

Speaking of home:

Bangladeshi women

in

London's East End

reflect on belonging

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore belonging through the experience of two Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets, east London. It is based on interviews with women of different generations who reflect on their belonging in terms of everyday aspects of their lives such as family, religion and education. The research is located within a theoretical background of the politics of belonging, globalisation, transnationalism and national identity, within the local context of East End studies, and within gender theory. The methodology uses qualitative narrative inquiry and a hermeneutic, interpretative approach to elicit meaning from the women's subjective experiences. Analysis of the data illustrates the complexity and individuality of belonging and explores some of the generational differences. Reflexivity is considered a crucial element of the narrative process and attention is given to cultural barriers in the interviewee/interviewer relationship. Further study is proposed applying the same approach in broader contexts.

Please Note:

* Numbers appearing in brackets throughout the text refer to line numbers in the interview transcripts, Appendices IV and V

* Both interviewees have been given pseudonyms

Contents

		Page
<i>Introduction:</i>	The Question of Belonging	1
<i>Literature Review:</i>	Women, Belonging and Tower Hamlets	3
<i>Methodology:</i>	The Narrative Choice	13
<i>Analysis:</i>	Themes of Belonging	20
	Rasha	21
	Safiya	29
	The Complexity of Belonging	37
<i>Conclusion:</i>	Belonging in the Future	41
<i>References</i>		43
<i>Appendices</i>	I Ethics form	47
	II Interviewee letter of consent	49
	III Interview themes	51
	IV Rasha interview transcript	52
	V Safiya interview transcript	87

The Question of Belonging

As the British born daughter of German Jewish refugees, I found being young in post-war London a somewhat confusing experience. Growing up with a continuous sense of never quite fitting in engendered a very real sense of not belonging. Later, having moved to Tower Hamlets as a young adult, it was traumatic when circumstances forced me to leave after twenty-two years. Only after long reflection did it become clear to me that it had been a fitting and comfortable place to be – as one of many people in an East End that for centuries has been the stopping place for immigrants. This question of belonging was intriguing. I began to wonder about other women who had come to Tower Hamlets, or those born there of immigrant parents. Where was home for them? Where did they feel they belonged?

My research therefore would be to interview Bangladeshi women about their sense of home and belonging. To get a perspective of how belonging might be perceived differently across age groups, I would interview two generations. What does home mean to them? Is it in the building in which they live, in their culture, in an East End community, in friendships, in transnational relationships with their country of origin, or in their religion? Might it be different for those women who migrated to London from those born and educated here?

Questions of belonging and identity have been the subject of a number of different theoretical studies, exploring themes such as the politics of belonging, globalisation, transnationalism and national identity. These will be considered in a

literature review, together with various important studies of Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets, particularly in relation to questions of changing identity. Some studies look at the issues from a gendered perspective, with reference to the circumstances and role of women.

The very nature of belonging as an intensely personal, subjective aspect of the individual's inner being, demands an approach that considers the whole person within their life story. Only through such a holistic perspective, placing the person within their social context in terms of time and place, can its authentic meaning be revealed. Thus an open, narrative approach will be used in interviewing, and hermeneutic, interpretive methodology applied in the analysis.

This dissertation brings together the theoretical political and social ideas of identity and belonging, with the more personal methodology and practice of narrative research and life histories tradition. By locating issues of belonging in gendered terms, the research will explore them specifically in respect of women's own stories. To my knowledge this is an approach that has not been undertaken before with Bangladeshi women in the East End.

Women, Belonging and Tower Hamlets

The politics of belonging has been identified in recent years as a key issue in the globalised twenty-first century. Belonging, as already suggested, is deeply subjective, and is an aspect of self that is often not considered until it is disrupted by change or loss. Such emotions have arguably affected migrants and the second

- and probably at least third -generation throughout history. In Britain, and more widely, the politics of belonging have long been polarised, with traditionalists calling for immigrants' integration, if not assimilation, and radicals condemning such demands as racist or xenophobic. According to Geddes and Flavell (1999), academic study has followed the same lines, emphasising inclusion and exclusion and failing to take account of wider considerations. They suggest that for such study to provide a broader, all-encompassing perspective, a different approach needs to be taken. They propose that 'the politics of belonging' should be a specific subject in its own right including both the formal and legal aspects of migration control and citizenship alongside the signifiers of culture and language, thus bringing together the formal and symbolic positions.

