would not like to damage the prestige of their families. Some linked it with honour, others felt it was because of their religion. All Asian religious groups were unanimous about the prestige of the family as an important indication of their respect for their parents' religion and tradition.

The continued importance of family prestige to young Asians as suggested by Anwar also implies the pressure on them to conform to the 'norms' of behaviour within the community, and to minimise behaviour which is likely to attract censure.

Anwar like Modood et al. (1994) also recognises that shifts have occurred in the attitudes of both generations over time to the processes of spouse-selection and arranged marriage. He suggests that the system has become more flexible allowing for “various types of discussion which takes place between parents and their children before a decision is taken” (Anwar, 1998:109). As such he identifies the growing part played by the press and marriage agencies, (discussed earlier), in the process of spouse-selection, when he says, “In Britain, several Asian parents now use the Asian press to find suitable partners for their children” (Anwar 1998:110).

However he also implies, like others earlier the continued importance of status and prestige (and therefore “izzat”) for spouse selection, and the ensuing pressure on the young to succeed to meet parental expectations:

It is clear that...education, religion, national, regional origin and financial security are considered important, in addition to physical characteristics, by Asian parents. (Anwar 1998:111)

So the importance of status and prestige (and therefore “izzat” is reiterated) through education and employment for both parents and young Asians. He also indicates that Asian young men face greater pressure to succeed than young women and that there is the potential for tension here as young Asian women indicate their desire study on and to work against the expectations of parents and their brothers. However, he does not fully discuss this, although he reiterates the differential treatment of young women, while asserting the variation in the relative attitudes between the three main Asian religious communities:

There were greater demands from Asian girls (almost 80 per cent) that they should be allowed to work than either their parents (65 per cent) or brother (60 per cent) would agree to. Once again, religion was the main reason given by those agreeing that Asian girls and young women should not go out to work. Generally,

four out of ten Muslims agreed with the proposition, but only one in ten Hindus took this view, with Sikhs midway. (Anwar 1998:69)

This again demonstrates the influence that brothers have over their sisters (Briggs 1997) and is particularly important with regard to the pressure on women to uphold “izzat” (Wilson 1979; Kassam 1997), by conforming to expectations and by not behaving in ways that could attract shame. In his surveys Anwar (1975, 1986, 1998) pointedly asks Asian parents to respond to the statement: “If I had teenage daughters I would not let them go to any of the places where white girls go to in this area” (1998:143).

This again conveys the perception of Asian parents about the host society and the potential dangers it poses in enticing their young daughters into what would be considered “wayward” behaviour, which could potentially damage their reputation. It also implies the pressures that are on young Asian women to behave appropriately and to conform to the ‘norm’, while also suggesting the pressures on Asian parents to ‘control’ their daughters. Again, although “sharam” is absent, the parents’ motivation to protect their daughters comes from wanting to prevent the loss of “izzat”. It is through indicators such as the wearing of Asian and/or Western clothes that Anwar (1998:143) implies the pressures on young women to conform:

There was also the extended family and community pressure for Asian girls to be ‘modest’ in their behaviour and dress. The wearing of Western dress by Asian girls was also seen as indicative of freedom.

Interestingly Anwar’s findings relating to the extent to which religion has a hold on young Asians is telling and echo Modood et al’s (1994) findings, showing a gulf between Asian and white young people:

We discovered that, while six out of ten white young people never went to a place of worship, only 28 per cent of Asian young people did not. Similarly 56 per cent of white young people never prayed, compared with only 18 per cent of Asians. (Anwar 1998:120)

This indicates the continued hold of “izzat” on Asian young peoples’ lives, given that the concept is underpinned by religion and tradition. Anwar (1998:121) like Ghuman (1994) and Modood et al (1997) confirmed the differentials between communities and therefore the fact that,

Muslims were more likely (74 per cent) than Hindus (43 per cent) and Sikhs (46 per cent) to say that religion was very important in the way they lived their life.

He hints at the inevitable tension experienced by young Asians (especially men) who are under pressure to ‘achieve’ (Bachu 1985), while also facing difficulties in securing employment often because of racism. The resultant antagonism towards white, mainstream society and the frustrations of young Asians can be guessed at. Anwar indicates that young Asians’, especially young mens’, response to their disillusionment is overt conflict which significantly erupted in Britain’s cities in the late nineties (Cantle 2001; Ouseley 2001; Macey 2007):

The disturbances started over the treatment of Asian women by the police and later developed into a protest not only against the police, but also against discrimination against Asian young people in getting jobs, non-representation and lack of equal opportunity policies. There were also signs that young Asians were not happy about their parents’ tolerance of racial prejudice and discrimination, and this showed the generation gap. (Anwar 1998:157)

Although he suggests that the conflict is a reaction to the marginalized position that young Asians, especially Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, find themselves in (Roberts 2006; Khan 2011), I think that this reaction is also symbolic of them ‘regrouping’, asserting their identities and their sense of group pride. For me the dual pressures of status acquisition on the one hand and racism and Islamophobia on the other have resulted in young Asians, coming together in an angry expression of their group identity and pride and therefore “izzat” in the collective domain. The open expression of defiance by young Asians represents an example whereby

“izzat” shifts from the private, personal/individual domain to the public, collective, group one. Unfortunately this is beyond the scope of this study with its focus on the fundamentals of how “izzat” shapes individual lives.

Bhatti’s (1999:3) ethnographic research is another example of a study based on “the home and the school experiences of a group of Asian children”, attending a “mixed” comprehensive in south England. Her work focuses equally on the children’s home and school experiences. Although these two spheres have also been touched on in other studies (Mac and Ghail 1988; Gillborn 1990; Wright 1992; Ghuman 1994; Gillborn and Gipps 1996; Abbas 2000, 2002, 2004), their focus has been more on the children and young peoples’ achievements in formal education. Her relatively greater focus on ‘home life’, makes it more likely that “izzat” will emerge as a recognisable force because it plays a role in family-life.

“Izzat” appears as a term in Bhatti’s (1999:277) ‘glossary’ and is described as,

honour, virtue, respect; ‘izzat’ is reflected in the way a family conducts itself. Not being able to maintain ‘izzat’ is equivalent to falling from grace within the community and extended family. It is often, though not exclusively, perceived as a predominantly female attribute. There are innumerable associations and proverbs attached to the concept of ‘izzat’. For example, poor people may claim that all they have is their ‘izzat’ (that is leading a respectable life by maintaining ‘izzat’ means more to them than material wealth).

This definition, like Ballard’s (1994) conjures up the importance of self-respect, pride and self-worth, which is integral to the intangible nature of the concept. Her ‘glossary’ does not include an interpretation of “sharam”, which I believe is equally important, and she refers directly to “izzat” on only six pages. Therefore the concept is generally inferred through some of the wider discussions around home/family life, and issues of reputation, dress and so

forth. She emphasises the importance of ‘encapsulation’ for the retention of cultural values, which in turn helps to modify and determine behaviour:

Encapsulation has been described as an ethnic force which causes individuals to conform to the value system of their own community. It is at its strongest where ethnic communities’ commercial, social and other day-to-day needs are met from within the ethnic enclave, for example by Asian-run shops, travel agents, banks and so on... For encapsulation to occur, it is important that the kinship ties within which a person has been socialised are maintained. (Bhatti 1999:6)

This tendency for Asian communities to be ‘encapsulated’ like Ballard’s *‘Desh Pardesh’*, ensures there is great pressure to conform and also means that the community as a whole, separate entity is more likely to come to the note of those outside it. Bhatti (1999:6) recognises the pressure to conform and that possible deviation from the norm has consequences:

So strong is the tendency to conform, partly re-established through within-kin marriages, that individuals have much to lose in the way of prestige if they deviate from the norm.

She mirrors Wilson’s (1979) work, regarding the distinction between daughters and sons, in relation to the burden of “izzat”:

...the family’s ‘izzat’ (honour) was gauged by the behaviour and attitude of its daughters. This is not a new finding. It confirms all previous research findings in the field... The question of family ‘izzat’ affected fathers as much as mothers, though mothers seemed to carry a self-conscious burden of guilt. (Bhatti 1999:55-56)

She explores the power of gossip as a force for conformity through its impact on the lives of the female and male pupils, emphasising the link between gossip and the importance of a good reputation and the dangers of a bad one, and demonstrating how easily reputations can be influenced by rumours. Although she does not refer to “sharam” she establishes the role

played by gossip in “curbing deviant behaviour”, and distinguishes between the relative impact on young Asian women and men:

Gossip played an important role in curbing deviant behaviour among girls, in a way it did not for boys. Mothers wanted to learn a lot about whom their daughters mixed with and what kind of cultural and moral upbringing her peer group had had. Gossip travelled home through other girls thus curbing deviant behaviour. (Bhatti 1999:167)

Thus, girls and women collude in ensuring that deviance is curbed, that reputations remain important, and that “izzat” remains prominent. In contrast, with regard to the impact of gossip Bhatti (1999:169) asserts that, “... Asian boys *never* ‘grassed’ on Asian boys whereas girls did on other Asian girls. Gossip is used as a form of social control”.

She discusses the relative lives of young Asian women and men in some depth and in the case of the girls, suggests that they have to learn to perform “the delicate act of balance” (p. 164), which leads to the winning of personal freedoms for the girls, which are granted more freely to the boys. She notes that there is a different pressure on men to succeed, reiterating the point made by others (Jackson 1981; Werbner 1990; Ballard 1994):

If boys failed the price was heavier, exclusion from their peer group, guilt for having let the family down, guilt about not having become a ‘big’, that is a rich, independent, self-sufficient man. On balance, then, boys were paradoxically under more noticeable pressure. (Bhatti 1999:165)

Although, Bhatti’s work explicitly features “izzat” as a concept on a few occasions, including in the glossary, it is a force which is inferred through the gender dynamics in Asian families and communities.

I have decided to review Shaw’s (1988, 1994, 2000, 2001) work next because it bridges two decades – from the 1980’s to the millennium. She researched the Pakistanis in Oxford



extensively over this period with her later work building on earlier research, and in this regard she says, “Kinship, with its obligations, and dynamics, is a central theme in what follows” (Shaw 2000:4).

Shaw rejects the idea that young Pakistanis are ‘caught between two cultures’ or experiencing culture clashes. Instead she suggests that they embrace family-life and allegiance to community values willingly – albeit with some changes to the context. She (2000:3) refers to the Pakistani settlement in Britain as “accommodation without assimilation”, an idea borrowed from Gibson (1988).

“Izzat” does not appear in her earlier work. However, inferences can be drawn regarding its implicit presence through her focus on caste, marriage, “lena-dena” and in relation to the role of status and reputation. In Shaw’s later work (2000) it is significant that one of the chapters is titled ‘Honour and Shame: Gender and Generation’, and it includes sub-headings on ‘Purdah and ‘Izzat’ in Pakistan’ and ‘Purdah and ‘Izzat’ in Britain’. By 2000, “izzat” appears in the index, indicating links to a number of pages and it also appears in her work on consanguineous marriages (2001:324) in the context of “shot gun” marriages. This shows a progression in her analysis of Pakistani communities, including recognition of the growing importance of “izzat”. Perhaps it indicates how the significance of the concept has begun to dawn on researchers like Shaw and Ballard as their emersion into Asian communities, gains momentum and is marked by the passage of time.

For Shaw (1988, 2000, 2001) the “biradari” is the stabilising institution in the community and since “biradari” is concerned with retaining kinship ties, it follows that caste is an important consideration in arranging marriages:

Within the constraints of caste and ‘biradari’ people appear to make choices of marriage partner that will maintain or improve their status in relation to their wider ‘biradari’. (1988:104)

Shaw (2000:292) suggests it is not difficult to gauge the importance of “izzat” and “sharam” in relation to the maintenance and perpetuation of the “biradari” because it, “invokes concepts such as honour (‘izzat’) and shame, especially as they affect gender roles and sexuality”. Clearly, those individuals in the community who behave in acceptable ways within the “biradari” and community acquire “izzat” and enhanced status, through acceptance. In contrast, those that behave in ways deemed unacceptable, attract condemnation and therefore “sharam”, leading to ‘damaged’ reputations. On the whole this active responsibility lies with men. As she says, “Men, not women, are seen as perpetrators of ‘biradari’ ‘blood’” (2000:212), and this means that men are responsible for ensuring that it is sustained. Therefore she states, “Female sexuality, uncontrolled, can threaten the integrity of the ‘biradari’” (*ibid*).

The underlying mechanisms for exerting control, through established norms of behaviour, rest with the implicit forces of “izzat” and “sharam”. Differences in the treatment of boys/men and girls/women are established early on through “cultural mechanisms”, “socialisation and upbringing” and therefore,

.....norms of ‘appropriate’ behaviour are instilled in girls from an early age and particularly as they approach puberty. (Shaw 2000:213)

Shaw suggests therefore that “sexuality must be controlled” to avoid disgrace, and in particular that daughters “must dress and behave modestly, avoid meeting unrelated men and

ideally, marry early while still a virgin” (p. 213). She therefore echoes the views of others when she says women’s activities are confined “to the home” (Shaw 1988:171), re-emphasising Werbner’s (1990) private/public dichotomy. The underlying force of male chauvinism and the inherent implications for “izzat” and “sharam” with regard to norms and control of behaviour (both self-control and the control of women by men) are evident in such attitudes, which according to Shaw (1988, 2000) persist unchanged from one generation to the next:

As one mosque committee member, whose views were shared by many younger men, said: “If you have something valuable, you keep it safe. If you have a diamond you lock it in a case. You don’t leave it for anyone to take. A woman is like a diamond. She is precious. You should keep her inside the four walls of your house. She should look after the house and children, and you look after her. Inside the house she is in charge. My place is outside. (Shaw 1988:172; 2000:166-167)

In fact the expectation that the women will behave “with “sharam””, and thus constrain any rebellious desires, can be understood given the descriptions of punishments for unconventional, shameful behaviour, enshrined in religious mythology. Shaw (1988: 171-172; 2000:168), quotes a young married woman:

“The Prophet Mohammed was out walking one day when he saw a woman in torture, hanging by her hair, but still alive. A little further on, he saw a woman being hung by her breasts and then he saw a woman being put into a huge fire, screaming. Horrified, he asked Allah, “Why are these women being tortured like this? Please let them go free”. But Allah replied, “The first woman used to tantalize men with her hair, the second used to reveal her breasts to strange men and the third slept with a man who was not her husband. This is why I cannot set them free.”

Therefore she recognises that conformity must be commanded and transgressions punished because ultimately, “honour”, is at stake:

In extreme circumstances, men and sometimes women have ‘taken the law into their own hands’ in their attempts to salvage honour or damaged reputation, following perceived insults to a wife or daughter, in the event of a daughter or sister’s elopement, if a marriage has failed, if money has not been returned or paid, or if someone’s son has been charged with some offence or imprisoned and

so on. These attempts to salvage honour have included physical or mental abuse, physical assault, and even murder. (Shaw 2000:295)

It is “izzat”, both, loss of it and efforts to be seen to act in ways to protect and restore it, that lead to such actions, and perhaps this sets Asian communities apart from the British host society. The difference in moral codes in attitudes to gender, and the idea of “izzat” as respect, particularly for women, provides another source of conflicting perceptions of East and West. Ballard (1994) also identified these differing and conflicting perceptions. As professionals from the host society assume “Asian girls are oppressed and subordinate” (Shaw 1988:165), resulting in the fact that “Western perceptions of Asian women’s roles are generally negative” (p. 161), members of Asian communities view the position of women in the West with equal disdain:

“Women are exploited in English society. They are like toys for men to play with. They are cheap. Women are out on the streets, in shops, on the television. They work like slaves for a pittance in factories, in shops and as cleaners, there’s no respect for them.” (Mosque Committee President quoted by Shaw 1988:172)

Such fundamental differences in perception, coupled with a strong sense of allegiance to the family that is underpinned by the institutions of caste, (especially “biradari”), ensure that the Pakistani community continues to exist in a state mirroring life on the subcontinent, and with an ever-increasing gulf between it and the host society. The gulf and “insecurities” are further “exacerbated” by,

Recent fears of increasing hostility towards British Muslims... One man said, “We keep links with Pakistan, because you never know, what happened to the Ugandan Asians might happen to us”. (Shaw 2000:294)

The negative attitudes of the host society are evident also through the rise in islamophobia (Runnymede Trust 1997, 2002; Parekh 2000; Abbas 2007, 2011), and the Pakistani community’s relative socio-economic insecurity, racism and “their low starting point on the

ladder of assimilation in Britain...” contribute to the fact that, “Muslims have fared the least well of all ethnic groups in Britain, in terms of income, employment and housing” (Shaw 2000:294). These points are also made by others (Roberts 2006; Saeed 2006). Thus it is not surprising that individuals (both men and women) within the Pakistani community, tied into strong ties of kinship, are drawn to the family and the “biradari”, given the understandable sense of security that it offers, thus also ensuring the continued hold of “izzat”.

Like Ghuman (1994) Shaw (1988:6; 2000:7-8) also suggests an underlying distinction that ensures the perpetuation of the community’s mores, as she suggests that Pakistanis,

...do not prize ‘individuality’ as highly as Westerners do, and for most of them the sacrifice of ‘individuality’ that the culture requires is more than off set by the advantages of fulfilling one’s role within the family, ‘biradari’ and community.

Although Shaw (1988, 2000) is not explicit about this, “izzat” is the ‘glue’, by which cultural dynamics are sustained and perpetuated. She suggests that status, and its acquisition (and therefore “izzat”), in the context of marriage, is also an important factor in perpetuating the cultural dynamism of the community, because inherent in the acquisition of status is the increase in “izzat”, of both, an individual or the family s/he belongs to. Status-acquisition as stated earlier (Ballard 1994), is an indicator of social mobility and she recognises that as the community becomes more settled in Britain, the rules generally stay the same, while the context changes and the opportunities for the means by which status can be acquired increase:

Most of the more recent adaptations of the past fifteen years, in household organization, family structure and employment patterns, such as the increase in the proportion of ‘nuclear’ households, the move to the suburbs and the increasing number of women in paid work, can still be interpreted in terms of the desire to acquire property and status in traditional terms, even when they might appear to indicate the contrary.’ (Shaw 2000:292)

Like Bachu (1985) and Werbner (1990), Shaw (1988, 2000) also emphasises the status-acquiring role played in the lives of women, by traditions within the private domain such as “lena-dena” (Shaw 1988:5, 117) and the opportunity to display piety through ostentatious reciting of the Quran (that is the “Khatmi Quran”) (Shaw 1988:120). Therefore the motivation to acquire status is a fundamental aspect of the lives of both, men and women in Pakistani communities, because it is a means by which the well-being and “izzat” of individuals and their families can be secured and assessed.

For men, the traditional pressure to succeed outside of the home, in the public domain helps to push the boundaries of community-life, encouraging the move from one context to another in the pursuit of status. However, in the British context, given the hostility faced by Asians and especially by young Muslims today within the wider society (Runnymede Trust 1997; Ansari 2004; Mukhopadhyay 2007; Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert 2007; Abbas 2007, 2011), the pressure to succeed can lead to the pursuit of status by unconventional means such as illegal wealth-acquiring activities, and conflict and tensions between the generations.

The balancing act, of status and “izzat” acquisition, and the dangers resulting from the loss of “izzat” is an increasingly difficult one, for Asian young men in Britain. For young Muslims, especially Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, who fare poorly in the British context when compared to other minority groups (Shaw 2000; Roberts 2006; Saeed 2007; Amed 2011), the lure of illegal activity in pursuit of wealth, status (and “izzat”), may become difficult to resist. Although the implicit connection to “izzat” is not discussed by Shaw (1988, 2000), its influence clearly lurks in the background.

Shaw's work is important because it provides a sustained focus on a Pakistani community in Britain. Despite "izzat" being more explicit in her later work (Shaw 2000), it still remains relatively marginal when reviewing her research in its entirety. I have situated her work at the end of the 1990s because it bridges two of the periods under review, and leads into the millennium. Her work also provides a synthesis of the discourse on "izzat" through the research on Asians in Britain, with many themes being re-iterated and re-emphasised.

### **1.5. The Millennium and Beyond**

Before embarking on further explorations of "izzat" in specific research in this final section of the review, I will appraise the general research landscape regarding Asian communities in the 1990s and in the period beyond the millennium. This may reveal any 'patterns' regarding the research focus on Asians, embarking into their third and fourth generations in Britain.

The 1990s saw the emergence of much more research on ethnic minorities including Asians, but the nature of the research focus had diversified and become more 'subject-focused'. Researchers for example began to concentrate on particular social welfare aspects of these communities which have also been an impetus for major policy shifts in services for young people.

Examples of such subject-focused research include the exploration of the relative performance of Asian pupils within the British education system and their career aspirations (see for example Thorley and Siann 1991; Gillborn and Gipps 1996; CRE 1996; NASUWT 1999 Abbas, 2000, 2002, 2004; Crozier and Davies 2007; Crozier 2009). This has included the

specific focus on Pakistani and Bangladeshi young men, and their relative educational success. This interest in this particular ‘sub’ group is also reflected in the field of employment (Heath and Cheung 2006; Roberts 2006) and their growing marginalisation from mainstream society has resulted in further attention (Modood et al 1994; Anwar 1998; Roberts 2006; Din 2006; Khan 2011) and their responses to their disaffection, including finding strength in numbers has also generated interest (Mukhopadyay 2007; Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert 2007; Abbas 2007, 2011; Macey 2007; Khan 2011; Robert 2011; Belton 2011).

Unfortunately none of the research highlighted above, which goes to great lengths for example to explore the relative educational and employment –related success and failure of young Asians, especially the young men’s, identifies or discusses the role that “izzat” as pride may play in their responses to their marginalisation and exclusion.

The area of health has provided further opportunities for researchers to specifically focus on the Asian communities in Britain, and especially on women. (See for example Bhardwaj 2001; Chew-Graham et al 2002; Weston 2003; Anand and Cochrane 2005; Reavey et al 2006; Quraishi and Evangelini 2007). Some of this research on health, such as Gilbert et al’s (2004 and 2007) includes some focus on “izzat” and “sharam” and will be reviewed later in this chapter.

As some Asian communities settled in Britain enter into their third and fourth generations, the socio-political and economic landscape has changed. With this, the foci and emphases of some of the researchers reviewed here also reflect these shifts. Their explorations of Britain’s Asian communities therefore shift to include wider perspectives, such as concerns with transnationalism and the Asian diaspora including changes in the labour markets (Ghuman 1994,



2000, 2001; Werbner 2002; Cressey 2004; Ballard 2000, 2001, 2003, 2006 and 2009; Mand 2005, 2006). In regard to Muslim communities' concerns about terrorism or Islamophobia have also generated interest (Ballard 2001; Ansari 2004; Roberts 2006; Saeed 2006; Malik 2006; Abbas 2007; Hellyer 2007; Mukhopadhyay 2007; Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert 2007; Kundnani 2009; Shah 2011; Soni 2011).

In the midst of this diversification in research areas on Asians in Britain, honour has also received attention in its association with honour-related violence especially regarding honour-killings and forced marriages. Regarding honour-killings (see Gill 2003, 2004, 2005; Meeto and Mirza 2007; Gill and Thiari 2009) there has also been growing journalistic interest resulting in particular from the deaths of Banaz Mahmood and Shafieah Ahmed (McVeigh, 2007a and b; Carter 2008, 2012; Hundal 2012; Khan 2012; Ellen 2012; BBC 2012). In research terms this interest is also mirrored in other European contexts (see Werbner 2007; Wikan 2008). The focus on forced marriage has also produced research (Sardar 2008; Chantler et al 2009; Toor 2009; Younis 2010; Gill and Anitha 2011), and both 'topics' have enlisted government responses including the setting up of an Honour Network Helpline (Home Affairs Committee 2011).

Ironically this impetus has resulted in a simplistic, one-dimensional discourse on "izzat", submerging the search for a more nuanced meaning of it. Generally I think that much of the discourse on "izzat" had emerged by the time the millennium arrived, but the focus on honour-related violence threatened to submerge what I had thus far been able to uncover. In fact even though others have since also undertaken research on Asians (especially on the

young), their discourses for example on identity (Alam 2009) have added little to the light shed on “izzat” thus far.

From this more subject-focused, thematic research I selected three examples to explore the role played by “izzat” and “sharam” in the lives of members of Asian communities. These include Samad and Eade’s (2002) research on forced marriages and Gilbert et al.’s (2004, 2007) focus on Asian women and mental health and finally Din’s (2006) Bradford-based research on young Asians. I will explore each of these in the order they are mentioned and then end this chapter by drawing some conclusions.

Samad and Eade’s (2002) research on forced marriage discusses “izzat” as it affects Bangladeshis and Pakistanis in Britain. The concept appears in two of the four chapters of the research. Although the focus of the research is primarily on forced marriages, reflecting the growing political interest in this area, (see FCO 2004; Home Office 2000, 2005), it includes an explicit acknowledgement of the role that “izzat” and “sharam” can play in the process. Like Werbner (1990), Samad and Eade (2002:39) are aware of the concept’s intricate relationship with concerns of “zat” (caste), competition, social standing, respect, gender dynamics and reputation:

Zat is also related to honour (‘izzat’) and honour is associated with competition between families, family respect and the control of women’s behaviour. Relationships between families are often competitive, with each family being concerned about its own social standing and reputation.

This echoes earlier research including Wilson’s (1979) concern with the “control of women’s behaviour”, and Bachu’s (1985), Shaw’s (1988, 2000) and Werbner’s (1990) focus on social status and its relationship with dowry and the marriage process, and with Ballard’s (1994:18) notion of “‘izzat’-competition’.

Samad and Eade (2002) stress the aspect of honour to do with behaving honourably, and 'keeping one's word'. They suggest that once an arrangement for marriage has been agreed, "usually between fathers" it is difficult to disentangle oneself from it resulting in young people being forced into marriages because "Honour becomes a clear issue..." (p. 39).

In line with the work of the Home Office Working Group (2000), Samad and Eade (2002:75) believe that there are three reasons for forced marriage. The first is concerned with the family; the second with "sexuality and independent behaviour", and the third simply with "honour". They also suggest the burden of "izzat" lies with "daughters" as "Parents consider it to be their greatest responsibility to guard the 'izzat' of their daughters and through them their own 'izzat'". They point out the importance of "izzat" and "sharam" within gender relationships:

Most Asian communities are concerned with the linked issues of honour ('izzat') and shame or modesty ('sharam'). These concerns have an affect on gender relationships, for whilst men defend and advance the family's 'izzat' through active participation in public activities, women demonstrate a sense of 'sharam' by excluding themselves from such arenas and ensuring that their own personal 'izzat' is unimpeachable. Flagrant disregard of segregation and conventions of modesty raise issues of family honour. In theory male behaviour is also regulated by shame but in practice, there is very little that men cannot do and that would bring dishonour. Men's claim to 'izzat' is really about controlling women and their departure from the home is seen as a threat to patriarchal domination. (Samad and Eade 2002:75)

Although the focus in Samad and Eade's research is specifically on forced marriages, it includes some discussion of "izzat" and "sharam" (especially as modesty), and in relation to the differential treatment of men and women as demonstrated above.

I will move on to Gilbert et al.'s (2004 and 2007) research on Asian women, mental health and the relationship with 'shame'. Gilbert's (1992) early work focused on the link between subordination and depression, and later between feeling trapped and depression (Gilbert and Allan 1998). This led to Gilbert (1998, 2000) developing the link with shame, but it is not until his later work (2004, 2007) that the themes developed further to show "that shame, subordination and entrapment can play a powerful role in psychopathology" (Gilbert et al. 2004:1). In their work with Asian women's focus groups, they examine how "reflected shame and honour" (*ibid.*, p. 1) impacts on their lives. In this case, and re-emphasising Wilson's (1979) work, Gilbert et al. explain "reflected shame and honour" as the "shame and honour that can be brought to others by one's own behaviour" (2004:1). Thus not only do they identify the fact that, "The importance of maintaining family honour and identifying with it ('izzat') was linked to personal shame" (*ibid.*, p.1), but also demonstrate how reflected "izzat" and shame, not only affect the individual, but others around him or her – a point also identified by others (Wilson 1979; Werbner 1990; Ballard 1994; Modood et al. 1994). They explain that "fear of reflected shame and loss of 'izzat' were regarded as key reasons South Asian women might not use mental health services" (Gilbert et al 2004:9).

Gilbert (2002, et al. 2004, et al. 2007) builds on the work of Mesquita (2001), who distinguished between "collective" and "individualistic" cultures - a distinction that Modood et al. (1994), Ghuman (1994, 1996), Anwar (1998) and Shaw (1988, 2000) also implied. As Gilbert et al. (2004:2) state:

There is now good evidence that in collective cultures emotions are more linked to how behaviours reflect on others, whereas in individualistic cultures emotions such as pride and shame relate to reflections on the self.

The assumption is that the culture of mainstream British society is individualistic and that Asian culture is distinctly collective. Therefore because of this difference, movement between the two may be fraught. I suspect that this distinction between the host and Asian communities has become sharper over time, given the shift within mainstream, British society to a greater emphasis on individualism, and the market economy which gained impetus and ascendancy especially during the Thatcher years (Magnusson 1990). This is important not only because it impacts on those individuals who through the course of their lives have to negotiate acceptable norms of behaviour between their own and the host society, and vice-versa, but also because there is a possibility that because of the stark difference in emphasis, for members of the majority, British, individualistic society to perceive minority, collective cultures as insular and difficult to understand (Ballard 1994).

In collective cultures, notions of pride and shame are inextricably linked, and this dynamic often also determines the gender relationships within a culture. In drawing on the work of Figueredo et al. (2001), and Goodwin (1995), Gilbert et al. (2004:2) suggest that,

...Patriarchal family honour, in relation to availability of resources, social economic status and the support of male kin, can benefit women but also be a source of excessive control over their behaviour by others (men and in-laws)... Subordination entrapment can therefore be linked to family dynamics of honour and shame.

In patriarchal Asian cultures where established norms of behaviour demand conformity, from both men and women, Gilbert et al. (2004 and 2007), like other researchers (Wilson 1979; Khan 1979; Kassam 1997), suggest that failure to conform can result in “stigma” (2004:2) and damaged reputations. In such cultures they suggest men exert control, while women have to conform, re-iterating the work of others (Wilson 1979; Khan 1979; Shaw 1988, 2000; Werbner 1990; Kassam 1997; Samad and Eade 2002). The theme of “izzat”, the ensuing

control and pressure to conform and “obey the rules”, “in order not to bring bad ‘izzat’ to one’s family” in Gilbert et al.’s (2004:11) focus group participants’ views was experienced by them as “subordination”. Some of their participants expressed the all-pervasive nature of “izzat”, echoing my thoughts about its implicit nature, and ultimately its hold on the lives of all those engaged in Asian community-life:

A participant said “I think ‘izzat’ is something, it’s so pervasive ..... you’ve been taught it by the time you are 19”. Another participant said, “It’s like the weather, you can’t question it. ‘Izzat’ is there so therefore it’s always been around. If somebody’s made it up by somebody centuries back, somebody made up ‘izzat’ and they probably did it to I think, know as a special control. (2004:7-8)

For them concern with ‘reputation’ is the key mechanism for demanding conformity and therefore the link with subordination and entrapment is the result of this link. In summarising the responses to their first scenario, involving a young Asian woman college student who is “going out with an African-Caribbean man of 28”, Gilbert et al. (2004:9) say,

The key themes to emerge were that ‘izzat’ is related to issues of family honour and reputations and personal reputations. One could bring shame to one’s family by behaviours that damage reputations as perceived by the family. Remaining true to one’s culture and maintaining a reputation for the family within society was central to ‘izzat’.

Their research with Asian women has clear implications for professionals regarding policy and practice. These include for example the ability to recognise the impact of “izzat” and “sharam” on mental well-being. Although beyond the scope of this thesis, it would be interesting to gauge the extent to which social care professionals are conscious of this. They make a convincing case for the impact of the dynamics of “izzat” and shame on the mental health of Asian women. Unlike Wilson (1979) who indicated the general, pervasive hold of “izzat” and “sharam” on Asian women, Gilbert et al. (2004:15) are more specific in their conclusions, and this is a result of their specialisation in research in psychopathology:

The key themes to emerge were that mental health is linked to each of the themes of 'izzat', shame, subordination and entrapment. The dialogues suggested that various themes were linked to mental health; such as having to meet obligations, feeling a failure in roles, and lacking support. As noted previously in group 2 some felt it would be better to commit suicide than leave an abusive relationship, to protect 'izzat'.

Moving on to Din's (2006) work, this perhaps signals a return to in-depth studies of particular Asian groups and especially the young, in British society (see also Lewis 2007). This research on young Pakistanis in Bradford is perhaps symptomatic of current interests reflecting the wider socio-political concerns about community cohesion (Ouseley 2001; Cattle 2001), multiculturalism, racism, islamophobia and the current socio-political concerns about young Muslims in Britain and farther afield (Runnymede Trust 1997; Parekh 2000; Whittaker 2002; McGhee 2005; Sheridan 2006; Roberts 2006; Khan 2006; Saeed 2007; Macey 2007; Sanghera and Thapar-Bjorkert 2007; Abbas 2007, 2011), as well as the local focus on Bradford, following the disturbances there involving young Pakistanis (Abbas 2005; McGhee 2005; Macey 2007).

Din (2006) researches the lives of young British-born Pakistanis, aged between 14 and 19. Although the focus on "izzat" in it can by no means be described as central, it is nevertheless explicitly regarded as an important aspect in their lives. He acknowledges that, "'Izzat" has different meaning depending on the context and varies for example, 'honour', 'status', 'respect', 'obedience' and 'loyalty'" (p. 31).

Like Ballard (1994) and Shaw (1988, 2000), Din (2006:125) recognises that in the settlement process of the community, "izzat" played an important role enabling the Pakistani community "...in self-policing itself through the concept of 'izzat' (honour)". There is a return to themes

discussed earlier including the differential burden of “izzat” borne by girls and the force of conformity that can be invoked through “izzat” by perceived transgressions, which must be “severely punished for tarnishing the honour of the family” (Din 2006:142).

He re-emphasises the idea of “‘base-thi’ (shame)”, and therefore “loss of honour”:

...loss of honour) is clear for parents. They take the attitude that if a marriage breaks up then it would be ‘base-thi’ (shame) for the whole family... (Din 2006:143)

Again the hold of family and “biraderi” (p. 101) as a unit in the community is emphasised, and its control is exerted on the young through the mechanism of “izzat”:

The community looks after its own. Kinship is central. The community both looks after and controls itself. (Din 2006:150)

This research seems to return to the ‘between two cultures’ paradigm (Ballard and Ballard 1977; Weinreich 1979; Ghuman 1994; Anwar 1979, 1998), illustrating the continued hold of the family/”biraderi” on young Pakistanis, in spite of what lies beyond this. Din’s (2006:149-150) tone is honest citing some ‘uncomfortable truths’ and in his conclusion he states:

The elders... undermine the social equilibrium of the young by citing their present values and interests as ‘kufr’ [immoral]. This undermines the sense of well-being in the young... It also causes hypocrisy in them. If they are not allowed to behave naturally then they behave in one way for their parents and in another, including a different style of language, for their peers. In this particular community the disjunction between the two is extreme. There are two separate codes of dress as well as taste, of habit as well as behaviour. So much of what goes on remains deliberately hidden from parents and elders. This means that parents think they have more control than they actually have. The irony is that because of the sense of ‘biraderi’, thinking they have control leads to a sense of real control. The determination to force arranged marriages and to harass those who wish to go their own way, even to the point of murder, shows how deep the control is. The young people resent it, but have to submit to it. This is the deepest hypocrisy.

This research explores power and control within the Pakistani community and in doing so refers to the role played by “‘izzat” and shame.



This is a good point to draw the review to a close, since this text brings the research on Asians in Britain ‘full circle’, with a return to in-depth studies on particular groups, and a return to particular paradigms and themes. The power of “izzat” is indicated, although again this is not the central focus of the research, leaving that task open for me to pursue in Chapter 3 of this study.

## **1.6.Conclusion**

The concept of “izzat” therefore generally remains implicit and inferred through the myriad of research on Asians, that has been referred to here, and which examines family ties, peer networks and inter-community relations as aspects of Asian community-life in Britain. However to the perceptions of an ‘insider’ like myself the impact of “izzat”, lurking beneath the surface, is not far away. The concept clearly helps to shape behaviour, often concerned with reputation, in efforts to gain status and prestige, in the fulfilment of social obligations, and in efforts to demand conformity, and to avoid ‘losing face’, and attracting “sharam”. “Izzat” therefore emerges as a ‘normalising’ force that demands conformity from members of Asian communities.

A few researchers explicitly discuss the concept, including Roger and Catherine Ballard (1977), and Roger Ballard’s later work (1982, 1994), and the work of Bachu (1985), and more significantly the research by Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990), Ghuman (1994, 1996), Bhatti (1999), Shaw (1988, 2000), Samad and Eade (2002), Gilbert et al (2004, 2007) and Din (2006) , but even here the focus on “izzat” is marginal, first appearing explicitly in some of the work from the seventies, and then intermittently since then. Significantly over

approximately forty years of research on Asian communities in Britain, some views first expressed early on over this period are still being endorsed, for example Wilson's (1979) definition of "izzat" as an aspect of the male ego, which women have the responsibility to uphold.

It is also interesting how some researchers developed their initial ideas about the concept and its significance in Asian communities, over time, into something more concrete. Ballard for example gave further shape to his initial thoughts from his research in the seventies, about "izzat" being linked to status and prestige in general terms, into a theory which later (Ballard 1994:18), more definitely emphasised the acquisition of status and prestige as a responsibility largely of men, aided by "izzat-competition".

Generally, the attention paid to the concept of "izzat" in wider British society relates to its 'sensational' value (Wilson 1979), as an integral component or motivator for 'honour killings' and 'honour crimes' within Asian communities. These concepts, which have always been present in Asian communities have therefore entered into the public domain of British society as a result of their association with extreme behaviour, with power and control, and ultimately with honour-related crimes and killings (such as the murders of Banaz Mahmod and Shafiea Ahmed).

Although researchers reviewed in this review have made some references to "izzat" (honour) and "sharam", the concepts are largely marginal in the context their overall work. However, it has been possible to glean and collate particular themes concerning these concepts and their emergence through the work reviewed.

Throughout the decades covered here, it is significant that the link between “izzat” and reputation has been generally noted, as has the fact that often “izzat” and “sharam”, as a force for conformity and censure, can be a mechanism for ensuring an untainted or good reputation. This was particularly identified by researchers in the nineties and beyond. Often, gossip in the community is used to curb behaviour and therefore to keep “izzat” and reputations intact, as noted by Shaw (1988 and 2000), Bhatti (1999) and Gilbert et al (2004).

At its extreme, “izzat” as a force for conformity and censure can result in what some researchers and the media describe as ‘honour killings’ – a price for behaviour considered to be out of the ‘normal’ range or just dis-honouring/ or dis-honourable (“be-izzat”). This extreme aspect of “izzat” was identified early on by Wilson (1979), and reiterated in later work (Shaw 2000; Samad and Eade 2002; Din 2006).

On the whole, although reputations, good and bad, affected the “izzat” of both men and women and their families, it was generally accepted by researchers that the negative burden of “izzat” and “sharam” rested with, and affected women more. Honour crimes and killings, whereby women are usually the victims are an extreme example of the control exerted mainly by men over women in Asian communities. Again, this aspect of gender dynamics which result in the control of and curbing of women’s behaviour was identified early on by Wilson (1979) and reiterated in later work (Briggs and Briggs 1997; Shaw 1988, 2000; Samad and Eade 2002; Gilbert et al 2004; Din 2006).

The differential treatment of boys and girls was generally noted throughout the decades. In particular, some researchers emphasised the greater moral pressure on girls to behave in an acceptable fashion, whereas only a few focused explicitly on the effects of shame on women (Wilson 1979; Shaw 1988, 2000; Gilbert et al 2004, 2007). In fact, early on Wilson (1979) identifies “izzat” as ‘personal shame’ and this was reiterated only by Gilbert et al (2004) much later.

In regard to gender dynamics a few researchers distinguished between the public domain of men and the private, domestic world of women (Webner 1990; Shaw 1988, 2000; Samad and Eade 2002), while others stressed the relatively greater pressure on men to succeed in the ‘outside’, public domain in an effort to acquire greater “izzat” through their success (Bachu 1985; Bowen 1986; Werbner 1990; Ballard 1994; Anwar 1998; Bhatti 1999; Shaw 1988, 2000). In relation to this ‘public’ arena, inhabited largely by men, others, especially male researchers (Modood 1992; Modood et al 1994; Ballard 1994; Anwar 1998), emphasised the importance of the expression of group pride (through for example the “Ummah” - Brotherhood in Islam). Ballard (1994) suggests that this vying for position in the public domain can act as a spur for individuals in the community, which he describes as “izzat”-competition”.

The acquisition of “izzat” and therefore enhanced status resulting in respect and good reputations, by many different means are identified by many of the researchers. In this regard Bachu’s (1985) distinction between ‘ascribed’ and ‘achieved’ status is valuable and adopted by others. As such, Bachu (1985), Ballard (1994) and Samad and Eade (2002), describe how the acquisition of material things (such as land and property etc) can help to enhance an

individual's or his/her family's "izzat" and therefore their standing in the community, while Bachu (1985), Jackson (1985), Werbner (1990), Anwar (1998), Bhatti (1999) and Gilbert et al (2004) stress the importance of personal achievement (through success in education, employment and wealth acquisition) and heritage. Others focus on the role played by certain rituals such as "lena-dena" (gift exchange), and religious and marriage ceremonies, in the acquisition of "izzat" (Bachu 1985; Werbner 1990; Shaw 1988, 2000; Ballard 1994; Samad and Eade 2002). In this context Werbner (1990) emphasises the "izzat"/respect acquiring aspect of giving donations to charity as a public act, namely by men. A few researchers also cite the idea that "izzat" can be enhanced by geographical re-location, such as from the Indian subcontinent to Britain (Ballard 1982, 1994), or even from the inner-city to the suburbs (Werbner 1990).

It is from the nineties onwards that "izzat" becomes associated explicitly with notions of 'respect', self-esteem and self-dignity (Modood 1992; Ballard 1994; Bhatti 1999; Samad and Eade 2002; Din 2006), and researchers begin to distinguish between Western individualistic and Asian collective cultures (Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990; Modood et al 1994; Ghuman 1994; Anwar 1998; Gilbert et al 2004). This is an aspect of Asian culture which enables "izzat" to have a hold on members of a 'collective' culture. Gilbert et al (2004) are in fact the only researchers to identify the concept of "izzat" as all-pervasive within Asian communities, although their research focus is limited to Asian women in the context of mental health.

Din's (2006) research explicitly explores the power and control exerted on young Pakistanis through the medium of "izzat", which also establishes its importance in community-life.

Over time, as the social, political and economic backdrop has changed researchers' priorities have shifted to reflect these national and international trends, perhaps influenced by emerging, new funding opportunities. As such, generally the focus on concepts such as "izzat" and "sharam" in Asian communities have once again been left behind and further submerged and marginalised, or in fact the focus has become one-dimensional with its concerns with honour-related violence.

The chronological approach adopted in this review has been important in tracing the concepts of "izzat" and "sharam" through a myriad of meanings, nuances and associations. Initially these often had to be gleaned from inferences in the behaviour of individual and collective members of Asian communities, to, over time, much more confident and explicit discussions about the concepts' role within Asian community-life in Britain. Indeed the researchers from the nineties to the present millennium have discussed and explored "izzat" and "sharam" with greater surety and confidence, each emphasising some aspects of their hold on the behaviour of members of Asian communities. This approach has enabled me to bring together these various facets of "izzat" and "sharam" and to assess and collate these in turn into 'areas' and 'themes' influencing the lives of young Asians, thus providing a framework for my empirical explorations to be presented and discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. This framework includes most poignantly how both "izzat" and "sharam" (including its relationship with censure), impact on and shape the lives of young Asians, and in relation to this, the role played by gender (including the rules governing community-based gender dynamics). It would be interesting to explore how "izzat" is maintained/gained or lost (and therefore "sharam" attracted) and its links with reputation. Finally although beyond the scope of this thesis, given

the opportunity I would like to gather data on whether “izzat” and “sharam” influence professional practice within Asian communities.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE RESEARCH JOURNEY**

### **2.1 Some Theoretical Considerations**

My reflexive research ‘journey’ began a long time ago. My decision to make “izzat” the main focus of this research has its basis, as I stated earlier, in two aspects of my life in Britain – personal experiences as an Asian woman growing up in Britain, and professional encounters with the concept as a Youth and Community Worker, working particularly with members of Asian communities (Soni 2006 – Appendices 1 and 2).

In terms of methodological approaches, two have been especially significant in bringing me to the point where I decided to undertake this research with some seriousness. They are heuristics and participant observation - conceptual models with which I am familiar, and which allow me to draw on my own experiences (Shipman 1981; Grix 2002). The “tricky issue” of drawing on my subjective influences, both as an inspiration for this research, and as a factor throughout the research process is “.... not new and has been a central issue for feminist research” (Walkerdine et al. 2002:179). As May (2002:2) also states:

Particular ideas of neutrality, such as the maintenance of objectivity through positioning the researcher as nothing but a passive instrument of data collection, are now exposed as falsehoods that seek to mask the realities of the research process. The knower (as researcher) is now implicated in the construction of the known (the dynamics and context of society and social relations).

The other very important influence in carrying me to this point is the practice and principle of self-reflection/reflective practice (Schon 1995) which is fundamental in Youth and Community Work. Dadds (1995) coined and captured the notion of ‘passionate enquiry’ in her research as a teacher–practitioner/researcher - an idea that also applies to my research, because Youth and Community Work practice and research share the same fundamental



values, purposes and processes as those involved in the pursuit of a “passionate enquiry”, given the importance of self-reflection in this. I think that it is important to give some account of these two approaches as a way of giving some explanation for the influences on me, which in turn are important as epistemological considerations. As Stanfield (1993:14) points out:

By *epistemology*, I refer to the meaning of life and the physical environment, that undergirds how we think and what we think about and how we interpret what we think about.

Reflecting on moments in my life and on the lives of others, when “izzat” clearly influenced the choices I and others made, provides an essential backcloth for this journey, but one which is now at a point where I need to go beyond myself to empirically test if my experiences and reflections are significant in the lives of others as they have been in mine. As Aull Davies (1999:3) says:

In doing research of any kind, there is an implicit assumption that we are investigating something ‘outside’ ourselves, that the knowledge we seek cannot be gained solely or simply through introspection.

And,

On the one hand, we cannot research something with which we have no contact, from which we are completely isolated. All researchers are to some degree connected to, a part of the object of their research. And, depending on the extent and nature of these connections, questions arise as to when the results of the research are artefacts of the researcher’s presence and inevitable influence on the research process. For these reasons, considerations of reflectivity are important for all forms of research.

In terms of theoretical perspectives, given the discussion thus far, I feel that I fall between, or draw on a combination of two theoretical perspectives – subjectivism, (which legitimises the use of subjective experience in research), and constructionism, which suggests that, “Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world” (Crotty 1998:8). In relation to my epistemological position, interpretivism best serves my

perspective because it “requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action” (Bryman 2001:12 -13).

As “izzat” has been established as a dynamic mechanism and force which fuels and controls behaviour in Asian communities, its dynamism lends itself well to the notion of constructionism. My acknowledgement that I have drawn on personal and professional experiences, and will inevitably encourage others to recount theirs, has a ‘home’ in subjectivism. Therefore the theoretical perspective which perhaps best encapsulates this research can be described as ‘subjective constructivism’. This research is a good example of this combination. As Crotty (1998:9) succinctly puts it “...subject and object emerge as partners in the generation of meaning”.

Another methodological perspective which perhaps needs a brief consideration is phenomenological enquiry (Denscombe 2007), because “izzat” is a dynamic mechanism and also a phenomenon in Asian communities which influences life in Asian communities and for their members.

This journey began with my experiences, but it is heuristic methodology which provided me with the ‘licence’ to look within myself as a beginning:

In heuristics, an unshakeable connection exists between what is out there, in its appearance and reality and what is within me in reflective thought, feelings and awareness. It is I the person living in a world with others, alone yet inseparable from the community of others; I who see and understand something, freshly, as if for the first time, I who came to know essential meanings inherent in my experience. (Moustakas, 1990:12)

However, once the impetus or realisation that "izzat" was an important aspect of my life in Britain, was achieved, I did not want to dwell further on these experiences from which I had now developed some distance and to which I had now become reconciled. The raw brunt of my experience of "izzat", although still ever present, is something that I have clearly developed strategies to cope or deal with in my life, making the brunt of the experience less potent, perhaps even jaded. I needed to move on to see if others also felt the same as I did, or if their experiences and understanding of the concept were completely different from mine.

The other 'influence', as I mentioned earlier, comes from my reflections as a Youth and Community Worker, and from my previous training as a Social Anthropologist – a discipline in which the notion of participant observation (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007) plays an important role. Although when I was fully engaged as a face-to-face Youth Worker, I did not don the official mantle of a 'researcher', reflections on my professional experiences as I was immersed (just as a participant observer would be) in the daily routine of practice over many years with young Asians and their families, led me to appreciate the pressures and influences on their lives.

Self-reflection on practice is encouraged in the profession. In fact, reflexive practice is a skill that as trainers of Community and Youth Workers we try and encourage students to perfect. It is because of this very practice of self-reflection in and on practice (Schon 1995) that I identified "izzat" as a concept worthy of deeper exploration, given its impact and significance in the lives of the young Asians that I worked with. At that point in time, as I have acknowledged, I was not officially a 'researcher', but I knew that at some point in time I would become one, and that these experiences and reflections were important. So, how do I

label my case notes from my practice (appendix 2), reflection on which has led me to consider “izzat” as being worthy of further research? Are these the reflections of a covert researcher? Are they the field notes of a participant observer who was engaged with the ‘client’ group officially as a Youth Worker? My previous training and education in Anthropology has always been a useful tool to reflection on practice, and something that has always been latent in me – its principles used to aid my reflective practice.

As a practitioner, I had the trust and deepest confidence of the young people that I worked with. However, I never gained their ‘official’ written consent in my work with them, a requirement of an ethical researcher (Kent 1996, cited in Silverman 2005). Some researchers (Aull Davies 1999) suggest that ‘post hoc’ consent should be sought. However, the incidents in the lives of the young people I worked with were moments of real crises in their lives, ones which they survived with my confidence as their Youth Worker. They were moments in their lives that they had moved on from. So the professional/practitioner in me bolts at the idea of seeking a consent which will re-awaken the possible pain and anguish of those moments. I have ascribed anonymity to these reflections of the practitioner on these key incidents (Soni 2006). Nevertheless, there is one part of me that is uncomfortable with the idea that my reflections on these very moments led to my present focus in my research, and I feel that I need to formally acknowledge this as it is a vital part of my research ‘journey’. It has significantly influenced the form that this research takes, in that I am both interested in how “izzat” shapes the lives of young Asians in Britain and its relevance in professional practice within Asian communities, because this was an important aspect of the ‘balancing-act’ that I engaged in as an Asian female practitioner working within them. However the latter point is

beyond the scope of this thesis, but will be written up and disseminated elsewhere (through the writing for example of journal articles).

My review of the literature and self-reflection (both personal and professional) have led me to understand that “izzat” in all its positive and negative guises (as “sharam”, for example), is most tangible at moments that could be described as particularly significant in the lives of Asians. In fact, in its most potent form, as a negative, ‘conformity demanding’ or ‘sanctioning’ mechanism, it is present at what I would describe as sensitive moments of ‘crises’, when individuals had to make difficult, painful decisions, with the implications of the loss of “izzat” and the attraction of “sharam” looming over them, with all their contingent ‘costs’. In short, this research would inevitably include exploration of experiences which may be considered taboo (Farberow 1963) to them and their families. Thus, any exploration of the concept in the lives of others would need to be handled with some foresight and care, given that it would inevitably include individuals being asked to think about and recount moments when “izzat” and its loss were particularly significant in their lives. The possible implications of researching a potentially ‘sensitive topic’ (Lee 1999) will be discussed more fully a little later in this chapter as I consider the ethical dimensions of this research.

## **2.2 Research Design and Ethical Considerations**

The fact that this research begins with an acknowledgement of the importance of the researcher’s own experiences, and aims to explore sensitively, the role of a particular phenomenon (“izzat”) in the lives of others, lends itself well and logically to the qualitative paradigm.

In the quest for the search for meaning, the social researcher is what Shipman (1981:26) calls a “pioneer”, because each researcher is collecting data on a context of particular interest to him/her, and which is therefore unique. Furthermore, the researcher makes sense of his/her observations using conceptual models with which s/he is familiar as well as by drawing upon his/her own experiences (Shipman 1981). Qualitative research therefore pays particular attention to humanising, both of the researcher as active, not merely a neutral conduit for data, and of the ‘subjects’ as people with rights and feelings. As Gerson and Horowitz (2002:199) point out:

Qualitative research always involves some kind of direct encounter with ‘the world’, whether it takes the form of ongoing daily life or interaction with a selected group. Qualitative researchers are also routinely concerned not only with objectively reasonable ‘facts’ or ‘events’, but also with the ways that people construct, interpret and give meaning to these experiences. Qualitative approaches typically include attention to dynamic processes rather than (or in addition to) static categories...

This research demands that I spend time exploring the concept of “izzat” with others, which would be difficult to undertake with any level of sensitivity by using quantitative methods which have a reputation for producing larger scale ‘number crunching’ research. In contrast, the nature of qualitative research is that it tends to be small-scale, and at its heart, it is about exploring and making sense of the social world, through an inherently subjective process. As Douglas (1976:24) suggests sociologists are engaged in exploring “social meanings” on “any group’s activities”, and in doing so they,

“... necessarily rely, at some level, upon their own common-sense experience in society. As a result, their own subjective experience is ultimately the basis of all their imputations of meanings to the people they are trying to understand scientifically.

Although some social scientists may consider the above a jarring hindrance in the quest for objective knowledge about the social world, I think that as long as the researcher is aware of and open about his/her subjectivity, this perceived weakness can become a strength making the research more honest and reflexive. However, the above provides an insight into some of the potential shortcomings of qualitative research. Others are succinctly captured by Shipman (1981:xii):

Samples may be unrepresented, individuals under observation tend not to behave naturally. Results from research in any one place or at any one time may not be applicable in others. Human individuals and human groups are marked by their variety. Generalisation from one to another may be misleading.

Nevertheless, the most logical approach for me to adopt in this research is qualitative, in spite of the possible 'shortcomings' listed above. Although there are many techniques and methods of qualitative research, the most common ways of obtaining qualitative data involves the asking of questions of people (Mason 2002) who may be best placed to share their experiences and insights on the subject of focus. In short, it involves some form of "conversation with a purpose" (Burgess 1984:102), and is a process of "social interaction" (Bell and Nutt 2002:77).

As Gerson and Horowitz (2002:201) suggest, "individual interviews" with well-placed individuals that they refer to as "strategic social actors", provide a great opportunity to solve "empirical puzzles" by "examining micro social processes as they unfold in the lives of individuals". They state that interviews are a particularly useful method because they,

...focus attention on individual biographies which become a lens through which to view social contexts and arrangements. Individual lives are seen to embody larger structural and cultural formations. (p.216)

The nature of “izzat”, given the wide-ranging nuances of meanings and associations that emerged from the literature review, as a subject/focus of exploration, makes it inevitable that any individual interviews would have to be in-depth. General guidance on how to conduct in-depth interviews has been provided by numerous writers (Spradley 1979; McCracken 1988). However, as Gerson and Horowitz (2002:210) state, “In-depth interviewing thus depends on creating trust, rapport and mutual commitment within a short time period”. Also, Hammersley and Atkinson (1983:15) simply describe interviews as “...interactional events, constructed as they happen, they are the product of a particular time and place...”

Thus, the use of structured or unstructured interviews is a fundamental method of qualitative research, and one which I have decided to use. As Lee (1999:104) points out:

In contrast, [to survey interviews] it is agreed that interviewing in depth produces more valid information. Such interviews provide a means of getting beyond surface appearances, and permit greater sensitivity to the meaning contexts surrounding information utterances. This is particularly so when sensitive topics are studied.

In this case, the “social actors”, a term also used by Lawler (2002:201), that will provide a window on the nature of “izzat” in Asian communities are young Asian women and men, between the ages of 18 and 35. I have selected such a wide age range because I need the participants to be old enough to be able to reflect on both, their personal and professional lives, and also because on the Indian sub-continent, the notion of ‘youth’ extends to the age of 35.

The other factor I hope to investigate, analyse and disseminate elsewhere, and which also influences the selection of my ‘sample’ further, concerns the possible significance that an understanding or knowledge of “izzat” may have on professional practice within Asian



communities. As such, I selected the young Asian respondents from two sources, including students undertaking the professional training for Youth and Community Workers at a University (where I was a lecturer), and from qualified and unqualified practitioners, working within the sector in the Midlands. All the respondents, including the students, were expected to have some experience of working within Youth and Community settings. As Gerson and Horowitz (2002:204) point out:

In choosing a sample, the goal is to select a group of respondents who are strategically located to shed light on the larger forces and processes under investigation.

By selecting young Asian Youth and Community workers I was able to ‘narrow’ the selection of respondents, and target individuals who were strategically located, given the focus of this research. The fact that these practitioners were themselves Asian and had experience of working within Asian communities, potentially gave them a holistic view of life in these communities. Their background as Asians and members of Asian families and communities themselves also provided them with the authenticity to reflect on the significance of “izzat” in their own, and in the lives of others. However, there are obvious ethical issues, particularly with regard to ‘power’ that need to be considered, and I will explore this in some depth later in this chapter.

The choice of ‘sample’ or respondents is particularly important, given that the researcher aims to “provide an efficient way to answer large questions with a comparatively small group of people” (Gerson and Horowitz 2002:204). They also advise that care should be taken to construct an “interview guide” to facilitate the collection of data “in a manageable form, for later analysis”.

Thus, in this case, I decided to make use of the themes connected to “izzat” (and “sharam”) that emerged from the literature review, as a ‘guide’ for my interviews. I needed these interviews to be focused, yet flexible enough to allow respondents the freedom to express themselves fully (Bell and Nutt 2002), which is why I decided that a semi-structured interview format would be best suited for this research. It is interesting to note in fact, as Mason (2002:232) suggests:

...it is not possible to conduct a structure-free interview not least because the agendas and assumptions of both interviewer and interviewee will inevitably impose frameworks for meaningful interaction.

My professional training and experience where listening, probing and the skills of interpretation are important, hold me in good stead as an interviewer, where the same skills are required (Mason 1996). As “izzat” often features in peoples’ lives at points of ‘high’ drama or crisis, with both positive and negative consequences, it is important for me to pre-empt any potential difficulties for the interviewees in discussing experiences of a sensitive nature, and, “... to create an environment in which the participant feels accepted and thus free to disclose and reflect honestly on controversial personal and political issues” (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002:215). This means that, as for the Youth and Community Worker, skills of understanding and encouragement are essential aspects of an interview, but need to be “...balanced with a certain degree of circumspection” (ibid p. 215). Other elements, which are also relevant in Youth and Community work, and that can aid the asking of sensitive questions on potentially sensitive subjects are, “...privacy, confidentiality and non-condemnatory attitude... because they provide a framework of trust” (Lee 1999:98).

The importance of privacy as an environmental factor is self-evident, and confidentiality (an important ethical consideration) will be returned to in greater depth later in this chapter, while

a “non-condemnatory attitude” (*ibid.*) has its echoes in the principle of non-judgemental practice (Rogers 1961; DfES 2002, 2003), which is a core tenet of Youth and Community work practice.

There is a range in opinion concerning the nature and frequency of using interviews as a data-generating technique. Some researchers advocate that the researcher should invest in the relationship with the interviewee/respondent, through a process of repeat interviews (for example, see Laslett and Rapoport 1975; Oakley 1981), and by seeing the research as an “on-going research relationship” (Lee 1999:209). As Lee points out, the “on-going” nature of this process means that:

The establishment of trustful relations depends on the quality of the interpersonal engagement between researcher and researched and the building over the course of the research relationship of increasing levels of fellowship, mutual self-disclosure and reciprocity. (p. 208)

The potential result of such “sustained trustful relations” is that the quality and quantity of the data produced is influenced in a positive way. However, this can also mean that the “probability of holding sensitive information” is also increased, and may make the dissemination or publication of such information ‘problematic’. As Lee warns, “What is made publicly available, and how, may need to be carefully judged if the researcher is not to stand accused of betrayal” (p. 209).

This is particularly significant for my research, given the potentially sensitive nature, especially of the loss of “izzat” or of attracting “sharam”, and of the influence that the concept of ‘reputation’ (particularly negative ones) in Asian communities can have on individuals, and by extension, on their families. Since reputations are made and potentially damaged through

what is or is rumoured to be in the public domain, I need to be mindful of how I handle and disseminate sensitive information about the individuals that I interview.

However, the dilemma of how often to interview respondents, remains under discussion, as Brannen (1988) and Miller and Bell (2002) suggest that when dealing with sensitive issues, the research should be “based on single rather than repeat interviews...” (Miller and Bell 2002:57). In fact, Brannen (1988) goes as far as to suggest that when dealing with sensitive issues, and to ensure trust between the interviewer and the interviewee, that interviews should only take place once, and that respondents should not have to be fearful that “...the path of interviewer and interviewee will ever cross again” (cited in Lee 1999:112). Gerson and Horowitz (2002:210) liken the intensive, in-depth interview to the therapeutic interview of clinical practice because, “its success depends on interviewing a range of emotional as well as analytical skills, including sympathy, support and intense concentration”. However, they also say that, “Relationships must be forged (and ended) quickly, and they must be constantly re-established with new participants as the study proceeds”.

My research falls somewhere between the two ‘poles’ suggested in the discussion above. I have decided where possible to interview individuals once, and in-depth, but am conscious that they are known to me and have an on-going relationship with me as their Youth and Community Work University Lecturer. There are clearly implications in relation to ‘power’ and other ethical considerations that I need to think about, and I will return to this later in the chapter, but the other important factor remains the importance of reflexivity in this research.

As Aull Davies (1999:4) points out:

In the context of social research, reflexivity at its most immediately obvious level refers to the ways in which the products of research are affected by the personnel

and process of doing research. These effects are to be found in all phases of the research process from initial selection of topic to final reporting of results.

I have already mentioned the difficulties of producing and handling sensitive data, for which I will have to draw on my professional training, and especially on my knowledge and experience of handling emotions. As Lee (1999:113) suggests, "...the relationship between disclosure and intimacy is a curvilinear one" and as Reynolds (2002:300) warns:

...interviews actually encourage research participants to disclose what is often very personal and intimate detail in their lives, only then to have these accounts objectified, dissected and scrutinized.

These 'soft' skills from my professional training will further need to be relied upon as:

Interviewing about sensitive topics can produce substantial levels of distress in the respondent which have to be managed during the course of the interview.... All that may be possible in these situations is for the interviewer to undertake the difficult task of enduring and sharing the pain of the respondent. (Lee 1999:105-106)

Therefore my listening skills and the ability to empathise with respondents will be crucial – both important aspects of Youth and Community work (DfES 2002, 2003). In relation to practicalities, I need to ensure that respondents, as far as possible, are interviewed in an environment which ensures some level of privacy, and that I carry a box of tissues with me. "Izzat", as is evident from the literature review, can be an all-pervasive force (Gilbert et al. 2004), but it is particularly relevant at points of distress and crisis in the lives of individuals, and it may be inevitable that my probing about the concept, will trigger emotional responses. The ability to empathise with respondents as they recall distressing incidents from their lives needs to be ironically balanced by the ability to be detached as the researcher. As Gerson and Horowitz (2002:210) state:

Although it may seem paradoxical, the bounded nature of the interview and the professionally neutral stance of the interviewer, make the process of disclosure possible, the structure of this situation, with its guarantee of confidentiality,

creates a space outside the ‘real’ world in which disclosure and insight can proceed.

The use of vignettes and scenarios in qualitative research is well documented (Finch 1987; Finch and Mason 1993; Smart and Neale 1999), and is a technique that I can employ within my research. As Mason (2002:230) suggests, the use of scenarios or vignettes could help in enabling respondents to discuss sensitive issues or topics in a more manageable, perhaps less emotional way:

This [using scenarios] may be a particularly useful way of asking questions in ethically and morally sensitive situations, because in theory it allows the interviewee to discuss their own moral reasoning without having to (publicly) locate what they say in the detail of what may be difficult or private experiences. The logic is that interviewees are asked to do moral reasoning on the spot, but are given contextual information – albeit hypothetical – with which to do this.

In relation to research undertaken with Asian women, this technique was particularly usefully employed by Gilbert et al (2004), and is important for me to consider in researching “izzat” and “sharam”, perhaps for example in relation to triangulating the data I gather from the in-depth individual interviews.

Researchers (for example Shipman 1981) advocate the use of more than one method to aid the process of triangulation. The reliability of any data depends on a number of factors including the quality of the respondents, their level of trust in the researcher, and thirdly, in the researcher being able to check the information out by the process of triangulation – that is by finding other sources of information on the subject or topic under exploration (Shipman 1981). Therefore, the use of complimentary techniques and methods can help with the process of triangulation.

Triangulation through the use of documentary evidence indicates the importance of background work – that is, historical research on how things came to be. A historical perspective, as has been presented in the literature review, develops an understanding of the situation or the topic/subject under focus, and can also reflect the changes that may occur over time. In this case, the research process began through the chronological, historical review of literature, will be continued mainly through the process of undertaking individual in-depth interviews, and will be further triangulated through the use of focus groups with a different set of participants, (apart from those selected for individual interviews). In this regard I was asked by a Sikh women's organisation to provide a 'workshop' on "izzat" to a group of about 40 women, from a wide age range, (between 16 and 75). I made use of this opportunity to explore the concept and their understanding of it, for the purposes of triangulating the data gathered through the in-depth interviews, which in turn were guided by my review of the research literature on Asian communities settled in Britain since the 1960's. (Appendix 8 provides the workshop outline).

As such, my intention was to conduct workshop-style focus groups using 'vignettes' (Mason 2002) to aid discussion. Morgan (1988:9 -10) succinctly describes focus groups as,

...basically group interviews, although not in the sense of an alternation between the researcher's questions and the research participants' responses. Instead, the reliance is on interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher, who typically takes the role of a moderator.

The size of a focus group can vary from between 4 to 12 participants (Krueger 1994), although others suggest that the group size should start with a minimum of 8 members (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990). Krueger (1994:16) suggests that:

Focus group interviews typically have six characteristics or features. These characteristics relate to the ingredients of a focus group: (1) People, (2) assembled

in a series of groups, (3) possess certain characteristics, and (4) provide data (5) of a qualitative nature (6) in a focus group discussion.

With regard to participants having certain characteristics in common Madriz (2000:835) suggests the importance of , “... same socioeconomic, ethnic and gender backgrounds”.

The use of focus groups was important, not only in relation to triangulating the data from the individual interviews, but also because as a method, it has its own benefits. As May (1997:114) says, “Group and individual interviews may produce *different* perspectives on the *same* issues”. Madriz (2000:845), as indicated above recommends homogeneity in terms of age, class and race, because it would mean that, “...participants felt freer to express their ideas...”

I hoped that the all-female environment would help to generate a sense of security amongst the group, facilitating honest responses and discussion. As Madriz (2002:839) further points out:

Focus groups not only encourage researchers to listen to the voices of those who have been subjugated, they also represent a methodology that is consistent with the particularities and everyday experiences of women of color’.

I had an opportunity to gauge the views of a group that I would not normally be in touch with, both as a youth worker (since my professional relationships with ‘clients’ would normally be with young people, and any contact with older members of their families would only occur in relation to the concerns of the individual young people), or as a lecturer. However, I was conscious that my gender and cultural background would be an important asset in facilitating discussion with such a group, including, possibly, through the use of their mother-tongue



(Punjabi). Jarret (1993) in fact suggests that a moderator who reflects the race/ethnicity of the participants may enhance rapport and increase the willingness of participants to respond.

I was also aware, from my review of the literature on Asian communities in Britain, that the focus on “izzat”, and inevitably on “sharam”, could trigger personal, emotional responses in individuals, which may be difficult for participants to express in a group, rather public environment. This is why I decided to use vignettes (Mason 2002), a method also used successfully with Asian women by Gilbert et al (2004). As Madriz (2000:848) advises:

...in a situation where a researcher needs participants to share very intimate details about their lives, a focus group would not be the most appropriate technique.

The use of vignettes removes the need for participants to reveal intimate details about their own lives (although they would also be free to do so if they so wished), and the workshop-style would also ensure that groups responded simultaneously to the vignettes, ensuring that my influence as a moderator would be minimal. As Stewart and Shamdasani (1990:69) suggest, ideally a moderator has, “...the unenviable task of balancing the requirements of sensitivity and empathy on the one hand, and objectivity and detachment on the other”.

Apart from dealing with sensitive issues which I have touched on earlier, I now want to focus in some depth on other ethical considerations which are relevant to this study. Ethics are defined by Flew (1999:112) simply as

...a set up of standards by which a particular group or community decides to regulate its behaviour – to distinguish what is legitimate or acceptable in pursuit of their aims and what is not.

For researchers this means making conscious, ethical decisions about their actions throughout the research process, determined not by “...expediency or efficiency but by reference to standards of what is morally right or wrong” (Barnes 1979:16). In essence ethical

considerations are concerned with dilemmas that the researcher faces at different points throughout the research process, and the decisions that s/he makes in relation to these. In this study, there have been many such dilemmas, including decisions about who to interview and in relation to this, concerns about the possible influence of race, religion, culture, gender and social status (especially given my position as a lecturer in relation to the respondents being my students).

I will now move on to discuss the ethical nature of the decisions specifically related to who I will be interviewing, and the interaction between these respondents and myself as the researcher, and with particular regard to factors such as social status/power, gender and the ‘insider-outsider’ dichotomy, which I believe will have the most significance in this study.

Clearly the fact that I am a lecturer means that there are implications with regard to power in the dynamics between myself as the lecturer/researcher, and the respondents as students/respondents that need to be explicitly acknowledged, and reflected upon during the course of the study. Even without the additional factor of the lecturer – student dynamic, Reynolds (2002:300) says,

A traditional claim within social research is that the interview process produces an unequal exchange between the ‘powerful researcher’ and the ‘powerless research participant’.

Brannen (1988) amongst others (McKee and O’Brien 1983: Wise 1987) suggests that the balance of power in the research process can ebb and flow, emerging from the “interaction between the topic, the particular method of interviewing used and the respective statuses of the participants” (cited in Lee 1999:110). It seems logical that,

...structural divisions in society, such as race, class and gender divisions, and in particular the differing class, race and gender status of the researcher and research participant directly influences power relations in this research relationship. (Reynolds 2002:300)

Clearly there may be possible issues regarding the relative statuses of myself as the researcher, and the respondents as students on a programme that I taught on. Walkerdine et al. (2002:187) provide an interesting insight into how status ‘positioning’ can emerge during a research process. They reflect on their research on the *Transition to Womanhood* and on how the research participants consisting of “working class Mr and Mrs Cole” and “Mrs Falmer, a professional middle-class mother”, respectively positioned the researchers as “a welfare agency ‘shopper’” and as a “therapist”. As they further acknowledge:

It is difficult to tell whether the researchers projected these positionings onto the participants, whether the participants projected them on the researchers or whether they were mutually created. Perhaps what is important is that it is these positionings through which the subsequent interview is conducted and understood. The researchers and researched may like to resist their positionings. There is not just a simple story to be told. The story is created in and through these dynamics and so it seems important to understand what the dynamics are – and not only for the subject of the research. (p.187)

The above is an example, amongst others (Oakley 1981; Stanley and Wise 1990, 1993; Ribbens and Edwards 1998), of the concern in feminist research with subjective experience, “...and the meanings individuals give to their actions” (Miller and Bell 2002:53). Furthermore, it is also about, “...reflecting upon their own roles in the co-production of research data and questioning the power relationships that are produced and underpin data gathering” (ibid, 2002:54).

In my case there is little ambiguity about my power and status as a lecturer, however the balance of power in this situation is not entirely skewed in favour of the researcher, because the process of in-depth interviewing as a technique provides respondents with an opportunity

to take some control over the process. This is by virtue of being able to decide how much or how little they are willing to reveal (Gilbert 1993; Reynolds 2002; Gerson and Horowitz 2002). The balance of power would be different again, in interviews with practitioners in the field (who were not students on the Youth and Community course), who may or may not know me as a colleague/co-professional.

The other factor or variable that needs some thought is the possible effects of gender as a dynamic between the researcher and the respondents. As my intention is to interview both Asian young men and women, I need to be conscious of the possible implications of the rules governing gender relations in Asian communities, and their relationship to “izzat” and “sharam” (Anwar 1998; Shaw 2000), and those relating to gender in society in general.

Indeed, Bhavnani’s (1993), (an Asian female’s), account of her interviews with male and female adolescents from Asian and white, European backgrounds, provides an interesting insight into how gender relations can influence the data gathering process, and also impinge on the power – balance with regard to gender relations within the research process. Lee (1999:100) also suggests that females in general were “more comfortable interviewed by a female interviewer”.

As a Youth Worker, I do not find the above surprising, given that there is a history of gender specific work in this sector (Davies 1999a and 1999b; Cressey 2006; Spence 2011). In these circumstances the skills of the researcher are clearly important in enabling respondents, both male and female, to feel able to engage with the topic and the research process in general. I believe that my interpersonal skills training as a professional are very important for this.

However the other possible factor, in terms of the researcher's 'power', that is flagged up by researchers, relates to the very fact that the more successful a researcher is in deploying his/her interpersonal skills in encouraging respondents to share potentially intimate details of their lives, the more power the researcher holds over the respondent (Finch 1984; Brannen 1988). This is "...by virtue of possessing potentially damaging information which may have been revealed in the interview" (Lee 1999:110). However, as Lee suggests, this is often balanced by the "relative powerlessness" of the researcher, given the 'etiquette' of the interview process which, "...generally forbids even the self-disclosing interviewer from being openly judgemental about the respondent".

The issue of 'gate-keeping' access to potential respondents, clearly also has a dimension concerned with issues of power, particularly if issues, of "... access, coercion and, more importantly, consent..." (Miller and Bell 2002:62-63), need negotiating. In the case of this study, it can be argued that in relation to those respondents who were students on a course that I was a lecturer on, that perhaps as the lecturer, I also became the 'gatekeeper'. In the case of other respondents, who were volunteers and/or paid workers in the field, their peers (some of whom were students on the course, that I lectured on), and sometimes their line-managers acted as gate-keepers. In the case of peers, the issue of power is less relevant. However, where line-managers needed to give consent or allow their employees time and space to be interviewed in their 'work' time, the issue of power emerges once again. In this case, I tried to restrict the relevance of this by approaching potential respondents directly in the first instance, and asking them to negotiate for time and space with their line-managers, offering to interview only if they wanted me to.

What is clear in this study with regard to issues of power is that reflexivity remains important (Stacey 1988; Fonow and Cook 1991; Reinharz 1992; Aull Davies 1999) because, as Haney (2002:286-287) points out,

...reflexivity can imply addressing the power embedded in the research/researched relationship and sharing this interpretive power with those being studied. As an analytical tool, reflexivity can mean recognising researchers' own social locations and disentangling how they might shape the empirical analysis.

The requirement to reflect further on this process remains important (and I will therefore do so later in this study), but just as important with regard to how the influence of the power-dynamic between the researcher and the 'researched' can be limited, is the idea that the research process is made as transparent as possible. Therefore it is important as a starting point, that the research is overt, and that the purpose of the research is declared and explained to those who will potentially be involved with it, so that they can make an informed decision about their participation. However, as Miller and Bell (2002:65) warn:

Obtaining 'informed consent' at the start of a project should not mean that it does not have to be thought about again. Researchers need to decide what they are inviting participants to consent to. Is consent just about participation in the research in terms of being interviewed or does it go further, involving and commenting on transcripts and the analysis of data?

The process begins with honesty and openness, which are important for the building of trust between the researcher and the respondents. These three qualities are essential for building informative relationships within the research process. The open discussion about the purpose and scope of the research topic is also important because an initial discussion of the topic can help the researcher to gauge the level of interest in the subject, while for the potential respondent it can help him/her to decide whether and the extent to which they would like to be involved in the research. The completion of an ethics form which includes the consent of the

participant (see appendix 4), provides a written record of the relationship between the researcher and the respondent. However, as Miller and Bell (2002:53) state:

We also argue that satisfactorily completing an ethics form at the beginning of a study and/or obtaining ethics approval does not mean that ethical issues can be forgotten, rather ethical considerations should form an ongoing part of this research.

The inclusion of “ethical considerations” throughout the research process, mainly concern the conduct of the researcher, and therefore, reflexivity throughout the process remains important.

Recording of interviews and their transcription can provide another means by which the process can be made transparent throughout, especially if the recordings or transcripts are made available to those who are involved. The other benefits of this, as Shipman (1981:98) states, is that the use of tape and audio/visual recorders can enable, “...the interview to be checked later on”. This in turn can help to optimise the data collected. Although such gadgets may seem intrusive and off-putting to respondents, Shipman (*ibid.* p. 98) suggests that: “Most subjects rapidly forget a tape recorder is present and cassette machines are inconspicuous”. In fact, technological advances have significantly reduced the sizes of gadgets, making them less conspicuous.

Since research can obtain information that in social, political and personal terms can cause serious harm to individuals involved, obtaining that information may only be possible if the researcher promises confidentiality to the respondents. This is a fundamental ethical consideration that researchers, like other professional groups, (such as priests, doctors and solicitors) offer. As Aull Davies (1999:51) states:

The question of confidentiality essentially concerns the treatment of information gained about individuals in the course of research. It over-laps with considerations of privacy and assurances of anonymity.

Again, these considerations are not alien to those working within the social care arena since they apply to work with individuals within their communities. The only exception is if information obtained can cause actual physical or mental harm to either the 'client'/informant or others known to him/her, in which case the professional requirement is to stop the 'client'/informant and to advise him/her of the legal responsibility of the professional to share the information with others in authority, so that steps can be taken to prevent (further) harm. These are the normal procedures for the protection of any child/vulnerable adult (DCSF 2010). The assumption is that the same would apply to those involved in the research process.

However, although the ideal of confidentiality can provide respondents with assurances of anonymity, which in turn seem to give them the licence to talk freely, this may be more difficult to uphold than it first appears. Researchers may use many techniques to grant anonymity to the respondents, such as the use of pseudonyms, but as Barnes (1979) argues, their function may be largely symbolic because they are transparent to those within the research setting itself, and therefore merely create an illusion of complete anonymity. Brannen (1988) also concurs with this, suggesting that the unique and personal nature of the data often means that respondents are easily identified by themselves and those close to them. Indeed, although this illusion may often seem acceptable to those involved, Barnes (1979) suggests that attempts at a total disguise may be misguided, because this not only "runs the risk of distorting the data" (Lee 1999:187), but potentially also causes the risk of sanctions or stigma, from different sources. This is particularly relevant given the relationship between "izzat" and "sharam" and gossip and reputation in Asian communities, established through the



literature review earlier, and therefore needs careful consideration in both, the process of data collection and in the ‘final’ dissemination of this study.

This perhaps, is more important in this study, given that the respondents may grapple with whether they see me (as the researcher) as an ‘insider’ or an ‘outsider’. I feel that my affinity in terms of race and culture with the respondents as Asians will make facilitating rapport easier, given that to some extent I could therefore be classed as an ‘insider’, and overcome any potential linguistic barriers in communicating key concepts such as “izzat” and “sharam”. This certainly seems evident from the experiences of some of the Asian researchers featured in the literature review earlier who suggested that they found their categorisation as ‘insiders’ helpful (Wilson 1979; Bachu 1985; Din 2006). They felt that the fact that they were seen as ‘insiders’ led to respondents being more open and frank, but it also meant that respondents assumed a level of knowledge and understanding in the researcher, often expressed through comments such as, “You know how it is”.

I have learnt from my experiences as an Asian female professional working within Asian communities, that ‘clients’ may initially struggle to share information of a confidential nature with me, because they fear that as an ‘insider’ to their community I may break the codes of confidentiality (Soni 2006 – Appendix 1). I have also had young Asians come to discuss personal, sensitive, health-related issues and insist that they cannot consult their General Practitioner because the doctor is also seen as an ‘insider’ and therefore not able to be trusted with regard to confidentiality (Appendix 2). This phenomenon has been documented, especially in health-related research (Gilbert et al. 2004). With regard to this study, therefore,

some understanding of the influence of how respondents perceive the researcher with regard to the 'insider-outsider' dichotomy is important.

In this case, the significant factors that make the researcher an 'insider' are their race, culture, language, and where appropriate, all these factors, coupled with gender. However, as Stanfield (1993:9) warns, the researcher as an 'insider' can also encounter dilemmas including,

... the perplexing fact that, given their credentials and the norms of professional community membership, researchers of colour who study their own communities are also outsiders, owing to the class divide. The class gap between the researcher of colour and subjects of colour, who are more than likely poor as well as racially oppressed, is a particularly touchy issue for those who view themselves as liberators of the oppressed.

Thus, my status as a lecturer may remain significant, placing me as an 'outsider', in spite of all the other factors that can facilitate my categorisation as an 'insider' in the perceptions of the respondents. However, as Bell and Nutt (2002) also point out, researchers who are also part of a particular profession and who choose to investigate a topic which has some relevance to their profession, may also find themselves categorised as 'insiders' by dint of the sharing of this professional arena with the 'clients' who are also their respondents. Professions have a tendency to develop their own specialist knowledge and a language which accompanies this. In this case the fact that I am well known in the Midlands both as a Youth and Community practitioner and lecturer in the sector, and have decided to interview young Asians who are also involved with this field of work, may mean that once again, I become an 'insider'. So ultimately, it is important to heed the advice of Gerson and Horowitz (2002:215):

The thin line between insider and outsider status is one that must always be negotiated. In the end, the success of any qualitative approach requires creating bonds across the researcher–respondent divide. These relationships may emerge in different ways and take different forms, but they have the common goal of transforming strangers into confidants.

### **2.3. Conclusion and the Way Forward**

In this chapter of the thesis I have considered factors that have provided the momentum for the focus of this study and also discussed the most appropriate methodological approaches for it. In doing this I have inevitably included an examination of the key ethical considerations that underlie this research, and explored the importance of reflexivity in this research. I have outlined the nature of my sample and discussed the incumbent ethical dilemmas that may be posed by this. I have consistently suggested that the literature review has helped to shape what I need to explore with my respondents, in relation to how “izzat” (and “sharam”) shapes their lives. These concepts (and the ensuing themes for exploration) that emerged have been chosen not only because of their importance as a result of the review of literature (in Chapter 1 of this thesis), but also because my personal and professional experiences seem to indicate the centrality of these concepts in the lives of members of Asian communities.

The investigative process, (Chapters 3 and 4), is divided into two – firstly an exploration of “izzat” in Chapter 3, and then of “sharam” in Chapter 4. How both these concepts are understood and how they shape the lives of the respondents, along with a discussion about any gender-related implications will form the basis of the investigative process. The data collected will be thematically analysed and also finally be triangulated using the data from the Sikh women’s workshop (Appendices 8 and 9).

Given the nature of the participants for the in-depth interviews (as young Asians and Youth and Community practitioners), I will also take the opportunity to explore the potential implications of these concepts for professional practice. However this latter discussion is

beyond the scope of this thesis, but the data collected will be presented and analysed elsewhere as a follow-up to previous work (Soni 2006 - Appendix 1).

This study aims to explore how “izzat” shapes the lives of young Asians. Uniquely the concepts of “izzat” and “sharam” are being explored as a central focus, with a distinct group of people, all of whom are both, members of Britain’s Asian communities as well as practitioners in a particular social care arena, with practical/professional experience within these communities.

### **CHAPTER 3: PRIMARY RESEARCH –FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS: “IZZAT”**

Chapters 3 and 4 of the thesis focus on the presentation and analysis of the data from my primary research, with Chapter 3 discussing “izzat” and Chapter 4, “sharam”. These chapters are divided into a number of sub-sections and Chapter 3 will start by introducing my sample of 25 in-depth interviewees (3.1) and then proceed to the presentation and analysis of my findings from the interviews (3.2 to 4.7). The focus on “izzat” covers points 3.4 to 3.6 and “sharam” is covered in Chapter 4 by points 4.1 to 4.5 followed by a discussion on reflected “izzat”, “sharam” and the links with reputation (4.6). Chapter 4 ends with a discussion drawing on the data from the workshop-style focus group interviews undertaken with 40 predominantly Sikh women (appendices 8 and 9) which helped to triangulate the findings from the in-depth, individual interviews (4.7).

#### **3.1. The In-Depth Interviews Sample**

Over a period of three years I undertook in-depth interviews with 25 individuals. ‘Pen’-pictures of each of the 25 individuals are at appendix 5. The sample of 25 included 13 women and 12 men. The ages of the interviewees ranged from 19 to 35. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the 25 individuals in the sample in relation to their age.

**Table 1: Interviewees - Sample Age Range**

| Age           | 19        | 20 – 21        | 22 – 23            | 24 – 25        | <u>Sub<br/>Total</u> | 26 –<br>29        | Over<br>30         | <u>Sub<br/>Total</u> | Totals                                     |
|---------------|-----------|----------------|--------------------|----------------|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------|--|
| Men           | 1<br>(4%) | 4 (16%)        | 3<br>(12%)         | 2 (8%)         | <b>10<br/>(40%)</b>  | 0<br>(0%)         | 2<br>(8%)          | <b>2<br/>(8%)</b>    | <b>12<br/>men<br/>(48%)</b>                |
| Women         | 2<br>(8%) | 4 (16%)        | 2 (8%)             | 2 (8%)         | <b>10<br/>(40%)</b>  | 2<br>(8%)         | 1<br>(4%)          | <b>3<br/>(12%)</b>   | <b>13<br/>women<br/>(52%)</b>              |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>3</b>  | <b>8 (32%)</b> | <b>5<br/>(20%)</b> | <b>4 (16%)</b> | <b>20<br/>(80%)</b>  | <b>2<br/>(8%)</b> | <b>3<br/>(12%)</b> | <b>5<br/>(20%)</b>   | <b>25 men<br/>and<br/>women<br/>(100%)</b> |

As Table 1 shows, of the 25 interviewees, 20 (80%) were aged 25 or under (10 each of the men and the women), and 5 (20%) were aged between 26 and 35. All of these individuals were linked to Youth and Community work, either as students in training, as volunteers in appropriate settings or as fully qualified workers in the field. In this regard 18 (72%) were students in training (9 each of the men and women), 3 (12%) were volunteers in the field (2 men and 1 woman), and 4 (16%) were employed full-time as qualified professionals in the sector (1 man and 3 women). Their involvement with the sector ensured that they had some ability to reflect (an important aspect of professional practice, which has been discussed earlier), had some knowledge (through their personal and professional experiences) about life in Asian communities in Britain, and ensured that they were well placed to evaluate whether the concepts of “izzat” and “sharam” had any significance in relation to their lives and to working within Asian communities. This latter point cannot be explored in this research, given its main focus on “izzat” in relation to understanding how it shapes the lives of young

Asians in Britain, but this was explored with the interviewees and will be written up and disseminated at a later date.

The interviews were guided, as I have already stated, by themes that emerged from the review of the mainly ethnographic research on Asian communities settled in Britain, and covered understanding of “izzat”, of “sharam”, and explored the related topics of gender, reputation, identity, friendship patterns and peer networks, religion, culture and society, marriage, gift exchange and “izzat” and “sharam” in relation to Youth and Community Work Practice. (Appendix 6 provides an outline guide for the interview process). However, given the main focus of this research, and the word constraints placed upon it, the key concern in Chapters 3 and 4 is with how the respondents understood, defined and experienced “izzat” and “sharam” in their lives (including how they believed “izzat” could be maintained and/or gained/enhanced and “sharam” attracted, and the significance of gender in relation to these concepts). The related themes of reflected “izzat”, “sharam” and reputation are also explored (in Chapter 4).

The shortest interview was 2 hours and 40 minutes long, and the longest lasted 4 hours and 10 minutes. Most of them were undertaken in one meeting as recommended by Brannen (1988) and Miller and Bell (2002). However 4 (16%) of the 25 interviews involved 2 meetings each. The length of the interviews is testament to the fact that they were, indeed, in-depth, generally very ‘fluid’, being guided by the areas needing to be covered rather than by specific questions. (See appendix 6 for the interview guide).

The interviewees were ‘allowed’ to decide where they would like the interview to take place, and some were therefore carried out in the interviewee’s work setting (7 (28%) of them), 2

(8%) were undertaken in a completely ‘neutral’ setting, in a room in Birmingham’s Central Library, 1 (4%) was completed at a weekend in the respondent’s ‘home’, where she lived in a rented, shared house, and when her landlord was away for the weekend, and 15 (60%) were undertaken at my place of work where I trained Youth and Community workers, on days when the interviewees were either already in University, or when they offered to come in especially. The choice of the venue and the time was entirely at the discretion of the interviewees.

The accepted norms of ethical research – related procedures were followed (BSA 1992) and therefore the nature, possible length of the interview and purpose of the research was explained, both, verbally and in writing (see appendix 3). Written consent was obtained (see appendix 4), and anonymity and confidentiality promised (Miller and Bell 2002; Aull Davies 1999). Given the fact that these interviews provided access to a unique set of respondents, as young Asians (aged between 18 and 35), being asked to explore the concept of “izzat” in relation to their lives in Britain, I was conscious that this could produce a unique set of data, which could be used in future research (both, by myself and others). As such, the respondents were also asked for permission for recordings of their interviews to be officially archived by a professional team of workers at Birmingham’s Central Library. Again, anonymity in relation to this was assured, as staff at the Library had already confirmed that this was an accepted part of their procedures for archiving “interesting material”. However, it was interesting that in relation to this about half of the interviewees were actually happy and gave consent for their real names to be attached to their audio recordings (see appendix 4) – they wanted their voices to be heard in the future, which was a “challenge to orthodox assumptions” (Grinyer 2002:2).



Given the range of areas being covered by the interview process and therefore the length of each interview, the interviews were recorded (on a digital and a small tape-recorder) and later transcribed as suggested by Shipman (1981). The interviewees were given the opportunity to “check” the transcripts (see appendix 10 for an example) once they were ready, although none were interested in doing this. However, two of the women asked for the recordings of their interviews, and these were made available to them.

In line with other research practice (such as Shaw 1988, 2000; Din 2006) the individual interviewees’, real names have not been used and they have been given pseudonyms (Grbich 1999) in line with each individual interviewee’s gender and religious background. Each interviewee was also allocated a ‘code’. This ensured that the respondents have a ‘voice’ without any danger of them being identified. I did consider giving the individuals numerical codes only, but felt that this was too ‘clinical’ and given the nature of the subject, and the stories that the interviewees shared in relation to how “izzat” and “sharam” shaped their lives, I wanted them to be able to emerge as characters rather than merely coded, numerical entities. However for the purpose of making the process of collating the data more systematic, I did also ‘code’ each of the individual interviewees within the sample. Therefore, the twelve men were allocated codes M1 to M12 and the thirteen women were coded from F1 to F13. In both these categories (‘M’ and ‘F’) the numbers allocated were in chronological order, with the youngest of the men being M1 and the oldest M12, and this logic was also applied to the coding of the women (therefore from F1 to F13), (see Table 2 ). In my presentation and analysis of my findings, I have referred to the pseudonyms given, accompanied by each of their codes.

**Table 2: Sample of 25 Interviewees – Including Codes, Pseudonyms, Ages and Religion**

| <b>Code</b>  | <b>Pseudonym</b> | <b>Age</b> | <b>Religion</b> |
|--------------|------------------|------------|-----------------|
| <b>Women</b> |                  |            |                 |
| F1           | Yasmin           | 19         | Muslim          |
| F2           | Jasmine          | 19         | Muslim          |
| F3           | Laila            | 21         | Muslim          |
| F4           | Farzana          | 21         | Muslim          |
| F5           | Nasreen          | 21         | Muslim          |
| F6           | Shameem          | 21         | Muslim          |
| F7           | Sajida           | 23         | Muslim          |
| F8           | Shazia           | 23         | Muslim          |
| F9           | Paramjeet        | 24         | Sikh            |
| F10          | Nina             | 25         | Hindu           |
| F11          | Jatinder         | 26         | Sikh            |
| F12          | Rehana           | 27         | Muslim          |
| F13          | Uzma             | 35         | Muslim          |
| <b>Men</b>   |                  |            |                 |
| M1           | Sadir            | 19         | Muslim          |
| M2           | Yaser            | 20         | Muslim          |
| M3           | Imran            | 21         | Muslim          |
| M4           | Sayed            | 21         | Muslim          |
| M5           | Bilal            | 21         | Muslim          |
| M6           | Rashid           | 23         | Muslim          |
| M7           | Abdullah         | 23         | Muslim          |
| M8           | Adam             | 23         | Muslim          |
| M9           | Raj              | 24         | Hindu           |
| M10          | Shaz             | 25         | Muslim          |
| M11          | Haroon           | 32         | Muslim          |
| M12          | Khalid           | 33         | Muslim          |

All of the interviewees were in training and/or working in the Midlands in the Youth and Community sector at the time of their interviews. With the exception of two of the men, all had lived in the West Midlands for a large part of their lives. The two men, who were not from the Midlands, had been working in Dudley and living and training in Birmingham for the last two years. They were originally from Bradford and still travelled ‘home’ to Bradford on most weekends. I believe the fact that the sample included individuals from across the

West Midlands conurbation is not particularly relevant, given that the focus is an enquiry into the phenomenon of “izzat” (Denscombe 2007). The fact that the interviewees were Asian, and had experience of life (and work) in at least one of the five main Asian communities settled in Britain (Bangladeshi and Pakistani – both predominantly Muslim) and Indian (which are mainly Sikh and Hindu) and East African (– usually a mixture of the three ‘main’ religious communities), has a greater significance than where they individually came from within the West Midlands or further afield. In fact, the wide geographical area that the sample was drawn from is important in demonstrating the role that “izzat” plays in the lives of members of Asian communities regardless of where they live in Britain.

In relation to religious and ethnic identity the respondents were asked to ‘categorise’ themselves at the beginning of each of the interviews (Table 3).

**Table 3: Interviews Sample Breakdown in Relation to Religion and Ethnicity**

| Religion and Ethnicity | Muslim          | Bangladeshi Muslim | Pakistani Muslim | Sikh   | Hindu  | Totals           |
|------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|--------|--------|------------------|
| Men                    | 11 (44%)        | 2 (8%)             | 9 (36%)          | 0 (0%) | 1 (4%) | <b>12 (48%)</b>  |
| Women                  | 10 (40%)        | 1 (4%)             | 9 (36%)          | 2 (8%) | 1 (4%) | <b>13 (52%)</b>  |
| <b>Totals</b>          | <b>21 (84%)</b> | <b>3 (12%)</b>     | <b>18 (72%)</b>  | 2 (8%) | 2 (8%) | <b>25 (100%)</b> |

As demonstrated above, 21 (84%) of the total sample of 25 individuals described themselves as “Muslim”. Of these 21 interviewees, 11 of the 12 men and 10 of the 13 women were Muslim. These 11 “Muslim” men included 9 of a Pakistani origin and 2 were Bangladeshis,

and of the 10 women, 9 were also Pakistanis and 1 was Bangladeshi. Of the remaining 4 individuals, 1 was a Hindu man and the other 3 were women (2 of whom were Sikh and 1 was Hindu).

Clearly there is a Muslim – oriented bias within the sample of 25 individuals. However, given the way in which the interviewees were ‘recruited’ to participate in the research (through my ‘role’ as a Lecturer in an institution where many of them were either students or actively involved in the Youth and Community sector in the West Midlands as practitioners), this bias could not be helped. As a professional and Trainer, however, it did raise some interesting questions for me, but which are beyond the scope of this research. These included whether the fact that the profession was attracting more Muslims than Sikhs or Hindus was indicative of whether Muslim communities needed such practitioners more than the other two religious Asian communities in Britain, or whether in fact, individuals belonging to the Sikh and Hindu communities ‘preferred’ other professions.

However, the Muslim-oriented bias within the sample may actually be useful in providing some evidence of the role that “izzat” (and “sharam”) play within the Asian, Muslim communities of Britain. The sub group of 21 (84%) Muslims (11 men and 10 women) is large enough to generate data of significance, relevant to that particular religious community. It is important to remember, however, that the literature review included the work of researchers who focused on all the three main ‘Asian’ religious communities, and therefore the inclusion of the 4 non-Muslim participants within the research remains relevant. Significantly it is important to remember that 40 predominantly Sikh women (aged between 15 and 73) also participated in a two- hour workshop-style focus group interviews and generated data in relation to the significance of “izzat” and “sharam” in their lives. (See

appendices 8 and 9). This data was particularly useful in triangulating the findings from the individual, in-depth interviews.