Within this argument there are differing perceptions. Crowley (1999) argues that belonging should be sought in inclusive membership within the nation-state, while Favell (1999) asserts that belonging would be most empowering in the wider boundaries of transnational laws and political institutions, enabling inclusion of their cultural and linguistic origins. Such theoretical thinking is brought into recent political context by Yuval-Davis et al (2005), with regard to British government concerns about migration and belonging. They are critical of social cohesion policies and their negative impact on women, particularly in terms of language and citizenship.

There is an intrinsic connection between notions of belonging and identity. A number of theorists have proposed that twentieth century migration and globalisation have produced a "dislocation of identities" (Woodward, 2002:54). It is suggested that globalisation has undermined identities by diminishing the

importance of the nation-state and local cultures and that women in particular can be disadvantaged through insecure jobs and low pay (Woodward, 2002:55-57). Bauman explores the idea of national identity in the modern world and argues that without the state as a law-making, determining authority over the diversity of local tradition and custom of day-to-day life, there would be no national identity. *Ipsa facto* national identity is a construction of the nation-state and is therefore subject to the vagaries of the fickle human being. It is powerful to belong, but belonging would not have the power that it commands without the fear and actuality of exclusion (Bauman, 2004:20-22).

Globalisation is also deemed by some to have positive outcomes for belonging as the weakening of the power of the nation-state enables new connections and new identities to be formed. Hall argues that globalisation in terms of diaspora offers fluidity in identity, that there can be movement rather than fixed identities, where people can "...speak from the in-between of different cultures [...] finding ways of being both the same as and different from the others amongst which they live" (Hall, 1995 in Woodward, 2002:63). New communication technologies can support the development of transnational relationships and identities. Indeed, the mobile phone has enabled migrants to connect with hitherto unreachable rural communities of their far away families (Horst, 2006). However, as Morley (2001) describes, new technologies can also mediate lives more negatively. Despite old physical borders being broken down, new symbolic borders in the media and cultural capital are also created where not everyone can find space or place to belong. These borders particularly affect women and people from minority groups.

A number of studies have identified the importance of belonging as an issue among migrant women to Britain, however they have not used a narrative approach. Phizacklea (Westwood & Phizacklea, 2000) for example explored the economic, cultural and emotional aspects of migration and transnational relationships, partially basing her study on interviews with women working as live-in domestics or maids for wealthy British families. Phizacklea found that the politics of belonging for these women was not only “a hugely complicated affair” but also “an emotional nightmare” (Westwood and Phizacklea, 2000:142). Of the interviewees, few had independence, their status was often that of ‘belonging’ to their employers and they maintained strong transnational relationships with their families in their homelands. Even for those women who had developed independent lives in this country, their transnational links remained paramount, even where there was little possibility of them returning. While ‘belonging’ is a principal theme, it must be emphasised that Phizacklea’s core subject matter was that of transnationalism rather than women’s subjective sense of self. Interviewees were first generation economic migrants, many with children remaining behind in their homelands, representing a very different group of people and perspective to that intended in this study. In addition, whilst Phizacklea did undertake interviews with seventy women, a narrative approach was not used. Indeed, hers is a primarily theoretical study using quotes as illustrations without intention of presenting stories over time and in interpretive form.

The concept of belonging itself has been the subject of study by Eade (1990, 1997, 2002, 2004, 2006). As a leading theorist on identity, he has considered belonging particularly in terms of Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets with whom he has worked and written about for the past twenty years. Eade argues that

in contemporary society the notion of belonging is far more complex than simply that of nation-state borders or nationalistic allegiance. Realities such as migration and globalisation are factors that ensure a changing rather than fixed nature of identity, which impact on people's concepts of home and belonging. Eade speaks of "...a world of compromise and incompleteness, where boundaries and identities change through active engagement with others" (2004:26). Thus a melting pot of locality, culture, religion, ethnicity, language all influence how and where a person may find a sense of belonging, which is unlikely to be fixed in any one place or by any one aspect but will be an ever shifting amalgam. Eade's specific work on belonging is drawn from a set of structured interviews with twenty second-generation Bangladeshi young adults at university. In response to a specific question of where they belonged, Eade found a wide range of responses, but central for these young adults were the belonging they found in religion and nationhood (Eade, 1997, 2002). Eade's work on identity is very significant and does, unlike others, include belonging in his focus. However, his interviews concentrate on young Asian adults and his studies do not primarily consider gender differences. Also, his work is not narrative based.