Given that the focus of this research is on Asians in a British context and my sample of interviewees was drawn from communities already settled in Britain, I was interested to test what ‘generation’ (of Asians settled within Britain), each of the 25 individuals considered themselves to be from. Since this research owes its conceptualisation to some level to heuristic enquiry (Moustakas 1990) and reflection into my experiences as a second generation Asian woman educated, living and working in Britain, I felt it was important to gauge which generation of ‘British’ settled Asian communities the individuals within the sample felt they were from. In particular, I wanted to gauge how long their families had been in Britain, and where they felt they ‘fitted’ within this. The concept of ‘encapsulation’, discussed earlier (Bhatti 1999), is connected to the length of time over which communities’ feel settled in Britain. The link between a community and its members’ sense of ‘encapsulation’ and the perceptions of the individuals interviewed in regard to the length of time that their families had been in Britain, was important for their understanding of some of the mechanisms that oil ‘community-life’, including the concepts of “izzat” and “sharam”. Encapsulation, the idea that Asian communities can meet their “commercial, social and day-to-day needs” in an “ethnic enclave” (Bhatti 1999:6), is essential for “izzat” and “sharam” to operate and influence life in Asian communities. In relation to the individuals within my sample it was therefore important to gauge how ‘settled’ they felt as members of their families and communities within Britain. Each of the respondents was therefore asked, “What ‘generation’ of Asians in Britain do you feel you belong to?” (See Table 4).

**Table 4: Interviewees Responses Regarding “Generation”**

|        | 1 <sup>st</sup> Generation | 2 <sup>nd</sup> | 2 <sup>nd</sup> + 3 <sup>rd</sup> | 3 <sup>rd</sup> | 4 <sup>th</sup> | Total     |
|--------|----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------|
| Men    | 0 (0%)                     | 6 (24%)         | 1 (4%)                            | 5 (20%)         | 0 (0%)          | 12 (48%)  |
| Women  | 0 (0%)                     | 10 (40%)        | 0 (0%)                            | 2 (8%)          | 1 (4%)          | 13 (52%)  |
| Totals | 0 (0%)                     | 16 (64%)        | 1 (4%)                            | 7 (28%)         | 1 (4%)          | 25 (100%) |

As Table 4 shows 16 of the 25 individuals (64%) said they were from the second generation of their family in Britain (6 men and 10 women), while a further 7 (5 men and 2 women – 28%) said that they considered themselves to be “third generation” Asians in Britain. One of the men (Haroon - M11), described himself as being “between the second and the third generation”, and one of the women (Laila - F3) proudly pointed out that she was “actually the fourth generation”, given that her great grandfather was still alive and in Britain.

Significantly none of the individuals actually claimed to be ‘first’ generation Asians, demonstrating that their families had been settled in Britain for at least two generations.

However it is noteworthy that 5 (20% - 3 men and 2 women) of the respondents (4 of whom admitted to being from the “second” generation, and the remaining 1, said he was a “third” generation “Pakistani Muslim” in Britain), said that they “felt” like they were the “first” generation of Asians in Britain. Of the 5 who felt like this, 4 (16% - 2 women and 2 men) suggested that it was because unlike their parents/grandparents, they were “born” in Britain:

“I always think I am the first generation, sort of born in this country.”  
(Uzma – F13)

Imran (M3) also suggested that he felt that he was:

“First generation because my parents, they don’t understand British culture.”

He felt this was significant because he straddled the different worlds of “Pakistani” and “British” cultures, which his parents were unable to do in the same way, in spite of having arrived in Britain in the 1960’s. This has echoes in the work of Shaw (1988, 2000) and Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990). It is important to point out at this early stage, however, that the sentiment being expressed by Imran (M3) and which was gleaned from all the other respondents, was not in the early Asian young people “caught between two cultures” vein (Anwar 1978). They were confident in the two, very different and distinct worlds of their cultures of origin and “British” culture (Shaw 1988, 2000). This was significant because it provided some sense of their ability to engage with this research and therefore with concepts such as “izzat” and “sharam”, which the research reviewed earlier suggested are deeply entrenched in Asian cultures.

A second factor, apart from the period of time that the respondents’ families had been ‘settled’ in Britain that contributed to the process of ‘encapsulation’ (Bhatti 1999), was the extent to which the respondents and their families were immersed in ‘Asian’ community-life. In relation to this, where they lived and worked was important. Significantly it was interesting therefore to find that of the 25 individuals in the sample, 21 (84%) of them lived in areas of Birmingham and the West Midlands conurbation with significant or large Asian populations. Of the 4 (16%) who did not live in such areas, 2 were the young men from Bradford, living in shared ‘student’ accommodation, 1 woman was married (Uzma, F13) and living with her family in a predominantly ‘white’ area of Birmingham, and the remaining individual, Haroon (M11), was living and working in a predominantly ‘white’ environment.

Three of the 4 individuals discussed here, however, worked in predominantly Asian areas of the West Midlands, and, Haroon (M11), who lived and worked in a predominantly non-Asian setting, was in close contact with his parents and siblings and therefore with the community from which he had originated. He had previously worked as a Youth Worker in predominantly Asian settings. Thus, for most of the respondents, either because of where they lived and/or worked, their experiences, knowledge and understanding of Asian community-life, 'preserved' to an extent, through the process of 'encapsulation' (Bhatti 1999), was important, and they clearly were significant and appropriate 'social actors' (Bryman 2001; Lawler 2002) for this research.

In terms of the socio-economic backgrounds of the individuals who were included in this sample of 25, there was a remarkable extent of homogeneity. Although 3 (12%) of the 25 in the sample were in full-time employment (2 women and 1 man), I decided that their parents' employment-related status would be a more accurate measure of their classification in relation to social class. Twenty-two of the 25 (88%) were in training, part-time workers or volunteers within the Youth and Community sector, and 20 of the 25 (80%) were in fact, living in their parents' homes, and therefore with their parents. Of the 5 (20%) who were living 'independently' of their parents (2 men and 3 women), 3 (12%) were married and had children (2 men and 1 woman) and the remaining 2 women were living in rented accommodation. Four (16%) of these 5 maintained close links with their parents' households, living "close-by" and visiting regularly, with only one married woman (Uzma, F13), living in a different city to that of her parents.



The Government classification of social classes, which I used (Rose and O'Reilly 1998), consists of 8 distinct categories ranging from 'Higher managerial and professional occupations' at the top, and 'Never worked and long-term unemployment' at the bottom of the range (Appendix 7). In relation to their chosen profession all the respondents within the sample could be classed within the third category of 'Intermediate occupations', since even those working full-time were in front-line Youth and Community Work, and not in any managerial positions which could lead to their classification in the higher category as 'Lower managerial and professional occupations'.

However, as I have already stated, I believe that their parents' employment-related status provided a better indication of the socio-economic backgrounds (see Table 5) of the 25 individuals within the sample, given the reasons discussed above. Of the 25 individuals within the sample all except 4 (16%) at the time of interview, had both parents alive. Of these 4 who had lost one parent, Rashid's (M6), Nina's (F10) and Jatinder's (F11) mothers were widows, and Uzma's (F13) mother had died a few years earlier. However these 4 individuals also discussed their parents' occupations from when they were alive and so have been included in the data collated in Table 5, which provides a summary of the socio-economic backgrounds of the parents of the individuals within the sample.

**Table 5: Interview Sample in Relation to Socio-Economic Classification of Parents (Mothers and Fathers)**

|                   | Mothers of Interviewees                                   |                          | Fathers of Interviewees |                     |                 |  |
|-------------------|---|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|--|
| Employment Status | Working in Routine Occupations (machinists, factory work) | Housewives / Not in Work | Lower Supervisory work  | Routine Occupations | Small Employers | Retired or in Ill Health (not working) |
| Men               | 3 (12%)   | 9 (36%)                  | 1 (4%)                  | 4 (16%)             | 1 (4%)          | 6 (24%)                                |
| Women             | 3 (12%)   | 10 (40%)                 | 0 (0%)                  | 8 (32%)             | 2 (8%)          | 3 (12%)                                |
| <b>Totals</b>     | <b>6 (24%)</b>  | <b>19 (76%)</b>          | <b>1 (4%)</b>           | <b>12 (48%)</b>     | <b>3 (12%)</b>  | <b>9 (36%)</b>                         |

It was significant that 19 (76%) of the mothers of the 25 interviewees were classed as “housewives” who had “never worked” and therefore belonged at the bottom (level 8) of the ‘category’ range (appendix 7). The 6 (24%) mothers who had worked, all worked in what could be classified under category 7, one of the lowest, as ‘Routine occupations’, namely as machinists at home or in factories. Given that the sample was biased in favour of Muslims, and included only 4 (16%) non-Muslims (Table 3), it was significant that 4 of the 6 ‘working’ mothers were either Hindu or Sikh, and of the 2 (8%) working Muslim mothers, one was a widow. In line with the findings of Anwar (1998), the inference that may be drawn from this

is that the Muslim communities in Britain continue to be the most conservative in relation to measures of traditionalism, and therefore in relation to women and work.

In relation to the occupations of the fathers of the individuals within the sample, 12 (48%) were in the lower category of 'Routine occupations', and mainly worked in factories, and a further 9 (36%) were retired (including 3 (12%) through "ill health"), having worked in either 'semi-routine occupations', (category 6), as taxi drivers and 1 as a train driver, or in 'routine occupations' in factories. Therefore 21 (84%) of the fathers, were either currently working, or had previously worked in 'semi-routine' or 'routine' occupations' – the lowest social categories in the Government's classification of social class.

Of the remaining 4 (16%) fathers of the 25 individuals within the sample, 3 (12%) were in business as small-scale employers, (1 owned a grocery store, and 2 were in the clothing business), and could be classified within category 4, as 'Small employers and own account workers'. The remaining 1 (4%) father now worked in "the railways", having previously worked in the Police Force. He belonged in the fifth category – 'Lower supervisory, craft and related occupations'. On the whole, therefore, the sample itself included individuals, all of whom were either working in the third category, 'Intermediate occupations', or aspiring to work in the higher category of 'Lower managerial and professional occupations', (ibid, 1998), as Youth and Community Workers, but their parents were predominantly classified in the lower categories of the social classification range (appendix 7).

Clearly the 'set' of individuals I interviewed have been successful in shifting and improving their social classification in comparison to their parents. The sense of pride and the ensuing

link to gaining “izzat” and status through employment will be returned to and discussed later. However, given the nature of this sample as discussed above, I have to be careful not to draw inferences related to this ‘improvement’ in social class in this particular group of young Asians, and assume that the same would apply to other young Asians in Britain.

The initial focus in this chapter of the thesis is on the data generated by the in-depth individual interviews. It is important to point out however that the Sikh women’s focus groups are another ‘sample’ in its own right. Although I have not included a detailed description of them, because the data generated by my workshop with them has merely been used to triangulate my findings from the in-depth individual interviews (at the end of Chapter 4), a more detailed exploration of the two-hour workshop is located at appendix 9 and appendix 8 provides the workshop outline.

### **3.2. Introduction to the Presentation and Analysis of Findings**

I will now move on to present and analyse the main findings from the primary data gathered regarding “izzat” and then “sharam” (in Chapter 4) from the in-depth interviews. The data from the in-depth interviews has been thematically organised, presented and analysed. As such I begin with how the 25 respondents defined and understood “izzat”, including how they believed “izzat” could be enhanced/gained and/or maintained and then in Chapter 4, discuss “sharam” including a discussion about how “sharam” can be attracted and “izzat” lost. At each stage of the presentation of the data and its analysis I will include and draw inferences regarding the issue of gender. The penultimate discussion in Chapter 4 deals with the significance of the process of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” and the link with reputation, in

the lives of those 25 individuals interviewed. “Sharam” has a particular significance in the lives of women (Wilson 1979), and therefore in connection with gender, and is also the mechanism used for curbing behaviour. Both these discussions regarding “sharam” as a force for curbing behaviour and regarding reflected “izzat”, “sharam” and the link to reputation are included in Chapter 4. Finally towards the end of Chapter 4, I will reflect on and triangulate these findings with the data from the workshop-style focus groups undertaken with the 40 predominantly Sikh women.

At the beginning of each main area of discussion that resulted from my thematic analysis, I have indicated the areas/lines of questioning which produced the data and led to the particular theme(s) being presented. (Please see appendix 6 for the complete ‘Outline Guide for the Individual Interview Process’).

In relation to the actual in-depth interview process, once the biographical data (some of which has already been presented) had been gathered at the beginning of each interview, I turned my attention to how both “izzat” and “sharam” were defined and understood. The explicit focus on “izzat” and especially how it could be maintained or enhanced generated a plethora of responses that have been organised into sub-themes and distinct categories. “Izzat” as ‘respect’ is discussed first, because it was the most common and the initial response given when interviewees were asked to define the concept. This is followed by a focus on its definition in relation to the self and includes “izzat” defined as ‘trust’. I have then discussed the fact that a sizable proportion of the sample (11 of the total – 44%) significantly viewed “izzat” as being particularly relevant to Asian communities. Once I have presented and analysed how the interviewees understood or defined “izzat”, I moved on to present my findings regarding how they thought “izzat” could be maintained/enhanced. The data

generated for this has been organised into three distinct ‘categories’, with the data from each ‘category’ being presented and analysed sequentially. Wherever possible I have attempted to discuss the themes in relation to the ‘volume’ of responses relevant to the theme in hand. However, analysis of qualitative data does not always make this possible, and some deference has to be given to the ‘logical flow’ and ‘natural’ links between the various points of the discussion.

I have then moved on in Chapter 4 to focus on “sharam”, initially on how it is understood and defined, followed by how it can be attracted resulting in a loss of “izzat”. The relationship between “sharam” and gender receives special attention, followed by a discussion about how “sharam” is significant in curbing behaviour. This is followed by a discussion regarding the process of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” and its link with reputation. Once the data from the in-depth interviews has been thematically presented and analysed, a discussion triangulating this with my findings from the workshop-style focus group interviews with the group of predominantly Sikh women aged between 15 and 73, will complete Chapter 4 of the thesis.

It is, important at this early point in the presentation and analysis of the findings from the in-depth interviews, to illustrate the difficulties that I encountered in relation to organising the data into distinct themes to facilitate their analysis.

### **3.3. A Note of Caution: Thematic Analysis of “Izzat” and “Sharam”**

The ‘fluid’ nature of the phenomenon of “izzat” (and “sharam”) posed particular difficulties in the organisation of the data gathered, and therefore in identifying distinct themes especially from the in-depth interviews. For instance a response from an interviewee in relation to

him/her being asked to give an example from his/her or his/her family's life of where/when his/her "izzat" had been positively and/or negatively affected, would often result in the recounting of a particular incident which could include many subtleties and nuances regarding the affect, influence or impact of "izzat" and/or "sharam" in his/her life. One simple example from Rashid (M6) who recounted how his and his family's "izzat" had been affected by his family circumstances illustrates this:

"Because my mum didn't have a husband, we didn't have a father, that was how the respect started to go down, because my older brother, he messed about, and started disgracing the family, and that was where the respect ends for that family, the respect just dropped."

This example shows how Rashid (M6) clearly understood "izzat" as respect received from others, and conveyed how two factors contributed to the loss of "izzat" simultaneously – the absence of a father and his older brother's behaviour. Even though he did not spell it out, the effects of how the respect "just dropped" could be felt in his story, in relation to both himself and his family. Although he did not explicitly mention 'reputation' and family standing, it is clear from what he said that reflected "izzat" and "sharam" had an effect on the family's standing within the community. Therefore, this one example, from one of the 25 interviewees, demonstrates the multi-faceted and layered nature of "izzat" making its analysis very 'slippery'. In relation to the sub-themes, Rashid's (M6) one example could be discussed under a number of the themes including how "izzat" is defined as respect, how it can be lost and "sharam" attracted, and how the example illustrates the process of reflected "izzat" and "sharam". The example also demonstrates that the use of available, technical, software packages would be difficult in this research - there are just too many nuances that perhaps benefit from an insider's inevitably 'subjective', 'manual', 'traditional' analysis (Crotty 1998; Aull Davies 1999).

### **3.4. Defining “Izzat”**

The themes that are presented here (in 3.4) regarding how the respondents defined “izzat” are a result of questions relating to their understanding of “izzat”, their sharing of examples whereby their or their family’s “izzat” was affected, their exploration of any possible differences in the way that “izzat” is experienced by and affects men and women, and whether they thought that “non-Asians” understood the concept. (See appendix 6).

As I have stated in the introduction to this study, the concept of “izzat” is generally translated and referred to as personal honour and/or family honour in English. Although I have chosen to use the Urdu term “izzat” in this study, (because I find the translation rather limiting), at least 12 (48%) of the 25 individuals (including 8 women and 4 men) in my sample also referred to it as “honour” from time to time. For example Rehana (F12) translated it immediately:

“Izzat is honour...”

And Sadir (M1) suggested, “izzat” is:

“Honour and everything.”

However, in the interviews undertaken with each of the interviewees, a more varied and nuanced experience of “izzat” emerged, which such a simple translation is inadequate in capturing. Thus what follows in this chapter of the study are my findings and analyses of how “izzat” shaped the lives of the individual men and women that I interviewed.



## **“Izzat” as ‘Respect’**

All 25 respondents defined “izzat” as ‘respect’, and for 19 (76%) of these 25 interviewees (11 men and 8 women), it was their ‘key’ or main definition while the rest included it as an aspect of their general definition for “izzat”. Jatinder (F11), a young Sikh woman said simply,

“Respect, “Izzat”.”

Nasreen (F5) suggested,

“So “Izzat” is the respect that you gain.”

While Abdullah (M7) conveyed its reciprocal nature:

“It’s about the respect, the respect you gain off others and the respect that you give others. I think that will explain it in a nutshell.”

This was also emphasised by Khalid (M12):

“Respect, a two-way process...”

Who also asserted,

“But “izzat”, it’s a very, very deep subject.”

The idea of it being simply defined as ‘respect’ on the one hand, and the acknowledgement that it was “deep”, was reiterated by Bilal (M5):

“I see it as a deep thing really, as respect.”

The youngest of the men, Sadir (M1) acknowledged its complexity early on when he said:

“...there’s so many branches to it, there’s like respect, there’s like honour, you know, there’s being trustworthy.”

This was also emphasised by Rashid (M6):

“”Izzat” is basically respect, it’s respect but respect comes in different forms; it’s got a lot of meanings to it.”

Adam (M8) demonstrated this complexity in meaning further when he said,

“‘Izzat’ to me is respect, honour and pride, family values, understanding of each other, honesty, trust, all that, you could say rolled into one.”

Laila (F3) suggested it was related to feelings and thinking processes:

“I don’t know, I mean, my personal opinion, I think ‘izzat’ is in your heart and it’s in your mind.”

Yaser (M2) hinted at how it gained significance in a collective, group, community context:

“To me, ‘izzat’ is about respect, being able to show your face.”

Abdullah (M7) suggested it was of fundamental concern for Asians and Shaz (M10) also stated that “izzat” was very important for the Mirpuri community that he belonged to:

“I think that respect... uhhhh, if I was to put it in a nutshell; I think that respect is the main object for Mirpuris to gain respect.”

Jasmine (F2) thought that it was important in her life given its definition as ‘respect’:

“‘Izzat’ is a lot in a way, it means a lot to a lot of people, but to me it does mean a lot as well, especially as respect.”

While Nina (F10) pointed out its growing significance in her life:

“Yeah, really conscious of it. I mean I’ve been more conscious of it over the last few years than I have ever been.”

The idea that the significance of “izzat” grew with age was echoed by Shazia (F8):

“‘Izzat’ becomes more important as the girl gets older, it’s proportional to that.”

Raj (M9) was one of the first to explicitly link it with behaviour and actions:

“To me, ‘izzat’ is respect so that, and gaining it or losing it, is how you go about it.”

In relation to the link between “izzat” (as respect) and behaviour Nina (F10), suggested that it was something precious and precarious, and needed protecting. Regarding her relationship with her mother, she said,

“So I wouldn’t do anything to jeopardise that or lose the respect from her. I couldn’t do it. So to me it means a lot.”

However, Shameem (F6), while acknowledging its significance, hinted at the potential for hypocrisy to be associated with it:

“I think “izzat” is instilled into you and you are kind of brought up with it. Then if you have it I suppose you have respect and you behave in a respectable way. At the same time you can do the things that you are not supposed to do and be respectable.”

One of the women, Uzma (F13) who was the only Pathan (ie originating from the North-West Frontier region of Pakistan, neighbouring Afghanistan), linked “izzat” with women in Asian families:

“Well I know “izzat” is something that is mentioned a lot in Asian families, and I think “izzat” is synonymous with respect, because they go hand-in-hand; “izzat” is respect, and unfortunately, when you think of “izzat” in families, you think of young women...”

This idea that “izzat” is concerned mainly with women, was also strongly asserted by Shameem (F6) and by Shazia (F8) who, on discovering that I was also interviewing men, said, “I mean, I can’t imagine how a man can understand the word “izzat”.”

Significantly, one of the men, Adam (M8), who gave a range of meanings for “izzat” (quoted above), also related it to being a phenomenon largely concerned with women:

“I think the relevance of “izzat”, a lot is the main importance, when I look at it, for us, for our families, is the females. Asian communities, I know it’s male-orientated, Asian people and the families, is a lot male orientated, and because of that a lot of males can get away with a lot of what they do, so a lot of it is that way, but the family respect is looked at with the females.”

Finally, Khalid (M12) pondered the ever-present nature of “izzat”:

“... and “izzat” is ... it’s been there from the beginning of time, ain’t it?”

I found the predominance of the respondents' defining "izzat" fundamentally as 'respect' very interesting, since this was not a favoured way of translating or interpreting the term by the researchers I reviewed. Clearly the idea of respect was 'implicit' in the research reviewed earlier, for example in the relationship between a 'patron' and a new settler described by Desai (1963) and Ballard (1994), and in the process of "lena-dena" discussed by Bachu (1985), Werbner (1990) and Shaw (1988, 2000), because implicit within "lena-dena" is the idea of conferring status and therefore respect on the recipient of gifts. Ghuman (1994) spoke of respect in relation to how young Asians behaved with elders within their communities, while Anwar (1998:106) mentioned it in relation to "respect" that young Asians have for "parents' religion and tradition". However, only 3 of the researchers reviewed earlier included "respect" explicitly in connection with "izzat".

Bhatti (1999:277) included "respect" in relation to "izzat" within her glossary, although the idea was not discussed in any depth within her school-based ethnographic research. This also applies to Din (2006:31), who acknowledged that the meaning of "izzat" was dependent on the context, and included "respect" as one of the meanings amongst "honour", "status", "obedience", and "loyalty". Samad and Eade (2002:39), referred to it in relation to "family respect" in their concern with discussing "izzat" and its relationship with "zat" (caste).

Many of the researchers referred to "izzat" in relation to prestige, status, standing and reputation, and the concern with protecting and not 'endangering' these. However these concepts can only have value and importance in a collective context where respect received from and taken away by others is implicit in the process of acknowledging, bestowing or

withholding these value-laden concepts from individuals and/or their families in Asian communities.

For my entire sample, however, as I have already stated, the idea of “izzat” being related explicitly to respect seemed to be ‘obvious’. This raised two particularly interesting points. The first concerns the fact that they seemed oblivious as to how other researchers had translated it, thus giving me a sense of assurance that their responses were coming entirely in relation to how the concept impacted in their lives. Secondly, it made me wonder whether there were any ‘external’ factors which may have influenced them to interpret and define the concept of “izzat” as “respect”. In relation to this I was particularly conscious about the fact that over the period that the interviews were conducted the then Labour Government was discussing its ‘Respect’ agenda, in relation to the marginalisation of young people from mainstream society and the associated concern with anti-social behaviour (HMSO 2006). Although I believe that these government-initiated agendas are far removed from the role that the concept of ‘respect’ (as “izzat”) plays in the lives of my interviewees, the term was being more commonly evoked at the time. Moreover as practitioners involved in the youth and community sector, they would have been exposed to it in its ‘official’ capacity, and therefore it may have been in their consciousness in relation to their professional practice.

Returning to the fact that my respondents clearly preferred to think of “izzat” in relation to respect, the range of the discussion in relation to this included an acknowledgement that the ‘subject’ was something “deep”, and complex. Its complexity was accepted by others (Shaw 1988, 2000; Werbner 1990; Ballard 1994; Bhatti 1999; Din 2006), while the fact that it seemed to perpetually exist concurred with the sentiments expressed by Gilbert et al’s (2004)

women in their focus groups. Also, the fact that 3 of the women in my sample and 1 of the men indicated that they thought the concept was largely associated with women, re-iterated a recurring theme in the research I have reviewed (Wilson 1979; Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990), and will be discussed periodically throughout this part of the thesis.

The idea that some of the interviewees were wary of jeopardising their “izzat” and therefore “respect” will also be discussed in greater depth later, but this was clearly an aspect of “izzat” that other researchers have also acknowledged.

One of my respondents (Shameem, F6) hinted at the potential for hypocrisy to be associated with “izzat” and with behaviour associated with it. Din (2006) strongly made a point regarding hypocrisy in relation to inter-generational relations in Bradford’s Pakistani community, and the control exerted by parents over their children (especially in regard to marriage), but he never suggested that “izzat” was the vehicle for such hypocrisy, which seemed to be the point being made by Shameem (F6).

Two points in my analysis so far remain unique in relation to “izzat” as respect; firstly the assertion by Shaz (M10) and Abdullah (M7) that the pursuit of “izzat” is the “main object” for Asian communities. Although this was implied by other researchers, (especially Ballard 1994), it was never explicitly asserted. Secondly, the fact that 2 of the women in my sample (Nina - F10 and Shazia - F8) explicitly suggested that “izzat’s” significance in their lives grows as they become older, has not been discussed by others, although the fact that it became more important in relation to spouse-selection and marriage, indicates its growing relevance in the lives of young Asians when they reach a ‘marriageable’ age or state in their lives.

## **“Izzat” as Self-Respect and Pride**

As I have already demonstrated for all of the interviewees the notion of “izzat” as respect was an initial interpretation and definition. Sixteen (64%) of the 25 interviewees (7 men and 9 of the women) also linked “izzat” to a quality inherent in oneself – that is as self-respect, self-dignity, self-esteem, self-perception and self-pride. For example, Raj (M9) said:

“... but “izzat” in general, yeah, just self-respect, realistically, and respect for others that’s how you create “izzat” if you ask me.”

And Yasmin (F1) suggested:

“I think to be honest “izzat” is what you feel for yourself, and how you perceive yourself and not how others perceive you.”

For a number of those who referred to the idea of respect being a quality inherent within oneself, notions of self-belief and pride in oneself, as well as being proud in the company of others were also closely linked. For example Abdullah (M7), referred to it in relation to his progress at university:

“For example, like uni, I wouldn’t have dreamed of completing a level 1, when I first started, I took it step by step, if I had done an assignment, I would just carry on doing the second one and then third one. I didn’t have that “izzat”, I don’t know, that ideal self. I didn’t have high expectations of myself, thinking what I was capable of doing.”

For Shaz (M10), the sense of pride was a key element:

““Izzat”? I think “izzat” is a level of pride, isn’t it?”

And,

“Within our culture, and the word pride comes from it – “izzat”, the word “izzat” comes from.”

He went on to associate it with his conduct and expectations as a son:

“And what kind of son am I? He [father] brought me up for 25 years, and I can’t look after my parents, and that comes from “izzat”, I think, in a ....., and pride, you know, your parents have brought you up; you’ve got to, you know, what sort of person are you if you don’t. I think personally, if you don’t look after them, in their old days, or even now.”

Here Shaz (M10) hinted at both expectations of himself as a son, but also at the idea of his personal values and morals. The link between “izzat”, values and morality has already been mentioned by others (such as Adam - M8, earlier), and was also expressed by Sayed (M4):

““Izzat” is respect, ain’t it? And like personal values and morals ain’t it? That’s how I see it, self-belief and stuff like that.”

Therefore, this ‘personal’ aspect of “izzat” as self-belief/worth was linked by some inevitably to morality and values.

The idea of self-pride being reliant on a social, group context was made by both, Rashid (M6) and Jasmine (F2). Rashid (M6), as he discussed the idea of leadership within the community, explained:

“As a community, it means that people are going to look up to you and shake your hand, invite you to their house, for their own purposes, and you feel that proudness, and your esteem and confidence goes up. So yeah, it does give that respect to you, because people will look up to you, that’s the thing about respect, its people looking up to you.”

For Jasmine, (F2) feeling proud because of the respect given by others was an important aspect of “izzat”, but she also hinted at how it could also be the opposite:

“... “izzat” is when you feel proud of yourself, people feel really honoured to have you around; and respect you a lot, and then there’s like not respecting you a lot.”

For Laila (F3), the notion of self-respect in its own right was important, although she also acknowledged its social context. When discussing the possibility of gaining “izzat” through the making of charitable donations, she said:



“If you’re gonna go around boasting - oh I sent £1000 to Islamic Relief or whatever, then obviously people are gonna think “wah”, you know, “how respectable”, but if it’s just about yourself inside, then the “izzat” that you give yourself – I think rather than the “izzat” that people give you, you should have that “izzat” that you give yourself. Otherwise it’s one without the other – it’s incomplete and you can’t cope I don’t think. You don’t respect yourself then people respect you, you think, “Hey what’s going on here?” I think both of them link in quite well together.”

This ability to retain self-respect and self-believe in spite of those around you was also echoed by Shazia (F8), who, reflected on being unmarried at a ‘marriageable’ stage of her life:

“When I lost my face, I didn’t lose my respect. I have respect for myself – everyone else had the problem.”

For Rehana (F11), the notion of ‘pride’ was included in a plethora of meaning associated with “izzat”, including a concern with status and reputation. Most significantly however, she saw it as a mechanism for controlling women:

“Reputation, status, pride, male ego, all that really, to keep a woman in her place.”

In fact 4 of the 9 women included in discussing “izzat” in relation to ‘self’ also linked the notion of self-respect to their own conduct, and to notions of modesty, which in turn impacted on their and their family’s reputation. As Jasmine (F2) pointed out:

“So I do believe that I must have to cover myself, not only for others, but for myself as well, to keep my self-respect and everything else, and for my religion.”

Some included a concern with shame in their definitions. As Sajida (F7) said,

“I mean like, I feel ... I don’t know, it’s stupid though, I mean what is “izzat”? You have it – enough respect for yourself and respecting your family and not doing anything that you’re going to feel shames your family, do you know what I mean? That is it, that’s all “izzat” is...”

And Nina (F10), stated:

“It’s about respect - having that respect off people and respect for yourself and who you are, and showing people you have respect for yourself and not undermining yourself or doing what other people tell you to do, or following a

certain way – it's about being you, your own individual character, and doing things that wouldn't cause "sharam".

Farzana (F4) was succinct:

"Self-respect, how you contain yourself – that is how I see it, self-respect really."

Laila (F3), like Jasmine (F2) earlier, extended its relevance to include the family, and therefore as a phenomenon that reflected on the family. This idea that an individual's "izzat" was reflected on the family was explicitly acknowledged by at least 20 (80%) of the 25 respondents (12 of the 13 women and 8 of the 12 men) and will be discussed in more depth later:

"I would define it as dignity and prestige really, and to define with more simplicity, I would say that "izzat" is something that I have been brought up with, and that is an expectation that I have to live up with. I mean I can't go out there and do something that will affect my parents' "izzat", my "izzat", my whole family's "izzat" as a whole. So I don't know if that is a good definition." (Laila – F3)

My findings regarding this aspect of "izzat" as associated to concepts of 'self' was also subtly nuanced, and the complexity and variations in how it was explained by the individuals in my sample, was not necessarily identified by other researchers. Perhaps Ballard's (1994a:13) reference to "personal honour" was one of the few occasions when this conceptualisation of "izzat" was at least acknowledged.

For Sayed (M4) "izzat" was also about "personal values and morals", which has some echoes in Bhatti's (1999:277) glossary definition of "izzat" that included "izzat" as a "virtue" within it. This 'moral' aspect of "izzat" as self could perhaps also be inferred from Samad and Eade's (2002:59) notion of "keeping ones word", when parents were under pressure regarding the process of marriage for their children. In identifying this pressure that parents

experienced, Samad and Eade were also recognising the social context within which this personal, moral aspect of “izzat” as respect, existed and was articulated.

For some of my interviewees the experiences of personal aspects of “izzat” in a social context found expression in various forms. Therefore, Rashid’s (M6) statement that leadership within the community could result in “people looking up to you” was an aspect of “izzat” as pride and by inference also as “competition”, recognised by both Werbner (1990) and Ballard (1982, 1994). The recognition of “izzat” expressed as pride could also be inferred through Bachu’s (1985) notion of ‘achieved’ status that resulted from individual achievement in relation to personal success in regard to fulfilling expectations, especially relating to wealth, education and employment. It was significant that this aspect of personal “izzat” expressed and defined as “pride” was articulated by 3 of the men (Rashid – M6, Abdullah – M7 and Shaz – M10).

In contrast to the men, when Rehana (F12) defined “izzat” as “pride” she saw it as “male pride” potentially used “to keep a woman in her place”. It was, in fact significant that in contrast to the men, four of the women emphasised the concern with shame, and also focused more on their personal conduct, and therefore on “how to contain yourself” (Farazana – F4), and “cover myself” and “keep my self-respect” (Jasmine – F2), which was particularly related to notions of modesty and personal shame. This more female-focused aspect of “izzat” as an aspect of personal conduct and especially expressed through concerns with modesty has been identified by others (Wilson 1979; Ballard 1982; Shaw 1988, 2000; Kassam 1997; Anwar 1998; Bhatti 1999).

For Sajida (F7) ensuring that her personal conduct involved “not doing anything that ... shames your family” included a general recognition of the impact of attracting shame for the individual and for his/her family. The potential loss of self-esteem was an aspect of the consequences of attracting shame identified by Khan (1979) regarding possible transgressive behaviour associated with spouse-selection in particular.

The social context within which the various ‘personal’ aspects of “izzat” were experienced by the interviewees connected it directly to the idea of reflected “izzat” (and “sharam”), to be discussed in the next chapter in much more depth, (Wilson 1979; Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990; Shaw 1988, 2000; Werbner 1990; Ghuman 1994, 1996, 1999; Kassam 1997; Anwar 1998; Samad and Eade 2002), and therefore also to a concern with prestige, status and standing of the family within the community.

### **“Izzat” as Trust**

For 7 of the interviewees (28% of the sample – 4 women and 3 men), trust was mentioned as a significant aspect of their understanding of “izzat”. Their use of the concept of trust was implicitly linked with respect for individuals especially within their families with whom they entered into reciprocal relationships, underpinned by expectations of ‘trust’ and ‘trustworthiness’.

For Sadir (M1) and Adam (M3), the notion of trust being a part of the multi-nuanced nature of “izzat”, has already been discussed elsewhere. Of the remaining 5 (20%), trust was explicitly

related to their actions and behaviour. Therefore, Imran (M3) reminisced about how his “izzat” was affected when he was caught misbehaving:

“My “izzat”, it’s like er ... my father used to send me to the mosque and for 8 months I used to slam; I used to leave that house and never went to mosque; 8 months later I got caught, and I felt, oh all right, and I got caught smoking – that were a lot of my “izzat”. Trust, I think “izzat” is related to trust also. My “izzat” was like taken then, because they thought we’ve given trust, he’s broken that trust, now why should we respect him?”

For Paramjeet (F9), the notion of being trusted/trustworthy was encapsulated within the fact that her father, in spite of being advised by his older brother, not to allow her to go away from home to study, had allowed her to go because she felt that he ‘trusted’ her to return, and not behave in any way that would abuse his trust in her. The precarious nature of this trust was also inferred by both Jasmine (F2) and by Yasmin (F1). For Yasmin (F1) this was in relation to her being allowed to be a Youth Worker, although financial necessity also seemed to be a factor:

“I think, to be honest, with my mum ..., because my sister and my myself and our brother are the only ones bringing money into the house, they actually want me to build a good career for myself, and not bring shame on the house at all, because I think definitely ..., because they have given me so much “izzat”, they have given me that trust to go out, and not come back saying, “Oh, you’ve done this, you’ve let us down”.”

Like Imran (M3) earlier, Uzma (F13) stressed the importance of conducting oneself in line with ‘gendered’ expectations, and being fearful of breaking the trust that especially her parents placed in her. For her, the notion of trust seemed synonymous with respect:

“Uhhm, I suppose there are different levels to that; I suppose if you’re at home ..., you’re the daughter for example, at home, then your respect is ..., from a traditional perspective, just looking back at me, the respect was coming back from school, not lying to my parents. Well for me, my mum was really ... because my dad worked, went to mosque and that sort of thing, so was around, but my mum had more of an impact in our lives, because my mum kind of trusted us, without sort of saying “I trust you”, because she would let us go to our friends’ houses and things like that – you felt that you didn’t want to do anything to break that trust, so

it was kind... I understood it as a two-way thing, and that sort of ... that's where the whole values thing comes in it for me."

Uzma (F13) also went on to describe the sense of obligation that her father felt, about his daughter's arranged marriage to a man who others in the family, including the prospective bride, felt uncertain about. The sense of being trustworthy was implicit in him feeling obligated and therefore to be trusted to keep his word to the prospective spouse and his family. As Uzma (F13) said,

"... my father much preferred for it to go ahead and fail, than not go ahead at all."

I think it was significant that 7 (28%) of the 25 interviewees specifically associated "izzat" with the notion of trust and the sense of being trustworthy. The link with the idea that this therefore affected family reputations was also made. It is interesting that this representation of "izzat" in relation explicitly to trust was on the whole absent from the existing research that I reviewed, although many of the researchers focused in general on "izzat" and its wider concern with reputation, standing and status. The findings and analysis in relation to the significance of reputation will be presented in much more detail and depth in the next chapter. However, in regard to the present discussion, it is important to point out that for some of the researchers such as Shaw (1988, 2000) and Werbner (1990), their concern with reputation was generally in relation to caste hierarchies. The researchers reviewed focused on mechanisms for commanding conformity to establish and maintain individual and family reputations, rather than discussed the underpinning significance of trust, as some of my interviewees suggested. In general the researchers like Ghuman (1994:15) discussed notions such as, "a primacy of the family over the individual", or Din's (2006:150) "the family should come first" in their efforts to ensure conformity to acceptable norms of behaviour. Others (Nesbit 1994; Modood et al 1994; Anwar 1998; Bhatti 1999), in relation, for example to the process of spouse-selection, suggested that young Asians (and therefore sons and daughters) were

fearful of sanctions which therefore led them to show some deference to their parents' wishes and to conformity. The absence of trust and trustworthiness was interesting, although perhaps it could be included as an aspect of "virtue" (Bhatti 1999:277) when it is defined as "the quality or practice of moral excellence or righteousness" (Collins 1998:1702).

In their invocations of 'trust' as an aspect of "izzat", the interviewees perhaps implied that they were tied into a network of "fundamental obligations", which Ballard (1994a:13) referred to. He did so, in the sense of 'keeping ones word' and therefore being trusted to do so, as suggested by Uzma (F13) in her example regarding her father's attitude to her sister's arranged marriage. The importance of "keeping one's word", was also discussed specifically in relation to arranged and forced marriages by Samad and Eade (2002:59). However, the explicit reference to trust made by nearly a third of my sample, as an aspect of "izzat" which tied them into a network of subtle reciprocities with their families, remains significant and a little different from the way in which it was discussed by the researchers I reviewed.

### **"Izzat" as an 'Asian' Phenomenon**

As a part of the interview process there was some exploration of the concepts of "izzat" and "sharam" in relation to how or whether non-Asians understood it. I was particularly interested in exploring this because my respondents were all Practitioners, who had experiences of working in multi-cultural and/or predominantly Asian settings and often alongside colleagues from other backgrounds. However the planned focus on this during the course of the interview was meant to be towards the end of each interview, when I had explicitly planned to discuss practice-related themes. However, it was interesting to note that well before I actually reached this point in each of the interviews many of the sample in fact

began to discuss the cultural and traditional, peculiarly ‘Asian’ community-based significance of the concept of “izzat”. This idea of “izzat” as a particularly ‘Asian’ concept emerged organically in their explorations of “izzat” in their lives. In fact for 20 respondents (80% of the sample - 9 men and 11 women), this was an aspect of “izzat” that they specifically highlighted.

Four ‘sub-themes’ all closely related, emerged from this to give a sense that these 20 interviewees (80%) felt “izzat” was something that belonged to, and could only be experienced in Asian communities and (in some cases) was a phenomenon that was clearly distinct from anything that existed within the host British society. For half (10) of the 20 individuals who highlighted this aspect of “izzat” (and “sharam”) it had a cultural or religious significance that was peculiar to their experiences as Asians. A particularly memorable example came from Jasmine (F2), whose father was largely absent from their predominantly female household for a large part of her young life, because he was ill:

“It’s just the way that Asian people are in a way, because they say “izzat”, it’s a very strong word, they say that it’s got a lot of power, and it is a very very strong word “izzat” is. My father did fall ill, and just having a man in the house did mean a lot to people, but not having him in the house, females doing what they want, going out, and the rest of it, wasn’t something that you would normally get in an Asian community, but keeping our own respect was important, not getting other people, you know, all Asian people pointing their fingers at us, like “your father’s out of the house, the girls are doing this, the little boy, he’s only little”, and all the rest of it, and, “what’s going to happen to the family?”, and all the rest of it.”

Jasmine (F2) poignantly voiced a concern also expressed by some of the 20 (80%), with what others in the community would think, while others such as Laila (F3), whose extended family all lived in the neighbourhood, moved simply to speak of where they lived in ways which implied the boundaries of (Asian) community life:



“Our community, and I’m talking about our little community, which is just our couple of streets, it’s quite alright, because we used to be together ... it’s all ... we do respect them, and we do give them [the elderly in the community from other communities] that “izzat”.”

Adam (M8) and Sayed (M4) saw “izzat” as something traditional. For both it was a positive aspect of being Asian, which for Adam (M8), engendered a sense of heritage:

“I think it’s healthy that it’s there, because, it’s not something that I’ve put there, it’s something that has been passed down, and it’s for the better of the person...”

For Sayed (M4) it was a tradition that needed to continue, given its clear concern with Asian family and community-life:

“I think that you’ve just got to keep that tradition going on in a way; do you know what I mean? With my family and that, and in terms of, I’m dropping mine and my family’s “izzat” and that, because at the end of the day, if I do something wrong, it’s going to affect my family as well at the end of the day, so I’ve got to keep it right, that’s what I think.”

The above quote from Sayed (M4), as well as the earlier quote from Jasmine (F2), strongly indicated the idea of reflected “izzat”, a concern for reputation and the fact that “izzat” was a phenomenon that demanded conformity to particular norms of acceptable behaviour in Asian communities, and these are aspects of “izzat” that will be returned to and analysed more deeply later in the thesis. Here, I am concerned with the fact that a majority of the sample seemed to infer that their ‘Asian-ness’ came from a concern with the “collective” – orientated communities to which they and their families belonged, and to which they wanted to belong. Abdullah (M7) described it as,

“It’s a sense of belonging, you want to be part of that group, and you want to be respected within that circle or outside that circle, to be part of something, to be wanted.”

Like Jasmine (F2) earlier, Nasreen (F5), although single at the time of her interview, voiced concerns about the future, and the continuing significance of “izzat” as a force for censure in her life, particularly in relation to belonging to the community:

“I believe it was, it does come down to that “izzat” thing, what will the community say? It’s this whole thing, where it’s passed on from grandparent to parent to children, and they’re forced to carry it on. – “It’s not me who’s bothered about you going to work in the evening, it’s the people around you”, or “I’m not your enemy, it’s everybody else”. Even me if I had children, I would have to be worried about the older members of the community, would be thinking about them if they did go out, so there is always that restraint there, the barrier that you can’t break.”

Others, such as Yaser (M2) when pondering my request to interview him, said,

“... but I did think it would be around Asian people automatically, I don’t know why, I just assumed that.”

Shameem (F6) also thought like Yaser (M2), but singled out the emphasis, that “izzat” placed on women:

““Izzat” is described in English as honour but it focuses on Asian females than on males or non-Asians. It’s more for Asian people.”

Rehana (F12) reiterated the focus on particular conduct, especially for women:

“Yes, because when we are talking about Islam, a lot of the notions of women keeping themselves, you know, in terms of clothing, and how that should be that’s about “izzat”, but that is a notion that come from... that is a religious concept as well. In terms of culture, you know you need to maintain some kind of ..., clothes should not be clingy, and that kind of stuff, in terms of how you’re governed, your behaviour. That kind of stuff is actually written in the Koran and the Prophet’s sayings. But it is also about honour, maintaining honour; the way you dress, walk and talk, for women, they will affect your honour.”

Sajida (F7) echoed Rahana’s (F12) and Shameem’s (F6) thoughts, alluding to cultural and socially acceptable behaviour and linked this to “sharam”:

“...it’s like, if something happens to you, or you do something that isn’t culturally, your society doesn’t accept, it’s like you’re bringing shame on the family.”

Shazia (F8) was more direct:

“Because people are creating their own fear, cultural ideas and conditions. It is used to oppress women.”

While others, like Nina (F10) and Farzana (F4), specified particular aspects of Asian culture that were relevant to “izzat”. Thus Nina (F10) focused on caste:

“If you’re from a certain caste, you’ve probably got that little bit more respect.”

And Farzana (F4) focused on marriage:

“... I only understand the importance of it in an Asian’s life. So when people say I am getting married for the family, the family pressure.”

Seven of the sample (30% - 5 men and 2 women), thought that “izzat” was a distinctly Asian concept in comparison to other cultures, because of its capacity to be reflected. Two examples include Rashid (M6), who articulated the process of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” well as a distinction between Asian and the host society:

“Whereas now, Asians, if we do something, we think twice – is this going to affect anyone else? Is this going to be shameful to me? Is this going to put me down on a level? British or white people don’t have that same level.”

And, Uzma (F13):

“I don’t think they [non-Asians] understand the concept at all, because I think a lot of Asians get the whole thing confused as well, do you know that way that “izzat”, is such a loaded word...”

One of the interviewees, Shaz (M10), suggested that the concept of honour gained prominence because it has featured in the media in relation to honour-related violence, which he believed was a specific feature of behaviour in Asian communities:

“...in the Mirpuri context, it... it’s been in the media quite a bit recently, uhhhm, with “izzat”, “izzat” killings, and “izzat”, I would say, is, uhhhm something ... if I was to look at it in a negative way, it is something that holds onto a culture, that is sort of struggling, within Britain, especially with arranged marriages, and forced marriages etc. Uhhhm...”

Khalid (M12) suggested (like Uzma - F13, earlier) that the concepts (of “izzat” and “sharam”) were often confusing:

“...these are brought over from old. It’s cultural and people that are brought up with this culture and religion, they can’t distinguish between the two.”

The sentiment that there was confusion between the religious and cultural underpinnings of “izzat” was echoed by Uzma (F13):

“I think culture, I think there is always confusion between religion and culture and tradition ...”

While Haroon (M11) suggested that “izzat” was quite negative, and somehow belonged to its place of origin on the Indian subcontinent:

“Yeah, yeah, but there is a certain kind of... certain amount of stigma attached to the word “izzat”, for me, simply because “izzat” conjures up ideas of pride, respect, honour, and all things that kind of like, I see as belonging to the motherland, belonging back in Asia, not really a case for concern in this country.”

Finally, Paramjeet (F9) provided a ‘handy’ overarching definition of “izzat”, which linked it to individual identity, culture and therefore being Asian:

“I think yeah, the culture, it is based on “izzat” and your identity is shaped by your culture, so therefore “izzat” does play a part to your identity as well. I think they are all inter-related.”

The fact that 20 of the sample (80%) considered “izzat” as a particularly ‘Asian’ concept and phenomenon was interesting. For many of these, its ‘Asian-ess’ lay in its roots within the “motherland” (Haroon – M11) and in cultural, religious and traditional practices. The cultural and traditional aspects of the concept, for example especially in relation to caste/”zat” affiliations, were inferred by many of the researchers reviewed earlier, (Ballard and Ballard 1977; Knott 1986; Barton 1986; Werbner 1990; Modood et al 1994; Ballard 1994; Anwar 1998; Shaw 1988, 2000; Din 2006), although the reference to caste was specifically mentioned only by Nina (F10) in this context.

For many of the researchers the link between cultural and religious practices and the treatment and expectations of women was how “izzat” and “sharam” manifested as a peculiarly ‘Asian’ phenomenon. This point was generally recognised by my sample, but made specifically by 4 of the women in relation to their understanding of “izzat” (Shameem – F6, Sajida – F7, Shazia – F8 and Rehana – F12).

The idea of the differential treatment of men and women and differing expectations of men and women within Asian cultures is clearly closely linked to the norms of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and censure of personal conduct as prescribed within Asian families and communities. For particular behaviour and conduct to be ascribed positive or negative ‘value’, it generally relies on communities being ‘encapsulated’ (Bhatti 1999), and distinguishable from other communities, allowing for the generation of mutually understood meaning within the confines of a particular cultural and/or religious community. In Asian communities this results in individuals being driven to conduct themselves within what I would describe as, ‘the limits of acceptability’, gaining “izzat” and avoiding the loss of “izzat” or attracting “sharam”. The underlying reason for this, as articulated by Rashid (M6), was the idea of reflected “izzat” and “sharam”. At least 7 (28%) of the sample specifically identified this aspect of “izzat” as a particularly Asian phenomenon, especially in comparison to other cultures (including the host, British society). Reflected “izzat” was recognised by others such as Wilson (1979), Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990), Ballard (1994) and Kassam (1997) as a general aspect of “izzat”. The notion of ‘reflected’ “izzat” and/or “sharam” will be presented and discussed in more depth later in this thesis, but it is relevant here because nearly a third of the sample cited this aspect of the phenomenon as peculiarly ‘Asian’.

The fact that 20 (80%) of the individuals saw “izzat” as a particularly Asian phenomenon that required an Asian social context also suggested that they were aware of the distinction between individualistic and collectivist cultures, although none of them actually couched it in these terms.

I believe that the key, under-pinning debate that captures this distinction between Asian and other cultures (especially those belonging to the “West”), is the distinction that some researchers suggested between ‘collectivist’ and ‘individualistic’ cultures. This discussion has been voiced in different ways by researchers over the period reviewed in this thesis. For example, early on Khan (1979:6) referred to it as the “control of individual initiative”, while Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) discussed it in relation to young peoples’ acquiescence regarding “izzat” in relation to family reputation, especially concerning marriage and spouse selection. Ghuman (1994:15) spoke of “a primacy of family over the individual” and discussed the idea of acculturation and Anwar (1998:106) identified the concern with ‘respect’ of young Asians for “parents’ religion and tradition”, including young Asians’ conformity regarding endogamy. Bhatti’s (1990) notion of ‘encapsulation’, discussed earlier in some depth, inevitably means a hold of censure, the pressure to conform and the connected concerns with the importance of reputation, given the collectivist nature of Asian communities. This concern with reputation, especially in relation to caste, “biradari” and/or “zat”-affiliation, which also implies the influence of collectivism was discussed by Shaw (1998, 2000), Werbner (1990) and Samad and Eade (2002). In relation to this, Shaw (1988:3) asserted an idea borrowed from Gibson (1988) about “accommodation without assimilation”, while Bowen (1981:10), discussed the “bi-culturalism” (the idea of Asians living effectively

in two cultures) of young Hindus. Wilson (1979), Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990), Ballard (1994), Modood et al (1994), Anwar (1998) and Shaw (2000) discussed the effect of external hostility (including racism and the rise of Islamophobia) as a factor for making young Asians turn ‘inwards’ towards their own communities (Parekh 2000) for a sense of belonging, which in turn meant that they had to adhere to and maintain the established norms within the community in relation to ‘acceptable’ behaviour.

All the different ways in which researchers have expressed the distinctiveness of Asian cultures and communities in relation especially to the ‘host’ society, I think, infers the distinction that only some of them draw explicitly between the ‘collectivism’ of some cultures, and the ‘individualism’ of others (Triandis 1994; Gilbert et al 2004, 2007; Mesquita 2001, 2007). The interviewees in my sample were far more descriptive about these distinctions and their impact on their lives.

### **3.5. How “Izzat” Can be Maintained, Gained/Enhanced**

Having explored an initial understanding of “izzat” in the lives of respondents, it is also important to explore how they thought “izzat” could be maintained and gained/enhanced. Therefore this was explored as a part of the interview process, and the questions which generated these findings relate to five areas/lines of questioning. The first of these relates to their understanding of “izzat” and their examples of when and how their or their family’s “izzat” was affected, and their exploration of any “symbols” or “trappings” of “izzat”. Secondly, questions relating to “Gender and Reputation” explored their and their family’s

expectations of them, and their awareness of any “codes” of behaviour within the family and/or community. Thirdly, under the “Identity, Religion, Culture and Society” area of questioning they discussed “caste”, religion and any “rules” regarding notions of dress. Finally, their responses relating to the questions under the “Marriage/Spouse-Selection and Gift Exchange” area was important, besides an exploration of leadership and respect from the “Respect/Losing Face” area of questioning within the interview questions guide (appendix 6).

The data generated by this exploration has been organised and collated into three ‘main’ categories, each including a number of sub-themes. Table 6 shows the three ‘main’ categories listed in the left hand column and the right hand column includes each of the sub-themes under that category.

**Table 6: Maintaining, Gaining/Enhancing “Izzat”**

| <b>‘Main Category for Maintaining/Gaining/Enhancing “izzat”</b> | <b>Sub-themes Related to the ‘Main’ Category</b>   |
|---|--|
| <b>1. Through Conforming to Acceptable ‘Norms’</b>              | a. Through general conformity, behaving ‘correctly’, fulfilling expectations(including giving and receiving respect)<br>b. Through ‘acceptable’ spouse-selection and marriage<br>c. Through ‘lena-dena’<br>d. Through religiosity and piety<br>e. Through modesty<br>f. Through approved peer networks |
| <b>2. Through ‘Achievement’</b>                                 | a. Through employment<br>b. Through education<br>c. Through money/wealth and materialism<br>d. Through leadership (including being a role model)<br>e. Through ‘good’ actions<br>f. Through having sons  |
| <b>3. Through Inherited Factors</b>                             | a. Through general inherited factors - family standing and reputation (often accumulated over time)<br>b. Through caste-affiliation  |



I will present the findings from each of the three main categories (along with their corresponding sub-themes) in the order that they are listed in Table 6, with the analysis for each category presented before the findings and analysis of the next one. Therefore, the findings for the first category relating to how “izzat” is maintained, gained/enhanced ‘Through Conforming to Acceptable ‘Norms’ along with all the sub-themes (a. to f.) related to this category will be presented and analysed, and then this pattern will be repeated for the remaining two categories.

### **Category 1: Conforming to Acceptable ‘Norms’**

As Table 6 shows, the first category that I identified in relation to how “izzat” can be maintained, gained or enhanced related to what I have described as ‘conforming to acceptable norms’, which includes the sub-themes of gaining “izzat” through respectful behaviour (including receiving respect from others), through spouse-selection and marriage, through “lena-dena” (gift exchange), through being religious/pious, through modesty, and through approved peer networks.

### **General Conformity and Giving/Receiving Respect**

In regard to this first ‘main’ category, and concerning the first sub-theme in this category (listed as 1a in Table 6), general conformity and the giving and receiving of respect was unsurprisingly perceived as a significant way for gaining and enhancing “izzat”. Given that all of the respondents initially defined “izzat” as respect (presented and analysed earlier), it

was not surprising therefore that 23 of the 25 interviewees (92%) explicitly stated that behaving respectfully would be a good way to gain or enhance “izzat” or be perceived as “izzatdar” (ie as someone with “izzat”). Therefore one’s general conduct was a source of gaining “izzat”. Only 2 individuals were not explicit about this, but in both these cases the significance of respectable conduct was implicit in other claims they made. Therefore Jasmine (F2) suggested that “izzat” could be gained from being religious and pious, and Khalid (M12) identified the importance of generally meeting “expectations”, and therefore conforming to acceptable norms:

“It’s about expectations. For me, with respect and that, these are the ways that they expect you to live, and if you are not that, you are totally on the outside of things. And I think that it is just a way of .., not keeping the culture alive, it is cultural, it’s to keep certain standards going, and if you don’t keep it going, you’re outside, because you are either part of it or you are not.” (Khalid – M12)

Abdullah (M7) was also clear about the significance of “izzat” and the concern with conformity and therefore “doing the right thing”:

““Izzat” is one of the main things in Asian communities that people worry about. So like, if you are living in a close-knit community, you have to worry about your “izzat”, you have to improve your “izzat”, you have to show people that you are doing the right thing.”

The fact that most of the respondents interpreted “izzat” as respect has already been discussed in some depth, and this subsumes the idea that respectful behaviour is an important aspect of this. Therefore it is unnecessary to present large quantities of data in regard to this, and a few examples will demonstrate how significant respectful behaviour was in gaining/enhancing “izzat”. As such, Imran (M3) pointed out:

“...because like if we have relatives over, it’s like you would show “izzat” and you would smile, and you know be respectful, and that’s “izzat”, you know, that is showing “izzat” to people.”

While Sajida (F7) demonstrated how the use of language could convey respect for elders:

“I think that the respect you have for people I suppose changes, depending on who the person is, like if it’s an older person, like in our language to older people you say “tusi” and to a younger person you’ll say “tu” – it’s the way you adapt the language to the person you’re talking to, and that’s one way of showing respect.”

Seven (28%) of the interviewees (4 women and 3 men), were explicit about the fact that the acquisition of “izzat” was a reciprocal process of giving and receiving “izzat”, and also clear that the receiving of “izzat” in this process was particularly important. Abdullah (M7), for example pointed out:

“It’s about the respect, the respect you gain off others, and the respect that you give others.”

### **Spouse-Selection and Marriage**

The second sub-theme listed under the first category for gaining/enhancing “izzat” concerns conformity in relation to spouse-selection and marriage, (1b in Table 6). The idea of spouse-selection was discussed with the interviewees in the context of their expectations and their parents’ expectations for them. For those 4 interviewees who were already married, the reasons for their choice of spouse and any ensuing repercussions (especially those relating to individuals who had clearly ‘transgressed’ or made choices that seemed outside ‘traditional’ parameters dictated by the family/parents and community), were explored. A brief summary of their intentions in this regard is presented below, followed by a discussion regarding the significance of spouse-selection and marriage as a means of gaining/enhancing “izzat”.

The experiences or expectations of the 25 interviewees in relation to spouse-selection have been ‘collated’ into four categories, summarised in Table 7.

**Table 7: Expectations/Experiences Relating to Spouse-Selection and Marriage**

| <b><u>Category</u></b>    | <b><u>Number of Interviewees</u></b>   |
|---------------------------|--|
| Arranged Marriage (15)    | This included 15 (60%) interviewees (8 women and 7 men) who said that they would like an arranged marriage, whereby their parents or elder members of the extended family would help to find a spouse.   |
| ‘Negotiated’ Marriage (5) | This category included 5 (20%) individuals (2 women and 3 men) who were hoping to meet someone to marry, but expected the potential spouse to be from an ‘acceptable’ range of religious, cultural and racial backgrounds. They were hoping to ‘introduce’ the potential spouse to their parents and family, and then to have a ‘traditional’ wedding. |
| Forced Marriage (1)       | The individuals involved had been coerced into marrying someone against their wishes (Rehana - F12, was the only interviewee in this category).  |
| Already Married (4)       | Four individuals (16%) were already married at the time of interview (2 women and 2 men including Shazia – F8 and Uzma – F13, and Abdullah – M7 and Khalid – M12).   |

As Table 7 shows, 15 of the interviewees (60%) expected to have an arranged marriage while another 5 (20%) hoped to meet someone that would be ‘acceptable’ to their families for marriage, and to try and ensure this, they were actively seeking to meet and marry someone from an ‘acceptable’, background as themselves in regard to race, culture and religion. These 5 have been included in a category described as hoping for a ‘negotiated marriage’, and included individuals such as Haroon (M11) and Jatinder (F11) who lived on their own and had therefore moved out of their parental homes. It also included Farzana (F4), Sayed (M4), and Bilal (M5) who still lived ‘at home’, and had had a discussion with their parents who had

agreed that this would be fine, as long as the ‘boundaries’ of religion, race and culture were respected by them.

Rehana (F12) had been forced into a marriage, and at the time of interview, she was liaising with the Home Office to ensure that her ‘spouse’ would be prevented from coming to Britain. The remaining 4 individuals (Shazia – F8 and Uzma – M13, Abdullah – M7 and Khalid – M12,) were already married, but each had a unique ‘story’ to tell about this, which contravened the ‘traditional’ processes of spouse-selection. Their ‘pen’-pictures (see appendix 5) include some of the circumstances regarding their spouse-selection.

In relation to conforming to acceptable norms regarding spouse-selection and marriage 10 (40%) of the individuals, explicitly cited spouse-selection and/or marriage as a means of gaining/enhancing “izzat”. This was apart from the fact that 15 (60%) of the interviewees said that they would have arranged marriages, and a further 5 (20%) of the 20 who were unmarried within the sample were hoping to negotiate an ‘acceptable’ ‘outcome’ in this regard with their parents. For example, Shazia (F8) was very clear about the link between “izzat” and marriage:

“Marriage is “izzat”; marriage is “izzat” – that is all I’m saying.”

For Rashid (M6) marriage was just another element in a whole string of attributes for gaining “respect”:

“Now it is about having that respect, but in a good way, which is getting married, getting qualifications, having a full-time job, raising a family and bringing that family up in a good way. That is respect to me.”

Jasmine (F2) made a clear distinction between the relative levels of “izzat” attached to “arranged” and “love” marriages:

“...say if I chose a person, and it was an arranged marriage, and the community know about it, I would probably get more “izzat” from that, than having a love marriage. So if I have an arranged marriage and went ahead with it, then I would probably get more “izzat” than if it was a love marriage, and they knew I was seeing a person, I would be less respected for it.”

Adam (M8) and Haroon (M11), implied that there was a close link between a family’s standing and the “izzat” attached to a prospective marriage in that family – a point that Laila (F3) also made assertively:

“If you’ve got “izzat”, you’ve got the reputation and stuff like that, then there would be a lot of families that would probably want to have you as their daughter-in-law, because you are from a good and respectable background. You would be good in that house with that family. Whereas if I was to come from a background that was not very respectful or whatever, for whatever reason, then I don’t think I would get that many choices.”

Nasreen (F5) pondered the fragility of “izzat” gained and lost through marriage especially for women:

“If you’re not married, it’s kind of hard to have “izzat” I think, that would probably be the big thing. You’re closer to having honour or respect in that sense if you’re married. Again, even if you lose it, if you’re married and you’re with him for a few days or weeks, and he’s not been the one for you or it’s not turned out for you, and you divorce, it’s the whole, “You’re a bad woman, what you did was wrong”, despite the circumstances. You can lose it quite easily.”

Uzma (F13) speaking as a Muslim woman also emphasised the importance of marriage:

“I think from an Islamic point of view, “izzat” is marriage, so as soon as your daughter gets to a marriageable age, the respectful thing is to get her married. So I think there is a real link there I think, but especially when it comes to daughters, because you know, the idea is that you got her married off, and there the respect still stays there, so if anything goes wrong, it’s wrong because she’s in her marital home, sort of thing.”

Finally, Nina (F10) linked conforming to acceptable norms in regard to marriage and the achievements of the prospective spouse:

“I think if you’re seen to be doing it [marriage] the right way then you’ve got that respect off people, haven’t you? You’ve kept your “izzat” and can still hold your

head up high, that you've done it the right way. And you get that respect off your family because you have found a good guy who has a good job and got a good education."

### **"Lena-Dena" (Gift Exchange)**

Nine (36%) of the individuals (including 4 women and 5 men) thought that participation in and knowledge of "lena-dena" (gift exchange) provided another way to gain "izzat". For example Abdullah (M7) stated:

"Again, you know, a couple of years ago I remember that the restaurant I used to work for, the boss's wife was going to a wedding – it wasn't a close wedding, but because of the reputation they had, or the reputation of their status, she was giving a TV as a present. So obviously, that would have been that she was like a big person and things like that. So that "izzat", she maintained that "izzat", and she done that through giving a big gift; so that people could say, "Ooh, did she give it? Ooh, b\_\_\_ hell"."

For Shaz (M10) and Nina (F10) the protocols surrounding "lena-dena" were implicitly associated with the giving and receiving of respect:

"It's gaining that respect, kind of like, "I bought them this, so I'm going to get that little bit more respect"." (Nina – F10)

Four (2 women and 2 men) of the 9 individuals who cited "lena-dena" as a means of giving "izzat" also suggested that it provided a measure of relative wealth and/or perceptions of relative generosity or meanness. Shameem (F6) stated:

"I suppose if you give stuff and that then it shows that you are well known and respectable I suppose and you can afford it. So you are classified as you have status, you have "izzat", but if you don't then you might be seen as having no "izzat", as in a sense you are not good enough – you know you don't fit in, you are less well off, you are poorer."

Khalid (M12) also said:

"Now, if you don't give as much, you are looked down upon, you know, like if you don't live up to this expectation of you are supposed to give this much. You know, people talk about notes – nowadays you can't go there with pound coins

and drop them in a hat kind of thing, and you're supposed to give notes. So you know, if you don't seem to be giving as much as the next person, they will look down on you – the "izzat" you know."

Rashid (M6) and Rehana (M12) made the link between "lena-dena" and the tradition of dowries. Rehana (F12), for example, when reflecting on the day of her forced marriage (see her 'pen'-picture at appendix 6), said:

"The more things you give, the more that people think that, "Oh, your daughter is going into a wealthy family". It brings your status up I think, but the more you have..., for example like that day when my mum put all that stuff on me – you know, people looked at me like, "Your daughter has got so much; you bring so much gold; look how much she's got". So, really, it's like putting it on show really and appealing to their nature."

### **Religiosity and Piety**

For all the individuals in the sample, their religious identity as Asians growing up in Britain was important, and this has been discussed to some extent as a part of the description of the sample as a whole earlier. However 8 (32%) individuals within the sample (6 men and 2 women) were explicit about how being religious or pious could be a means of gaining "izzat". However, I would also consider adding Sadir (M1) to this group because although Sadir (M1) was not explicit about the significance of religion as a means of gaining "izzat", he was clearly immersed in his religion and presented as a traditional, practising Sunni Muslim with a beard, who was self-assured in the respect that this brought for him from both, his peers and older members of the community. Therefore 9 (36%) respondents endorsed piety and religiosity as a means of enhancing one's "izzat".

For Rashid (M6), being a Muslim and the association with identity was just another way amongst others of gaining "izzat":



“‘Izzat’ is basically respect, it’s respect, but comes in different forms. It’s got a lot of meanings to it. It could be like respect being employed, respect like being a Muslim. It comes in all different ways – respect from family, respect from outside, you can get respect from having money. It’s got a lot of little branches to it.”

Shaz (M10) suggested explicitly amongst other things that:

“...religion is one thing that tends... that can build up your reputation”,

and also singled out particular religious practices such as going “to the mosque”, and the reciting of the Koran, which seemed to also act as a convenient point of comparison with others:

“If somebody...if I was to go into somebody’s house, and they were reading the Quran, just reading the Quran, forget about the rest, like “Khatums” and anything like that, that is seen as a form of respect. And so if you go around there, and they’re reading the Quran, my parents will come back, or people will come back, and because that person is reading the Quran, “How come you don’t read?”...”

Raj (M9) like Jasmine (F2) suggested that “religion” was important for gaining “izzat”, while also implicitly linking it to conforming to norms of acceptable behaviour:

“Well basically, if you, a lot of people would say that if you follow your religion – if you do this, if you do that, you know, you’ll be respected more, you’ll be given more “izzat”, and that’s where it fits in, simple, you know?” (Raj - M9)

For Haroon (M11) religion and religious roles could be a means of gaining “izzat”, amongst other circumstantial aspects associated with one’s life:

“Respect can be gained by being older, by things that are not under your control, simple because you may be an elder in the community, by being a parent, or you can actually gain respect... I feel through certain actions, if that makes sense? So if you happen to be a “Moulvi” [religious leader like a Priest] in a mosque, you will automatically have respect, even if you have maybe not earned it...”

This idea of fulfilling a religiously significant role within the community was echoed by Farzana (F4) who additionally pointed out that for her father the role that he fulfilled within his religious community was also a source of self-respect besides implicitly receiving respect from others:

“He is retired, he doesn’t work, but he is active in the community – he is the mosque man – he is not the head of the mosque, but he is a key role in that, but he plays a big role in the community, the Bangladeshi community in \_\_\_\_\_. So he has a lot of respect for himself.”

Abdullah (M7) seemed clear about the potential for religion to be linked to reputation and therefore to “izzat”, but also conveyed a sense of underlying confusion given his marriage to a Hindu girl (see appendix 5):

“It [religion] is really important because it’s probably another phase, because I was growing up, I wasn’t thinking about all of the consequences and “izzat” and things like that, but now I am thinking about “izzat” and consequences, but I’m not thinking about religion, but before I was. So hopefully I will be thinking about religion and then I will be able to complete the whole bigger picture, because I think that is the missing bit in my reputation and things like that. I’ve got the job and the education hopefully the missing bit is just the religion, to complete the bigger picture.”

## **Modesty**

It is interesting to note that 6 of the women (24% of the sample), suggested the importance of modesty for the gaining of “izzat”, compared with only Rashid (M6) from the men, (and therefore 7 (28%) in total), and even for him the implication regarding the notion of modesty, applied to women:

“Religion is where you have got to pray five times, people start respecting you, and the girls wear the “hijab” and cover their faces when they walk on the streets, you know – that is respect. Religion plays a part in that as well” (Rashid – M6).

This focus on modesty as highlighted by the 7 individuals is also very significant in relation to attracting “sharam” (shame) and will therefore be presented and analysed in more depth in Chapter 4, as an aspect of the presentation and analysis of the data on “sharam”– attracting behaviour. However, given the fact that 6 of the women specifically mentioned modesty, it is important to provide examples of their concerns here relating to the gaining of “izzat” and the

concerns with modesty and its link with “sharam”. Shazia (F7), for example reflected on an encounter with her uncle:

“I think “izzat” and “sharam” is more or less the same in a way. It’s like, if you feel... Okay, like, if I was his niece, and if I had got enough “sharam”, I would have protected my “izzat” by pulling my scarf down.”

For Rehana (F12), her position as an Asian young woman who was acutely aware of cultural expectations was further complicated by living in a British context:

“But ultimately, our parents... in this country, there is very much a conflict with the British way of life and the Asian way of life. There’s two identities that you have to maintain, because we’re British, yet also Asian. So we have to try and be a certain way with our friends for us to fit in, yet then we have to go back home, we have to be that claustrophobic, I’ve got my “hijab” on my head; I’m being a good girl.”

In fact, she uniquely also reflected on how concerns with expectations regarding modesty may also conflict with her and others perceptions of her professional identity:

“Stuff like dressing in a certain way, as a Muslim you are not supposed to wear clothes that are clingy, tight jeans and that, but probably because of the profession that I’m in, I have to look like a young person to work with a young person. So in a sense I deviate from that.”

### **Approved Peer/Friendship Networks**

It was also noteworthy that 3 of the women suggested that ‘approved’ friendship and peer networks were important for both, gaining and losing “izzat”, and Rehana (F12) implied a relationship between this and the fact that in the community women faced greater scrutiny than the men. It is important to remember that in the earlier discussion regarding trust as an aspect of “izzat”, Uzma (F13) pointed out that she was trusted to “go to our friends’ houses”, thus implying that they were ‘approved’. Therefore in fact 5 of the women (20% of the total sample) suggested that having the ‘right’ friendship and peer-networks were important for at least maintaining “izzat”. For example, Shameen (F6) said:

“I think whatever your friends do or who your friends are, that does have an effect, because if your friends are perfect and good, then you are all good and you will get good “izzat”. If your friends are bad and messed up and do bad things, then you will get bad “izzat”.”

For Yasmin (F1), the company you kept had an effect on your reputation:

“I am pretty conscious actually, with work and everything that is going on... and if you’re not hanging around with the right people and you’re hanging around with the wrong people, people will see you as a wrong person, because you shouldn’t have been hanging around with them in the first place. So I think that sometimes you know you have to have high self-esteem and a good reputation; you have got to have that respect.”

Jasmine (F2) was more explicit about the criteria related to the behaviour that was generally applied to “who you hang around with”:

“...the way you behave, and probably who you hang around with – the way you hang around people. I mean, a lot of young people these days just want to have fun and chill out. It’s probably the way in which you chill and have your fun. Are you doing it with a specific group, if it is, what are their background? Are they male? Are they female? Things like, do they smoke? Do they drink? Do they mess around? Are they getting an education?”

The idea that women faced greater scrutiny (discussed in more depth later) perhaps was connected to the fact that women recognised the importance of friends and peer networks that are ‘approved’. As Rehana (F12) stated when thinking about the concept of “izzat”:

“I wish to God it wasn’t there. I wish this notion wasn’t there, that our parents have to... because our behaviour is regulated because of it. But I think to myself, knowing it’s there, you have to understand that it is a part of our lives...”

### **Analysis of Category 1: Maintaining, Gaining/Enhancing “Izzat” Through Conforming to Acceptable Norms**

In relation to the first category (and sub-theme 1a in Table 6) for maintaining, gaining/enhancing “izzat”, although all the individuals in my sample suggested or implied the significance of respectful behaviour, and therefore of receiving and giving respect as a means of gaining “izzat”, this was not especially discussed in any depth by any of the researchers

reviewed earlier. For my respondents the actual act of giving and receiving respect through their behaviour seemed to be a symbolic representation of “izzat”, inherent in the norms or ‘codes’ of acceptable behaviour within their peer networks, families and the wider community to which they belonged. Thus, it was not surprising that Khalid (M12) saw it as an aspect of “expectations”, as “cultural” and about keeping “certain standards” of behaviour “going”. Perhaps in this regard Sajida’s (F7) example of the use of language to implicitly convey respect for elders was poignant.

Marriage and especially spouse-selection as a means of gaining “izzat” (1b in Table 6) and ensuring a certain level of conformity through “endogamy” (Anwar 1998:108) was a focus of much greater attention in the existing research reviewed earlier. However although this was discussed by 10 individuals (40%) in my sample (4 men and 6 women) it did not seem to have any greater significance for gaining “izzat” as any of the other means suggested. The focus on spouse-selection and marriage in the work reviewed earlier seemed much more generally concerned with issues relating to caste-affiliation and related “status” (Shaw 1988:104), and with young Asians’ deference to “parental wishes” regarding spouse-selection (Modood et al. 1994:77). In contrast, individuals in my sample (such as Jasmine – F2, Laila – F3 and Nasreen – F5) were more descriptive about the processes involved in spouse-selection and marriage, and their significance, especially for women (Uzma – F13). However, the fact that 60% (15 individuals) of the sample were prepared and expecting to have arranged marriages, with a further 20% (5 individuals) ‘negotiating’ to find an ‘acceptable’ spouse in regard to religion, culture and race, demonstrated the continued deference to “parental wishes” (Modood et al. 1994:77), and indicated the continued hold of “izzat” exerted through marriage, on their lives.

“Lena-dena” (gift exchange) in all its complexity as a process which inherently conferred status on recipients and provided an opportunity to ‘show case’ an individual or family’s wealth is discussed mainly by the female researchers reviewed earlier (Bachu 1985; Shaw 1988; Werbner 1990). Their research emphasised the significance of “lena-dena” especially in the lives of women in the community. It was interesting, therefore, that of the 9 (36%) individuals from my sample who acknowledged its role in relation to the acquisition of “izzat”, 5 (20%) were men.

The more public arena where ostentatious wealth is on display, such as weddings, and the public giving of alms or donations to charity, are the ‘public’ domains in which men are expected to engage. Perhaps these more public settings facilitate the emergence of what Ballard (1994:18) described as “‘izzat’ competition”, an aspect of “izzat” in relation to families also discussed by Samad and Eade (2002). The inherently celebratory nature of a wedding provides an ideal opportunity for displays of ‘ostentatiousness’ and therefore the public display of a family’s wealth and standing (captured for example by Rehana’s (F12) description of her wedding day). This in turn could also give rise to the mechanism of “izzat”-related competition. Perhaps, therefore, the fact that 5 of the men in my sample (20%) recognised the “izzat”-related function of “lena-dena” was not surprising.

Acts of worship, piety and being religious were explicitly cited as “izzat” acquiring facets by 9 interviewees (36%), and including Sadir (M1) who presented overtly as a young Sunni Muslim man (for example with a traditional beard). Shaw (1988:132) cited the prestige inferring qualities of “Khatmi Qurans” for women, and although such a symbolic,

“ceremonial” reading of the Koran was not mentioned by any of the individuals in my sample, Shaz (M10) did cite the reading of the Koran in general. Werbner (1990:130) suggested the importance of “Islamic scholarship”, in line with Farzana (F4) and Haroon’s (M11) acknowledgement that those who were involved in the activities of the mosque acquired “izzat” by virtue of the roles they played. Ghuman (1994) and Anwar (1998) suggested the comparative importance afforded by Asians to religion, especially by Muslims, and since my sample predominantly included Muslims, perhaps the fact that religion was explicitly mentioned as an “izzat” enhancing attribute by some of the interviewees (8 of whom were Muslims – 32%) should not come as a surprise. In the discussion about identity all the interviewees stated that their religious identity was important to them. This echoed Anwar’s (1998:106) suggestion regarding the continued “respect” of young Asians for their “parents” religion and tradition, although his point was not directly linked by him to the idea that religiosity and piety could enhance one’s “izzat”.

In relation to modesty the fact that 7 individuals (28% - 6 women and 1 man) identified dressing modestly as a way of gaining “izzat” was significant. However, given the close links between modesty and “sharam” (Wilson, 1979), this will be analysed in more depth in Chapter 4.

The fact that 5 of the women (20% of the sample) cited the significance of ‘approved’ friendship and peer networks for gaining “izzat” suggested that girls/women faced greater scrutiny or pressures to conform to acceptable norms of behaviour, but more importantly this also indicated that young Asians, especially women, were continuing to observe the rules that govern “izzat” in the community. Both Wilson (1979) and later Bhatti (1999:55) suggested

that “the family’s “izzat” (honour) was gauged by the behaviour and attitude of its daughters”, and the distinction that Bhatti (1999:167) drew between “good”, “shareef” (respectable) girls and others that were labelled as those reputed to go “man-hunting at the poly!”, has some resonance with this idea of preferred and more acceptable peer networks designed to attract “izzat”, especially in relation to the behaviour of the young women.

## **Category 2: ‘Achievement’**

The second category for maintaining, gaining/enhancing “izzat” concerned the idea of ‘achievement’, especially in relation to the ‘successes’ of an individual, and included tangible factors such as employment, education, and “money” (including materialism). It also included more ‘social’ factors such as leadership (including being a role model), having sons rather than daughters and status gained through ‘good’ actions. As with category 1, the findings for this category (including all the sub-themes included within it – 2a to f in Table 6), will be presented first and the analysis will follow.

### **Employment**

‘Good’ employment was identified by 11 (44%) of the interviewees (6 men and 5 women) as a means of gaining “izzat”. For some, such as Sayed (M4), Bilal (M5), Abdullah (M7) and Jasmine (F2), their work as youth and community professionals seemed particularly significant. For example Jasmine (F2) said:

“I have a lot of parents who respect me for the work that I do.”



Abdullah (M7) acknowledged the importance of money, but said that what he did was also satisfying and significant:

“Work... the pay has kept me there, but it’s also about what I’m doing... you know, managing and trying to make a difference in the service. That has kept me in the drive.”

For Yaser (M2) work, amongst other things was a source of respect from the family:

“In the family you can gain respect by, like working, and supporting your family, without the... you know, not getting up to no badness. And in the community, you can gain respect by helping people, and you know just... respecting them and stuff like that really. You can gain respect through the community by doing them kind of things.”

Laila (F3) also acknowledged the importance of a “decent job” for Asians, and outlined possible preferred professions:

“But yeah, if I had a decent job, or for example, if I was doing law, medicine or pharmacy, I would get a great deal more “izzat” than I probably get right now, but that is down to people ain’t it? There are lots more popular jobs in our Asian culture right now.”

And Raj (M9) stressed the effects of not having a “job”, and the link with status:

“If you haven’t, for example, if you haven’t got the greatest job in the world, people possibly look down on you. If you haven’t got the best education in the world, people look down on you. Uhm, status, basically, that’s what the problem is – people believe that’s what “izzat” is, I think.”

For Shazia (F8), identity, perceived wealth and employment were combined as she revelled in the reflected “izzat” and therefore status, gained from her husband being an Arab, and working as a pharmacist in Saudi Arabia:

“To be honest with you they don’t really know how much he is being paid but I can go around saying he is a supervisor in a pharmacy hospital in Saudi Arabia. So in terms of “izzat”, people are jealous of us because when they say, “Who are you?” they turn around and say, “Oh my god”. First of all he is Arab, now they are seen as quite superior in the Islamic community. In terms of language, in terms of being seen as more physically attractive, Arabs are. They are seen as having more wealth, which is not always true... Secondly he is working in Saudi

Arabia, oil you know. Secondly he is a pharmacist. So, it's just, "Wow – he is a pharmacist". It is not just the money; it is that he is almost a doctor status you know."

Nina (F10) like Raj (M9) earlier, suggested the importance of both education and employment, and reflected on how they were clearly important in her family:

"We've all been educated, I mean my brother and sister, have both been educated – they've both got degrees, they've got good jobs. I'm getting my education, and I have to say I have a really good job. And I know for a fact that no-one could turn around and say your kids are like this, and I think that me, my brother and my sister owe that to our mum..."

This was also echoed by Rashid (M6) who (like Khalid -M12, and Abdullah -M7, earlier) seemed to indicate a change in his behaviour, and also made the link between education and employment (like Nina – F10, and Raj – M9):

"Out in society watching people you know, in gangs and drive in nice cars, and things like this, and start noticing these things... So that has all affected me, having respect, because I changed the direction of my life and got myself employed, and into university, and that is respect."

Jatinder (F11), like Shazia (F8) explicitly made the link between a profession and the status attached to it, while also emphasising the importance of education and caste:

"I think that for Indians, uhm... who... I mean, a lot of this kind of goes back to a lot of caste systems and everything, and what you traditionally you do as farmers or as workers, or as pen pushers and as business people, or whatever. But generally, I think with Indians, it's a status thing, to complete studies, and school, college, go on to university, become a solicitor, a chemist..."

Sayed (M4) was more succinct about this point:

"A lot of people respect people because of their authority or because of their status basically or what they do, and stuff like that..."

## **Education**

The reference to education for attracting “izzat”, has also already been mentioned by Nina (F10), Jatinder (F11), Rashid (M6) and Raj (M9), in the quotes relating to employment cited earlier. Another 4 interviewees, and therefore 8 (32%) in total (5 men and 3 women) also suggested that education was a factor for gaining “izzat”. For example, Yasmin (F1) noted a difference in the way that she was regarded within the family and thought that this was because of her “studying”:

“I mean my brother’s not studying now, and because I’m studying, so I think I’ve got that respect from the family that I’m actually doing something in education. Even my sister, she works, and my brother treats me different to her.”

For Bilal (M5) his sense of pride given his educational achievement also resonated with his father, further demonstrating the notion of reflected “izzat”:

“Another thing because at the end of the day, I am coming to university, that is a big thing and I am the only one from my family who is coming to university. That is respect because when I go to my relatives’ house they say, “I am really proud of you”. That is respect and they say to my father, “You should be really proud of your son”, and my father is happy as well. My father is going... “I have heard your son is going to university that is really good” and my father is really proud of me. When I walk down the road, everyone is calling me and shaking my hand, “Ah, what are you doing?” Then when I say, “I am at university”, they tap my hand and say, “Well done”. Respect. Whereas if I was a drug dealer and walking the street and I call them, they would say, “What are you calling me for, you’re a drug dealer”. Just because I am on a good path, they want to know me. I am doing something for the community, they respect me and they are taking me into consideration.”

## **Money/Wealth and Materialism**

Subsumed within the significance of good employment for gaining “izzat”, is the implicit importance of money/wealth and therefore “materialism”, and often also a ‘good’ education.

With respect to money/wealth and/or materialism 11 (44%) of the interviewees actually mentioned it as a means of acquiring “izzat”, including 5 women and 6 men. Yasmin (F1), Abdullah (M7) and Shazia (F8) have been quoted earlier in relation to the link between money, employment and “izzat”, and Paramjeet (F9) stated:

“So for me, money, yeah it can... it does play an important factor, especially in today’s society, and I think that the way other people view you as well, in terms of the amount of money you’ve got, and the way they act towards you in terms of the amount of money you’ve got makes a difference I think.”

Nasreen (F5) provided another reminder while also emphasising the collective circumstances necessary for its existence:

“‘Izzat’, for us as a family, it would only come from the acceptance or how much people around us like us. The money also comes into it a bit, because if you’ve got money and you can spread it around then people like you even more or you believe that they will...”

Nina (F10) was more direct:

“In Asian families yeah, money is the main I’d say, because you get a lot of respect for that, don’t you? Like “You’ve done well for yourself, you’ve got a good family and good education and good background. You’ve married a good guy.” ...but yeah, I’d say money was a big thing – especially with Asian culture I think.”

While Shaz (M10), speaking of his parents, also emphasised the role played by gossip in sustaining “izzat” and its link with money and materialism:

“Uhhh, they always talk about “Oh this person has got this, this person has got this”, and they want to do similar things, and so they are also getting respect.”

Adam (M8) suggested that there was a shift to ‘materialism’ from more traditional means of acquiring “izzat”:

“For other people now I think nowadays it’s a lot to do with money. Before it was for your family and for your casting system – it was through what your parents or what your grandparents did or what your family status was; back home I still think that when I go back home, but now it’s got a lot to do with connections and how much money you have, how much influence you have. That’s what I think the materialistic “izzat” is.”

The following exchange with Imran (M3) demonstrated how he distinguished between contexts in relation to respect, but also implied the significance of materialism:

**“Imran:** Again, It’s like totally what is someone looking for as respectable? I know that like my father, that if I would stay at home more often, you know, modest myself down, if I was like... to a certain extent, passive, don’t be disrespectful.

**Me:** What about amongst your peers?

**Imran:** Amongst my peers? Again, it’s different, different peers – with certain peers, peers that I grew up with, with disrespectful behaviour, that is bad, bad things, yeah. It’s like if someone was selling more drugs than the other person that, that would bring respect, “We’re going to respect that geezer”, but do you genuinely have that respect for that person? And that is the thing – respect - having a nice flash car, you know you can make your respect back with a nice flash car, that is respectable behaviour, you know, being well known...”

## **Leadership**

The achievement related to being a leader and/or role model, and therefore having good “connections” (Adam – M8 cited earlier) was recognised by 6 (24%) of the interviewees (2 women and 4 men).

Rashid (M6) and Yaser (M2) were scathing about the leaders in the community, but Rashid (M6) like Yasmin (F1) recognised that it was a desirable requisite for being respected:

“None of the community leaders in my area are doing f\_\_\_\_-all for the community. But, yeah, the Asian community, being a leader is something respectable. Councillors, they want to be councillors, politicians. It’s something that’s used as a tool to make themselves better, and get that respect from people. So like I said, it’s something that people want to have, the grown up men want to have that.”

(Rashid – M6)

Yasmin (F1) made the link between being a leader and the status accrued by this:

“So if you were a community leader, your respect would be in a higher sort of status, as just having “izzat” and everything.”

Abdullah (M7) like Jasmine (F2) hinted that his professional role helped to change perceptions and gain respect by virtue of him being regarded as a “role model”:

“It’s hard work. It could be basically, people praising you for something you have done, people looking up at you as a role model by some of the young people, as in my case. People changing their views about you, approaching you, talking to you, saying, “Oh, how’s it going?” you know, “Can you help me?””

Interestingly 3 of the men (12%) suggested that one could become a role model through anti-social or criminal activity. Imran (M3) has already been cited referring to drug-dealing (in relation to materialism) as has Khalid (M12) with his reference to “bad men”, but perhaps Rashid’s (M6) reflections better conveyed the allure of respect and therefore “izzat”, for a young man in less socially ‘acceptable’ circumstances:

“I think it’s something that people want to go out and achieve, it’s something we want to get, respect. When I was a young lad growing up, I wanted respect – it was something, a goal. It wasn’t about having a job, it was respect. But this was respect in a different environment – it was the street, ghetto respect. That’s why I say respect comes in different forms.”

### **‘Good’ Actions**

Five of the men (20% of the sample) stated that “izzat” could be maintained and/or enhanced through ‘good’ deeds or actions. For Yaser (M2), Adam (M8) and Shaz (M10) it seemed to have been a general way to gain “izzat”. Shaz (M10) for example reflected on the actions of both his father and grandfather, although he seemed ambivalent about the idea:

“Respect is something that... uh-hm, my dad, I think, definitely uh-hm... does acquire within our community – because my dad is like the..., he can do anything, you know, when it comes to plumbing, and gas work, and this and that and the other, and so whenever something happens, they call my dad, and my dad sees that as respect, although I see it as my dad being used. But at the same time, whenever my dad needs something from somebody... And so my dad is working there, and three other people who will just come and help my dad out, because

they know my dad was working there. And so my dad has a lot of respect in that way, and so has my mum.”

And in relation to his grandfather:

“My granddad did a lot of things, and so I think this is where I get it from, I think, and for people who were less privileged than we were.”

Two of the men also suggested that good actions could help to “earn” “izzat”, but at the same time implied that this behaviour was indicative of a change in them. For example, Abdullah (M7) hinted not only that his professional role within the community helped to gain “izzat”, but also helped to perhaps compensate for his previous, ‘poorly’ perceived actions:

“My voluntary capacity... because giving something back to the community and making that difference, even a slight deprivation and the balance of the community – that’s given me that drive... My parents...making their “izzat” different and things like that. I am trying to satisfy them more because I know that I never did it when I was young, I used to rebel and I didn’t used to respect them as much as I should. So I am giving that back now. And my family, they just think that it’s improving, and I’m trying to help them.”

Khalid (M12) echoed the same message, but more forcefully. He also acknowledged a certain level of respect attached to being “bad”:

“I have earned my respect or “izzat” through my good actions, through helping young people. I used to have a different kind of respect before, where I go and would knock somebody out if anybody messes with me. But I think that I have totally turned that around through the good things that I have done with people, and tried hard not to get to that level...So, it depends on what kind of “izzat” you want – some people want that “izzat” you know, when they are bad men, which I wanted at 17 or 18. Yeah man, I wanted people to recognise me as someone who you don’t mess with. But as you get older, you think that, “I don’t want a reputation or “izzat”. I want a different kind of it.” And you know, it’s through your actions how you earn it.”

## **Having Sons**

In contrast to some of the views expressed by the men above, 3 of the women (12% of the sample) suggested that within families and communities there was a cultural preference for

sons rather than daughters, and which therefore resulted in them gaining “izzat”. They implied that this was an ‘achievement’ for a woman. Jasmine (F2) was especially reflective about this:

“But I think now things have changed – people are giving birth to little baby boy or a baby girl. I mean having a boy was really... a lot of people would be like “Oh no, you’ve had a girl and not a boy”, so you get a lot of “izzat” there, and a lot of “besti” there. I would say that an example would be one cousin has had a boy, and one cousin has had a girl. There would be more attention to the side of the boy than the girl, so there is more “izzat” there, and that lady would probably feel a little bit ashamed of herself, but in a way she shouldn’t because she has given birth to a beautiful little child – hopefully very healthy, but even though the boy might not be so healthy, he’ll be getting all of the respect, and all the honour and all the rest of it.”

### **Analysis of Category 2: Maintaining, Gaining/Enhancing “Izzat” Through ‘Achievement’**

The second category regarding the acquisition of “izzat” related to the more ‘tangible’ achievements of individuals including success involving employment and education, the acquisition of money and wealth, and the status achieved through leadership and being a role model and the social capital associated with it. ‘Good actions’ and ‘having sons’ were also listed as ‘achievements’.

Of the 11 individuals (44%) who suggested the significance of ‘good’ employment for acquiring “izzat”, it was noteworthy that nearly half were women. The recognition of employment as an aspect of general success, for enhancing an individual’s status, was cited by some researchers (such as Bachu 1985; Bowen 1986; Werbner 1990; Ballard 1994; Anwar 1998; Bhatti 1999). However, they all featured its significance mainly in relation to men and some (Bachu 1985; Werbner 1990) linked its importance to spouse-selection because of its reputation-enhancing quality. The focus on women and employment was in fact either



‘absent’ from the discourse or seen as problematic because it would mean that to be in employment women had to leave their domestic domain and engage in the more public domain of ‘men’ outside of the home, and therefore transgress the generally acceptable rules regarding gender-related conduct. Of the 5 women who suggested the significance of employment for enhancing “izzat”, 3 were Muslim and the remaining 2 were each Sikh and Hindu. Perhaps the fact that they viewed their employment as reputation-enhancing signalled a shift in attitudes. Although it is important to point out that of these 5 women, Jatinder (F11) was living on her own having moved out of her parental home, and both Jasmine (F2) and Nina (F10) lived in households where their income was needed to sustain the family because their fathers were either deceased or too ill to work.

For the 4 interviewees who specified the importance of their chosen profession of Youth and Community Work, there were undercurrents of the profession in itself being seen as a means of helping others, and therefore some overlap between this and the other sub-theme relating to ‘good actions’ as a means of acquiring “izzat”. However, only Abdullah (M7) explicitly made the link between the two. In fact for those women in my sample who still lived with their parents their chosen profession was both a source of pride, but was also problematic given the unsocial hours involved in the nature of the work.

Particular professions such as being a solicitor, pharmacist and doctor were cited by at least 5 (20%) of the respondents as being more prestigious and therefore perceived as having greater “izzat” acquiring/enhancing qualities. Although earlier researchers do not specify the more ‘prized’ professions, Bachu (1985), Ghuman (1994) and Anwar (1998) recognised the importance of “earning potential and education” (Bachu, 1985:91) generally for enhancing

one's reputation through the generation of "izzat". Ghuman (1994:96) also warned that teachers of Asian young people said that their parents wanted them "to be doctors and engineers even when the ability or potential is not there".

The link between "earning potential" and "izzat" included the implicit significance of a 'good' education for contributing to 'good' employment. Although only 3 of the 8 interviewees (32%) who cited the significance of education for gaining "izzat", were women, it is important to remember that all 13 of the women in my sample were either studying at university at the time of their interview, and/or were working as qualified professionals, having completed their formal training at university. Again, the discussion regarding the value of educational achievement was accepted by some researchers (Jackson 1981; Werbner 1990; Ghuman 1980, 1981, 1987, 1994, 1995; Anwar 1998) but they suggested that it was "prized" (Jackson, 1981:11) mainly for boys. My sample was clearly 'unique' given the fact that all the women interviewed were studying or had studied in higher education, demonstrating a possible shift in family and community-based expectations regarding girls/women and their education. The fact that my sample included 10 Muslim women (40% of the sample) from Pakistani and Bangladeshi backgrounds may be an important indicator of change, given that Anwar (1998) suggested that on a sliding scale concerning religion and therefore tradition, Muslims in Britain were the most 'conservative', and therefore likely to be more resistant to change.

Both success in education and therefore good employment were important for facilitating material well-being which was another "izzat"-acquiring attribute identified by 11 (44%) respondents. The acquisition of money, wealth and general materialism has been recognised

by researchers as being important for enhancing “izzat” throughout the period reviewed. For example early on Ballard and Ballard (1977:26) related “honour” to land acquisition in the “homeland” and this was a point later reiterated by Shaw (1988, 2000). Bachu (1985:91) included wealth, alongside “education and career choice” as an aspect of “achieved” status, which was also emphasised by Ghuman (1975, 1994, 1996, 1999) and Anwar (1998). However, again, the research reviewed suggested that men bore the brunt of the pressure to succeed in the face of external hostility and racism (Anwar 1998). However, in relation to the 11 interviewees (44%) who were explicit about the significance of wealth for generating “izzat”, it was important to note that 5 were in fact, women, thus inferring a possible shift in the context of Britain, whereby women’s contribution to the household income and to the collective wealth of the family may be being recognised.

Unfortunately since Anwar’s (1998) research, the external hostility (especially faced by Muslim young men) has in fact grown, given the rise in Islamophobia (Mukhopadhyay 2007; Abbas 2011; Soni 2011) and evidence that shows that Muslim men in particular fare comparatively worse than their peers from other communities (Shaw 2000; Roberts 2006; Heath and Cheung 2006). However, although the men in my sample were mostly employed in the Youth Work sector (and only Sadir – M1, was not in paid work) many of them worked with young Asian men, and so must have therefore been aware of these circumstances. Perhaps, they and their families valued their employment more because of this knowledge and awareness regarding the rise in Islamophobia. In a climate where employment is considered essential for an individual and his/her family’s well-being, it is perhaps understandable that a shift away from inherited factors to more ‘material’ wealth-related attributes for acquiring “izzat” was signalled by Adam (M8).

The fact that an individual's (and his/her family's) status was enhanced by achievements related to education, employment and money/wealth has already been established. Leadership and being a role model (perhaps also through achieving success in education and employment) was cited by 6 (24%) of the sample. The focus on leadership in the literature reviewed started early on with Desai (1963), Ballard (1973), Ballard and Ballard (1977) and Shaw (1988) implicitly identifying the underlying leadership quality inherent in a "patron" and his "client" in regard to the process of migration from the 'homeland' to Britain. However, the context within which the 6 (24%) individuals from my sample viewed 'leadership' for gaining "izzat" was entirely different, and related more to the emergence of '*Desh-Pardesh*' (Ballard, 1994), and therefore the establishment of social and political community-based networks, facilitating the development of what Ballard (1994:15) described as "an arena of status competition", where "an ever high premium gradually began to be placed on moral conformity". As representatives of the third and fourth generation of Asians in Britain, the 6 respondents who cited leadership in its 'positive' guise were reflecting on the role of leadership, and social capital in general for acquiring "izzat" within now settled Asian communities. In the absence of more recent ethnographic studies on Asian communities in Britain, it is difficult to verify the continued significance of leadership in relation to status and therefore "izzat" acquisition. The fact that some of the interviewees acknowledged, with some sense of pride, that they were seen as role models in their roles as Youth Workers implied that leadership continued to confer status. It was perhaps also significant that in the absence of more conventional ways of gaining "izzat" and status, including through leadership that 3 of the men (Imran – M3, Rashid – M6 and Khalid – M12) hinted at the possible 'status' attached to 'leadership' in alternative, anti-social contexts (such as being

involved in dealing drugs and being perceived as ‘tough’). This also suggested that young Asian men needed to engage in “an arena for status competition” (Ballard 1994:15), and that they may ‘seek this out’ in ‘alternative’ settings to those that are conventionally recognised, but perhaps not accessible to them. The need to be competitive in relation to ‘status’ and therefore “izzat” continues to be strong and was inferred especially by these men. Werbner (1990), like Ballard (1994) also stressed the importance of competition to generate and enhance status, but the more unconventional ways of doing so, mentioned by some of the men in my sample was only hinted at by a Guardian newspaper article (Harris and Wazir 2002) and not really discussed in any of the ethnographic research within Asian communities in Britain.

Five (20%) of the men in the sample, and significantly none of the women, also suggested the importance of ‘good actions’ for enhancing an individual’s and his family’s “izzat”. Again, the idea that such ‘good actions’ were overtly carried out in the more public domain of men, resonated with the earlier point regarding “lena-dena” for example in the public context of a wedding. The idea of the public/private dichotomy regarding the social arenas in which men and women engaged was explicitly articulated by Ballard (1982, 1994) and Werbner (1990: 296) who, for example, said, “giving brings honour and status”. Others implied the same dichotomy but perhaps discussed it in terms of relative freedom between boys and girls and the differential treatment of boys and girls (Bowen 1981; Barton 1986; Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990; Ghuman 1994, 1996, 1999; Anwar 1998; Bhatti 1999; Shaw 1988, 2000; Samad and Eade 2002).

Finally, the inclusion of the 3 women (12% of the sample) who cited having sons as a significant factor for gaining/enhancing “izzat” in the community, illustrated the continued influence of traditional gender-related preferences, ironically in spite of some ‘changes’ in the activities that women were undertaking (discussed earlier). This preference for ‘boys’ has been acknowledged by others (including Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990; Shaw 1988, 2000; Ghuman 1975, 1994, 1996, 1999; Anwar 1998) and illustrated the continued hold of traditional patterns of thinking and expectations in a British context, which for some Asian communities is entering a phase involving the fourth generation.

### **Category 3: Inherited Factors**

The third and final category for gaining “izzat” related to factors that are inherited, and/or accumulated by an individual and his/her family over time and which contribute towards a positive reputation and good standing in the community, (see Table 6, 3a and b). It was concerned with the inherited circumstances that individuals found themselves in such as caste-affiliation and an individual’s, but especially a family’s reputation and standing in the community. This category was also closely linked with ‘achievement’, since individual achievement could clearly contribute to personal and a family’s standing, especially over time.

### **General Inherited Factors**

The importance of inherited circumstances was generally recognised by all 25 of the respondents. From these, 13 (52%) individuals suggested some link between “izzat” and

attributes that may be inherited (including caste), and of these 13, 6 were women, and 7 were men.

Ten of the individuals from the sample (40%) including equal numbers of women and men, explicitly suggested the link with inheritance, while 4 also stated that it was related to “tradition”. Four of the men also suggested that “izzat” was generated or gained over time.

For example, Bilal (M5) echoing a point cited earlier (by Shaz – M10) pointed out:

“You have to build it up, “izzat”, it’s from your family, like I said from your grandfather. You have to build it up...”

For Farzana (F4) the more inherited aspects of “izzat” were an affront:

“No, I think that is false respect some people get because of their father’s name.”

The link between inherited factors and reputation was acknowledged as significant by all the individuals in the sample (100%). However, since reputations can be both, good and bad and enhanced and lost, this theme will be presented and analysed in Chapter 4, once the data for both, how “izzat” can be gained and lost (and therefore “sharam” attracted), has been considered, presented and analysed.

### **Caste-Affiliation**

Five (20%) of the interviewees (including 3 women and 2 men) mentioned caste in particular as an inherited factor. Khalid (M12) for example said:

“You can get “izzat” through your caste system, whether you’re a “Raja”... or whether you are a “Jat”.”

However, Sajida (F7) disagreed, although the fact that she discussed it indicated that she was aware of the potential link with “izzat”:

“I don’t think there is – caste and “izzat”, because... I mean you could have nothing, and still have a lot, or you can have a lot and have nothing. So, I don’t really think that “izzat” comes... is linked with caste that much.”

Also, regarding caste Nina (F10) has already been cited and Laila (F3) was adamant that she could not “get married out of caste”, but also displayed some confusion over how much it mattered in a British context:

“If you’re of a higher caste, you tend to have that false ignorance, arrogance and ignorance because of ignorance obviously, and you have that, you know, you tend to believe that you’ve got, you’re more “izzatdar” because you’re a “Raja” or “Rajput” or whatever or you’re a “Jat”, or whatever. You’ve got more “izzat” than a “Mochi”, or I don’t know much of these castes but just because back home was their occupation, it’s not now. You could be earning more than a “Raja” here – so does it really matter? No, I don’t think it matters.”

In contrast Rashid (M6) recounted the process of marriage regarding a family member, where his family were told by the potential bride’s family, “You ain’t got that level”, hinting at a concern with both wealth and caste. However, Adam (M8) stated that for him caste was less important than for his parents, therefore suggesting that there was some change in the light of his own experiences (regarding spouse-selection):

“I would change with my daughters now than what my parents did. I would like for her to marry a Pakistani – if it’s not then it would definitely have to be Muslim. But before a lot of problems have happened are because of casting – with Pakistanis it’s got to be, the right/same caste – “Jats”, “Rajas”, and that’s happening with us lot, with our families. I wouldn’t want to have that on my daughters - if he’s Pakistani, fair enough.”

Finally, Imran (M3) cited “stability” as an element, which was linked to good standing accrued over time (and therefore potentially inherited), also implying that this could be achieved through the more tangible achievements that have been presented earlier:

“...I think a lot of “izzat” comes from demonstrating stability. If you can show people that you have got stability I think that shows a lot of “izzat”.”



### **Analysis of Category 3: Maintaining, Gaining/Enhancing “Izzat” Through Inherited Factors**

The third category relating to how “izzat” was maintained, gained/enhanced related to inherited circumstances or factors. Of the 10 (52%) individuals from my sample who made some reference to “inheritance” in the context of a family’s reputation and standing, often accumulated over time, 5 (20%) of these 10 also made some reference to the significance of ‘caste’ as a factor.

The idea of ‘inherited’ factors generally was in line with Bachu’s (1985) notion of ‘ascribed’ status which concerned a family’s ‘history’ in contrast to status which was ‘achieved’ through more tangible ‘successes’ measured for example through education and employment. The findings and discussion presented later in Chapter 4, regarding the sample’s understanding and experiences of ‘reflected’ “izzat” and “sharam”, provides a good insight into how all the individuals understood the impact of their or their other family members’ actions on the reputation and standing of the family as a whole within the community. The fact that 4 (16%) of the men also pointed out that it took time to generate and accumulate “izzat”, demonstrated that they understood how success through achievements could be added to over time so that it in turn became a part of the family’s ‘ascribed’ status (Bachu, 1985). From my sample 4 other (16%) individuals also made reference to the significance of ‘tradition’ (including 2 women and 2 men). It was interesting on the whole that the men seemed more conscious of the value of ascribed status than the women, perhaps because they were aware of the fact that the ‘mantle’ of responsibility and therefore, of upholding their family’s “izzat” would one day

rest with them as the ‘head’ of a household. Bilal (M5) and Shaz’s (M10) reminiscences regarding their respective fathers’ and grandfathers’ reputations were testament to this.

Although only 5 (20%) of the individuals in the sample were actually explicit about the importance of ‘caste’-affiliation as an inherited factor, the research reviewed earlier placed a much greater emphasis on caste, “zat” and “biradari” networks and membership. Dahya (1972-1973, 1973, 1974) for example, discussed early on how occupational status was linked to and has an effect on traditional caste hierarchies. Knott (1986) also suggested the significance of caste for regulating community-based dynamics between families, while Werbner (1990) explored the link between spouse-selection/marriage and caste or “zat”-affiliation which was a point discussed by only 3 (12%) of the individuals in my sample (Laila – F3, Nina – F10 and Rashid – M6). Nesbitt (1994) also highlighted the potential for punishing “zat”-related transgressions. Although only a few of the individuals in my sample made the link between caste and spouse-selection, it was significant that 15 of them (60%) expected to have an arranged marriage, and therefore the idea that caste-related considerations would guide this process, was implicit in this. This mirrored Din’s (2006) assertion that the “biradari” continued to exert control on the young. Of all the researchers reviewed earlier Shaw (1988, 1994, 2000) explored the impact of kinship and the “biradari” in some depth, identifying the role that men played as perpetrators of “biradari blood” (2000:212), and perhaps therefore, it was not surprising that more of the men in my sample, rather than the women, were alert to the significance of reputation and standing built over time.

### **3.6. “Izzat”- Some Conclusions**

“Izzat” emerged through this analysis as a particularly ‘Asian’ phenomenon, which had some key facets to it. It was understood primarily as respect, and had a personal aspect to it (in relation to self-respect and self-dignity). It also expressed itself in relation to notions of pride and trust.

The presentation and analysis of the three categories and the sub-themes subsumed in each provided an interesting insight into the various means for gaining and enhancing “izzat” identified by the 25 interviewees. It provided an invaluable insight into their perceptions demonstrating their clear understanding of the mechanisms and means by which “izzat” could be gained and enhanced, thus illustrating its continued importance for them and for the communities to which they belonged. Through my data and especially given the relatively fewer number of sub-themes discussed in relation to inherited factors, there was a sense that perhaps materialism and wealth and therefore ‘achieved’ status has gained in significance, and yet the interviewees’ understanding of the significance of maintaining reputation and standing over time also hinted at an awareness of the more intangible, inherited factors that played a part in their lives.

The fact that I identified three categories from the data generated by the interviews for gaining “izzat” also signalled a move away from the findings of other researchers. Bachu’s (1985) identification of the distinction between ‘ascribed’ and ‘achieved’ status, subsumed two of my categories relating to inherited factors and achievement. However, my first category regarding doing the ‘right’ thing and therefore conforming to acceptable norms of behaviour

emerged through my data as a category in its own right. The ‘behaviour’ included in this category captured some of the subtleties of behaviour, such as the giving and receiving of respect, and behaving appropriately with elders in the community. The sub-themes included in my first category therefore are unique, and the fact that the focus on “izzat” is central to this research and not submerged or marginalised as in the work of other researchers, enabled such subtleties to emerge.

Also the fact that all the interviewees understood the significance of reputation and standing within the community was succinctly captured by Sayed (M4) with his simple assertion “I represent my family”. His example conveyed understanding of the sense of responsibility that clearly rested with each of them. It implicitly inferred an awareness of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and therefore the ‘boundaries’ of conformity. It also suggested an awareness of the ability to enhance a reputation further, because of the process of reflected “izzat”, and Adam’s (M8) “...it’s about understanding what I should be doing as a man on behalf of the family” also demonstrated this.

Given the fact that all the interviewees understood and valued ‘reputation’ merits a more in-depth presentation and analysis of this concept, especially in relation to the process of reflected “izzat” and “sharam”, and this will therefore be discussed in more depth in Chapter 4. For now the focus of attention needs to be on understanding how “izzat” can be lost and therefore, on “sharam”.

## **Chapter 4: PRIMARY RESEARCH: “SHARAM”**

At the beginning of this research I stated that any research on “izzat” should include a search for the concept of “sharam” (shame) and that, in fact, some of my interviewees (like Shazia – F8) quoted earlier viewed “izzat” and “sharam” as a part of the same continuum.

This chapter therefore focuses mainly on “sharam”, including how “sharam” is defined and understood and also how it can be attracted and therefore “izzat” lost. The relationship between “sharam” and gender is then discussed, followed by a discussion regarding “sharam” as a force for curbing behaviour. The penultimate discussion in this chapter focuses on reflected “izzat” and “sharam” and their link with reputation. Finally the findings from the in-depth interviews are triangulated and validated through a comparative discussion using the data generated from the workshop-style focus groups with the 40 predominantly Sikh women.

### **4.1 Defining “Sharam”**

The respondents’ key definitions of “sharam” are drawn mainly from responses to questions from the “Sharam/Lajja” section of the interview guide (appendix 6), especially “What is “sharam” and/or “lajja”?” and “What do you consider to be “sharam” and why?”

Unsurprisingly all of the respondents in the sample displayed knowledge and understanding of the concept of “sharam”. However, there were subtle differences in how they explained it. “Sharam” was translated explicitly as “shame” by 11 (44%) of the sample, (4 women and 7 men). For example, Sadir (M1) said simply;

“Shame.”

Others attributed it immediately to behaviour, such as Laila (F3) who said it was:

“Shameless.”

Rashid (M6) indicated that it was clearly something to “avoid”:

“‘Sharam’ is something which you avoid; you don’t want to be shamed; once you’re shamed it’s hard for it to come back. But I haven’t had a proper experience of a shameful experience, no.”

Sayed (M4) also saw it as something that you “have”:

“It’s like shame, ain’t it? If you have any shame, “sharam rakho” [“keep shame”] that’s what my mum says.”

Sayed (M4) explained when his mother identified him as having no shame and therefore as being “besharam”. He clearly made the links with his behaviour:

“Like when I go home at a weekend, on a Saturday I will link up with loads of my old friends you know and like I’ll come home proper late, and my mum will say, “‘Be-sharam, sharam nahi he” [“shame-less, you have no shame”], have you got no shame? Why are you walking in at this time for?” Which in a way I agree with her, do you know what I mean? I’ve got a little brother; do you get what I mean? I don’t want... because he always plays that card yeah, like, “Why can he do it and I can’t?” Which is true, do you get what I mean? It is, and my mum always says I’m older and stuff like that, but that’s no excuse, my mum says, “I know you go out with “dosts” [friends], I’m not with you all the time and that, at least when you come back to Bradford, have some “sharam” – don’t do it blatantly in our face and that”, which is true.”

Fourteen (56%) of the interviewees (8 women and 6 men) explained the concept of “sharam” with reference to other terms they were familiar with and experienced. These other Punjabi, Urdu and Bengali expressions included “beguerat”, “besharam” (see Sayed – M4 above), “be-izzat” and “besti”. For example Laila (F3) laughed and said,

“My mum would call me “besharam”, she always does. I mean the way that my mum and her mum are, it is totally different to the way I am with my mother. Like stuff that I would say to her, I can’t imagine her saying that to her mum, that is why she always says, “you’re besharam”.”

Shameem (F6) provided an interesting distinction, between a personal attribute and one's actions:

“‘Sharam’? It’s very similar to ‘besharam’; I think ‘sharam’ is made to do with characteristics where as the other is actions. I think it is shyness, quietness, projecting happiness in a certain way; acting in a certain way. Personality, the way you portray yourself, I think that is more ‘sharam’. I think that it could be positive, could be negative, it could be both.”

Imran (M3), used the Urdu term “beguerat” while also suggesting (along with two of the other men in the sample) that how it was experienced, inevitably included an emotional aspect to the concept:

“‘Sharam’ is the outcome of ‘beguerat’ behaviour- but not necessarily. ‘Beguerat’ behaviour doesn’t necessarily bring ‘sharam’. It’s something that someone feels. I think that’s ‘sharam’. Because if someone does something, and...so what? ...you know,, if they come out with that reaction, and they’ve done ‘beguerat’ behaviour, everyone knows they’ve done ‘beguerat’ behaviour, and they say, “so what? I don’t care”. That person’s got no ‘sharam’. We would say, well really, he’s not lost no shame, he’s not lost no ‘izzat’ because, you know, like they say, he didn’t have no ‘izzat’ to start with. I think ‘sharam’ is an emotion to be honest.”

Adam (M8) was very clear about the emotions implicit in “sharam”:

“Fury and anger for me, yeah. You look a bit surprised by that? Because if ‘sharam’ happens on me, something that I ain’t done, and something that is affecting me, the only way I can deal with that is by fury and anger.”

Shaz (M10) initially used the expression “be-izzat”, being without “izzat”:

“‘Sharam’? I’ve heard the word –‘sharam’ is like, is seen as... like “be –izzat”, isn’t it? It’s a similar thing to “be-izzat”...”

He went on to explain “besti”:

“uhhhm... ‘sharam’, I think that if I was to sell drugs...I would bring “besti”, and I would be... in a way, “sharam”, uhhm...”

All of the individuals in the sample explained the concept of “sharam” including its corollaries such as “besharam”, “beguerat”, “besti” and “be-izzat”, in relation to the behaviour

that attracted “sharam”, and that therefore would be considered unacceptable or undesirable, and judged by others as such.

**4.2 “Sharam”-Attracting Behaviour**

Examples of “sharam”-attracting behaviour which results potentially in a loss of “izzat”, are already implicit in some of the quotes used so far, including Laila’s (F3) ‘inappropriate’ familiarity with her mother, Sayed’s (M4) coming home late at night and Shaz’s (M10) selling of illegal drugs. The interviewees were encouraged to share their ideas regarding behaviour that they considered capable of losing “izzat” and attracting shame. Their responses to questions from the sections on “Defining “Izzat”/Understanding of “Izzat” and “Sharam”/”Lajja” from the interview guide (appendix 6), provided the basis for the discussion. In particular their examples of when their or their family’s “izzat” was affected, and of “be-izzat” and/or “besharam” behaviour and the consequences of an individual suffering from a “besti” (insult/stigma), form the basis for the evidence collated and presented here (in 4.2). The examples shared by them about how “sharam” could be attracted and therefore “izzat” lost, have been collated into six distinct themes. These themes are listed in Table 8 (a. to f.):

**Table 8: Unacceptable Behaviour that Attracts “Sharam” and Loses “Izzat”**

|   |
|---|
| <div>a. Gender-related and relationship misdemeanours,<br/>b. ‘Bad’ manners (including inappropriate behaviour with<br/>    parents and elders),<br/>c. Concerns regarding fashion, dress and modesty,<br/>d. ‘Life-style’ factors,<br/>e. Crime-related factors<br/>f. Other miscellaneous examples.</div> |
|---|



The interviewees' examples for attracting "sharam" that I have collated into the six themes (Table 8), seemed to be directly in opposition to the first category related to how "izzat" could be maintained, gained/enhanced through 'Conforming to Acceptable 'Norms' (Category 1 in Table 6). In short, the examples they shared in relation to "sharam" could all be discussed under one key category – 'Unacceptable Behaviour that Attracts "Sharam" and Loses "Izzat"'. There were therefore no counter examples shared by the interviewees in relation to the other two categories for gaining/enhancing "izzat" (ie. through 'Achievement' or 'Inherited Factors' - Categories 2 and 3 in Table 6), both of which remain significant for maintaining/enhancing "izzat".

### **Unacceptable Behaviour that Attracts "Sharam" and Loses "Izzat"**

I will now move on to present the findings related to each of the six themes listed in Table 8, in the order that they are listed

### **Gender-Related and Relationship Misdemeanours**

Nine (36%) of the interviewees (interestingly 8 women and only 1 man) suggested that gender and relationship related misdemeanours were a potent source for attracting "sharam". Apart from divorce, and getting pregnant (out of wedlock), and "sleeping around" (Shameem - F6), some of the women included the transgressions of caste, religion and/or racial boundaries within this. For example, Nina (F10), a Hindu, was clearly "very" conscious of the pressures to do the "right" thing because of her brother and sister's relationships:

“...as it's more difficult, far more because my brother's with a white girl, my sister's with an Arab guy, and I feel it for me now because my Mum is like,

“What are you going to bring home?” Do you know what I mean? So I feel it’s for my-self to do it the right way, at least one of us should do it the right way.”

In relation to ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ gender relations, Rehana’s (F12) experience demonstrated how behaviour that was acceptable in other communities may be considered ‘risky’ for an Asian girl:

“One time I was with my family once and this one young male who I was at school with, said “hello”, and do you know? I got a slap for that, and all he had said was “hello”. And then it was, ““besharam”, have you got no shame? What are you talking to him for? You should only be talking to girls”.”

### **‘Bad’ Manners**

‘Bad’ manners including how to behave with elders within the community including one’s parents was a theme in its own right, as 8 (32%) of the interviewees (5 men and 3 women), stated that it could be a source of “sharam”. They cited not listening (Bilal - M5), being overly familiar with your mother as a daughter (Laila - F3), “talking back” (Nasreen - F5, and Shaz, M10), swearing in front of your parents (Raj - M9), or smoking in front of them (Khalid - M12) as some of the examples.

The following example illustrated the complex subtleties involved and showed the extent to which an understanding of “sharam” had to be entrenched in the behaviour of young Asians in relation to their relationship with their parents as elders. Haroon (M11) described the intricate etiquette involved in a son providing financial support to parents who were struggling to meet the household costs. He also reflected on his circumstances as a son living away from home:

“...because there are certain connotations to the way they receive money from you, especially for themselves and the wider community, so you can’t just go out there and say, “here is £30 pay your bill”. That’s not acceptable because that is a shame, so basically, you come in...they wouldn’t have to ask you, because that is

shame, does that make sense? So you have to either read their minds, or kind of be really nosey, or find out from whoever lives with them, like my little sister lives with mum, so I'm going to find out from her if they're struggling, what needs doing, and then maybe independently go and pay the bill, or give money to my sister, who will then go and hand it over to my mum, because it's acceptable. It's not acceptable a younger giving it to an elder as such, but it's more acceptable than me going over and saying, "here you are", but my sister lives with her, and if my sister said "right, I gave it her for the family", then it will be accepted."

### **Concerns Regarding Fashion, Dress and Modesty**

Concern with fashion, dress and issues of modesty was the third theme for shame-attracting behaviour and 7 (28%) of the respondents (5 women and 2 men), suggested that unacceptable behaviour in relation to this was significant in attracting "sharam". Interestingly even the 2 men focussed on women's clothing as a source of shameful behaviour. Significantly 3 of the women and 2 of the men specifically mentioned the wearing of skirts/mini-skirts as an issue.

For example, Sajida (F7) said:

"Okay as for example wearing a skirt, "Ahggg why are you showing your legs for?" It's like they'll come out with something like, "Gori" as in like white girls and say, "Why are you wearing a skirt, are you white? Why are you showing your legs?" and this, that and the other. And it's like that, and it's like, "Haven't you got any "sharam"?" which is in a way a different word for "izzat". And I suppose you kind of grow up with it..."

Haroon (M11) summarised how "sharam" seemed synonymous with the female form, including the concern with notions of modesty and perceptions of acceptability in regard to dress codes:

"Rules of dress and culture, a general rule for Asian girls is to kind of dress down instead of up, dress down. I mean like my parents expect my sister to.... alright she wouldn't wear a headscarf, but that was expected, but at least kind of dress in trousers, and not wear skirts, and to kind of not wear anything too skimpy or too revealing, nothing see-through, to at least cover your "sharam", which is your body as a woman."

The idea that understanding about “sharam” in relation to notions of modesty, started early in life especially for the women, was echoed by Shazia (F8) like Sajida (F7) earlier:

“When you said “sharam” the first thing that comes into my head is my youngest memory. My mum used to chase me round and say, “It’s shameful to run around naked, put your pants on, put your skirt on”. You know running around in the garden. They do that so we grow up to wear clothes and we have that shame.”

For the 2 Sikh women (Paramjeet – F9 and Jatinder – F11), the notion of modesty included the awareness of other sensibilities regarding the margins of acceptability. Paramjeet (F9), for example, in reflecting on “sharam” said:

“Going against the norm, being an individual, which isn’t seen as being normal within your family, like, dying your hair red, wearing Doc Martins and Combats...it’s kind of like, “What happened to her? She’s gone mad, quick, get her, sit her down and sort her out”.”

Jatinder, (F11) meanwhile dwelt on her procrastination regarding a hair-cut, given that Sikhs are traditionally meant to keep their hair long and uncut. She cited cutting her hair as an example of “be – izzat”, shameful/disrespectful, behaviour:

“I don’t know, it was just something that I wanted to do, and I said, “I’d better wait up until my sister’s wedding at least”, because prior to that I would have got a roasting. So I thought I’d wait until my sister’s wedding was over, and then I’m just going to do it, because I want to, and that was it.”

### **‘Life-Style’ Factors**

‘Lifestyle’ Factors was the fourth category of shame-attracting behaviour, cited by 12 (48%) of the interviewees including 7 women and 5 men. Under this theme I have included a wide range of behaviours such as smoking (Laila - F3 and Khalid - M12), drinking (Nasreen - F5 and Rehana - F12), gambling (Nasreen - F5), being on the streets “late” (Jasmine - F2, Rehana

- F12 and Sayed - M4) and “going clubbing” as a Muslim girl (Shameem - F6). One woman also mentioned “working late” (Jasmine, F2) as being problematic.

Haroon (M11) suggested that “sharam”,

“...especially in our Asian culture, is mixed up with tradition and religion, does that make sense?”

The example he cited, illustrated the wide effects of “sharam”, embedded in religious and traditional practices:

“Not going to the mosque or not praying is something that... I mean that is totally a religious thing, but it’s been dropped in, and mixed in with tradition and upbringing, and said that if you don’t pray then you’re being shameful, to your parents, to God, to your religion, to your culture.”

Two of the women (Jatinder - F11 and Rehana - F12) mentioned being conscious of living on their own as young, unmarried women, and therefore, “moving out of home” (Rehana – F12). The idea of doing something culturally “your society doesn’t accept” (Sajida - F7) was echoed by others who suggested “not being normal” (Shameem - F6) or “going against the norm” (Paramjeet - F9), or even “trying to be white” (Shameem - F6) as variations on this.

Imran (M3) also cited homosexuality as an issue, and I have included it in this category while another, Shaz, (M10) focused on his choice of career:

“Uhhhm, when I joined the Police Force...A couple of years ago, I think my parents were so uhhhm... so anxious, of how the wider community was going to view it...because I am like the only Police Officer from my area, they thought that it might be seen as “besharam”, and it was...”

## **Crime-Related Factors**

Within this fifth theme examples were mentioned by 5 (20%) of the interviewees including 3 women and 2 men. For example Bilal (M5) recounted an incident that resulted in a loss of “izzat” for him and therefore in attracting “sharam”, and which illustrated the consequences for himself and his family:

“Well, he [father] said, “Don’t hang around in this place”. It was a bad place, “Don’t hang around in that place – trust me, the Police are going to go to that place and you are going to get arrested. The house is going to get raided”. I go, “Dad, don’t worry, don’t worry”. What my dad said happened. I carried on hanging around that place and it got raided and I got arrested. At the end of the day, my dad was saying that because we have respect, these are the people who respect us. When the coppers came to the house, and my dad went out of the house, about fifty people were asking, “What are the police doing coming to the house for?” At the end of the day since twenty-five years there has never been police in my house, and the police came to the house and my dad was very upset. The police came to this house and that was a big thing.”

Shameem (F6) also suggested that “going out with someone in prison”, was stigmatising:

“Well I liked this one guy and I went to visit him at prison. I got caught and my parents found out and for them it was a big thing. You know, “Oh my God, what are you visiting a guy in prison for. It’s not about... It’s what he does”. They saw this as a big thing and they were shocked with me. You know, “My daughter would go to such a place and has anything to do with guys”. That was a big thing for them, and they kept going on about, “What would people say if they found out” and what kind of life would I have with him. “He probably takes drugs. His own family doesn’t want to know him. He’s got no respect and you want to be associated with his family, and you’re such a good girl and you’ll get totally messed up”, kind of thing.”

## **Other Miscellaneous Examples**

Within the sixth theme I included examples that ranged from the ‘ridiculous’ and ‘embarrassing’ (such as “getting married with your Y-fronts on” - Rashid - M6), to wider concerns such as “terrorism” (Shazia - F8). Also included were some very

serious experiences such as Uzma's (F13) mother being kidnapped by gunmen on a visit to a village in the North-West Frontier region of Pakistan. Her story captured all the wider connotations of "sharam" and therefore will be presented later in this chapter.

### **4.3 "Sharam" and Gender**

Four of the eight areas of questioning in the interview outline guide (appendix 6) included specific questions relating to gender. These provided the evidence for the findings presented here (in 4.3). For example under "Defining "Izzat"/Understanding of "Izzat", and "Sharam/Lajja", respondents were asked "What are the differences, if any, in the way that "izzat" is experienced by and affects men and women?" and "What are the differences, if any, in the way that "sharam"/"lajja" affects men and women?" In the section on "Gender and Reputation" they were asked "What, if any, are the differences in the way that Asian communities treat young men and women?" Also, under the section on "Respect/Losing Face", they were asked, "What are the differences, if any, for men and women when it comes to 'losing face' or respect? Therefore the respondents were consistently asked to reflect on the issue of gender through the interview process. However, before presenting their findings in detail here, it is also worth re-evaluating the data presented so far in this regard.

A number of the themes presented in point 4.2 (as well as some of the earlier ones) clearly have gender-related implications. These include the themes regarding relationships and gender-related misdemeanours, modesty, fashion/dress and "sharam" and life-style factors. As such it would be logical to present fuller findings in regard to the relationship between "sharam" and gender, before moving on to present the analysis of both together, "sharam"-

attracting behaviour and the themes that emerged as a result of this, and the relationship between “sharam” and gender.

The relationship between “sharam” and gender therefore has already been touched on in relation to the experiences and perceptions especially of some of the women in the sample. To date examples include those from Laila (F3), Shazia (F8), Yasmin (F1) and Nasreen (F5), who indicated that there was a clear difference in the way the behaviour of men and women was perceived by the family and wider community, including Rehana (F12) and Uzma’s (F13) suggestions that “izzat” had a greater emphasis on women than on men, (a point also acknowledged by Adam - M8), Shazia’s (F8) assertion that men would not even understand the word “izzat”, and the fact that in relation to “izzat” concerning the ‘self’, 4 of the women already linked it to self-conduct and especially to notions of modesty, which in turn was linked to Rashid (M6) and Rehana’s (F12) comments about the wearing of the “hijab”. Other examples included the 5 women’s concerns with appropriate/approved friendship networks and the concern of 3 of them with having sons rather than daughters. The contrasting comments from the men regarding their involvement in the more public activities of leadership and ‘good’ actions within the community, as discussed earlier for ‘enhancing’ “izzat”, also shed an interesting light on the differential treatment and expectations of young Asian women and men.

In the overt, explicit discussion about “sharam” and gender through the interview process, there was further consensus that “sharam” had a greater hold and impact on women than on men, with all of the women in the sample and all except one of the men (Sadir, M1), stating this as a fact. For 7 of the women (28% of the sample) the link between “sharam” and



concerns with issues of modesty (which have already been presented) was a clear indicator of the distinction regarding expectations of men and women. This distinction was also evident in the discussion about shame-attracting behaviour, under which more of the women (8 of the 13) compared with only 1 of the men (Abdullah - M7) had cited gender-related 'misdemeanours' or transgressions as a reason for attracting shame. In fact most of the six themes of "sharam"-attracting behaviour (Table 8), discussed earlier, featured the women from the sample in greater numbers than the men, indicating their greater awareness of how "sharam" affected their lives more than the lives of the men in regard to themselves, their families and their communities.

The clear sense that "sharam" was more significant in the lives of the women, compared to the men was stated succinctly by most of the sample. For example Jasmine (F2) said simply,

"...I think it only happens mainly to Asian women I think mainly."

While Shazia (F8) stated:

"...because it has different meanings for a man and woman. A man can't be shameful, but a woman can be."

And Haroon (M11) stated

"...sharam"...for women it has a larger impact, because women are expected to tow-the-line a lot more, if that makes sense?"

Seven of the interviewees, (28%) including 4 women and 3 men, acknowledged the hypocrisy that was implicit in this distinction in relation to the greater impact that "sharam" had on the lives of women. Yasmin (F1) explained:

"Oh I think it affects women more because women, they can be put straight down as having a lot of "be-izzat", "besharam", or a lot of shame, but when it comes to men, they can cover their tracks. "I'm a man, I can do this; I'm a man, I can do that", that's what they usually say, most of the time whenever I hear them. A lot of them say that..."

Others like Laila (F3) reflected on the differences within their own families:

“If my brother was to do something, he probably wouldn’t be treated the way that ...Just say that he was found out with a girl in the wrong context, if he was seen, he wouldn’t worry about it, he would just say, “Oh, I was with my mate”, and they would believe him. But if I was out there and caught with somebody, caught with a man, it would be totally different.”

Khalid (M12) was clear on this point:

“So I think that women get the rough end of the stick, because the expectations put on them are totally unfair.”

Sayed (M4) also admitted this:

“I basically think, yeah, girls...in a stereotypical way, girls get it more, do you get what I mean? Girls get more...get accused of more “sharam” activities, but lads, when they do it, it’s not seen as that bad.”

The differences in the way that “sharam” impacted on the lives of men and women meant that women were watched more closely:

“I think because men are seen as quite responsible, because they’re the breadwinners, and they’re seen as infallible as well, that they don’t do anything bad, and even when they do, there’s not a watchful eye on them. There is this whole lax attitude to them, they can do what they want and get away with it, because they do it further afield – if they’re not at home when they’re doing it, it’s ok.” (Nasreen - F5)

For 2 of the women the differences clearly extended into the consequences of attracting shame:

“It is where the woman is punished harder. More secrets, they can feel more isolated and things like that. So you close your door, you don’t want people to know your business, you get more scared about what they will say.” (Nasreen - F5).

Rehana (F12) reflected on her own situation as someone who had rejected a forced marriage (see her ‘pen’-picture – appendix 5) and lived away from her parental home, when she described the comparative consequences of attracting shame for a woman compared to a man:

“Yes, it’s extremities. Women are like stripped of everything, you know. They lose their connections, they lose the love, their parents don’t give them that love anymore, that unconditional...They lose that respect and self-worth, and everything that you had, “You’re my daughter”. It’s all gone. You lose that relationship, you lose the contact, maybe you’re isolated. So you have nothing really, in the sense that you make your own links, but you’re isolated from the wider community, you’re isolated from your parents. However, the young man will just probably, probably go back and maintain some contact, and he’ll just be ill-treated and disrespected, but if a woman kept going back, she would be completely...depending on what parents...it would be alienation, “Stay away from us”. Violence, she would get all that if she went back, all the stigma and everything ...”

Paramjeet’s (F9) example also showed the reactions that such transgressions incurred, while also demonstrating the confusion they created:

“Yeah, this is probably a good one, I’d say for an example, my “mama”, my mum’s brother, his daughter; she is part of my extended family, my mum’s side. She’s the only girl, besides from that we’ve had like eight boys’ weddings, but she was the first one to get married, because she was the oldest. She was dating a Sikh, but not “Jat” Sikh caste, which is what I am. She was dating a “Chamar” or something – I don’t know what his caste was, and her family obviously wanted her to get married, and start looking, and I, me and my cousins who went to university knew that she wasn’t. God knows what’s going to happen, because I don’t know if she’s going to do it. Basically, it was just crazy, it was mad basically. It got to a point where his family was involved, and it got to a point where she was not allowed out of the house - her phone was taken off her.”

She seemed clearly torn in her allegiances, thus displaying her confusion:

“Yes, yes, she is close to me, very close to me, and that was a confusing time for me, in a sense. OK, what do I do here? Do I go with what she wants? Because it’s her happiness at the end of the day, or do I go with...because obviously, I know the way it’s affecting her mum and dad and my mum and dad – it’s kind of like tearing them up inside, and it’s like, what do I do here?”

The evidence from the women suggested their acute awareness of the impact of “sharam” in their lives, and their assertions also inferred the anger and injustice they felt about the differences in expectations of women and men in relation to “sharam”. In contrast, it was interesting to note the reactions of some of the men in relation to “sharam”. All of them explicitly agreed that there were differences in the impact of “sharam” on men and women.

Sadir (M1) was the least forthcoming and stated that the impact and effects of “sharam” in the lives of men and women were “90%” the same. For him, the differing expectations, context and circumstances determined the impact:

“At the end of the day it’s the context, it all comes down to the context at the end of the day. It’s about certain degrees, certain extent I would say I would say yes it would, in certain degrees it wouldn’t. It’s like, like I explained before, it’s like when someone comes in a room, the younger stand up, or the female, you know, put their headscarf up, because if their head...because if she doesn’t do it now ...I don’t have to do it, but she has to do it like so if she doesn’t do it, it’s like “sharam” on her...”

Bilal (M5) and Rashid (M6) accepted that there were real differences in the way in which “sharam” affected men and women, and more importantly drew attention to the fact that the negative effects last a lot longer, where woman were concerned. Rashid (M6) said:

“A girl who brings “sharam” onto herself or other people is more reluctant to be seen. I don’t know what a girl feels like when she has been shamed, but I think that it sticks with that person. If they are raised up in a community and still in that community, and have brought shame, they are always going to be known as, “That’s blah, blah’s daughter, and she done this”. For them to know that wherever they go they can’t show their face, it’s going to stick to them for the rest of their life, until they move out or go onto a different life. But I’d say that it sticks more with a girl than a boy.”

Bilal (M5) additionally suggested that the reasons for the gender-related differences in the effects of “sharam”, rested in the fact that women were “more valued”:

““Sharam” for men – they can go off for a couple of days. “Sharam” for girls...can go on for ages because she is a girl. You know, girls in Asians are more valued than boys. So if a girl does something wrong, her “sharam” goes on for ages and people are going to bring it up. Whereas for males it is not so important, if I do something, okay people are going to talk about it, whereas if my sister does something, it is going to be more published because she is so and so’s daughter.”

Abdullah (M7) suggested that difference in the way that women and men experienced “sharam” and its impact, was a matter of relative shyness and confidence:

“Men, it’s my perception anyway, because they are quite more stressed and things like that, they wouldn’t have that much “sharam”, they would feel more confident ...but they will have some kind of confidence. Females tend to be more shy, well it’s my perception; someone might come into a room and they might shy away. I’m talking in the religious context, because as soon as them words came into my head, I’m thinking about the religious context.”

Shaz (M10), who also readily acknowledged the effects of “sharam” on men and women, suggested that women could transgress only by being clandestine and therefore “hide and do it”. In contrast Imran (M3) suggested that the focus of the difference in experiences lay in the fundamental differences between men and women. For him “sharam” was an alien concept and the difference was reduced to the notion of ‘pride’:

“See, going back to men being proud – it’s not an emotion that men are really meant to feel, “sharam”.”

Adam (M8) was the only one who explicitly indicated that the expectations of men and women required them to operate in different ways, resulting in the “sharam”-related distinctions, which for him, have their origins in Pakistan:

“I reckon it’s more emphasised on women, but I reckon it’s the traditions and values that have come from before, being Pakistani, being from Pakistan, mainly male-orientated society, hardly any women around, women are in the house, they see each other going house to house. The country we live in now, women are meant to have that equal respect, they should be allowed to go wherever, do whatever they please – so, mixed signals – the outside world telling you one thing and your family telling you one thing. As a guy ...you could go out there at night in Pakistan, ...because they know you’ll be back, the family won’t have to worry, ...so it’s embedded into their mind, their brain, that the male can do certain things that the female can’t do.”

Both Haroon (M11) and Adam (M8) like Nasreen (F5) earlier seemed to indicate that scrutiny and control played an important part in the way that “sharam” impacted on women. As Haroon (M11) pointed out:

“Scrutinising is done by, usually men, extended families, or even, by the community that they live in.”

In reflecting on his own sense of responsibility regarding his sister, Adam (M8) hinted at the pressure to take action including retribution:

“My sisters yeah, and my sister has been shamed, and somebody else has been involved, I’ll probably want to go and do nasty things to them, and I’d probably end up flipping on my sister as well, which is why I said I need my brother or my dad to be there. I don’t know why I get really angry, I get violent.”

Having interpreted “izzat” firstly as “respect”, Uzma (F13) immediately defined it and linked it to “shame”. She then told a story from her experience within her family, which demonstrated the power of shame, while at the same time displaying its multi-faceted, multi-layered nature and impact. Although her example and story is unconventionally long it exemplified the importance of “sharam”, and also captured a number of different ways in which it was articulated by the other interviewees in the sample. I will conclude my findings regarding “sharam” and gender with Uzma’s (F13) poignant story, because it combined all the different aspects of “sharam” presented so far, but most of all it illustrated how the ‘burden’ of “sharam” fell on women. Her story concerned the repercussions following her sister’s ‘failed’ arranged marriage with a man from Pakistan and his angry, threatening reaction to this. When Uzma (F13) and some members of her family including her mother, went to visit relatives in a Pakistani village that happened to be close-by to her sister’s ex-husband’s village, they had to be careful because of his threatening behaviour. The ex-husband found out about the visit and as Uzma (F13) recalls:

...he actually had some men waiting, and they tried to grab my sister, thinking she was \_\_\_\_ [name of sister given] because she was wearing the “burkha”, and they thought I was a village person because I was wearing the “chador”. But we managed to get away from them and go home, but they stormed the house with machine guns and stuff, and they took my mum, and they said that they wanted an exchange, they said we’ll give my mum back, if they can get \_\_\_\_ [sister’s name] back. So that was shame, because they took her, with guns....

Her mother was rescued by the Police but as Uzma (F13) reflects:

... So that was shame, and I remember something that my mother said, she said, “Thank God I got back”, and I think my mum came back at about midnight, 1.00 o’clock, by the time we’d finally got her back, and they had taken her at about like 7.00 o’clock in the morning. And I remember my mum sitting there with my aunties in the room, and saying, “Thank God you got me back before I had to spend the night there, because God knows what people would say”. And I remember thinking, “mum, things like that don’t just happen during the night”, but do you know when you have that shame? My mum thought her shame was... I mean the shame was unbelievable, because people were saying, “Oh, she’s been taken”. Oh, all the villagers knew about it. The leaders didn’t really want to get involved, because they were saying, “Oh you’re from England, so you’ll go back, we don’t want to create problems, because we have to stay here, you’ll go back, and then we’ll have to deal with them”. So it was really complicated and stuff, but.... I remember my mum saying that about the shame, “Oh thank God you got me back before night, because God knows what people would say, if I had ended up spending the night in their village, with them holding me captive”. So, so that’s something I remember about shame.”

### **Analysis of “Sharam, “Sharam-Attracting Themes and “Sharam” and Gender**

The first theme of “sharam”-attracting behaviour, regarding gender-related and relationship ‘misdemeanours’, cited by 8 of the women and 1 of the men in my sample (36%), has a relatively ‘long’ history of attracting attention from researchers. Therefore, as early as 1963, Desai (p. 123) referred to “carnal extra-marital sex relations” and “sexual contact with the outsider”, as behaviour that attracted disapproval from the community. In referring to “the outsider” Desai (1963:123) inferred transgressions in terms of caste and race, which was also indicated by some of the examples from my sample in relation to this theme, such as Nina (F10).

The fact that there were clearly more women than men in my sample who provided examples of gender-related transgressions was also relevant, showing that there seemed to be a clear difference in relation to behaviour associated with gender and relationships and in this regard, expectations of Asian women and men. Although these differences were generally indicated

by the research reviewed, the specific point was only really made by Shaw (2000:212), who asserted that relationship transgressions regarding “‘race’ and therefore, ‘outside the ‘biradari’ for women could result in being ‘cut off altogether’, but the Pakistani father in such transgressions would be more accepted”.

Paramjeet’s (F9) procrastination and split sense of loyalty to her cousin and to her uncle and aunty (and by association to her own parents), provided a unique insight into the pressures created by “sharam”-related transgressions, especially those in respect to relationships with the opposite sex. Her example of a relationship between two young people across differences of caste revealed two significant points. The first related to the fact that her cousin, a peer, clearly saw her as a confidante and ally, in line with the findings of Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) who suggested that young Asians seemed to have a greater tendency than young people from other cultural backgrounds to develop a culture of ‘conspiracy’, using each other as confidantes. Secondly, and perhaps more significantly, Paramjeet’s (F9) discomfort with her cousin’s imprisonment and the fact that “her phone was taken off her”, seemed to be tempered by a tone that suggested some sympathy with her uncle and auntie’s actions as a consequence of the transgression committed by her cousin. Her loyalties and more importantly sympathy were by no means just with her cousin – she seemed to be genuinely grappling with the complexity of the situation, and the effects on all those involved, including her own parents. This example, like Laila (F3) and Yasmin’s (F1) earlier, demonstrated the impact of “sharam”, including the possible differences in relation to gender, in the lives of the young women in the sample.



The differences between men and women in both expectations and consequences of transgressions was mirrored by the women in my interview sample, with all of the 13 explicitly demonstrating an acute awareness of “sharam”’s ‘behaviour-curbing’ properties. This is an aspect of “sharam” that will be presented and analysed more fully next in this chapter. Therefore the differences in relation to gender were clear in the responses presented regarding “sharam”. They were experienced in relation to the notion of ‘relative freedom’ (Ghuman 1994, 1996, 1999; Briggs and Briggs, 1997; Anwar, 1998; Bhatti, 1999), and in the comparative force used on men and women in relation to the impact of the consequences of unacceptable behaviour which transgressed the norms of acceptability. As Ghuman (1994:86) stated:

The problem relating to independence versus conformity to family values was mentioned specifically in relation to girls.

The idea that women needed to be ‘controlled’ by men, because they were in danger of jeopardising their “izzat”, and therefore attracting shame, was hinted at by Uzma’s (F13) account of her mother’s kidnapping, and was a point inferred especially in Samad and Eade’s (2002) research.

Rehana’s (F12) example about the ‘risk’ incurred through being perceived to be liaising with a boy (albeit in an innocent way), provided a unique insight into how aware and alert to the potential ‘dangers’ Asian women need to be. Although researchers on Asian communities settled in Britain discussed the significance of appropriate, acceptable gender-related behaviour, and resulting censure in general, none actually suggested the notion of ‘risk’ potentially incurred as a result of perceived inappropriate, ‘everyday’ behaviour. This is a point that I acknowledged early on in my reflections as a Youth Worker (Soni 2006).

Rehana’s (F12) example demonstrated the respective differences regarding notions of

acceptability between different cultures, and Gilbert et al. (2004:2), were the only researchers who suggested some understanding of this, when they stated:

“...social groups define the characteristics that bring shame and stigma; what is shaming or acceptable in one culture may not be in another.”

So, although they did not make the link to the idea of ‘risk’, they were clearly conscious of cross-cultural differences regarding norms of acceptability.

Eight of the interviewees in my sample (32%) suggested that ‘manners’ and knowing how to behave appropriately with elders (including their parents), was important for avoiding “sharam”. The intricacies and etiquette potentially involved in the processes of interaction between a son and his mother was particularly well captured by Haroon’s (M11) description, which was unique in its subtleties. This level of description was an aspect of behaviour largely absent from the work of earlier researchers, although they did refer to shame – attracting behaviour in general terms. For example, Ghuman (1994, 1996 and 1999) drew attention to the importance of ‘good’ behaviour for women in particular. This distinction between the behaviour of men and women and the related expectations of the family and community was also made by Anwar (1998).

This focus on women’s behaviour was echoed by Bhatti (1999:55) when she pointed out that the mothers of the young people in her sample were, “more concerned about their daughters [...] because the family’s ‘izzat’ (honour) was gauged by the behaviour and attitude of its daughters”. In contrast, it was in fact, noteworthy, that this aspect of behaviour was cited by 5 of the men in my sample, demonstrating that it was something that impacted on both men and women.

Bhatti's (1999:55) assertion about the importance of young women's "behaviour and attitude", I think subsumed 'attitudes' in their widest sense, including, for example in relation to notions of fashion, dress and modesty, which was the third theme of shame-attracting behaviour mentioned explicitly by 7 (28%) of the individuals in my sample.

This concern with modesty, particularly in relation to women was acknowledged by other researchers including Wilson (1979) and Ballard (1982:5), who referred to women needing to behave "with seemly modesty". This was echoed by Kassam (1997) and Anwar (1998:143) who asserted that there was "community pressure for Asian girls to be 'modest' in their behaviour and dress". Samad and Eade (2002:75) also pointed out that:

Most Asian communities are concerned with the linked issues of honour ('izzat') and shame or modesty.

Implicit in their assertion seemed to be the sense that shame was synonymous with modesty and therefore particularly with female actions and attributes, as they also suggested:

Flagrant disregard of segregation and conventions of modesty raise issues of family honour. (ibid. p. 75)

Their perspective was reflected by Haroon's (M11) suggestion that "sharam" seemed synonymous with the female form, and included an inescapable concern with notions of modesty.

Shaw's (1998, 2000) references to modesty included a discussion about the expectations of both men and women, based on religious, Muslim practices, but this was not reflected in my discussions with the individuals in my sample, who focussed predominantly on the expectations of girls and women.

Bhatti's (1999:167) observations on modesty distinguished between two 'proto-types' of Asian girls including those labelled as, "man-hunting at the poly!" who arrived in school, "wearing 'shalwar' and 'kameez' and changed into mini-skirts and applied heavy make-up", and others who were described as "the non-make-up, non-mini-skirt groups". The reference to mini-skirts in particular was reminiscent of Sajida's (F7) views, in which she hinted that she would be accused of being a "Gori" (a white girl). Although Bhatti did not make reference specifically to 'white' cultural practices, it was implied in her discussion.

Other researchers have drawn more explicit attention to the negative implications for Asian girls, in particular those perceived as behaving in a 'westernised' or white manner including Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990), Ballard (1994) and Anwar (1998). Ballard (1994a:16), for example, in discussing the settlement of Asian communities in Britain, and therefore the establishment of a "fully moral social universe" was clear that:

Those who mimicked English ways too closely began to be accused of being "be-izzat" – without honour. (p. 15)

Paramjeet (F9) and Jatinder (F11), both Sikh women and Shameem (F6), a Muslim also made references to behaving in ways that would be considered "against the norm" (Paramjeet - F9), implying this involved behaviour outside the confines of 'Asian-ness', and therefore being more westernised. Jatinder's (F11) example of the "roasting" she received for cutting her hair was reminiscent of Sanghera's (2007) reflections on being beaten by her mother when she had her hair-cut and a perm.

The tensions implied especially by some of the women, between behaving in a traditional, acceptable way, and in ways which perhaps expressed their individuality (for example through having a hair-cut or wearing "Doc Martens" – Paramjeet – F9), seemed reminiscent

of some of the discussions in the reviewed literature concerning comparative notions of 'relative freedom' experienced by Asian young men and women. This debate appeared briefly in the work of Ghuman (1994, 1996 and 1999) and Anwar (1998), with Bhatti (1999:164) referring to the "delicate act of balance", young women were required to perform to gain "personal freedoms".

The comparative difference in both expectations and treatment of men and women was generally well documented by others. The greater burden of "sharam" clearly fell on women and this was reflected by my findings and in the literature reviewed. Kassam's (1997:119) simple assertion captured the distinction succinctly:

Asian girls have to shoulder this responsibility, however unfair it may seem.

Uzma's (F13) story also emphasised this point clearly and demonstrated how "sharam" continued to have a hold in the lives of young and all Asians, especially the women.

Although only 7 individuals in my sample (28%) explicitly volunteered issues of modesty as an important consideration in shame-attracting behaviour, its general significance was implicit in the conduct of all the individuals in the sample. For example, Uzma's (F13) reference to wearing the "chador" (in her story) implied the general expectations especially of women, regarding a sense of modesty within the family and the community at large. Given that my sample of 25 individuals included many Muslims, this makes me wonder whether this awareness in relation to the notions of modesty particularly in relation to Muslim women was also underpinned by the current concern with symbols of identity, which include modesty-related notions, expressed, for example through the wearing of the "hijab" (headscarf). Haroon (M11) and Farzana (F4) made explicit reference to the "hijab", which seemed to

mirror this debate about its emergence as a symbol of Muslim, female identity in a British context as discussed for example by Sheridan (2006), Sangera and Thapar-Bjorkert (2007), and Griffiths (2011). They suggested that there was a growing tendency among Muslim women of wearing the “hijab”, especially in the face of growing external hostility and the rise in Islamophobia in British and in other global contexts.

Moving on to life-style factors, in contrast to the distinctions that 4 of the women made in reference to trying to be “white” (Sajida – F7), and therefore to being an individual which was not seen as being “normal” (Paramjeet – F9), Haroon’s (M11) emphasis on “Asian culture”, underpinned by “tradition and religion”, suggested where the guiding principles of behaviour that was acceptable and therefore ‘normal’, came from. The assertion that tradition and religion underpinned what was considered ‘acceptable’ was indicated by Bowen (1981). Not surprisingly the examples included within this theme relating to ‘lifestyle factors’ such as homosexuality, smoking, drinking, gambling, being out “late”, “going clubbing”, “working late” and moving out of home as an unmarried woman could be considered both, as irreligious/untraditional, and perhaps also as mimicking “English ways” (Ballard 1994a:15).

Eleven individuals (44%) in my sample of 25, including 7 women and 4 men, were clearly conscious of the distinctions between the boundaries of acceptability within Asian cultures and communities, and behaviour that may be perceived as coming from outside the confines of Asian culture. This was in line with Bhatti’s (1999:55) experiences whereby the mothers of the Asian young people in her sample saw the host society’s “majority culture” as being “very different” from their Asian culture. Ballard’s (1994a:14) assertions regarding the Sikh community’s perceptions of the host society were more negative, and perhaps more closely

reflected the tone of negativity attached to such life-style-related transgressions suggested by the individuals in my sample:

This was not a culture worthy of simulation, nor one to whose corrupting influence their nearest and dearest should be exposed.

In line with this perception, Shaw (1998:172) also quoted a male mosque committee president's disdain for English society and particularly its attitude to women, when he said:

Women are exploited in English society...there's no respect for them.

The exception from the 11 individuals and their examples included under this theme was Shaz's (M10) reference to joining the "Police Force", which was viewed with trepidation by his family. In theory, this role/position should attract "izzat" and therefore status given the authority potentially attached to the role. This should be in line with Bachu's (1985) idea of achieved status through good employment, also implied by other researchers (including Dahya 1973, 1974; Anwar 1998; Bhatti 1999). However, the political climate, especially with the rise in Islamophobia, and therefore the community's perceptions of the Police as perpetrators of racist targeting of Muslims in Britain (Ratcliffe 2004; McGhee 2005; Abbas 2011; Khan 2011) acted to, in fact, attach a negative value to what should be perceived as a positive role. Shaz's (M10) example, perhaps, showed how "izzat" and "sharam" were influenced by the socio-political context in which a community existed at any given point in history.

The fifth theme of "sharam"-attracting behaviour cited by 4 (16%) individuals in my sample, and concerning crime and crime-related factors, was not specifically highlighted by many of the researchers reviewed earlier. The only exception was Shaw (2000:295) who briefly referred to loss of "izzat" incurred by a young man and his family because he was "serving a prison sentence on drugs charges". It is possible that the professional background of the

individuals in my sample made them especially conscious of young people and others within the community engaged in illegal activities. For example, Shameem (F6) at the time of her interview had just successfully completed a placement with an agency that worked with young people who were ‘at risk’ of becoming involved in crime. (See appendix 5 for her ‘pen’-picture).

The ‘miscellaneous’ theme of “sharam”-attracting behaviour included a range of specific examples from individuals within my sample. As examples they ‘stand- alone’, but the implicit inferences to reflected “sharam” and the concern with ‘reputation’ requires deeper analysis. This is a significant aspect of “sharam” and “izzat” and will be presented and analysed separately following the conclusion of this focus on “sharam”.

#### **4.4. “Sharam” and ‘Curbing Behaviour’**

Many of the findings and analysis presented thus far culminate in the discussion regarding “sharam” as a force for curbing behaviour. Therefore the examples shared by the respondents especially regarding when their or their family’s “izzat” was affected, what they considered to be “be-izzat” and/or “be-sharam”, their knowledge, understanding and experience of the ‘right’ way to behave and their “considerations” for choosing a spouse, were some of the key questions (see appendix 6) that provided the evidence for this discussion (4.4).

The fact the “sharam”- attracting behaviour was collated into six themes, demonstrates that the interviewees were very aware and conscious of the ‘type’ of behaviour that should be avoided. This links closely to the notion that “sharam” helps to ‘curb’ or restrict behaviour.



In relation to this, 18 (72%) of the respondents (12 women, that is all of them except Farzana – F4, and 6 men), showed explicit awareness of this aspect of “sharam”.

Some of the quotes and examples used in the earlier discussions about shame-attracting behaviour already indicated some of the interviewees’ awareness of the need to ‘curb’ their perceived behaviour. The examples already cited include Sayed’s (M4) coming in late after a night out with his friends on his weekend visits ‘home’ to Bradford, Jatinder’s (F11) procrastination about her hair-cut and waiting until after her sister’s wedding, Shameem’s (F6) sense of cautiousness regarding her visit to a boyfriend in prison, Imran (M3) being caught smoking and Khalid (M12) considering smoking in front of his father as an example of attracting “sharam” and unacceptable behaviour. Some of the women already cited, particularly linked their relative freedoms with being trusted to conduct themselves appropriately and with restraint (such as Yasmin – F1, Nasreen – F5, Shameem – F6, Paramjeet – F9 and Uzma – F13). This restraint or ‘correct’ conduct was also closely linked to their understanding of the demands of ‘modesty’.

Much of this ‘awareness’ revolved around having knowledge of certain ‘rules’, which related to behaviour and the limits that were implicit in this. It also highlighted an understanding of what may be considered “normal”. Shameem (F6) epitomised the views of the women:

“”Besharam” means when you are up a bit. When you have been disliked, or you don’t act in a certain way or you don’t do certain things.... It could be anything, it is what people see as not being normal and it could be classified as “besharam”.”

For Haroon (M11) and Imran (M3) “sharam” was linked to religious and traditional practices.

As Imran (M3) stated:

“There are certain rules that I do follow and I think there are certain ways that I conduct myself, yeah, which I think has really been because of my religion, and I think that if I didn’t have religion I think I would have been a lot more...a shameless person, a lot more...”

Laila (F3) also identified the controlling aspects of both, “sharam” and “izzat”, when asked about the relationship between the two.

“...they are both a means of control ain’t it? I think they are a means of control, and they are similar in the sense that they both put limitations in place.”

Shazia (F8) suggested the far-reaching effects of these “limitations” especially for women:

“...I have come across a lot of my friends, very educated, extremely bright girls doing Pharmacy and Optometry, high flying careers and they can earn forty grand easily one day in a year and it’s just not acceptable – it’s “besharam” to wear trousers and a top or a skirt and a top. They have to wear “shalwar/kameez”.”

The decision-making process in regard to the boundaries of shame and therefore of acceptable/unacceptable behaviour was captured by Laila’s (F3) example, which also reflected the concerns regarding gender:

“When I get out the house, I am conscious, because as you know, there are some temptations in the world, especially in our society, there are a lot of temptations and coming from my background, it’s really hard to go and say, “...Because I am a family person”. Every-day I go out, I have to have that in my mind, that I don’t want to do anything that stupid, not that I would, but it’s always there in your heart. Now I will give you an example. A few months ago, there was a concert – it wasn’t a concert, it was a show that was on, but it was from 9.00 to 12.00. Now I personally couldn’t go, but because it was a mate of mine who was doing it, I really wanted to go, and that was when I thought, “I can’t say that. What’s wrong with me going to my mate’s concert?” But it had impacted me like that – I really thought, “Why can’t I go?” Whereas, if that was my brother, he would do it, even if he had to keep it on the low, he would do it. So there is that difference, but with me, I take it so much more seriously.”

Yasmin (F1) also drew attention to the distinction between how the actions of a young man and a young woman were perceived by the family and the wider community. She provided the example of her older brother’s actions in regard to his relationship with a young

Bangladeshi girl, and more importantly, she illustrated the complex balance of both, ‘negotiation’ and rebuke that she entered into with him:

“I don’t know why, but it is my brother again. I really do because he went out with..., he says to us that we “shouldn’t do this and we shouldn’t do that”, and then he actually brought a girl down our house without anyone knowing, and then we found out, my mum found out, and she didn’t know what to do, and I think he put a lot of “sharam” onto the family then, and because he had to bring them to the house, my uncle seen her as well, then they found out, then obviously word goes around just by somebody saying. And I think he really shamed our family. I found out she was there, and I actually caught her, and I said to him, “What the hell are you playing at?” And he said, “Who are you talking to? I’m older than you”. He made it out like I was in the wrong and he was in the right, saying that, “I’m older than you, what’s it to you what I’m doing?” And I said, “Well you said that this is wrong, that’s wrong”. Because she was a Bengali and not Pakistani – my mum, she wanted him to get married to her first cousin, and he said, “I’m going to get married to her”, but my mum said, “You’re not going to marry her”. Well he rang me that night and he said, “Well go on then shout at me all that you want, do what you like and get it over and done with”. And I’m like, “What do you mean, get it done and over with?” And he said, “Well you’re going to say something or even tell”. And I said, “Everyone knows, who am I meant to tell? Everyone seen you come out of the house, so what does it matter what I say?” And he goes, “Alright then, fine”. The next day he was really okay and acting like nothing never happened. So, it’s like that – he can do everything that “sharam” or “be-izzat” our family, but if we do it, we’ve totally shamed the family, and we shouldn’t do this or that.”

Yasmin’s (F1) account and Laila’s (F3) earlier, illustrated the concern with reflected shame, and therefore being implicated by the actions of others, which was explicitly echoed by another 6 of the respondents (and therefore by 9 (36%) of them – 6 women and 3 men). It was worth noting Bilal’s (M5) clear concern about this as an example:

“You know when I do something, well I look at it beforehand and say, “Is it going to shame my family or me”, because at the end of the day, if I was going to do something that shamed my family, I wouldn’t do it. Because my family has earned respect and if I am going to shame my family, they lose that respect. You know, your family, they can’t face other people.”

For Rehana (F12) awareness of “sharam’s” curbing powers was strikingly poignant:

“I think it’s shaped most of my life, it’s had an immense impact, and when I think about it, because I understand the limits of it, and I understand how far it can go, and how much it’s shaped my life in terms of that. It’s controlled my life, for a

very long time. There are certain things that I can't do; I can't go out at certain times, because everything is going to go back to my family."

Six (24%) of the respondents, 5 women and 1 man, elaborated on the consequences of being 'caught' in the act of behaving shamefully. The 'consequences' suggested were varied – for example Haroon (M11) discussed the effects on one's "confidence" and the effects of reflected shame on, "...your standing in the community, within your family...", and Laila (F3) cited, "The guilt in me..." and, when she was younger "...no pocket money for two or three weeks....", as the consequences for being "caught smoking". Rehana (F12) and Nasreen (F5) implied that being ostracised would be a consequence, and Paramjeet (F9) described the circumstances surrounding her cousin's relationship with a boy from a different caste, highlighting both, the consequences of her actions, and the steps taken by her family.

The analysis that follows regarding how "sharam" acted as a mechanism for curbing behaviour also demonstrates and helps to establish the requirements of conformity. As I have mentioned earlier nearly three quarters of my sample of 25 interviewees (72%) especially illustrated this awareness, which was significant and therefore merits deeper analysis in its own right.

The concept of censure and conforming to acceptable standards and norms of behaviour was reasonably well documented by some of the researchers reviewed earlier. Therefore, Wilson (1979) early on discussed how "sharam" could be instrumental in securing conformity, and Khan (1979:45) referred to, "restrain on individual initiative and independence". Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990:42) also stated that there was "pressure" on young Asians "towards conformity, obedience and support of the family".

The difference and uniqueness of some of the insights shared by individuals from these interviews relate to two key points. Firstly, their examples illustrated the process of thinking, weighing up, negotiating and decision-making involved in the phenomenon of “sharam” as an active mechanism for curbing behaviour. The examples shared in particular by Bilal (M5), Yasmin (F1), Laila (F3) Paramjeet (F9), Jatinder (F10) and Rehana (F12), provide evidence of this. They made judgments about whether and how far they were ‘prepared’ to transgress the norms of acceptability, which they were fully aware of (as demonstrated by the themes of “sharam”-attracting behaviour analysed earlier). The evidence from my sample seemed to indicate this. The central focus on “izzat” and therefore “sharam”, in this research facilitated a more measured discussion of the concepts, enabling interviewees to reveal their thoughts and feelings in much more depth.

In fact it is noteworthy that for many of the researchers reviewed earlier “sharam”-related considerations were particularly relevant in the process of spouse-selection. Anwar (1998:108) for example pointed out that young Asians conform to “endogamy” because they knew that if they did not, then “relationships with their families and relatives could be strained”. In contrast, it is important to acknowledge, that my interviewees demonstrated how the concept and its impact and influence remained important in all other aspects of their lives. As Rehana (F12) pointed out bluntly:

“I think its shaped most of my life...”

This more ‘process-focussed’ aspect of their examples, is closely linked to the second point which concerned the fact that the decision-making process involved in the curbing of behaviour was in fact influenced by the context, and therefore especially by the place and

people present. Therefore, Khalid (M12) at the age of 33, smoked, but would not do so in front of his father, and Jatinder (F11) wore “sleeveless tops”, but not when visiting her mother. These processes of decision-making were subtly nuanced, influenced by each individual’s understanding of relationships regarding generational factors, gender and the dynamics of power that were inherent in them. Thus, Yasmin’s (F1) example of rebuking and remonstrating with her brother about his supposedly ‘clandestine’ relationship with a “Bengali” girl illustrated the interplay of gender and age in regard to the relationship between siblings and between a mother and her son. In fact the mother’s sense of helplessness – (“she didn’t know what to do...”), was palpable in spite of her seniority, showing how in such cases gender seemed to have the ‘upper hand’. This example also demonstrated a clear concern, urgency and fear of others outside the immediate family finding out, and the reflected “sharam”-related consequences of this. Such a level of complexity was merely implied by Gilbert et al. (2004:2) when they stated:

...the dynamics of shame and stigma may be linked to complex power and self-interest interplays between people.

In line with considerations regarding modesty, Shazia (F8) made a salient, wider point, which raised interesting questions. She pointed out that she knew many educated, professional friends, who were forced to wear “shalwar”/“kameez”, in respect of family and cultural expectations. As such, she hinted at the lack of opportunity for such Asian women to pursue careers that they may be trained in because explicit and implicit professional dress codes may lead to potential conflicts with Western ‘ideals’ of modesty for example through prescribed uniforms. In short they may inadvertently limit Asian women’s’ employment prospects however well qualified they may be.

Imran (M3) and Haroon's (M11) assertion that "sharam" (and "izzat") was linked to religious, traditional and cultural practices provided further gravity and weight to the concept.

Therefore, it was not surprising that 3 of the interviewees (12%) made an explicit reference to the idea that the concept was a mechanism of "control". This aspect of "izzat" and "sharam", was overtly stated by Wilson (1979), Ballard (1994), Modood et al. (1994), Shaw (1988, 2000), Anwar (1998), Samad and Eade (2002) and Gilbert et al. (2004). In fact, one of the focus group participant's views presented by Gilbert et al. (2004:8), made reference to "special control".

The fact that 6 (24%) of the interviewees (and 5 of these were women) explicitly discussed both the psychological and physical consequences of shame/shameful behaviour suggests a general awareness of the power of the concept and its impact especially in the lives of women. The psychological impact, including feelings of guilt, loss of self-esteem and confidence was highlighted by Wilson (1979) and Khan (1979) early on. Khan (1979:45) for example referred to the loss of "esteem and influence". However, it was the much later work of Gilbert et al. (2004, 2007), that focused in some depth on this aspect of shame (and therefore "izzat"):

Shame can be internal, related to negative self-perception and feelings... (2004:2)

Other researchers, like Nasreen (F5), Paramjeet (F9) and Rehana (F12) from the sample, focussed on more physical consequences such as physical punishment including ostracisation. This more physical consequence of community transgressions has attracted more attention from researchers, including Ghuman (1994), Din (2006) and Shaw (1988, 2000) who suggested:

...attempts to salvage honour have included physical or mental abuse, physical assault and even murder. (Shaw 2000:295).

Perhaps the growing media interest in honour-related violence, which has become an area of special interest for some researchers such as Gill (2003, 2004, 2005), has led to the greater focus on the physical consequences of shame-attracting transgressions, inadvertently moving the focus away from “izzat” as an ‘everyday’ aspect of life in Asian communities in general, which has been the emphasis of this research.

#### **4.5. “Sharam”: Some Conclusions**

The presentation of my initial findings regarding “sharam” from my 25 interviews showed they all had an understanding of the concept and how it contributed to shaping their lives, especially in relation to curbing their behaviour. My explicit exploration relating to “sharam” with the interviewees has resulted in a much deeper understanding of the concept than was gleaned from the earlier review of research on Asian communities settled in Britain. This is because my interviewees were encouraged to reflect on examples of “sharam”-attracting behaviour or behaviour considered shameful by the community, enabling the six themes of “sharam”-attracting behaviour to emerge. This along with the explicit discussion about “sharam” and gender, in turn helped to demonstrate the concept’s clear greater impact in the lives of women.

For many researchers ‘shame’ was the generic term used, with only Ballard and Ballard (1977) referring to the Urdu term “sharam” early on in the context of Sikh men liaising with white women, which resulted in the loss of “izzat”. Much later Shaw (2000) and then Gilbert



et al. (2004, 2007) referred to the concept using the Urdu term “sharam”, to mean ‘shame’.

My interviewees were comfortable using the Urdu term for this concept.

Most of the other researchers used the English term ‘shame’, discussing it mainly in the context of it being the general mechanism for enlisting conformity from members of the community. In contrast, my exploration of “sharam” as a mechanism for curbing behaviour and its ability to be reflected like “izzat”, illustrate the complex decision-making process that individuals engaged with in their ‘every-day’ assessments of situations and circumstances they found themselves in, which could potentially lead to the loss of “izzat” and to attracting “sharam”.

#### **4.6. Reflected “Izzat”, “Sharam” and Reputation**

The presentation and analysis of the findings to date already provide a basis for the discussion in this section of the thesis. This was further augmented by the line of questioning under the “Gender and Reputation” section of the interview guide (appendix 6). The data produced has been collated and presented here. The questions relating to the respondents’ understanding of “reputation”, and its importance in their and their family’s life, how a reputation can be influenced, their sharing of examples of this from their lives and their feelings about gossip, were particularly relevant to this discussion.

At the heart of the idea that Asian cultures are considered to be ‘collectivist’, as distinct from the more ‘individualistic’ cultures of the West, is the notion that the behaviour of an individual can reflect on the standing or reputation that his or her family has in the

community. Individuals belonging to a family can be affected positively or negatively, by the way that another member of the family is judged to have conducted himself/herself. The idea of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” (Wilson 1979; Din 2006) was explored in the previous discussion regarding both “izzat” and “sharam”, as a particularly Asian phenomenon and also in relation especially to the influence of “sharam” for curbing behaviour. However, it is important to spend more time on this notion of reflected “izzat” and “sharam”, and then on its relationship with reputation, because it helps to provide some idea of the extent to which the individuals in my sample were affected by, and conscious of it. This in turn would provide some evidence of the extent to which their families had some level of sway over the decisions they made about their personal conduct, because the individuals were aware of the effect that their behaviour could potentially have on their family, and on their family’s reputation and standing in the community. Although the interview process did not explicitly include questions about reflected “izzat” and “sharam”, as stated above it did explore interviewees’ awareness of the significance of the notion of ‘reputation’ in their lives and in regard to their families. Their understanding and knowledge of the mechanism of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” therefore emerged organically throughout and will be presented first, followed by a focus on reputation. Reflected “izzat” and “sharam” and reputation will then be analysed together, as these concepts are linked.

Significantly, 24 of the 25 individuals (96%) in my sample (all 13 women and 11 men – all except Sadir - M1, who ‘presented’ as a conservative, Muslim young man anyway), recognised that the notions of “izzat” and “sharam” were related to their actions and behaviour as individuals and reflected on their families. All of them, including Sadir (M1) were clear that reputations were important.

The idea that reflected “izzat” and “sharam” in general, are particularly ‘Asian’ phenomena, has already been discussed to some extent. However, a closer examination of this dynamic, that is the relationship between the individual and their family in regard to reflected “izzat” and “sharam” revealed that it had a number of different aspects to it, and therefore, like the concept of “izzat” itself, was subtly nuanced.

All 25 of the interviewees understood and acknowledged that as a ‘base-line’ regarding reflected “izzat” and “sharam”, there was a relationship between “izzat”/“sharam”, the individual and the family. Sayed (M4), for example said:

“Because at the end of the day, you represent... I represent my family. Do you know what I mean? If I mess about, it’s going to affect my family...”

Adam (M8) was also clear about his responsibility:

“I’ve got “izzat”. The same as within the family – it’s about understanding what I should be doing as a man on behalf of the family.”

Nasreen (F5) like others explicitly stated the link with her parents:

“For me, as an Asian woman, “izzat” means a lot of things, or meant to mean lots of things, so if I sort of put into that context, “izzat” is sort of what my parents want me to have, or they want me to make sure that people I see around me have got “izzat”, and that I’m a good Asian girl, so that would probably be “izzat” for me.”

For many of the respondents, the idea that they represented their families, and therefore their behaviour reflected on their families, came with an understanding that they should be ‘careful’ regarding behaviour that would be considered unacceptable or liable to lose “izzat” or attract “sharam”. As Imran (M3) stated:

“In the community that I have grown up in, it’s to be like, never washing your dirty clothes in public, you know, and stuff like that. So, any little things that happen in the house, stay in the house, that’s “izzat”, you know...”

It was clear that even with me as an ‘insider’ (Jarret 1993) some interviewees were careful in deciding which aspects of their lives in regard to “izzat”, and therefore “dirty clothes” (Imran - M3), they would be willing to share, and which they would not. Jasmine (F2) shared a lot, but there were clearly limits, and when I probed the reason a male neighbour had attacked her mother in the street with her shoe, and then with a screwdriver, she just said, “It can’t be told”.

On the whole the interviewees were very forthcoming in relation to their understanding about the dynamics involved in the process of reflected “izzat” and “sharam”. An example featured earlier is Laila’s (F3) procrastination about going to a friend’s show. Shameem (F6) cited earlier, also provided an interesting example of her efforts to keep her ‘relationship’ with a “guy” from prison, hidden from her family, and the extent to which her parents were vigilant in relation to her behaviour regarding her contacts or relationships, (because they opened a letter addressed to her from him).

Not only were the interviewees conscious of the effects of their conduct on their families, they seemed conscious that the behaviour of their siblings had as much effect on their family and on them as individual members of the family. This was illustrated by both Yasmin (F1), whose example regarding her brother’s relationship with a “Bengali” girl has been cited, and Rashid (M6), quoted earlier and who raised concerns about his brother’s behaviour, and hinted that the family’s “izzat” was particularly precarious, and negatively affected, because he lived in a family with no father.

Apart from Rashid (M6), 2 of the women, (Jasmine - F2 and Nina - F10), re-iterated the idea that not having a father at the head of a household or family, meant that there was an added pressure and struggle associated with gaining or maintaining “izzat” and/or not being seen to attract “sharam”. Jasmine (F2) for example, when discussing the meaning of “be-izzat” and “besti”, said:

“That’s like no respect, is it? I don’t know really - that would be really bad I think, because Asians do believe a lot in “izzat” and all the rest of it, and so on, and if we didn’t have that at that time, that would have been like a lot of more pressure on the family, especially my mother, with six daughters, and the youngest being me, that would have been really bad for the family, because my mother would be panicking more, stressing more about where we are, what we’re doing, and all the rest of it. So if we didn’t really have no “izzat” in the family, that would have made things really hard for us as well, because when we were having a lot of back-biting in the home, a lot of grief from other people, a lot of communities, you wouldn’t really get much help from a lot of people, as my father wasn’t there and that, so that would have made, things would have been really bad at home.”

The fact that all the interviewees were conscious of the impact their conduct had on their families was significant. However, although for most of them, this meant being wary of how their behaviour was perceived, 3 of the men also implied that it was a motivating factor. Bilal (M5), for example said:

“Basically, you know when you are walking down the road and someone calls, what it is in our community they say, “Whose son is he?” And you say, “He is his son”, and they shake your hand, because your father or your grandfather, have done something that they have respect for. They tell me, “Ah, your father is a really good person, and you should be really proud of your father, and you are a good person as well, because it runs in the family”. So they will have respect for us. So when I am walking down the road, there is people calling me, they are not saying things behind my back - they are just calling me. Like my family, there is people going out and saying, “Hello” to them. Saying that because they have “izzat” for us; they are respecting us – “izzat” is like that, I see it as respect.”

Khalid (M12) was clear about “izzat’s” motivating aspect for both, his father and for himself. He reflected on his professional role in the midst of the community within which he grew up, and where his parents still lived:

“People have said to my dad, you know, “Your son has done a good job; he has helped my grandson and son”, blah, blah. And my dad, he buzzes off that, because that “izzat” thing, it means a lot to my dad, and it’s starting to mean more to me....”

Abdullah (M7), a Bangladeshi, Muslim young man, was conscious of the effects in regard to his and his family’s “izzat” and reputation, of his ‘love’ marriage to a Hindu girl (see appendix 5), but also aware that he could regain “izzat” and rebuild his reputation:

“...because of my marriage and because of my past record. So it is, because basically, I want to be grown up, and I want to build up my reputation within the community, wipe out my bad points. I want to improve, because it is for the future, for my wife, for my daughter, and for my immediate family as well, and to build up my parents’, my brothers’ and sisters’, build up my, their “izzat”, back up again, because it might have gone down the drain because of what I did.”

Three of the interviewees (12%), including 2 women and 1 man, conveyed a sense of being pressurised or forced to conform to the ‘norms’ of ‘acceptable’ behaviour. Haroon (M11) for example explained the importance of ‘just’ respecting parents and that he had been,

“...brought up by the saying that you should not question your mother and father *at all, whatever they do*, yeah? Their honour and their respect is something that you need to uphold with everyone... So, but my mother and father are pretty important, and I can accept that, yes, generally keep that kind of respect up.”

Rehana (F12) emphasised the process of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” and its links with ‘reputation’, while re-iterating her view that “izzat” was the domain of men, but that women were more responsible for maintaining it:

“”Izzat” is honour; it is family reputation, and it’s status, everything that is connected to family. However, “izzat” is not about me as a person, it is about family basically, as long as my behaviour is appropriate, my family’s “izzat” is fine. But it is essentially male pride, male ego, very, very gendered. I don’t see it as... A woman has to maintain it, but she has to maintain it for the sake of her family, hence the male. In the sense that if I do anything wrong, it will ultimately reflect back on my family. So when I am out there, my behaviour is actually being monitored ... So in a sense, that isn’t just my life that I’m messing with here, it’s my family’s, especially my parents’ and my dad’s... because we are the upholders of it, we have to maintain it and be appropriately behaved, and

maintain that for them really. But it's a notion really; it's a cycle that has just been going on and on, but it definitely is the males."

Jatinder (F11) was also clear about the potential for repercussions, and that the...

"...values and principles of the community that you live in, requires you to adhere to, to adapt to, so that you and your family won't be ostracized, or segregated from the community."

She recognized, like Rehana (F12) above, that it was cyclical:

"...but you just need to comply - person, child, daughter, mother, whatever the role you play within your family, or even in the wider set in the community; when you go to the temples, whose daughter you are, whose son you are reflects maybe, what position you uphold within those circles, how respected your parents are because of your actions and your behaviour."

It was Nasreen's (F5) eloquent example which best illustrated the processes and pressures involved in the importance of upholding "izzat", and the relationship between this and the obligations attached to being a member of an extended family, with its implicit hierarchies. When asked to think of when either her or her family's "izzat" was affected, she shared the example of her brother's reactions when a proposal of marriage was received:

"...my uncle came to our house, and I remember him distinctly saying that you would have to get married to this girl, otherwise, "we'll never talk again", because he said, "They'd come to me, and it would be disrespectful for me to go now and say it won't happen". My mum was younger than him, and he said, "You have to do it". Yeah, so he said, "It's got to be done". And that was probably the first time that it came through for me that my mum was like, "If I don't do it, it will look bad for me, so I've got to go ahead". And for my brother, because he didn't want to get married at the time, so he'd been given a couple of weeks to decide, and obviously my mum's guilt sort of got in the way, so her persuasion came from guilt, so my brother, in the end said, "Yes, it will look bad if we don't do this, so we'll have to"."

Five (20%) of the women in the sample made the link between the need to uphold "izzat" and their conduct in relation to 'modesty', which has already been discussed. However, Farzana's (F4) example was poignant, as she traced the reactions of her sisters, her parents and 'the

community', in relation to her decision to wear the "hijab" (headscarf) and then to stop wearing it:

"I know it's weird, because when I put it on, the community stopped talking about me. My parents stopped nagging me, my sister said, "Why did you do it?" When I put it on, I said to my mum, "I have worn my headscarf, but don't expect my sister to, because I did it in my own time, and you have to understand that they will do it in their own time as well". So my parents were nice to me when I came home, and my dad didn't argue as much with me, because they have nothing bad on me now, because I had a scarf. It was weird, and my sister said, "You put that scarf on so they would let you go to university, didn't you?" I said, "No, it wasn't". Now that I have taken it off, it is coming back again. They only nag because the community nags at them."

Uzma (F13) also reflected on how the "hijab" seemed to symbolise the upholding of "izzat", and the control exerted by men in its maintenance. As she reflected on her first marriage, she said:

"When I got married for example, my husband... the first marriage that I had, which was a traditional arranged marriage, and he met me with, you know, I didn't wear a "hijab", my sister and I wore Western clothes, and when he met me, it was all fine, but as soon as I got married, I almost felt like he wanted me to be the symbol of the respect of our family, so he wanted me to wear the "hijab", and we even... we went out shopping for a coat, and he made sure that it was down to my ankles..."

The 'need' to control or demand conformity to acceptable norms of behaviour seemed to be reflected not only in the behaviour of fathers and husbands, but also in the brothers of some of the women interviewees. Yasmin (F1), who suggested some level of anxiety, (quoted earlier) about her brother's potentially "izzat"-damaging behaviour (because he had a Bangladeshi girlfriend who had been seen entering the family home), stated:

"I think it ["izzat"] affects my life in a big way actually, like my brother always keeps saying to me that, "Oh, you don't wear your scarf on your head, you don't do that, you don't do this", and because he keeps pushing me... the way that he does it, "You have to do it for your own family, you have to do it for your honour"."



Her example was interesting, demonstrating her brother's hypocrisy, and the sense that his 'misdemeanours' mattered less than his sister's. Clearly, for the women, there seemed to be an, 'added' pressure regarding the demands to keep theirs and their family's "izzat" intact.

Even Adam (M8) admitted this:

"...if I did a certain thing and my sister did the same thing, I'd probably get away with it, whereas she would get disciplined for it, she would either be told off, or told why she can't do it, so there is a difference. And me being a brother and everything, I know it sounds a lot, what is the word - hypocritical and everything, but I think there's a different role."

Only Sadir (M1) did not discuss the layered process of reflected "izzat" and "sharam" in any depth. Significantly however, he was one of the youngest in the sample, aged 19, and presented as a very 'conservative' Muslim with a beard, who had clear ideas about the 'boundaries' present in his life regarding the requirements of acceptable behaviour for men and women within his family and community. As such, he seemed to have little need to dwell on the potential tensions and pressures evident in the lives of some of the other interviewees, regarding the process of reflected "izzat" and "sharam", which have been presented. However he was clear that reputation, which is closely linked to reflected "izzat" and "sharam" was important. The process of reflected "izzat" and "sharam" ultimately ends with its impact on an individual and on his/her family's reputation within the community.

Although only 13 of the interviewees (52%) acknowledged the significance of inherited factors as discussed earlier, all 25 were clearly conscious of the importance of reputation and standing in the community. This was both, as a personal endeavour and one that reflected on and affected the family. The earlier data presented regarding how "izzat" could be gained suggested ways in which reputation and standing could be influenced. The concern with reputation and standing was implicit in many of the quotes already cited and also reflected a

concern with what others may think or say. Thus they all displayed an understanding of the significance of reputation.

All 13 women and 6 of the 12 men, (76% of the sample), were explicit that there was a clear link between “sharam” and reputation. Regarding the significance of reputation, Rashid (M6) was succinct:

“Having a reputation counts, so “izzat” is the whole lot.”

Jasmine (F2), like Laila (F3) and Nina (F10), was also clear:

“Well again, if it’s a good reputation, you’ve got “izzat”; it’s a bad one, you ain’t really got “izzat” there – so it’s best to keep reputation in the community up.”

And Laila (F3) said,

“If you haven’t got “izzat”, then you don’t have reputation. They go together closely, without one, you can’t have the other.”

For Shazia (F8) reputation was easily, negatively affected:

“Well if you lose your reputation you can lose your respect. If you lose your respect, you lose your reputation.”

Haroon (M11) reflected on both the emotional and physical consequences of him behaving in ways that were perceived by his parents as unacceptable, and acknowledged that their actions were influenced by a concern with “standing”:

“On emotion, I thought it was just a lot of emotional blackmail, “This is what we’ve told you, this is not acceptable, this is what needs to be done”, and on a physical level, well obviously they couldn’t really kind of do much, apart from kind of stop me from... well take the keys when I was going out, or lock the door from the inside, you know, silly things like that, which was all kind of part of their way of controlling, but yet it was more emotional than physical... Confused, but from their point of view I can understand, because obviously, they had a certain standing in their community. I realise that from their perspective it’s not an acceptable thing to do maybe, maybe not, depending on...”

Given his experiences (some of which are cited above), it was not surprising that for Haroon (M11):

“Reputation is not something that I feel is a positive thing.”

From the data presented thus far it is evident that all the individuals in the sample had a clear understanding of the relationship between reflected “izzat” and “sharam” and its potential effects on an individual and their family’s reputation and standing in the community. The prestige and status and possible shame inherent in this process was something that they all demonstrated knowledge and understanding of. Rehana (F12), Sayed (M4) and Adam (M8), for example, summarised the significance of this link between reflected “izzat” and reputation, which as stated before in turn is linked to the notion of status and prestige of the family within the community. This point has been asserted by many of the researchers reviewed earlier Werbner (1990) and Nesbitt (1994) mutually defined “izzat” as honour, reputation and status, while Anwar (1998:106) stated that “the prestige of the family is also regarded as being sacrosanct”. The level of importance attached to this by all the individuals in the sample was evident from the circumstances that they shared and also illustrated the point made by one of Gilbert et al.’s (2004:8) focus group participants who asserted that, “...it’s all about reputations; what people are going to think”.

The understanding of the significance of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” conveyed by the interviewees, illustrated the extent to which the ‘family’ still has a hold on young Asians in Britain, which is a point reiterated especially by Stopes-Roes and Cochrane (1990) and by Din (2006). Laila (F3) implied through her earlier example regarding the late-night “show” that outsiders to the community would not face the same dilemma, and certainly would not appreciate the boundaries that she was trying to clandestinely negotiate. Unlike her peers from other backgrounds she, like many others from the sample, displayed a “strong”... “tendency to conform” because “individuals have much to lose in the way of prestige if they

deviate from the norm” (Bhatti, 1999:6). What was implicit in such examples of procrastination was the fact these young Asians as representatives of their communities displayed an inherent understanding of the distinction between individualistic and the more collectivist Asian cultures in a British context.

Indeed it was this concern with ensuring that transgressions were controlled, and boundaries of acceptable behaviour upheld, that illustrated the sense of responsibility that the interviewees felt regarding the ‘burden’ of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” and by extension, reputation. Hence Imran’s (M3) ‘warning’ about, “never washing your dirty clothes in public”. Laila’s (F3) dilemma in particular vividly illustrated the ‘weighing up’ process or “the delicate act of balance” (Bhatti, 1999:164) that individuals, and especially women, undertook when potential ‘opportunities’ for transgressing norms of behaviour were presented. Her example showed the very different pressures that Asian young people were experiencing in comparison to their peers from other cultural backgrounds (including the host society). At the heart of the dilemma discussed by Laila (F3) was accepting the fact that:

Remaining true to one’s culture and maintaining a reputation for the family within society was central to ‘izzat’. (Gilbert et al. 2004:9)

The interviewees were clearly conscious of the network of familial “obligations” (Ballard 1994a:13) which made the decisions they made regarding potential transgressions, burdensome. Through the examples they shared, and including those which posed difficult dilemmas for them, they displayed a clear knowledge of conformity and the implications of committing transgressions or displaying deviant behaviour. They were very conscious of the fact that they did not want themselves or their families “disgraced” and also wanted to avoid “conflict” within the family (Modood et al. 1994:77). The notion of censure as a force for conformity related to both the potential loss of “izzat” and to attracting “sharam” has been

identified by others. Din (2006:31) for example defined “izzat” not only as “honour”, “status” and “respect”, but also as “obedience” and “loyalty” both of which are implicit in the demands for censure and the process of conforming. The requirement for “obedience” was inferred through the data presented regarding reflected “izzat” and “sharam”, and was perhaps best captured by Jatinder’s (F11) assertion that being accepted as a part of the community “requires you to adhere to ‘certain’ values and principles”. The huge pressure associated with such requirements for “obedience” was also poignantly recognised by Nasreen’s (F5) example, concerning her brother’s decision to accept a proposal of marriage brought by a maternal uncle, within which there was reference to the family as a collective, as he used the word “we”: “Yes it will look bad if we don’t do this, so we’ll have to”. Again, this example invoked a sense of the individual’s responsibility to the collective, the family.

The women in the sample bore the added pressures of needing to conform in regard to notions of modesty as acceptable behaviour. The link between “izzat”, “sharam” and the moral pressure to conform on girls and women has been identified and explored by many others, however, a ‘modern’ twist in relation to this was presented by Farzana’s (F4) earlier example of how differently she was treated by her family and how differently she was perceived by members of the community when she decided to either wear or not wear the “hijab” (headscarf). As a separate political Islamic identity emerges for Muslim women in Britain symbolised by the wearing of the “hijab” (Mukhopadhyay 2006; Griffiths 2011; Khan 2011), perhaps it is also accompanied by a growing pressure for Muslim women to conform to a ‘new’ requirement of wearing the “hijab”, which has also become an aspect of portraying a sense of modesty. The extent to which Muslim women exert control over the choices they make regarding the wearing of the “hijab” remains to be seen. For the Muslim women in my

sample it seemed to have become a means of ‘negotiating’ with the family on notions of relative freedom compared to their brothers or boys in the community, but it was also an aspect of control of women by men (as evidenced by Uzma’s – F13, account of her first husband’s wish for her to wear the “hijab” and a “long coat”). It was clear from the experiences shared by the women in the sample that the differential treatment of girls and boys continues in Asian communities. Adam’s (M8) acknowledgement that the differential treatment of girls was “hypocritical” provided evidence that this was generally accepted by both, women and men in the sample.

The fact that the individuals engaging in transgressive or deviant behaviour, have to do so clandestinely was testament to the fact that there was a general level of awareness of acceptable norms of behaviour. The fact that transgressions were often ‘secretly’ committed (such as Shameem’s – F6, relationship with a young man in prison) implies the existence of a network of ‘confidants’ who were ‘privy’ to sharing the ‘secret’, which had to be kept from the gaze of the immediate family and the community. Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) suggested that young Asians perhaps had stronger peer networks than their counterparts from other cultural groups, which was the impression gleaned from this sample of 25 individuals. Therefore there existed an intricate web of ‘shared’ secrets that had to be maintained as secrets, kept from those in one’s immediate family, and especially from the parental generation and the community at large.

Since transgressions that become public knowledge attract the most disgrace, it is in the interest of the family to deal with an individual member’s potential waywardness effectively without it becoming publicly known. However, once the information seeps out into the public

domain, then the need to be seen to punish any transgressions becomes significant. Hence siblings may share in each-others' 'secrets' but may also be wary of the effects on the family of transgressions committed by other members of the family (see also the case notes from my Youth Work practice at appendix 2). As such Yasmin (F1), Farzana (F4), Nasreen (F5), Sayed (M4), Rashid (M6) and Adam (M8) all reflected to various degrees on the effects of their and their siblings' behaviour on them and their family and vice-versa. The 'picture' that emerged was firstly of an intricate web of control, where awareness of "izzat" and the consequences of its loss and therefore of attracting "sharam", tied in siblings, parents and the extended family and drew in the men in the family especially into being seen to be responsible for controlling the women by virtue of their role as actual or designated heads of the household, which in turn signalled the continued hold of patriarchy (Wilson 1979; Bachu 1985).

The idea of the control exerted on women by men was initially captured by Wilson's (1979) definition of "izzat" as "male-ego", a point also made by Rehana (F12). However, others (Briggs and Briggs 1997; Shaw 1988, 2000; Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990; Samad and Eade 2002; Gilbert et al., 2004) reiterated this point, which seemed to have a continuing resonance in the lives of the women in the sample. The effects on a reputation of a loss of "izzat" or of attracting "sharam" were greater on women, and this was acknowledged by both the men and the women in the sample. Early on Ballard (1979:117) pointed out this imbalance by referring to "a girl's reputation" and Shaw (1988:175) discussed a "taint on the girl's character".

It is not difficult to see how this has led to the much publicised focus on honour-related violence. Secondly the cascading nature of the pressure on individuals to conform exerted by siblings, parents, the extended family and ultimately by the community, becomes clear. This was described by Ballard (1994a:13) as a network of “fundamental obligations”. At each point the need to exert pressure and uphold clear boundaries of acceptable behaviour is triggered, resulting ultimately in the need to be seen by the community to be taking appropriate action, especially if transgressions or deviance become public knowledge. Nasereen’s (F5) brother’s response to the proposal of marriage provided a significant example of this, while also illustrating how the boundaries between an ‘arranged’ and a ‘forced’ marriage become blurred.

It was interesting that 3 of the men implied that “izzat” as respect received from others could keep them motivated to maintain and even re-dress their personal and their family’s existing “izzat”. Abdullah (M7) cited earlier in particular hinted at how he felt responsible for re-dressing any loss of his family’s “izzat” because of his actions. Perhaps this was reminiscent of the fact that these men were conscious of the comparatively greater pressure on them to succeed. Although the men in the sample were not explicit about this, the fact that they displayed an awareness of how “izzat” could be gained or maintained for the family, suggests a latent consciousness about its ability to fuel competition and contribute to a process of “social hierarchy by increasing its material resources...” (Ballard 1994:15). As Bhatti (1999:165) pointed out men have a need to “become a ‘big’, that is rich, independent, self-sufficient man”, which could help to address any ‘costly’ previous misdemeanours or even enhance existing levels of an individual’s and their family’s “izzat”.



This seemed possible mainly for men but not for women to the same extent, illustrating another example of the differences between the expectations of men and women within the community especially in relation to the forces of “izzat” and “sharam”. For example, in contrast, Rehana’s (F12) guilt and reflections on the effects of her rejection of a forced marriage on her parents was poignant – there seemed no hint at how she could address this situation.

Perhaps it is this distinction between how differently “izzat” and “sharam” impacted on men and women that is at the heart of the expression of “izzat” as an aspect of group pride. As the men are more engaged in the competitive aspect of gaining and enhancing “izzat” through the process of its reflection on their personal actions/achievements, they become the means by which group pride is expressed through the sense of a group based allegiance as members of a particular community. This is clearly aided by the expectation that men will freely engage with the more public domains of society. Although the men in the sample did not articulate this explicitly, it was clear from their understanding of how they “represent” (Sayed – M4) their families, from their strong sense of belonging to particular “encapsulated” communities (Bhatti 1999), and their clear pride in their individual identities, that this aspect of “izzat” and “sharam” with their ability to reflect on and shift from the individual, the family and the community was implicit in their experiences as members of their particular communities. It was clear from the examples and experiences shared by all the individuals in the sample, that they had an acute awareness of the positive and negative aspects of reflected “izzat” and “sharam”, with the potential effects on their and their family’s reputations. Perhaps Uzma’s (F13) powerful and moving story about her mother’s kidnapping in Pakistan showed how the impact of “izzat” and “sharam” flowed from one society to another, across boundaries of

culture and nationhood. Ultimately, the interviewees displayed a good level of knowledge and understanding of what was expected of them as members of Asian communities living in Britain. Even where there was a potential to transgress given the ‘pull’ of different, less acceptable options available because they lived in Britain, they demonstrated a clear awareness of how they ‘negotiated’ their position through the potential dilemmas that they found themselves in. In short, they knew what the potential risks could be, especially in regard to the gaining and loss of “izzat”, and the process of decision-making was therefore a thoroughly conscious process.

#### **4.7. Validating and Triangulating the Findings from the In-Depth Interviews**

The data gathered, collated, presented and analysed from the 25 in-depth interviews was triangulated by the data gathered from the two-hour, workshop-style, focus group interviews undertaken with 40 predominantly Sikh women. These women were divided into 4 age-related focus groups. (Group A, B, C and D). Their views on “izzat” and “sharam” and on the related themes discussed thus far are gleaned mainly from their definitions of the two concepts and through their reactions to vignettes, consisting of a caste-based relationship misdemeanour/transgression. The description of the vignettes and a full record of their feedback and perspectives and fuller analysis can be found at appendix 9. Here I want to specifically focus on the findings from the workshop in order to test if my findings from the 25 in-depth interviews in regard to “izzat”, “sharam” and the linked themes I have presented found any resonance through a different set of data, from a very different sample of representatives of Asians in Britain, (that is, a group of 40 predominantly Sikh women aged

between 15 and 73). I will also draw on the literature reviewed earlier to analyse the two sets of data.

In relation to defining “izzat” it was striking how the 40 women reflected the range of nuances of meaning of “izzat”, (which have been discussed earlier in the reviews of literature and through the presentation of the analysis of the data from the in-depth interviews) and interestingly that, in fact, no one volunteered the more common, generic translation of “family honour”. Perhaps this can be explained firstly, by the fact that I was perceived as an ‘insider’ to the community by virtue of my race, ethnicity and ability to speak Punjabi. Bachu (1985) and Din (2006) both stated the significance of this in their research, in eliciting different responses and Jarrett (1993) suggested that the rapport and responses of the participants can be enhanced by the researcher being perceived as an ‘insider’.

In comparison to the responses from the individual interviews it was interesting to note that for these women too “Respect”, “Worth” and “Moral values” were featured, combining the idea of “izzat” being an inherent quality within oneself with the need for a social context (for respect to be given and received from others). The women in the workshop seemed to combine their understanding of “izzat” with how it could be enhanced/gained such as through religiosity, education and materialism, in line with my first two categories of gaining “izzat” through ‘Conforming to Acceptable Norms’ and through ‘Achievement’ (Table 6). The fact that clearly a ‘caste’-and gender-related misdemeanour as represented by the vignettes, seemed to matter, also illustrated that my third category of ‘Inherited Factors’ was significant.

The list of definitions for “izzat” offered by the women (see appendix 9) were interesting, in that they reflected the significance of “izzat” in the two ways outlined by Bhatti’s (1999) glossary translation of “izzat”, that is as “izzat” related to qualities or personality traits inherent within an individual, and “izzat” expressed through behaviour in relation to others, including the family, community and wider society. As such their responses included “beauty, vanity”, “worth (self)” and “moral values”, which are examples of qualities or traits within an individual and to some extent reflect the notion of “virtue, respect” offered by Bhatti (1999:277) and also the idea that an individual can be “izzatdhar”, thus possessing the qualities of “izzat” (being honourable, virtuous) within themselves. This aspect of “izzat” associated with notions of self-respect, self-esteem and especially self-dignity was a distinct theme which was also present in the collation of the data from the in-depth interviews, from the literature in the nineties and onwards, and was inferred in the work of Modood (1992), Ballard (1994), Bhatti (1999), Samad and Eade (2002) and Din (2006). Other responses from the women in defining “izzat” related to the importance of “izzat” in relation to others, especially in relation to offering/giving, receiving and attracting respect. Hence, “respect” itself appears in their list of definitions (see appendix 9), and was echoed in the use of Punjabi to address others (with the use of “Ji” instead of “Tu”, to denote respectfulness and in line with cultural expectations regarding ‘good’ manners). This was a point also made by Laila (F3) regarding the importance of appropriate use of language. Their definitions also included “care for others”; “authority (e.g. teacher and respect for)”; “respect for elders, for mother/father, for individuals and cultural awareness”; “respect for established norms in society”; and “religious respect – “Guruji”. These responses generally were also in line with the idea that general conformity and good manners are important for maintaining/gaining

“izzat”, which can be easily lost or damaged by ‘bad’ manners – a theme identified for attracting “sharam”, through my in-depth interviews.

The 40 women hinted at the idea that respect, and in fact, status could be gained through “materialism”, “money – “izzat” – power”, “hankar” [pride] (especially in relation to material things and vanity). This corresponds with my earlier findings from the in-depth interviews in relation especially to the ‘Achievement’ category for gaining/enhancing “izzat” (see Table 6). This facet of “izzat” was in line with earlier discussions featuring the work of Bachu (1985), Shaw (1988, 2000) and Werbner (1990), who all suggested that there was an interplay between ‘pride’ and attracting “izzat” through the accumulation of wealth-related assets. Ballard’s (1994:14) identification of “izzat” as “... a matter of relative standing which generates constant competition...” also underpinned the link between “izzat” and material wealth, and encapsulated the colloquial idea of ‘keeping-up-with-the-Jones’ as a means of gaining admiration and acceptance within the wider community and society. The link here to the earlier discussion about the process of reflected “izzat” and its relationship to the concept of reputation was clear, since this awareness was implicit in the women’s definitions.

“Education” was included by the women as an example of “izzat”, which can be both, inherent to an individual, but also seen as an aspect of an individual’s achievements which command respect from others (Jackson 1985, Ballard 1994). It straddled the two categories outlined earlier of ‘Achievement’ and ‘Inherited Factors’ (Table 6) in an interesting way, because education for its own sake can be the basis for possessing “moral values” and carrying oneself with “(self) worth” (Sikh Women’s Group), while the possession of a good formal education (and therefore, educational qualifications) can be an important step and link

to gaining well-paid employment and thus facilitating “materialism” and the possession of “money” over time, and therefore “izzat”, a good reputation and ultimately “power” (Sikh Women’s Group). This was an aspect of “izzat” that Bachu (1985), along with Shaw (1988, 2000) and Werbner (1990) discussed in her work, but specifically in relation to the process of spouse-selection. Here it was offered as being an important aspect of “izzat” without any caviats, in line with my findings from the in-depth interviews.

In regard to “sharam”, the 40 women’s responses (appendix 9) reflected qualities or traits inherent within an individual’s personality or character, such as “shame” and “confidence” and those aspects of behaviour that were in relation to others, and which straddled the domains of acceptability and transgressions. This therefore indicates that the idea of conformity and conforming to particular norms of acceptable behaviour ran throughout the women’s definitions. The suggestions of “restraint in behaviour”, “being constantly aware of your ‘place’ in society”, “dress (in relation to modesty)” and “gender” were fitting examples of this, while “brainwashing” and the reference to “Kahr bettho” [stay at home], provided an interesting insight into how conformity may be commanded within the community, especially by the older women in a family. These responses were in line with the idea of “sharam” as curbing behaviour discussed earlier relating to the data from the in-depth interviews. In terms of comparisons with the range of “sharam”-attracting behaviour collated and analysed earlier, only the gender-related and relationship misdemeanours had a special focus, but this was also unavoidable given the vignettes discussed by the women.

The idea that ‘safety’ lay within the community, and therefore the fact that you, “can’t trust anybody outside”, was significant in hinting at the lack of trust of the wider society and/or

other communities, and of insularity within the community (Parekh 2000). Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) and Ballard (1994) particularly explored the attitude of members of Asian communities to the ‘host’ white society. Although no direct reference was made to reputation, it was implicitly understood that the “restraint in behaviour” was important in protecting one’s standing and reputation, which mirrored my findings from the in-depth interviews. This also showed awareness of the process of reflected “sharam” that is linked to reputation. Also “being constantly aware of your ‘place’ in society” implied knowledge of relative standing as a woman in the family and within the wider community, and also had links to the importance of reputation. In line with Samad and Eade (2002:75), these women were clearly aware that they needed to,

...demonstrate a sense of “sharam” by excluding themselves from such (public) arenas and ensuring that their own personal “izzat” is unimpeachable.

In relation to the 40 women’s reactions to the caste-related relationship misdemeanour, captured by the vignettes, and their resonance to my findings from the in-depth interviews, it is necessary to reflect on their reactions (to the vignettes) in their age-related groups, given the range of responses enlisted which themselves had some interesting outcomes in regard to the ages of the women in each of the 4 groups. (See appendix 9 for a full set of responses from the 4 focus groups to the vignettes)

For example Group A’s responses (and please note that this group is the most closely aligned with my sample of in-depth interviewees, in terms of age and because all the women in it were unmarried), to the caste-related relationship misdemeanour fell into two ‘camps’. Firstly women who would just not allow themselves to, “go there” because “Respect for family is paramount”. Clearly these women knew where the boundaries of acceptable and

unacceptable behaviour lay within their families, and in line with the assertions of Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) and Anwar (1998), their families remained very important to them. More significantly, they would not want to risk this relationship, if at all possible. This sub-set of responses mirrored the procrastination and decision-making processes described by some of the interviewees earlier (for example Laila – F3, Nazia – F4, Jatinder – F11, Sayed – M4, Bilal – M5 and Khalid – M12) in relation to the choices they made regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

The women in Group A seemed clear that any ‘transgressions’ in behaviour and actions needed to be limited, and required a good degree of conformity. Group A was clearly divided, and the second sub-set consisted of women who suggested that they would tell their parents about the out-of-caste relationship (captured by the vignette) and “...take it from there”, and who considered it to be a matter of “... individual choice” and that these “things” were not planned and could just happen. Perhaps the earlier discussion regarding potential spouse-selection and marriage involving the interviewees (Table 7) was also indicative of this ‘split’ with the majority (15 – 60%) expecting and agreeing to an arranged marriage, and some (5 – 20%) hoping to ‘negotiate’ on this matter with their parents/families, while 4 (16%) had already married someone ‘of their choice’. This ‘split’ in the responses within the women’s group aptly captured the range of reactions that researchers (Bachu 1985; Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990; Werbner 1990; Anwar 1998) also outlined in response to the issue of spouse-selection. These ranged from the more conformist, traditional model of arranged marriages, to the idea that young Asians were beginning to seek their own life partners through the use of technology such as the internet, like Shazia (F8), which included turning their back to some extent on traditional practices (Anwar 1998), and widening the criteria for



selection (including therefore giving less regard to caste-related differences). The idea that young Asians would find life-partners within the ‘range of acceptability’ (gleaned from the in-depth interviews – see Table 7) in terms of caste, race or religion as necessary was reminiscent of those that hoped to ‘negotiate’ and compromise with their parents and wider families.

In Group B, including women with families in their 40s, the fear that there would be a cultural and religious ‘cost’ to such a transgression, and that “Children will lose Sikhism”, was mentioned. In some ways the fact that Group B very early on suggested that “Shame is very powerful”, was the reason they offered for those who decided to take a stance against an inter-caste relationship. These women seemed to suggest that their responses were part of, “learnt and indoctrinated thoughts” (Sikh Women, Group B), which perhaps enabled their children to be aware of the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and actions. In line with the findings and analysis from the in-depth interviews, these group members displayed a good knowledge of the role and power of “sharam”. In short, as with the individuals within the interview sample, these women appreciated and understood the inclination for negotiation and that for conformity. The most ‘extreme’ response from the women in Group B relating to children having to leave home or choosing between the parents/family and the “friend”, suggested that the transgressor would be ostracised, which was also suggested by some of the women in the in-depth interviews sample (especially Nasreen – F5 and Rehana – F12).

The third group, Group C consisting of women in their 50s, married and with children, also mirrored the 2 ‘camps’ or sub-sets of the women in their 40s (Group B). However, some of

these women seemed even more affronted by the situation described in the vignette and were therefore more 'extreme' in their reactions (see appendix 9). As such, their reactions included:

“Shock, horror”; “Anger”; “Upset”; “Scream/shout”; “Feel helpless”; “Talk her out of it.”

And significantly,

“Shoot/ use a gun/ “kirpan” [ritual dagger/sword].”

These had echoes of honour-related violence (Wilson 1979; Ghuman 1994; Shaw 1988, 2000; Sen 2000; Samad and Eade 2002; Gill 2003, 2005; Carter 2012; Hundal 2012; Khan 2012), but they were also concerned about:

“What will people say?”; “It’s about loss of face”; “Izzat”, “Sharam” and “Can’t go to anybody’s home”.

This showed clearly that the group was concerned about “izzat” and “sharam”, and aware of the inter-connected and inter-changeable nature of the two concepts. The idea of losing “face” and the acute sense of embarrassment related to the inability to “go to anybody’s home”, also suggested the significance of individual and especially the family’s reputation within the community as well as knowledge of the process of reflected “izzat” and “sharam”. This mirrored my findings from the in-depth interviews and was also identified in the work of Bachu (1985), Jackson (1985), Anwar (1998), Bhatti (1999) and Gilbert et al (2004, 2007). Although the women in this group did not specifically list “gossip” as a factor in their responses to the transgression of an inter-caste relationship, it’s function as an underlying mechanism (Bhatti 1999; Samad and Eade 2002) was implicit in the, “What will people say?” reason given to the scenario.

More importantly, the women in Group C felt that members of Group D, the women over 60 who were less ‘reactionary’, now probably grandmothers, were at a stage in their lives where the “, “difficulties”, “tensions” and therefore challenges of “keeping their children in line”, were behind them – their children were “settled” in their own lives, and therefore they no longer had to suffer the “tanay” [taunts] from the community in relation to their children’s behaviour and/or actions.

In contrast to the members of Group D, the women over 60, the women in Group B and especially in Group C (women in their 40s and 50s), were very much at a stage in their lives where these cultural boundaries were being tested by their children, and which therefore required clear guidelines from them as parents, especially in relation to the possible consequences for the ‘transgressions’ that their children may be tempted to commit. In regard to my interviewees from the in-depth interviews, it was worth remembering that the unmarried ones (20 of the 25 – 80%) were at the very stage in their lives when spouse-selection was to become a part of the ‘agenda’. As such perhaps the responses elicited from the women in Groups B and C, were indicative of the views of the parents of my unmarried interviewees. It is also worth remembering that on the whole in regard to measures of relative conservatism and traditionalism amongst the 3 main religious, Asian communities these predominantly Sikh women were supposedly less conservative than the Muslims and more so than the Hindus (Anwar 1998). My sample of unmarried interviewees was predominantly (15 of the 20) from the supposedly more traditional Muslim background. However, Sikh Paramjeet’s (F9) reaction to her cousin’s ‘out-of-caste’ relationship quoted earlier, captured her confusion regarding her sense of loyalty as well as the tensions that such scenarios raised

within the household and wider family. The women in Groups B and C provided an indication of this tension from the perspective specifically of the mothers.

Reflection on the make-up of the groups suggested that in relation to this, the women in their 50s, who listed the most ‘aggressive’ responses to the vignette (see appendix 9), were in fact, the group most likely to consist of mothers with children of marriageable age. The business of spouse-selection for their children was a present or imminent concern in their lives, at the time of their involvement in the workshop. For the women in Group B, women in the 40s, this was also a concern because it was either also already present or looming fast in their lives. Clearly the concern regarding “izzat” and “sharam”, and efforts to attract or gain “izzat”, keep “sharam”, and minimise the loss of “izzat” and the attracting of “sharam”, were concerns in their lives, encapsulated by the process of spouse-selection. In short, they needed to ensure ‘conformity’ to the ‘norms’ of acceptable behaviour from their children, and were very conscious that their children’s’ potential lack of conformity would lead to negative effects, not only for them as individuals, but importantly would also reflect badly on them as parents and the wider family. The concerns with the idea of, “What will people say?” and therefore with reflected shame (Wilson 1979) remained significant for these women and also mirrored the significance of reflected “izzat”, “sharam” and the linked concern with reputation that my interviewees from the in-depth interviews discussed.

My findings from the workshop therefore helped to triangulate my key findings from the in-depth interviews in relation especially to the multi-faceted, multi-layered understanding of “izzat” and “sharam” and also in regard to the related themes of curbing behaviour, reflected “izzat” and “sharam” and the importance of reputation. However the record of the responses,

especially from the mothers in Groups B and C, to a caste-related relationship transgression, went further than merely triangulating the existing data, it provided a small ‘window’ on the potential reactions of mothers in Asian communities to such transgressions by their children, demonstrating how conformity may be commanded and therefore the continued hold of “izzat” and “sharam” ensured in the lives of all members of Asian communities.

## **Chapter 5: CONCLUSION AND FINAL REFLECTIONS**

This research aimed to explore the extent to which “izzat” shaped the lives of young Asians in Britain in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The over-riding conclusion is that particularly through the empirical research I have been able to show how “izzat” and “sharam” shape the ‘everyday’ lives of young Asians. Significantly these are young people from families in communities entering into their fourth generation in Britain (as Laila’s (F3) family has), who have never been given any formal instruction or ‘training’ on the concepts and yet who clearly demonstrated a deep understanding of the function and power of “izzat” and “sharam” within Asian communities. In fact they highlighted how they too like others before them, continue to respect and observe the impact that “izzat” and “sharam” exert in shaping their lives.

The rest of this final chapter, aims firstly to draw some other ‘key’ conclusions and inferences from both the ‘mining’ of the literature on Asians settled in Britain, and from the empirical research undertaken to explore how “izzat” (and “sharam”) contribute to the shaping of the lives of young Asians in Britain in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This includes the implications for professional youth work practice that can be drawn from my analyses in this thesis (given the make up of my Interviews sample). The second part of this chapter includes reflections on the research journey as a whole.

### **5.1. Key Findings**

The largely chronological approach to the review of literature on Asian communities in Britain was particularly helpful in revealing the emerging discourse on “izzat” over the years and showing how ‘encapsulation’ (Bhatti 1999) and ‘*Desh Pardesh*’ (Ballard 1994) were

important in its emergence. It showed how in the earlier period of large-scale migration and settlement of Asians in Britain, the concept was inferred and implied through observations on behaviour within Asian communities and very rarely explicitly discussed. Thus for example, it was hinted at and lurked in Desai's (1963:123) notions of "ritual purity" and "casual extra-marital sex relations", and by the 1990s emerged explicitly through Werbner's (1990) discussions about kinship, "lena-dena" and the rituals associated with the marriage-cycle, which she suggested was a "persuasive Pakistani concern with honour, reputation and status ("izzat")".

The search for "izzat" and "sharam" in the ethnographic research on Asians in Britain revealed some unchanged and continuing patterns in community-life, for example in regard to gender and gender dynamics within Asian communities including the differential expectations and treatment of men and women. It revealed how status and reputation were always important, and how censure was used as a mechanism for ensuring that members of the community behaved within acceptable 'norms'.

The largely chronological review revealed how the concept of "izzat", although acknowledged by most of the researchers reviewed earlier as being significant in Asian communities (especially in regard to gender dynamics), was never fully explored or central to their research focus. It remained on the 'side lines' and therefore marginalised in most of the research, it seems until Gilbert et al.'s (2004, 2007) explicit focus on it in relation to mental health and Asian women. In fact generally from the end of the nineties and into the millennium, it was only in the context of honour-related violence and honour killings that focus on it seemed more explicit, especially in the media through a frenzy and sensationalism

associated with this aspect of 'honour'. This merely served to submerge it in relation to its significance in the everyday, mundane lives of members of Asian communities because attention was more focused on its 'violence inducing', sensational aspects.

Both, my insights as an 'insider' to Asian communities in Britain, and given the chronological approach undertaken to the secondary research ultimately helped to provide a framework for the empirical research that I carried out. My explicit interest in how the concept of "izzat", and by extension "sharam", shaped the 'everyday' lives of young members of Asian communities ensured the implicit uniqueness of the research focus, and therefore of the data gathered. I think my empirical research therefore fulfils a 'gap'. Unfortunately it only provides a 'snap shot', but at the very least, it makes "izzat" (and "sharam") its central focus, and therefore begins to provide some understanding of how the concept shapes 'ordinary' Asian lives in a British context.

The multi-faceted ways in which respect is experienced by members of Asian communities illustrates the nuanced nature of "izzat" itself. My empirical research demonstrated the closeness of the relationship between the two concepts of "izzat" and "sharam", and I will now move on to consider the key points in relation to each of these in turn.

In relation to "izzat" in the first instance my interviewees understood it first and foremost as respect. This in itself is significant signalling a move away from the tendency to just translate it as honour. The majority of them also saw it as a concept which personified their 'being', and therefore as an inherent quality of self-dignity, esteem and pride. They linked it to their conduct as individuals within their families and in relation to the wider community. The



notion of trust was also closely related to this, including trust as a facet of self-dignity in the sense of honouring one's word (Samad and Eade 2002), but also in the social context, of being worthy of others' trust, especially in regard to upholding acceptable norms of behaviour.

"Izzat" as pride was interesting especially for men, being a source of motivation for maintaining and gaining pride (as evidenced for example by Bilal's – M5 and Khalid's –M12 experiences) and acting as a force for "izzat"-competition as identified by Ballard (1994:18). It is through this immersion in the heart of family and community-life, through the informal, unwritten networks of "familial obligations" (Ballard 1994:18) that young Asians continue to learn about and understand "izzat" (and "sharam") in their lives. Therefore they learn about its relationship with gender dynamics, how "izzat" can be maintained and enhanced, and lost through its link with "sharam" – its impact being ever-present, yet not consciously thought about.

The 'smooth' movement of the concepts of "izzat" and "sharam", between self and the social context captures the slippery, fluid nature of both concepts, reflecting potentially from the individual to their family and wider to the community and even further afield in relation to intra-community relations. Hence as Imran (M3) warned, "washing one's dirty laundry", in public would be frowned upon and unwise. It is this quality of 'reflection' that led just under half of the individuals (44%) to suggest that the concept was a particularly Asian phenomenon. This concern with the concepts' ability to be reflected from the individual to the 'collective', a feature of collectivist cultures (Mesquita 2001), such as that of south Asians was echoed by both the individual interviewees and the Sikh women in the two-hour workshop. Therefore, my research demonstrated that "izzat" was experienced by all the respondents as a particularly Asian phenomenon. This 'dynamic' process of reflection is a

feature of collectivist cultures, and perhaps studied to some extent in cultures other than those from the Indian sub-continent (such as the Japanese in line with Mesquita's (2007) research), but the comparative studies regarding 'honour' in collectivist cultures remains an uncharted research area.

Although other researchers inferred some of these associations and aspects of "izzat", they seemed to link the concept's impact with key events in peoples' lives, such as the concern with keeping one's word and therefore being worthy of trust, and the fear of sanctions in relation to transgressions in behaviour within the process of spouse-selection (Nesbitt 1994; Modood et al. 1994; Anwar 1998; Bhatti 1998; Samad and Eade 2002). The difference between this and the views expressed in my sample relates to the fact that examples shared in my interviews, showed how this nuanced nature of "izzat" was experienced by them in their 'everyday' activities such as going to school and returning home on time (Uzma F13).

An exploration of how "izzat" is maintained or gained resulted in the emergence of three categories (Table 6), of conducting oneself within the boundaries of acceptability, achievement and inherited factors. I found Bachu's (1985) distinction between "achieved" and "ascribed" status, which has been used by others such as Werbner (1990), Shaw (1988, 2000) and Ballard (1994), inadequate, because it did not capture the influence of "izzat" in the very mundane nature of 'Asian' life, in its 'everyday' guise. Bachu's (1985) categories of 'ascribed' and 'achieved' status related to elements regarding inherited factors (such as caste-affiliation) and periodic success through 'achievements' in peoples' lives. Both these categories were consistent with mine, of 'Achievement' and 'Inherited Factors'. Uniquely however, my research demonstrated that it was in the domain of 'everyday' life – in how you

conducted yourself, how you dressed, whether you lived at home, the friends you have, and so forth, that “izzat” was largely gained or lost through attracting “sharam”. It is this category (Category 1 in Table 6) more than any other that shaped the lives of young Asians in regard to the influence of the two concepts and makes the power of “izzat” seem “so pervasive”, as one of Gilbert et al.’s (2004:7) focus group participants stated.

‘Achievement’, the second category (in Table 6) for maintaining/enhancing “izzat” was important because through periodic, often formally recognised achievements in their lives such as success in education and employment, it enabled individuals to provide ‘boosts’ and embellishment to the individual’s or family’s “izzat” ‘stock’. Over time both the processes of conforming to acceptable norms (Category 1 – Table 6) and the successes through achievement (Category 2 – Table 6), inevitably fed into the third category of ‘Inherited Factors’, which also included cultural factors inherent within Asian communities such as caste-affiliation. All three influenced the nature of one’s reputation and by extension that of one’s family within the community.

The concept of ‘caste’ needs some closer examination in the light of my findings because there seemed a clear imbalance in the importance attached to it by other researchers that I reviewed and my findings (for example Werbner, 1990 and Shaw, 1988, 2000). Although the concept of caste was central to the scenario used to enlist the views of the Sikh women in the workshop/focus groups, some of whom reacted very strongly to it (appendix 9), it is really interesting to note that for those young people that I interviewed, caste was a factor only cited by 5 individuals with only 3 of them (Laila – F3, Nina – F10 and Rashid – M6) actually discussing the significance of caste in relation to spouse-selection/marriage. In contrast the

Sikh women in the focus groups (especially those in their 40s and 50s) were adamant that they would strongly oppose any caste-based transgressions committed by their children in regard to having a relationship, spouse-selection/marriage. Perhaps the dissonance between the two sets of data is even more significant and interesting since my in-depth interview respondents were predominantly from the supposedly more conservative Muslim backgrounds than the Sikh women in the focus groups (Anwar 1998). From this I can only infer that the relative ages of the two sets of respondents - the interviewees who were predominantly of marriageable age and the women in the two focus groups in their 40s/50s (who voiced such strong opposition to caste-related transgressions), made a difference to their views.

This may signal a clear shift in attitudes to issues of caste-affiliation, which is a feature of much earlier research on Asians in Britain, amongst the younger generation, although this shift cannot be definitively 'proven', perhaps not until they themselves became parents. As Adam (M8) pointed out, he expected to be less concerned with issues of caste with his own daughter if he had one, than his parents were regarding his marriage. Therefore, at least for now, the strength of feeling expressed by the Sikh mothers (from the focus groups) with children at or reaching a marriageable age, seemed on the whole assured of conformity on this point from their children, if only because their children did not want to be alienated from their families (Modood et al. 1994), and were forced to show "obedience" (Din 2006:31) to their families. Thus, in contrast to the Sikh mothers, young Asians 'respected' inherited features (such as caste) because they were expected to and not because they thought these were inherently 'worthy'. Perhaps with the passing of the parental generation, its hold will further decline. Certainly my young interviewees seemed less concerned with issues of caste-affiliation than the existing research on Asians suggested.

Although the impact of external hostility to being Asian in Britain was not a focus for explicit discussion in this thesis, some of the interviewees certainly shared their views concerning the wearing of the “hijab” as an aspect of modesty, and since this has become symbolic of an assertion of particularly Muslim identity, it can be inferred that continued conformity and deference to parental wishes may also be attributable to the fact that young Asians have to ‘choose’ their home cultures in the face of such external hostility. In relation to the “hijab” (headscarf) itself although it was mentioned explicitly by only 7 (28%) of my respondents (Yasmin - F1, Farzana – F4, Rehana – F12, Uzma – F13, Sadir – M1, Rashid – M6, Haroon – M11), it seemed to indicate the emergence of a ‘new’ symbol of modesty, religiosity and Muslim, female identity, with its roots in the Middle East (Yaqoob 2007) as opposed to the Indian sub-continent from where the respondents’ families originated. What remains to be seen, and an area of future research, is whether women control its use, or whether this symbol in fact becomes a means of control of them by their parents and the men in their lives such as their brothers (as Yasmin – F1 and Farzana – F4, reflected). It is significant to point out that only one of the Muslim women I interviewed (Yasmin – F1) wore the “hijab” at the time of interview.

Lurking beneath each of these nuanced aspects of “izzat” (and the different categories for maintaining/gaining it), which can easily, smoothly morph from one to another, or have more than one or all present, all ‘at once’, in a particular situation, is the power and fear of attracting “sharam” and losing “izzat”.

In regard to “sharam” the most evident conclusion is its significance in relation to gender, and especially women. Most of the six themes that I collated regarding how “sharam” can be attracted and “izzat” lost featured the women in the sample in greater numbers than the men. For example gender-related misdemeanours were cited by 8 women and only 1 man. This greater burden of “sharam” falling on women was further verified through the explicit discussion in the interview process on how “sharam” impacts on men and women. All of the interviewees with the exception of Sadir (M1) agreed that “sharam” affected women more than men, and that its effects (for example on reputation) lasted longer for women, and therefore its consequences were far greater for women. The reticence of the men in the sample to admit this was perhaps indicative of how gradual any changes in the differential treatment and expectations of men and women in Asian communities has been. For me, this was very telling, since the women in the sample, predominantly from the more ‘conservative’ Muslim communities (Ghuman 1994; Anwar 1998) were instrumental in ‘pushing’ the boundaries of acceptability by virtue of their involvement in the Youth and Community sector, and given the sector’s commitment to social justice (DfES 2002, 2003), the need for such change should have been understood by all those I interviewed.

Yet in spite of this and with Asian communities entering potentially into their fourth generation (Laila – F3) in Britain, the greater burden of “sharam” remains with women, as was identified by the researchers I reviewed earlier throughout the period of settlement under review.

One of the key functions of “sharam” was its ability to curb behaviour. Again, although this aspect of attracting “sharam” and of losing “izzat” was identified by many of the researchers

reviewed earlier, the unique points to emerge from my explorations concerned the intricacies of the decision-making process whereby individuals assessed what, with whom, when, where and whether they should take certain actions. Their assessments were based on a clear understanding of the processes of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” and the links with personal and family reputations and ultimately with standing in the community. In relation to this they did not present themselves particularly as confused or stuck ‘between two cultures’ (Anwar 1998) but more as “bicultural” (Bowen 1981:10), well-versed in the values of their ‘homeland’ cultures and practiced in the art of “accommodation without assimilation” (Shaw 1998:3). The individuals in the sample revealed the complex decision-making/weighing up process regarding whether, when and how far to transgress from their knowledge of acceptable ‘norms’ of behaviour, and in doing so had to think about who will/needs to know and who will or whether anyone will find out – therefore the context was always important. Uniquely I was able to demonstrate that such intricate decision-making processes were engaged in while deciding on the more ‘mundane’ aspects of one’s life, such as Laila’s (F3) procrastination about going to a ‘show’, Jatinder’s (F11) having her hair-cut, and Sayed’s (M4) coming home late at night, as well as in relation to decisions regarding particular milestones in individuals’ lives, such as spouse-selection and marriage. The researchers reviewed earlier identified the importance of curbing individual preferences in favour of the family’s wishes in regard especially to spouse-selection (Khan; Nesbitt 1994; Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990; Werbner 1990; Din 2006), but my evidence was important in revealing its influence in the more mundane aspects of life within Asian communities.

Thus the process of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” and their ultimate relationship with the reputation of individuals and in regard to the wider ‘group’ context of family and the

community, ensure that “izzat” as well as, ”sharam”, continue to retain their hold on members of Asian communities in Britain. Uzma’s (F13) story not only captured its place in her life, and that of her family’s, but also showed how the inherent forces within the concepts of “izzat” and “sharam” cross national boundaries. The important distinction in relation to my findings therefore relates to the fact that my interviewees demonstrated their awareness of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” being part of a process which shapes individual and family reputations, which are important to them. My interviewees provided a ‘window’ on the entire process, and illustrated their awareness of this, thus at the same time demonstrating the continuing hold of these two concepts in their lives. More specifically they showed that the reflected nature of “izzat” and “sharam” are in fact elements of a fluid mechanism of making judgements, conferring status and sanctioning ‘punishments’ within the community. Their awareness of this process, perhaps more than anything else showed that the value ascribed to “izzat” and “sharam” may ‘shift’ in different contexts, but these concepts continue to have some hold on life in Asian communities. As Wilson (1979:104) pointed out over 30 years ago, “izzat” is,

...a tremendous, conservative force, controlling to different extents, everyone in Asian societies.

Therefore the continuing importance of “izzat” is captured by the findings from both sets of data, but perhaps the best indication of this is Haroon’s (M11) statement:

“So, but my mother and father are pretty important, and I can accept that, yes, generally keep that kind of respect up.”

The fact that this individual ‘left’ home at 17, (see his ‘pen’-picture at appendix 5), but still sees the value of upholding “izzat” provides some measure of its continuing hold. Also, the ‘passion’ enlisted from the Sikh women in their 40s and 50s demonstrates how its significance continues to be transmitted from one generation to the next, which as Bhatti



(1999) points out is a responsibility that tends to rest with the mothers, a group represented by two out of the four focus groups. The level of awareness of “izzat” and “sharam” and depth of understanding shown by respondents leaves me to believe that “izzat” remains very important for Asian young people in Britain. Although the nature of “izzat” and “sharam”, is not mentioned in formal education in Britain, and there is little discussion by the general public (except in regard to the sensationalism attached to honour-related violence), my young respondents are nevertheless familiar with its essential nature in shaping their lives in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

This thesis has drawn on data generated from all except one of the ‘areas’ of questioning included in the ‘Outline Guide for the Individual Interview Process’, (appendix 6). The exception is the area related to “Community and Youth Work Practice and “Izzat”. This research was inspired by reflections on the personal and professional aspects of my life in Britain, and the intention at the inception of this research journey was to include an analysis of the data generated regarding Youth and Community practice from a sample of young Asians drawn from this field of work. However along this ‘journey’ I found ‘gaps’ in the knowledge and understanding of the concepts of “izzat” (and “sharam”) themselves. Therefore this underpinning, fundamental knowledge regarding how “izzat” (aided by “sharam”) shapes lives in Asian communities became the sole focus of this thesis. This means that the data generated regarding professional practice remains ‘untouched’. Therefore, the collation, analysis and presentation of this will be the next leg of the ‘journey’, but cannot and has not been undertaken yet.

Nevertheless some provisional comments even at this stage can be drawn from the data, which are relevant for Youth and Community Practice. Doing so will also provide an impetus for me to collate and analyse the ‘untouched’ specifically practice-related data with some urgency.

Therefore, active decision-making regarding the curbing of behaviour, understanding notions of acceptable/unacceptable behaviour (especially relating to gender-dynamics), how “izzat” can be maintained/enhanced and/or “sharam” attracted and “izzat” lost, the process of reflected “izzat” and “sharam” and the significance of gossip in shaping reputation(s) are important outcomes of this research that also have implications for Youth and Community practice.

These implications have an impact at different ‘levels’, including those for young people (and their communities) and for workers, and for organisations/work settings. I will briefly reflect on each of these levels here.

In regard to young people (and their communities), and relating to how “izzat” is maintained or gained and/or “sharam” attracted and “izzat” lost, the significance of leadership/role modelling (as suggested for example by Abdullah - M7), ‘good’ actions (including helping others and volunteering), and education and employment was clear. If professionals understood how “izzat” can be enhanced by such factors then the development of projects which facilitate this for the young Asians that they work with, becomes pertinent. The harnessing of young Asians’ willingness to enhance their “izzat” through ‘good’ actions can

be particularly beneficial for communities, but professionals need to understand the underpinning motivation that “izzat” may provide for them.

The notion of gossip and the potential loss of “izzat” and attracting “sharam” through the breaking of confidences regarding transgressions that young Asians may commit (for example such as those related to gender dynamics, dress and notions of modesty and ‘bad’ manners) and which reflect on their and their families’ reputations, may also have implications for practitioners, particularly in relation to their understanding of familial and community networks. A practitioner’s lack of knowledge of these could easily result in confidences being inadvertently broken, with serious consequences for the Asian young people they work with. The implications for group work here are also obvious – especially in relation to group membership and the nature of the discussions that are encouraged in such contexts. A youth worker in such circumstances would have to tread very carefully. (My case notes from appendix 2 provide some indication of the need for such care).

Finally in regard to work with Asian young people, it is important to emphasise that if professionals/practitioners intend to provide them with a basis from which they are to make informed choices about their lives, then knowledge and understanding of how “izzat” shapes their ‘everyday’ lives becomes crucial (see appendix 1).

Given the preceding discussion the implications for all youth workers and organisations working with/within Asian communities and their knowledge of concepts like “izzat” and “sharam” is evident, particularly in regard to understanding how “izzat” can be maintained, gained or lost, and the relative implications of this for the young Asians they may work with.

Practitioners clearly need to be aware of the potential ‘risks’ of their lack of knowledge and/or actions because they potentially have consequences for the young Asians they work with, and also for themselves for example in regard to how ‘easily’ they can gain access to members of Asian communities. Reputations are at stake – both, of the potential clients but also their own as workers. Furthermore there may be additional implications for those workers and organisations that are also perceived as ‘insiders’ by Asian communities, particularly in relation to the potentially differing expectations of the Asian young people they work with and of their families/communities. A simple example given some of my findings (such as those regarding acceptable/unacceptable behaviour) can illustrate this. An Asian worker (especially a woman) may be judged by the community on behaviour which may seem unimportant in other cultural contexts – for example based on how she dresses (in Western or ‘traditional’ ways). The price to pay for a worker or organisation that develops a ‘poor’ reputation within an Asian community is high, because reputations are difficult to restore, and so both, workers and the organisations within which they work have to be knowledgeable in the decisions they implement in regard to their practice.

It is not difficult to infer that the generally accepted idea of ‘transparency’ and accountability in professional practice is also potentially fraught, as workers (and perhaps organisations) for example grapple with the need to work on topics or themes that may be perceived as ‘unacceptable’ by the wider community (such as targeted or mixed and gender-specific work for example relating to sexual health).

At a most basic level therefore my findings regarding the norms of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour gleaned through my 3 categories (Table 6) and list of “sharam”-

attracting behaviour (Table 8), mean that workers (and the organisations that they work for) need to understand the potential implications for their Asian ‘clients’ and the families they belong to. As such workers may face a difficult ‘balancing act’, having to decide between their allegiance to their young clients and their families – especially when the young Asians they work with are engaged in behaviour that may be perceived as transgressive by the wider community. For organisations with a religious affiliation there is a danger that they become involved in patrolling the boundaries of acceptable/unacceptable behaviour and therefore in fulfilling a role in maintaining particular ‘standards’ of morality, (an underlying aspect of “izzat”). The result of this could potentially lead to the alienation of those young people that ‘cross’ the line of acceptability in regard to behaviour. This by its very nature means that the ‘patrolling’ of morality and therefore of ‘norms’ of behaviour by respective religious communities perhaps will become more significant, which in turn may have an impact on young people on the margins of such communities, because of a greater culture of ‘scrutiny’. I can infer from this that the ‘balancing act’ between acceptability and unacceptability for young people, workers and organisations will possibly become an ever difficult one, with those young people on the ‘margins’ potentially being further marginalised by their ‘transgressive’ behaviour.

This research provides an invaluable “snap shot” of how “izzat” and “sharam” are understood by young Asians in Britain. The fact that most of the data was gathered at a time when a more frenzied focus on honour-related violence was gaining momentum, perhaps makes this research offering even more valuable, for the danger in this more “frenzied” focus is that an understanding of how these concepts shape everyday lives becomes “lost” amidst the sensationalism that violence attracts. In relation to social care practice and including Youth

and Community Work, I suggest that some knowledge and understanding of how the concepts of “izzat” and “sharam” impact on young Asians should be included as an element of their training, given the multi-cultural, diverse nature of British society today.

## **5.2. Reflections on the Research Journey**

Moving now to reflections on my research journey, there are a few elements that stand out in regard to the empirical research process. The first relates to my choice of methods, that is the in-depth semi-structured interviews, and the focus groups with the predominantly Sikh women, at their residential weekend. Another element which I have spent some time pondering is the extent to which the relative effectiveness of the research, and the data gathering in particular, is attributable to the fact that I was considered an ‘insider’ by my respondents as an Asian woman. Thirdly, I need to reflect on my choice of sample.

Regarding my choice of methods, I think my use of vignettes and the general use of my allocated time with the Sikh women worked well and was innovative in the use of ice-breakers and a workshop-style. However, I would have valued a fuller record of the discussions in each of the focus groups, and with hind-sight wonder whether I could have enlisted the support of note-takers. The use of audio equipment in a sports hall where all of the groups were in discussion simultaneously would not have worked, but a team of four note-takers, one allocated to each of the four groups would have been useful, to gauge the level of discussion and to be able to measure the extent to which it was ‘democratic’, allowing each member to have a say. However, I did not have the resources for this, and so I have only the groups’ final feedback sheets as a record of their discussion.

In regard to the in-depth interviews, I was conscious (even at the time) about the length that each was taking. The fact that a huge amount of data was generated made the ‘sifting’ of it more arduous. However, in regard to the length, many of the interviewees at the end of the process expressed surprise at how much time had elapsed, and acknowledged that it had really made them think about a concept that they had hitherto taken for granted. Perhaps the length of the interviews was an ‘issue’, but then not one of the interviewees thought that their interview was ‘too long’. In fact every one of them commented on the experience as being somewhat ‘cathartic’ – a thought provoking process which really made them think about their personal and professional lives, leading ultimately to moments of realisation about how “izzat” and “sharam” shaped their lives, and which mirrored my own reflections on the concept in my professional life (Soni 2006 – appendix 1). This was an interesting outcome or ‘by product’ of the research for the respondents. Although I can be less certain of a similar effect on the focus groups/workshop participants, I have no doubt that the level of discussion in the whole group was enlightening for all those present. For the interviewees the interview became a trigger to reflect, and given the sensitive nature of these reflections, for some it therefore became a cathartic process as acknowledged by other researchers (Lee 1999; Aull Davies 1999).

The sense of trust and security conveyed by the respondents through their responses to my questions is perhaps a good indication that they considered me ‘one of their own’, and so an insider. Uzma’s (F13) story is a good example of this. Her willingness to share such a private aspect of her family’s experiences with “sharam” is indicative of a good level of trust. Also embedded within the story is her reference to me by my name, conveying a sense of ease and familiarity. However some of this ‘ease’ may also be attributable to my training and

work as a professional practitioner with good listening skills. Perhaps the best indication that I was perceived as an ‘insider’ by the respondents is in the sporadic use of ‘mother’ tongue. The fact that I chose to refer in my research to the ‘Urdu’ terms “izzat” and “sharam” amongst others, resulted in the interviewees offering equivalent terms such as “beguerat”, “besti” and so forth. This may have been inevitable given my use of “izzat” in the first instance, but the interviews are littered with many other examples which suggest that my ‘insider’ knowledge provided a sense of mutual understanding and sharing (Jarret 1993) and inherent therein is a sense of ease. Some examples include the following:

“...forget the rest like *Khatums*” (Shaz – M10)

“*Sharam rakho*” (Sayed – M4)

“My *mama*’s daughter...” (Paramjeet – F9)

I thought that gender would be significant in the individual in-depth interview process, perhaps aiding the process with the women in the sample and a potential hindrance in my interviews with the men. In fact, on reflection I do not think that it was an issue within the interview process, and ironically only Jasmine (F2) seemed to put limits on what she would share, with her “it can’t be told”. Perhaps, although I was an “insider” by virtue of my ‘Asian-ness’, the fact that I was also an ‘outsider’ on many fronts (for example, my age and religion) and my commitment to my professional training (whereby confidentiality is prized), were factors in putting any gender-related factors ‘to rest’. The case notes (at appendix 2) based on my reflections in relation to my youth work practice are particularly useful in showing how this ‘insider/outsider’ dynamic can operate.

My choice of sample, especially for the in-depth interviews resulted in an over-representation of young Muslims. Although this has value in its own right as providing invaluable insights



into this sub-group within the Asian community in Britain, in future I would hope to work with a more religiously balanced sample. However, this ‘bias’ in the sample I believe was more than compensated for by the ‘nature’ of the respondents being Youth and Community practitioners. They were appropriately experienced and well-placed “social actors” (Lawler 2002:201) providing a richness of data given their position within Asian communities – both personal and professional. I hope that the imbalance in the in-depth interviews sample was at least ‘off-set’ in part by the predominantly Sikh women in the focus groups. I was sorry however that only one of the focus groups (Group A) was in the equivalent age-range of my individual interview sample.

This research has largely focused on the reflections of individuals regarding how “izzat” has shaped their lives. This was inevitable given the study’s intended focus on exploring the fundamental facets of the concept and of its corollary “sharam”. However, this has meant that there is a ‘gap’ in relation to the role “izzat” plays within collective experience in Asian communities. Therefore I would have also liked to explore “izzat” in relation to the assertion of group identity in far more depth (especially in relation to young Asians ‘new’ expressions of “izzat” for example through the link between dress and identity, and in regard to the concept of “ummah” for young Muslim men). My secondary and primary research found some evidence of this, partly in reactions to external hostility, but it needs much deeper focus in regard to the assertion of “izzat” as collective pride, which is a link and inference made by no-one else.

This research has exposed the gaps in understanding about the concept of “izzat” (and “sharam”) as they shape the lives of all Asians. I think these ‘gaps’ are a result of two ‘main’

discourses (and therefore potential areas of future research) that have dominated and consumed the attention on Asians in Britain. The first relates to the focus on honour-related violence, an area of discussion dominated largely by the media interest in it. This also defines how it is discussed in a classic ‘Orientalist’-way (Said 1978), with the ‘control’ of the discourse lying with a predominantly Western perspective that controls it. The second discourse relates to the growing interest in young Muslims’ responses to global events affecting the trans-national community of Muslims (the ‘Ummah’) and the rise in Islamophobia, which has already spawned research interest and will continue to do so in the near future.

Finally the interviewees generally gave their consent to having their audio-recordings deposited with the Archive Department of the Central Library in Birmingham, for possible future use. As such, once this research journey is completed copies of their recordings will be ‘housed’ there, making it possible for others to hear these unique voices in the future.

Although this thesis has come to an ‘end’, the process of data-collection has generated much more data than the thesis can hold, for example regarding the significance of “izzat” and “sharam” in relation to professional practice within Asian communities. Even though this has not been a subject of central focus in this research, I have reflected on how an understanding of the concepts of “izzat” and “sharam”, would contribute to the development of sensitive cultural practice within Asian communities for example in regard to the choices that members of Asian communities make about education, careers, the friends they have and so on. This leg of the journey has come to a close and I need to move on to the next, which involves collating, analysing and disseminating the data I have gathered on Youth and

Community Practice and “izzat”. Beyond that next step, I would like to undertake some comparative studies firstly regarding the concept of “izzat” in collective and individualistic cultures and then between different collective cultures (such as those from the Indian subcontinent, the Middle-East and/or South-East Asia). This research has shown that this is a rich, relatively ‘untouched’ area of study which therefore presents a plethora of possibilities for future work.

This particular research journey has led me to offer some insights about both “izzat” and “sharam”, which are unique, and which I hope will contribute in some part to creating a better understanding of what it is to be young and Asian in Britain in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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#### Web Addresses:

[www.shaadi.com](http://www.shaadi.com)  
[www.muslimmarriages.com](http://www.muslimmarriages.com)

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**Appendices 1, 2, 5 and 10 have been removed from the electronic copy of this thesis as they contain confidential information/are subject to copyright restrictions.**

### APPENDIX 3

#### **Purpose of Research Information for Interviewees** (To accompany the Research Consent Form)

**Name of Researcher :** Sangeeta Soni

**Contact Details of Researcher:**

Telephone:

Fax:

Email:

**Subject of Research Focus:** Understanding ‘Izzat’ (Honour) – A Focus on Young Asians’ Lives and on (Asian) Youth and Community Workers in Britain

#### **Purpose of the Research:**

This research aims to explore/understand the role of ‘izzat’ in the lives of young Asian men and women in Britain through the use of in-depth interviews. It will also explore whether an understanding of the concept of ‘izzat’ is important in Youth and Community Practice with/within Asian communities in Britain. As such, the Research is divided into broad areas covered by an in-depth interview including the following:

##### Interviewee Details

Understanding of ‘Izzat’

Friendship Patterns and Peer Networks

Understanding of ‘Sharam’ (Shame)/‘Lajja’

Gender and Reputation

Identity, Religion, Culture and Society

Marriage and Gift Exchange

Respect and Losing Face

Youth and Community Practice and ‘Izzat’

Each interview is expected to last at least 2 hours and interviewees can withdraw their participation at any point during the research process. Participants will be granted confidentiality and anonymity in regard to their participation in this Research. However, the interviews will be recorded using audio equipment, making it easier for the Researcher to concentrate on the interview(s). Also since this is an opportunity to gather experiences and views from a unique group of individuals, permission will also be sought from Research participants for the audio tape(s) of their individual interview to be stored for future use (by Researchers) at Birmingham City Library’s Archive Department (once this Research is completed). Again anonymity and confidentiality will be granted in regard to this. The interviews will be transcribed for the purpose of analysis. The transcripts will be available if required for interviewees to check for accuracy. The Researcher can be contacted using the contact details above, if any further information is required.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Research Interviewee Consent Form (including Copyright Consent)**

**Name of Interviewee;**

**Title and Identifying Code/Reference of Interviewee:**

**Date(s) of Interview(s):**

#### **Interviewee Declaration:**

I have been given information about the research on 'Izzat', and the way in which my contribution will be used. I give permission for the interview that I am about to give to be used for research purposes and published, subject to the terms below.

#### **Please tick either:**

☐ I am happy for my name to be released in association with the content of the interview I am about to give/have given and for my name to be published for research purposes in the following ways;

- Use in educational establishments, including use in thesis, dissertation or similar research project
- Use in publications, including print, audio or video recordings or CD ROM
- Use for public reference in libraries, museums and record offices (for example as archive material)
- Use in public performances, lectures and talks
- Publication on the internet
- Use on radio or television

OR

☐ I am happy for my interview to be used for research purposes. However I request that my name be kept confidential. It should not be released to researchers or published in any association with the interview I have given.

I assign the copyright in my contribution to SANGEETA SONI (the Research Coordinator). I understand that in assigning copyright I am giving the research coordinator the right to make and distribute copies of my contribution, subject to the terms of access above.

**Name:**

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**(Interviewee)**

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **‘PEN-PICTURES’**

**(BRIEF BIOGRAPHICAL DESCRIPTIONS  
OF EACH OF THE 25 INTERVIEWEES)**



## **APPENDIX 6**

### **Outline Guide for the Individual Interview Process**

#### **PhD Research - Questions Guide/Possible Questions for Interview**

##### **Interviewee Details:**

Date and Time of Interview:

Interviewee/ Respondent Code No:

Gender – m / f

Age/ Date of Birth.

Ethnicity (defined by self).

Religion - Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian, Other (specify).

Education and Employment Status: (Eg Student on CPY Programme, youth centre project member in or out of f.t educ, CPY worker etc.)

What are your ambitions for yourself? What would you like to do with regard to education, a career and/or work? Why?

Postal Code (home address).

Constituency/Ward of Home Address.

Where do your extended family live? - Nearby (same street, few streets away, same ward etc), in the same city, in another city (specify), overseas (specify).

General feelings about the area you live in?

Where did you grow up and go to school?

Where would you ideally like to live and why?

What is your family's country of origin?

From which region/state etc in the country of origin is your family?

Occupation of father.

Occupation of mother.

No of siblings.

Chronological position amongst siblings.

Marital status; (married, married with children (specify how many), unmarried)

Do you attend the local place of worship? Where? How often?

### **Areas for Questioning**

#### **Defining 'Izzat'/ Understanding of 'izzat'**

- \* Definition and understanding of 'izzat'
- \* Learning about 'izzat'
- \* Impact of 'izzat' on – self
  - family
  - community
  - men
  - women
- \* Symbols and trappings of 'izzat'
- \* Importance of 'izzat' for young people today
- \* Understanding of 'be-izzat'
- \* Understanding of 'izzat' by non Asians

#### **Possible Questions**

1. What is your understanding/definition of 'izzat'?
2. How do you/did you learn about 'izzat'? From what age were you aware of it?
3. Can you give me an example when your 'izzat' or the 'izzat' of your family was affected? Why? In what ways? How? What happened?
4. What does it mean to be 'be-izzat'? What would be considered 'be-izzat'?
5. What, if any, are the symbols and/or 'trappings' of 'izzat'? Why these?
6. What are the differences, if any, in the way that 'izzat' is experienced by and affects men and women? Why?
7. Some researchers say (Stopes-Roe and Cochrane, 1990) that 'izzat' is not as important to young Asians as to their parents. What do you think?
8. Does it matter whether non-Asians understand 'izzat'? Why?

#### **Friendship Patterns and Peer Networks**

- \* Friendships – in terms of gender, race, religion, culture
- \* Activities undertaken with friends
- \* Reactions and awareness of parents
- \* Cousin networks – inc gender
- \* Activities with cousins
- \* Asian gangs – reasons for their existence

- reasons for membership
- \* Inter-communal/inter-gang relationships
- \* 'Ummah' – understanding and relevance of
- \* 'Izzat' and friendships and peer networks

### **Possible Questions**

1. Who are your friends? Who do you normally 'hang around' with? Why? (Prompt to think in terms of gender, race, culture, religion and ethnicity etc)
2. Do you have any cousins that live nearby? Under what circumstances do you see them? How often etc? Who are they (in terms of gender)? Do you see/spend time with both your male and your female cousins? Why? Why not?
3. What sort of things/activities do you do with your cousins? What do you parents think about this?
4. Tell me about your friends. Who are they (in terms of race, culture, religion or gender)?
5. What sort of activities do you do with your friends?
6. How aware are your parents of this? Why?
7. In Birmingham at the moment, there are many issues regarding young Asians and gangs? What do you think about this?
8. Are you a member of a gang or do you know anyone who is a member of a gang? Prompt for details (feelings, activities, reasons for membership).
9. When I worked in Handsworth/Winson Green as a youth and community worker, there were often tensions between Asian gangs caused by girls from one community going out with the boys of another. What do you think about this?
10. What do you understand by the concept of 'ummah' ('brotherhood' in Islam)?

### **'Sharam'/'Lajja'**

- \* Understanding of 'sharam'/'lajja' (with personal or family or community based examples)
- \* Affects/Impact of 'sharam' on men and women
- \* Understanding of 'be-sharam'
- \* Understanding of 'besti'
- \* 'Izzat' and 'sharam'/'lajja'

### **Possible Questions**

1. What is 'sharam' and/or 'lajja'? What is 'sharam'/'lajja' about?
2. What would you consider to be 'be-sharam'? Why?
3. What are the differences, if any, in the way that 'sharam'/'lajja' affects men and women? Why?

4. What do you think are the affects on the individual of suffering from a 'besti' (insult/stigma), or of feeling ashamed of something that has happened? How does it make the individual feel?

### **Gender and Reputation**

- \* Expectations – of self
  - of men
  - of women
  - of the family
  - of the community
- \* Treatment within the family and community – of men
  - of women
- \* Transmission of cultural values
- \* Reputation – definition and understanding
  - influence and impact of reputation on self and on family (with examples)
    - affects on men and women
- \* Gossip – affects on individual and family
- \* Codes of behaviour – awareness of them in terms of gender, caste, religion, race
- \* Consequences of not conforming
- \* 'Izzat' and gender and reputation

### **Possible Questions**

1. What are your family's expectations of you and how do you know? (with regard to education, career, employment etc)
2. What are your expectations of yourself?
3. What are/would be the consequences of not fulfilling your family's expectations of you? Why?
4. Are there any differences in Asian family expectations of men and women regarding notions of success (for example to do with the type of career or employment etc)?
5. What if any are the differences in the way that young men/sons or women/daughters are treated in your family?
6. What, if any, are the differences in the way that Asian communities treat young men and young women?
7. In terms of gender whose responsibility is it, (men's or women's), to transmit cultural values to the next generation and why? How do you feel about this?
8. What do you understand by a 'reputation'?
9. Why is 'reputation' important – for you? – for the family?

10. What can influence someone's reputation?
11. Are there any differences in the way that reputations affect men and women? Why?
12. Can you give me an example when your reputation was affected in a positive or a negative way? What happened? When? Why? How?
13. How do you feel about gossip in the community?
14. Asian cultures often have rules about the 'right' way to behave, as men and women. How aware are you of these 'rules'? Can you give some examples?
15. What are the consequences of not behaving by the rules? How do you feel about this?
16. How can parents or the family ensure that individuals conform to or behave according to the rules?

### **Identity, Religion, Culture and Society**

- \* Self definition
- \* Language
- \* Importance/relevance of religion
- \* Relevance of caste
- \* Dress and modesty
- \* Intergenerational relationships
- \* Asian-ness – pride in
  - ashamed to be
  - as men
  - as women
- \* Outsiders perceptions of Asians
- \* Young Asians and the media (including the Asian media – tv, newspapers etc)
- \* Relationship of 'izzat' to identity, religion and culture and society

### **Possible Questions**

1. How would you describe yourself ie your identity? What is your identity? (in terms of nationality, religion etc)
2. What makes you proud to be Asian? Why?
3. Is there anything that makes you ashamed to be Asian?
4. What do you think about the British society in which you are living?
5. How do you think young Asians are regarded by the older people in the Asian community?
6. What do you think of racism in Britain? Do you think it exists?
7. What do you think of caste in Asian communities? What, if any, is the relationship between caste and 'izzat'?

8. What language(s) do you speak at home? Why? How do you feel about this?
9. How religious are you?
10. How important is your religion to you? Why?
11. What, if any, rules with regard to dress would you consider to be important and why? Do you follow these rules and why or why not?
12. How do you think Asians are portrayed in the media?
13. What do you think of the Asian media (inc tv channels and the print media)

### **Marriage/Spouse-selection and Gift Exchange?**

- \* Attitudes to marriage 'types'/ systems – arranged
  - love
  - introduced/negotiated/forced
- \* Exploration of weddings
- \* Spouse-selection
- \* Areas of agreement/disagreement with parents/family regarding marriage and spouse selection
- \* Understanding of forced marriage (including their affects) and gender
- \* Dowry/'daaj'
- \* Awareness and practice of 'lena-dena'
- \* Giving to charity
- \* 'Izzat' and marriage, spouse-selection and 'lena-dena'

### **Possible Questions**

1. When, if at all, would you like to get married? What do your parents/family think?
2. What sort of marriage would you like to have? ie Will you find someone yourself? Will it be arranged? Will you be 'introduced'? Etc.
3. What are your family's expectations of how you will find your spouse?
4. What are the important considerations for you when choosing a spouse/life partner? (Race? Religion? Caste? Class? Education? Property? Employment?)
5. What do you think of marrying someone outside the community? Would you ever consider doing so? Why? Why not?
6. What, if any, is the relationship between marriage and izzat?
7. What is a forced marriage?

8. It is generally known that forced marriages in Asian communities mainly affect women rather than men (Samad and Eade 2002). What do you think about this? Why do you think this is?

9. What do you think about the giving of a 'daaj' or dowry?

10. What do you think of 'lena-dena' in Asian communities?

11. How aware are you of the rules of 'lena-dena'? How did you learn about them?

12. To what extent do you practice 'lena-dena'? Why and who with?

13. What, if anything, is the relationship between 'lena-dena' and 'izzat'?

14. In Asian communities there is a tradition of giving publicly to charity. Who does the giving in terms of gender, age etc, and why? Do you give to charity? Which ones and why?

### **Respect/'Losing Face'**

\* Understanding of respect and losing face (including ways of showing respect)

\* Affects of respect

\* Affects of 'losing face'

\* Respect/losing face and gender

\* Leadership and respect

### **Possible Questions**

1. What is 'losing face' or respect?

2. How can you gain respect amongst your peers, within the family, and in the community? As a man? As a woman?

3. How do you show respect for others? Why, if at all, is this important?

4. What are the differences, if any, for men and women when it comes to losing face or respect?

5. What is the relationship between respect /or losing respect/face and 'izzat'?

6. Respect and status can often be gained through being a 'leader' in the community. To what extent are young Asians interested in this aspect of gaining respect? Why? Why not?

### **Community and Youth Work Practice and 'Izzat'**

- Experience of CY work in and out of Asian communities
- The challenges of CY work and being Asian
- Individualism of CY principles v collectivism of Asians
- The role of the family in Asian cultures and CY work
- CY work with Asians in mixed (gender and race settings)
- Issues facing Asian young people
- Solutions to issues facing young Asians

- CY work and 'izzat' and 'sharam'

### **Possible Questions**

1. How much experience do you have of working as a y and c worker?
2. How much experience do you have of working within/with Asian young people and/or Asian communities?
3. To what extent does being an Asian worker/trainee have any relevance to your CY practice both in general and when working with Asian young people/communities?
4. What, if any, are the specific challenges of working with Asian young people and/or within Asian communities?
5. What, if any, are the challenges of putting CY principles into practice when working with Asian young people?
6. Some key principles of CY work can be considered to be very individualistic - eg the idea of empowerment and of independence, while Asian cultures are often considered to be collective (family-orientated). How do you manage this potential tension?
7. Can you think of any examples when this tension was apparent? Prompt for examples.
8. To what extent do CPY workers (Asian and non Asian) understand the role of the family within Asian culture, and the role of 'izzat' within this?
9. What relevance, if any, does an understanding of 'izzat' have on your work as a y and c worker? Why?
10. What relevance, if any, does an understanding of 'sharam' or the loss of 'izzat' have on your work as a y and c worker?
11. As you're/were working in a racially and culturally mixed centre/project, are/were there any activities that would be considered acceptable in one culture and yet risky or unacceptable in another? Prompt for examples.
12. What difference, if any, does it make to have an Asian worker on this project/in this centre etc? Why?
13. Are there any differences in the issues faced by young Asian men and young Asian women in this area?
14. What do you think can be done about this?



## **APPENDIX 7**

### **The Government's Classification of Social Class**

1. Higher managerial and professional occupations
  - 1.1 Employers and managers in larger organizations
  - 1.2 High professionals
2. Lower managerial and professional occupations
3. Intermediate occupations
4. Small employers and own account workers
5. Lower supervisory, craft and related occupations
6. Semi-routine occupations
7. Routine occupations
8. Never worked and long-term unemployed

(Adapted from Rose, D. and O'Reilly, K. (1998) *The ESRC Review of Government Social Qualifications*, London, Office for National Statistics, 1998).

## APPENDIX 8

### Sikh Women's "Izzat" Workshop

#### Workshop – Outline

- 11.15am – Introductions, explanation of purpose of workshop, group consent and “thank” the participants
- 11.25am – Icebreaker – “The sun shines on....” (See rules below)
- 11.35am – Icebreaker and group ‘warm-up’
- 11.45am – Group divider – “The Age Line”, followed by
  - Whole group understanding and definitions of “Izzat” (Record responses on flipchart)
- 11.55am – Whole group understanding and definitions of “Sharam” (Record responses on flipchart)
- 12.05pm – Provide vignettes to groups
- 12.10pm – Discussion of vignettes in groups (Including recording of responses on the flip chart paper in each group)
- 1.00pm – Groups feedback and discussion
- 1.10pm – Final thoughts, comments and observations

#### Rules of ‘Sun Shines on...’ Icebreaker

Women will be sitting on chairs in a big circle in the hall. Ask one of the women to be a ‘volunteer’ and remove her chair from the circle (so there is one less chair in the group for the number of participants). Then, decide on a theme such as what participants are wearing, the colours on their clothes etc. Get the volunteer to stand in the middle of the circle and explain that the volunteer will choose and call out to the rest of the group, one thing from the chosen theme for example as follows:

“The Sun Shines on....anyone wearing some red..., or anyone wearing sandals..., and/or anyone wearing glasses” etc, etc.

As the volunteer shouts out her chosen example from the theme, all those women who it applies to must move out of their chairs and try and find another one in the circle – *THEY CANNOT STAY IN THEIR ‘ORIGINAL’ CHAIR*. The volunteer must also try and get one of the chairs as the women move, hopefully, leaving someone else without a chair to be the next ‘volunteer’. Repeat this process as long as needed for women to feel relaxed in the workshop setting.

#### Rules for the Age Line

Get all the women to stand up, and then ask them to organise themselves into one long line based on their ages with the youngest at one end and the oldest at the other. Then walk along the length of the line and divide the women into age-related groups by decades, giving each group a ‘letter’ identifier (ie. A, B, C, or D etc).

## APPENDIX 9

### Findings and Analysis from the Sikh Women's Workshop

I will now present the findings and analysis of the data from the Sikh women's workshop, which I will also use to triangulate the data and analysis from the in-depth interviews (as discussed within the methodology chapter of this thesis).

I was invited by a Sikh women's organisation to deliver a 2 hours workshop on "Izzat" in a youth centre on the outskirts of Birmingham as a part of their annual residential programme. The workshop was programmed between 11.15am and 1.15pm. There were 46 women across a very wide age range (between 15 and 73), and although most of them were from the West Midlands, a few had travelled for the weekend event from further afield (including, for example, from London and Edinburgh).

The women were already aware through the weekend's programme information, about the focus/topic of the workshop and were allowed to decide whether or not they wished to take part in the workshop on "Izzat". My arrival at the venue coincided with the morning "coffee break" and I was met by the Organiser and introduced to 3 of the women, prior to starting the workshop. It was significant that one of the three women, (a secondary school teacher), that I met on my arrival, said:

"You're brave – it is a very important topic. It affects women in  
All sorts of ways."

Before starting the workshop I had an opportunity to discuss the range of needs and backgrounds represented in the whole group with the Organiser (a woman in her 70's). She explained that the women came together once a year from "all over the country", and that they were from "all different", educational and socio-economic backgrounds, including factory workers, house wives, professionals and women who were "retired", like herself. Although 46 women were present at the residential, she said that only 40 would be participating in the "Izzat" workshop. She was happy for the discussions and feedback from the workshop participants to be used in my research, and stated that she had already informed the women, that this workshop was a part of my research. She said that 6 of the 46 women had decided not to take part, and that they had made this decision, because they were either "too tired", or because they were "not interested" in the subject or to contributing to the research. She had already informed the participants that any record of the discussions would be 'anonymised' and "confidential". In relation to religion 34 of the remaining 40 participants were Sikh, and 6 were Hindus. All of them were from Punjabi-speaking communities.

Given the age range of the participants, I checked the language in which the workshop needed to be delivered. Although my first language is Punjabi, I was uncertain if the workshop needed to be delivered wholly in Punjabi. More significantly although my spoken Punjabi language skills were adequate, I could not read or write it, making the idea of allowing the women to record their discussions in written Punjabi, a little problematic. However the Organiser assured me that the workshop could (and should) be delivered in English, with some concepts and ideas translated into Punjabi as necessary. She said that all the women had "some level of English", and "Some only use English with their children". She also assured

me that as a scholar of Punjabi, (she had written some Punjabi textbooks), she would be on hand “to help” as necessary.

In implementing the planned workshop, however, I found that the women were confident and comfortable enough to seek clarification from me, or to revert to Punjabi whenever they needed to. This was helped by my speaking in Punjabi to them at the beginning of the workshop in offering my “thanks” to them for their participation and for contributing to my research on “Izzat”. This was important both to officially acknowledge their contribution and consent and also enabled them to hear me speak Punjabi, and to gauge the level of my fluency in the language. I was deliberately and implicitly telling them that although the workshop would be in English, I was comfortable and happy for them to use the language of their choice.

### **The Workshop Design and Information Gathered**

In relation to the workshop the wide age-range, the participants’ backgrounds and the issues with language had been important considerations. I was also very aware that although I knew both, the organisation and the Organiser reasonably well (through my work as a Youth and Community Worker), I had never met any of the other participants before.

The Organiser through my initial ‘probing’, had confirmed that usually topics had been explored with the participants in the ‘annual’ residential through using a more information-giving/awareness raising, model which involved ‘experts’ coming in to give a “lecture” and information. I was very conscious, given the potentially ‘emotional’ responses that a sensitive subject like “izzat” could elicit, that I needed to establish a rapport quickly, and that the women needed to feel relaxed. I consciously prepared a workshop therefore which allowed them to discuss the topic, without having to divulge sensitive experiences and information in relation to the topic from their own lives in a very public environment.

The workshop was to take place, with the 40 participants, in the centre’s gym and I organised the chairs in a large circle (rather than in the more usual, and formal ‘rows’), with a flip chart at one end of the circle. Having spent the first 10 minutes, explaining the purpose and giving my “thanks”, I used the next 20 minutes of my allocated 2 hours to enable the women to ‘relax’. (Please see appendix 9 for the outline of the workshop). I began the workshop with a simple, fun ‘ice-breaker’, commonly known as ‘The sun shines on...’ (Please see appendix 9 for the rules). This enabled the women to move from their ‘original’ seats (which they had taken up, following their coffee break). This was followed by another ‘ice-breaker’, which also ‘doubled’ as a way of dividing the women into 4 age-related focus groups. Briefly the women were asked to form a straight line, and then re-form the line, based on their ages, with the youngest at one end, and the oldest at the other. Again, this was an activity which they enjoyed, but which also enabled me to divide the 40 women into 4 coherent focus groups as follows:

Group A – consisted of 8 women between 15 and 38 (only one woman was under 20 (i.e. she was 15), and one was 38). The rest were in their 20s and the 38 year old asked to stay in this group because they were all unmarried as she was.

Group B – included 12 women in their 40s

Group C – included 9 women in their 50s  
Group D – consisted of 11 women over 60

Each of the 4 groups was in line with focus group guidelines, which specify between 4 and 12 members (Krueger 1994) in each group. The rationale for the group membership was explained and clarified, and the women remained in these 4 groups for the rest of the workshop.

The next 20 minutes involved a ‘whole’ group exercise whereby I used the “word – storming” technique to get all the participants to firstly, define and share their understanding of “izzat” and then to go on to do the same for “sharam”.

It was only after the feedback relating to both “izzat” and “sharam” had been shared within the whole group that the women were asked to discuss and respond to the vignettes in their age related groups. (The use of vignettes has been discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis).

I decided to use two vignettes – one for the group with the youngest women (Group A) aged predominantly in their 20’s, and one for the other 3 groups. The vignettes, although slightly different, were as closely related as possible in their focus and the themes they covered. This was important to minimise the possible variables involved.

Therefore, for Group A, all of whose members were unmarried (including the 38 year old), were given the following vignette to discuss:

“You have fallen in love with a man from a different caste and want to marry him. What do you do?”

The members of the remaining 3 groups (Groups B, C and D) were all married women with families, and so they were asked to discuss the following:

“You suspect that your daughter is having a relationship with a man from a different caste and wants to marry him. How do you react and what do you do?”

Since “izzat” and “sharam” are both important in regulating ‘normal’, acceptable behaviour (Wilson 1979, Ballard 1982 and 1994, Shaw 1988 and 2000, Anwar 1998), and transgressions from this could result in difficulties for the transgressors (Shaw 1988 and 2000, Ghuman 1994), I needed to create a scenario which included members of the family and community, being involved in some form of behaviour which could be perceived as transgressive or unacceptable. However, I was also very conscious that I had very limited time to be able to evoke discussion and gauge the women’s reactions to the vignettes, and therefore the significance of “izzat” and “sharam” in their lives.

I had decided before the workshop to make the ‘transgression’ involved in the vignette as simple or ‘minimal’ as possible. By this I mean, that I believed that if the women reacted to a caste-related transgression, then it would demonstrate the extent to which, in a British context, it remained relevant. Moreover, in some ways it would give me some indication of the greater reaction they *may* have to relationships that crossed the ‘frontiers’ of race, religion, culture

and sexuality. Implicit within the vignettes offered for discussion was the understanding that those involved in a 'different castes' relationship would be from the same religious and cultural background – their 'differences' lay 'only' in caste related affinities. However, if the women reached an easy consensus, I was also prepared to 'change' the relationship cited in the vignettes, and 'move the bar' up, by making it either cross-religious and/or inter-racial. Whether I actually did so, would have been largely dependent on the discussions in the groups, and in gauging the level of consensus in relation to the initial vignette. It may therefore have resulted in a change to the original workshop plan/outline, and I was prepared for this.

However, the vignettes I offered resulted in a lot of debate and some very interesting reactions, which made the 'fall-back' plan unnecessary. Ultimately the outlined workshop plan (see appendix 8) was adhered to.

I will now move on to present my findings and analysis from the workshop and in doing so will also draw comparisons with the data gathered from the in-depth, individual interviews.

### **“Izzat”**

All the women as a whole group, seated in a large circle were asked to share their definitions and understanding of “izzat”. I recorded these on flipchart paper, which already had written on it “Izzat is (to do with)...” Individuals were invited to “shout out” what they understood “izzat” to be and the following were the responses in the sequence that they were suggested, in both in English and in some cases using Punjabi words:

- “Beauty, vanity”
- “Respect”
- “Worth (self)”
- “Materialism”
- “Money – “izzat” – power”
- “Hankar [pride] – especially regarding material things and vanity”
- “Ji” used instead of “tu” [to give respect]
- “Caring for values”
- “Family values – (religious)”
- “Care for others”
- “Authority – for example a teacher, and respect for a teacher”
- “Respect for elders, for mother/father, for individuals and cultural awareness”
- “Respect for established norms in society”
- “Religious respect - “Guruji” [spiritual/religious leader/guide]
- “Education”
- “Moral values”

Although this was only a 10 minutes exercise, it was striking how the group reflected the range of nuances of meaning of “izzat”, (some of which have been discussed earlier in the reviews of literature and through the presentation of the analysis of the data from the in-depth interviews) and that, in fact, no one volunteered the more common, generic translation of “family honour”. Perhaps this can be explained firstly, by the fact that I was perceived as an

‘insider’ to the community and clearly my opening message and ability to speak Punjabi, had given this impression to the women. Bachu (1985) and Din (2006) both suggested the significance of this in their research, in eliciting different responses and Jarrett (1993) also suggested that the rapport and responses of the participants can be enhanced by the researcher being perceived as an ‘insider’.

It was significant that the women provided a wide range of meanings for “izzat”. In comparison to the responses from the in-depth, individual interviews it was interesting to note that here too “Respect”, “Worth” and “Moral values” were featured, combining the idea of “izzat” being an inherent quality within oneself with the need for a social context (for respect to be given and received from others). The women in the workshop seemed to combine their understanding of “izzat” with how it could be enhanced/gained such as through religiosity, education, materialism, thus in line with my first two categories of gaining “izzat” through ‘Conforming to Acceptable Norms’ and through ‘Achievement’. The fact that clearly a ‘caste’-and gender-related misdemeanour (as represented by the vignette) seemed to matter, also illustrated that my third category of ‘Inherited Factors’ was significant. The group environment was also significant, enabling the women to “bounce-off each other”, to develop deeper meanings and understanding, which is recognised as an aspect of focus-group research (Morgan 1988, May 1997, Madriz 2000).

In terms of the actual definitions for “izzat” suggested by the women, some of their suggestions were in Punjabi, and I added the translations to the ‘list’ as the Punjabi words and phrases were offered, enabling all those present to both, understand the meaning of the Punjabi words/phrases, and to potentially correct or offer alternatives to my interpretations. I was conscious, given the wide age range amongst the women present, that there may be some who would value the translations and that in such a public environment, they may not feel comfortable to question or ask for the translations.

The list of definitions offered by the women was interesting, in that they reflected the significance of “izzat” in the two ways outlined by Bhatti’s (1999) glossary translation of “izzat” cited earlier. In short, their definitions can be grouped into two ways, with some overlap between the two – that is “izzat” related to qualities or personality traits inherent within an individual, and “izzat” expressed through behaviour in relation to others, including the family, community and wider society. As such “beauty, vanity”, “worth (self)” and “moral values” are examples of qualities or traits within an individual and to some extent reflect the notion of “virtue, respect” offered by Bhatti (1999), and reflect the idea that an individual can be “izzatdhar”, thus possessing the qualities of “izzat” (being honourable, virtuous) within themselves. This aspect of “izzat” associated with notions of self-respect, self-esteem and especially self-dignity was a distinct theme which was also present in the collection of the data from the in-depth interviews and emerged in the nineties (and onwards) and was inferred in the work of Modood (1992), Ballard (1994), Bhatti (1999), Samad and Eade (2002) and Din (2006). The rest of the women’s list related to the importance of “izzat” in relation to others, especially in relation to offering/giving, receiving and attracting respect. Hence, “respect” appears early on, and was echoed in the use of Punjabi to address others (“Ji” used instead to “Tu”, to denote and give respect); “care for others”; “authority (e.g. teacher and respect for)”; “respect for elders, for mother/father, for individuals and cultural awareness”; “respect for established norms in society”; and “religious respect – “Guruji”.

They hinted at the idea that respect, and in fact, status could be gained through “materialism”, “money – “izzat” – power”, “hankar” [pride] (especially in relation to material things and vanity). This corresponds with my earlier findings from the in-depth interviews in relation especially to the ‘Achievement’ category for gaining/enhancing “izzat”. This facet of “izzat” was also in line with earlier discussions featuring the work of Bachu (1985), Shaw (1988 and 2000) and Werbner (1990), who all suggested that there was an interplay between ‘pride’ and attracting “izzat” through the accumulation of wealth-related assets. Ballard’s (1994, p.14) identification of “izzat” as “... a matter of relative standing which generates constant competition...” also underpinned the link between “izzat” and material wealth, and encapsulated the colloquial idea of ‘keeping-up-with-the-Jones’ as a means of gaining admiration and acceptance within the wider community and society. The link here to the earlier discussion about the process of reflected “izzat” and its relationship to the concept of reputation is clear, since this awareness was implicit in the women’s definitions.

“Education” was an example from the women which can be both, inherent to an individual, but also be seen as an aspect of an individual’s achievements which command respect from others (Jackson 1985, Ballard 1994). It straddled the two categories outlined earlier in an interesting way, because education for its own sake can be the basis for possessing “moral values” and carrying oneself with “(self) worth”, while the possession of a good formal education (and therefore, educational qualifications) can be an important step and link to gaining well paid employment and thus facilitate “materialism” and the possession of “money” and therefore “izzat” and ultimately “power”. This was an aspect of “izzat” that Bachu (1985), along with Shaw (1988, 2000) and Werbner (1990) discussed in her work, but specifically in relation to the process of spouse-selection. Here it was offered as being an important aspect of “izzat” without any caveats.

### **“Sharam”**

Once “izzat” had been defined, the women were invited to define and share their understanding of “sharam”. Again their suggestions were listed, from the top of the page to the bottom, in the order that they were offered:

- “Embarrassment”
- “Shame”
- “Restraint in behaviour”
- “Being constantly aware of your ‘place’ in society”
- “Confidence”
- “Gender – in relation to men; behaviour between men and women” (- “starts early”)
- “Can’t trust anybody outside (- especially relating to girls/ daughters wanting to go ‘clubbing’)
- “Dress (in relation to modesty)”
- “Dhadhis” [grandmothers] said, “Kahr bhettho” (‘stay at home’) regarding “women not being allowed out for anything, especially work”
- “Brainwashing”

Again, their responses reflected qualities or traits inherent within an individual’s personality or character, (such as ‘shame’ and ‘confidence’) and those aspects of behaviour that were in



relation to others, and which straddled the domains of acceptability and transgressions. This therefore meant that the idea of conformity and conforming to particular norms of acceptable behaviour ran throughout the women's definitions. The suggestions of "restraint in behaviour", "being constantly aware of your 'place' in society", "dress (in relation to modesty)" and "gender" were fitting examples of this, while "brainwashing" and the reference to "Kahr bettho" provided an interesting insight into how conformity may be commanded within the community, especially by the older women in a family. These responses were also in line with the idea of "sharam" as curbing behaviour discussed earlier in regard to the data from the in-depth interviews. In terms of comparisons with the range of "sharam"-attracting behaviour collated and analysed earlier, only the gender-related and relationship misdemeanours had a special focus, but this was also unavoidable given the vignettes discussed.

The idea that 'safety' lay within the community, and therefore the fact that you, "can't trust anybody outside", was significant in hinting at the lack of trust of the wider society and/or other communities, and of insularity within the community (Parekh 2000). Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) and Ballard (1994) particularly explored the attitude of members of Asian communities especially to the 'host' white society. Although no direct reference was made to reputation, it was implicitly understood that the "restraint in behaviour" was important in protecting one's standing and reputation. This also showed awareness of the process of reflected "sharam", (discussed earlier), that is linked to reputation. Also "being constantly aware of your 'place' in society" implied knowledge of relative standing as a woman in the family and within the wider community, and had links to the importance of reputation. In line with Samad and Eade (2002, p.75), these women were clearly aware that they needed to,

...demonstrate a sense of "sharam" by excluding themselves from such (public) arenas and ensuring that their own personal "izzat" is unimpeachable.

### **Group Reactions to the Vignettes**

I will now move on to discuss the reactions of the women in the four groups (outlined earlier) to the vignettes. The groups were provided with flipchart paper and a copy of the vignette they needed to discuss in their group. Before the groups were given the vignette, a member from each group was asked to volunteer to 'scribe' and/or record the group members' reactions to the vignette. The resulting record was therefore in the words of a member from each group. It was made clear that although English would be preferable for recording the group's discussions, if necessary, Punjabi could also be used, because the Organiser had already offered to help with any translations. The groups were also made aware that they would be expected to share the recorded points from their discussion with the whole group in the form of feedback to generate further discussion.

The feedback from Group A that was presented and discussed first, regarding the possibility of having an inter-caste relationship with the possibility of marriage, and was as follows:

"Told parents and take it from there"  
"It wouldn't happen because of respect for family"

“I just wouldn’t let myself go there (-fall in love with someone ‘unacceptable’) when I know what my parents would think”

“Respect for family is paramount”

“It’s about individual choice”

“You don’t plan these things, sometimes you just meet someone and you just ‘click’”

“It isn’t just ‘bad’ girls and rebels that it can happen to”

The above responses fell into two ‘camps’. Firstly women who would just not allow themselves to, “go there” because “Respect for family is paramount”. Clearly these women knew where the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour lay within their families, and in line with the assertions of Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990) and Anwar (1998), their families remained very important to them and more significantly, they would not want to risk this relationship, if at all possible. This sub-set of responses mirrored the procrastination and decision-making processes described by some of the interviewees earlier (for example including Laila – F3, Farzana – F4, Jatinder – F11, Sayed – M4, Bilal – M5 and Khalid – M12) in relation to the choices they made regarding acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.

The women in Group A seemed clear that any ‘transgressions’ in behaviour and actions needed to be limited, and required a good degree of conformity. Group A was however clearly divided, and the second sub-set consisted of women who suggested that they would tell their parents about the out-of-caste relationship and “...take it from there”, who considered it to be a matter of “... individual choice” and that these “things” were not planned and could just happen. Perhaps the earlier discussion regarding potential spouse-selection and marriage involving the interviewees was also indicative of this ‘split’ with the majority (15 – 60%) expecting and agreeing to an arranged marriage, and some (5 – 20%) hoping to ‘negotiate on this matter with their parents/families, while 4 (16%) had already married someone ‘of their choice’. This ‘split’ in the responses within Group A aptly captured the range of reactions that researchers (Bachu 1985, Stopes-Roe and Cochrane 1990, Werbner 1990, Anwar 1998) also outlined in response to the issue of spouse-selection in. These ranged from the more conformist, traditional model of arranged marriages, to the idea that young Asians were beginning to seek their own life partners through the use of technology (such as the internet, like Shazia – F8), which included turning their back to some extent on traditional practices, and widening the criteria for selection (including therefore giving less regard to caste-related differences) (Anwar 1998). The idea that young Asians would find life-partners within the ‘range of acceptability’ in terms of caste, race or religion as necessary was reminiscent of those that hoped to ‘negotiate’ and compromise with their parents and wider families.

The final response from this women’s group was interesting in the language used, because it implied that girls/women going against the family’s wishes (by becoming involved in an inter-caste relationship) may be labelled by the family and wider community as being “bad” and “rebels”. There was a general acknowledgement of this, and when Group A fed their responses back to the whole group (towards the end of the workshop session), no-one questioned the terminology, and in fact, there seemed to be a general acceptance of it. Implicit within this response was an acknowledgement that there was a boundary, or line not to be crossed, and that in transgressing this boundary the individual concerned was in danger of

being perceived as “bad” or a “rebel”, thus hinting at the possibility of attracting certain consequences.

Group B was the largest consisting of 12 women in their 40's. This group, along with the remaining two groups (Groups C and D), were given the same vignette (described earlier). All of this group were married with children. Their responses (the full list is at the end of this appendix) also fell into two sub-sets as in the case of the previous group, including those who would “not accept” an inter-caste relationship and those who said that they would “discuss it” and also one response which said:

“If there is respect and happiness for one another, it does not matter what religion or creed.”

The most ‘extreme’ of the responses claimed that the

“Daughter would have to choose between parents and friend”,

And also that the

“Children would have to leave home.”

Both these responses included the threat of being ostracized from the family, and were in line with the idea that women in particular must be controlled and therefore conform, and that there was a heavy price for not doing so (Shaw 1988 and 2000, Werbner 1990, Samad and Eade 2002).

The fear that there would be a cultural and religious ‘cost’ to such a transgression, and that “Children will lose Sikhism”, was also mentioned. This was a point that was contested in the open discussion later when Group B presented its range of responses, as one of the women from the over 60s group (Group D) pointed out that “Caste is not a part of Sikhi”. However this statement was in turn generally contested by the members of this group (Group B) and by the women in their 50s (in Group C) who all suggested that although caste was supposedly abhorrent in Sikhism, that it was very much a part of their ‘lived’ experiences.

In some ways the fact that Group B very early on suggested that “Shame is very powerful”, was the reason they offered for those who decided to take a stance against an inter-caste relationship. They seemed to suggest that their responses were part of “Learnt and indoctrinated thoughts”, which perhaps enabled their children to be aware of the boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour and actions. In line with the findings and analysis from the in-depth interviews, these group members displayed a good knowledge of the role and power of “sharam”. In short, as with the individuals within the interviews sample, these women appreciated and understood the inclination for negotiation and that for conformity. The most ‘extreme’ response from the women in Group B relating to children having to leave home or choosing between the parents/family and the “friend”, suggested ostracization for the transgressor, which was also suggested particularly by some of the women in the in-depth interviews sample (especially Nasreen – F5 and Rehana – F12).

The third group, Group C consisting of women in the 50s, also mirrored the 2 ‘camps’ or subsets of the women in their 40s (Group B). However, some of these women seemed even more affronted by the situation described in the vignette, and were therefore more ‘extreme’ in their reactions (the full list appears at the end of this appendix). As such, their reactions included:

“Shock, horror”; “Anger”; “Upset”; “Scream/shout”; “Feel helpless”;  
“Talk her out of it.”

And most significantly,

“Shoot/ use a gun/ “kirpan” [ritual dagger/sword],”

which had echoes of honour related violence (Wilson 1979, Ghuman 1994, Shaw 1988 and 2000, Sen 2000, Samad and Eade 2002, Gill 2003, 2004).

The responses from this group started with the more emotional, violence imbued, and became more ‘accepting’ in their tone, with the last 6 responses including,

“Reason with her”, “Compromise”, “Talk to her man”, “See if he’s good enough”, “Support each other”, and “It’s about love.”

Between these responses and the more emotional and violent ones at the top of the list, the group members seemed to also acknowledge their sense of uncertainty, as they offered,

“Feel helpless” and “Do ‘Ardas’ [a Sikh prayer] to put some sense and educate her.”

As this group presented their responses to the whole group, one woman in the audience asked who should “compromise” and whether this was “ever possible in love?” A general discussion about this ensued, and there seemed to be no clarity about what it meant to “compromise” in such a situation - in other words, did it mean “acceptance” of an inter-caste relationship from the parent, or did it mean that the child should ‘give up’ such a relationship? The whole group of 40 was split regarding this.

Group C was the only group that listed/ recorded the reasons for their responses. These were interesting because, although the responses to the vignette, included some that implied the possible acceptance of an inter-caste relationship, the reasons listed suggested that the situation would be difficult for the parents, regardless of how they felt about it. Thus, the reasons included the following:

“What will people say?”; “It’s about loss of face”; “Izzat”, “Sharam” and  
“Can’t go to anybody’s home.”

This showed clearly that the group was concerned about “izzat” and “sharam”, and aware of the inter-connected and, in this case, almost inter-changeable nature of the two concepts. The idea of losing “face” and the acute sense of embarrassment related to the inability to “go to anybody’s home”, also suggested the significance of individual and especially the family’s reputation within the community as well as knowledge of the process of reflected “izzat” and “sharam”. This mirrored my findings from the in-depth interviews and was also identified in the work of Bachu (1985), Jackson (1985), Anwar (1998), Bhatti (1999) and Gilbert et al (2004 and 2007). Although the women in this group did not specifically list “gossip” as a factor in their responses to the transgression of an inter-caste relationship, its function as an underlying mechanism (Bhatti 1999, Samad and Eade 2002) was implicit in the, “What will people say?” reason given to the scenario.

The fourth and final Group (Group D), which consisted of women in the 60s and 70s, were the last group to present their reactions to the scenario. The ‘full’ list of their responses is located at the end of this appendix. I have to admit that I found their responses intriguing particularly given their stark difference in tone and sentiment, compared to the previous two groups (consisting of the women in their 40s and 50s). This group’s responses did not include a single reference to “shock”, “horror”, the sense of helplessness and violence, which the previous two groups had included. Their responses began with,

“explain the family values to your child,”

And ended with,

“If child insists, is firm in his/her decision, support him/her.”

They also reminded the whole group that,

“According to Sikh values, there is no caste system – so keep that in mind.”

However, the women in the other 3 groups, and especially from Groups B and C argued against this and reiterated the fact that ‘caste’ differences, although ideally not sanctioned by Sikhism, were very much a part of their ‘everyday’ lives in Britain. More importantly, they felt that members of Group D, the women in their 60s and 70s, now probably grandmothers, were at a stage in their lives where the “difficulties”, “tensions” and therefore challenges of “keeping their children in line”, were behind them – their children were “settled” in their own lives, and therefore they no longer had to suffer the “tanay” [taunts] from the community in relation to their children’s behaviour and/or actions.

In contrast the women in Group B and especially in Group C were very much at a stage in their lives where these cultural boundaries were being tested by their children, and which therefore required clear guidelines from them, as parents, especially in relation to the possible consequences for the ‘transgressions’ that their children may be tempted to commit. In regard to my interviewees from the in-depth interviews, it was also worth remembering that the unmarried ones (20 of the 25 – 80%) were at the very stage in their lives when spouse-selection was to become a part of the ‘agenda’. As such perhaps the responses elicited from

the women in Groups B and C were indicative of the views of the parents of my unmarried interviewees. It is also worth remembering that on the whole in regard to measures of relative conservatism and traditionalism amongst the 3 main religious, Asian communities these Sikh women were supposedly less conservative than the Muslims and more than the Hindus (Anwar 1998). My sample of unmarried interviewees is predominantly (15 of the 20) from the supposedly more traditional Muslim background. Paramjeet's (F9) reaction to her cousin's 'out-of-caste' relationship quoted earlier, captured her confusion regarding her sense of loyalty as well as the tensions that such scenarios raised within the household and wider family. The women in Groups B and C provided an indication of this tension from the perspective specifically of the parents.

Reflection on the make up of the groups suggested that in relation to this, the women in their 50s, who listed the most 'aggressive' responses to the vignette, were in fact, the group most likely to consist of mothers with children of marriageable age. The business of spouse-selection for their children was a present or imminent concern in their lives, at the time of their involvement in the workshop. For the women in Group B, women in the 40s, this was also a concern because it was either also already present or looming fast in their lives. Clearly the concern regarding "izzat" and "sharam", and efforts to attract or gain "izzat", keep "sharam", and minimise the loss of "izzat" and the attracting of "sharam", were concerns in their lives. In short, they needed to ensure 'conformity' to the 'norms' of acceptable behaviour from their children, and were very conscious that their children's potential lack of conformity would lead to negative effects, not only for them as individuals, but importantly would also reflect badly on them as parents and the wider family. The concerns with the idea of, "What will people say?" and therefore with reflected shame (Wilson 1979) remained significant for these women.

## **Conclusion**

The two hours workshop with these 40 women, from such a wide age range, provided an interesting 'snapshot' in relation to the continuing significance and importance of "izzat" and "sharam" in their lives. The responses of the younger group (Group A), was interesting because some of the members of this group seemed clearly conscious of the expectations that their parents and families had of them in relation to their behaviour.

The vignettes, although quite limited in their remit, helped to provide some measure of the range of responses that such a group of women may have, to a perceived 'transgression', relevant to caste, gender and relationships. This was also in line with my findings from the in-depth interviews with my sample of 25 interviewees whereby particularly gender-related and relationship-related transgressions were recognised as significant for attracting "sharam". Although 'caste' featured less prominently, it was nevertheless featured as a factor for consideration by some of the interviewees (such as Nina – F10). However, more importantly the unmarried interviewees from the in-depth interviews displayed a level of compliance regarding spouse-selection with 15 (60%) agreeing and expecting to have an arranged marriage (based on the 'traditional' model whereby the parents largely made the decisions). Perhaps, in the light of the findings from the workshop with the 40 women, these interviewees' 'compliance' was a result of very clear boundaries set in this regard by their parents, who were likely to have been of a similar age to the women in Groups B and C.

Group A's responses showed that they were also conscious of the 'boundaries' of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. They, like the respondents from the in-depth interviews were aware of these boundaries, and clearly valued their relationships with their parents and families, and implied that that would have to think very carefully before these would be endangered in any way. Stopes-Roe and Cochrane (1990), Ghuman (1994). Modood et al. (1994), Anwar (1998) and Din (2006), have alluded to this in their work.

The older women and mothers in Groups B and C also conveyed the continuing importance of "izzat" and "sharam", and implied that gossip (Bhatti 1999), reflected shame (Wilson 1999, Shaw 1988 and 2000) and the fear of loss of face, remained powerful mechanisms for exerting 'control' on their children, and for maintaining the significance and power of "izzat" and "sharam" in the community. As mothers, engaged in such "boundary enforcing" tussles with their children, they provided a fascinating insight into what their children may have to contend with. Since only 4 (16%) of the 25 interviewees (from the in-depth interviews sample) were married and only 3 of these had children, these two groups of mothers (in Group B and C) provided a fascinating insight into parents' expectations, fears and reactions to their children's behaviour (Anwar 1998). They provided some indication of the pressures that they were under to ensure that the norms and standards of acceptable behaviour within the community were upheld. Bhatti (1999) identified this in particular in relation to the role played by mothers in ensuring that cultural practices were 'passed on' to their children.

The oldest group of women (Group D) in their 60s and 70s provided some interesting evidence to indicate that perhaps there was a decline in the importance and hold of "izzat" and "sharam" in regulating behaviour once the parental responsibility of spouse-selection for children had 'passed'. As the women in the other groups implied, this may only be because these women perhaps had already successfully enforced and upheld the boundaries of acceptable behaviour within their own families, and were now in a position where such 'battles' no longer needed to be fought within their families. This was inferred from the discussions that took place within the whole group of 40 women, towards the end of the workshop. The time-constraints for the workshop made it impossible to pursue this in any more depth. However this workshop, with all its limitations (in relation especially to time and the subject of focus), has provided useful insights, which also helped to triangulate the data from the sample of 25 individuals and the in-depth interviews undertaken with them.

As such the findings from the workshop, in line also with the findings from the in-depth 25 interviews, demonstrated that "Izzat" and "sharam" clearly continue to be a force to contend with in Asian communities settled in Britain.

## APPENDIX 9 (Continued)

### Sikh Women and "Izzat" Workshop: Record of All Responses

#### **Whole Group Definitions of "Izzat"**

- Beauty; vanity
- Respect
- worth (self)
- materialism
- money - "izzat" - power
- "hankar" - pride (especially re material things and vanity)
- "ji" used instead of "tu" (to give respect)
- caring for values
- family values (religious)
- care for others
- authority (eg teacher and respect for)
- respect for elders, for mother/father, for individuals and cultural awareness
- respect for established norms in society
- religious respect ("Guruji")
- education
- moral values

#### **Whole Group Definitions of "Sharam"**

- embarrassment
- shame
- restraint in behaviour
- being constantly aware of your 'place' in society
- confidence (in relation to shyness)
- gender - in relation to men; behaviour between men and women (-"starts early")
- "can't trust anybody outside" (especially relating to girls/daughters wanting to go 'clubbing')
- dress (in relation to modesty)
- 'dhadhis' (grandmothers) said, "kahr bettho" ('stay at home') re women not being allowed out for anything, especially work
- "brainwashing"

#### **Group Responses to Vignettes**

##### **Group A ('Youngest' Group)**

- "Told parents and take it from there"
- "It wouldn't happen because of respect for family"
- "I just wouldn't let myself go there (fall in love with someone 'unacceptable') when I know what my parents would think"
- "Respect for family is paramount"
- "It's about individual choice"
- "You don't plan these things, sometimes you just meet someone and you just 'click'"
- "It isn't just 'bad' girls and 'rebels' that it can happen to" (implication that girls going 'against' family/parents are 'bad')



**Group B (40s Age Group)**

- "Shame is very powerful - pride"
- "Children will 'lose' Sikhism"
- "Learnt and indoctrinated thoughts"
- "Would not accept it"
- "Children would have to leave home"
- "Daughter would have to choose between parents and 'friend'"
- "If there is respect and happiness for one another, it does not matter what religion or creed"
- "Discuss it"

**Group C. (50s Age Group)**

- "Shock, horror"
- "Anger"
- "Upset"
- "Scream/shout"
- "Shoot/use a gun/'kirpan'"
- "Feel helpless"
- "Do 'Ardas' to put some sense and educate her"
- "Talk her out of it"
- "Reason with her"
- "Compromise" (NB - someone asked who should compromise and can you compromise in love?)
- "Talk to her man"
- "See if he's good enough"
- "Support each other"
- "It's about love"

**The 50s Group C 'Reasons':**

- "What will people say"
- "It's about loss of face"
- "Izzat"
- "Sharam" (Shame)
- "Can't go to anybody's home"

**Group D. (over 60s Age Group)**

- "Explain the family values to your child"
- "Ask child if s/he would consult parents or listen to their parents"
- "Be friends with your child from an early age and be a good guide during the teen years"
- "Try and make friends with your child and find out if it is true love or infatuation only"
- "According to Sikh values, there is no caste system - so keep that in mind"
- "If child insists, is firm in his/her decision, support him/her"