The particular situation of Asian women in Britain has been a specific concern of Wilson since the 1970s. In her recent book (2006), Wilson looks at the changes in women's lives during the past thirty years through interviews and group discussions with them. From a feminist perspective, she considers their multifaceted identities and how gender relations have altered during that time within different generations. She examines women's key role as the bearers of cultural tradition. Wilson also reflects on the oppression of women both within their historic South Asian patriarchy and by white British patriarchy. With regard to the

former, she discusses belonging in terms of women having the protection of the men in their families and communities and, paradoxically, being their possession. Wilson suggests that the British establishment has failed to appreciate the ever changing nature of different cultures and that simplistic multicultural policies have inadvertently supported the implicit acceptance of women's oppression. Wilson also argues that 1990s anti-Muslim racism in Britain began to differentiate south Asians by their religion rather than as previously by country or language, having the effect of strengthening women's religious based identities. This study represents many years of Wilson's interviews and discussions with south Asian women, including a number of semi-structured individual interviews specifically for the book, but it is not primarily narrative-based. Some of the women are from East London, but as a whole the study focuses generally on south Asian women in Britain, and on their broad experiences, not specifically on their sense of home and belonging.

Research by Shain (2002) focuses on the identities of Asian teenagers in Britain particularly in the context of their school lives. The work is based on interviews with forty-four girls from northern British cities.

Shain analyses the girls' strategies of resistance and survival in their world of competing expectations and ideals. She argues that the passivity often associated with Asian girls misrepresents the majority who are actively involved in shaping their own lives and identities. Belonging is not a theme of the work and narrative methodology is not used but it is a valuable study looking at the emerging identities of young Asian women.

Tower Hamlets in London's East End has been the subject of extensive research for decades (Young & Willmott, 1957; White, 1980). It has been an area of great interest, not least for the juxtaposition of its geographical proximity and economic distance from its wealthy neighbour the City of London. The hamlets around the Tower of London have for centuries provided a home, albeit generally poverty-stricken, for the many tradespeople serving within the city walls. With London situated on the River Thames, ships brought migrants from the world over, most of whom sought lodging in the vicinity. Widgery (1993) notes that in the 1730 records of St Anne's, Limehouse, the first men buried in the churchyard were "...an Asian seaman ... two negroes ... a Dane, and two Venetians" (1993:172). The East End became home to many migrant groups seeking refuge. Seventeenth-century Spitalfields settlers were Protestant Huguenot silk weavers fleeing from Roman Catholic France and in the nineteenth century the Irish sought economic refuge from famine. East European Jews arrived in the latter part of the same century, and the twentieth century East End has been host to immigrants from many lands including China, Somalia, the Caribbean and Bangladesh (Widgery, 1993; O'Neill, 2000; Adams, 1987; Kershen, 2005).

The long association between Bangladesh and Britain, and particularly with Tower Hamlets, goes back about 400 hundred years since the lascars, Bengali seamen, were employed on merchant ships. The relationship was strengthened during the colonial period under the domination of the East India Trading Company and the British Empire. Arriving in the London Docks, lascars would seek out other Asians with whom to stay, and thus chain migration from the Sylheti region began. It was these merchant seaman, most of whom were British subjects, who opened the first 'Indian' restaurants in the East End and whose

families began to join them from the mid twentieth century (Ballard, 1994; Adams 1987; Visram, 1986). From the 1950s when the number of Sylhetis in Tower Hamlets was around 300 (Adams, 1987), the Bangladeshi population has grown to more than 65,550 in 2001, nearly 34 per cent of the borough's population (Census, 2001a). The establishment and changing identities of Bangladeshis in Britain are discussed by Gardner and Shukur (1994), with particular consideration to the lives of young, British born Bangladeshis. Very little however has ever been written specifically about the women of these migrant families and still less about their sense of belonging. As Phillipson et al (2003:9) claim, "migration histories and experiences of Bangladeshi women have so far gone unrecorded in the research literature".

In *The New East End* (2006) Dench, Gavron & Young provide a valuable, twenty-first century examination of how the Tower Hamlets population has changed over the last fifty years using a mixture of reports, questionnaires and interviews. Up-dating Young & Willmott's well known 1950s investigation of life in East London, Dench et al study the impact of Bangladeshi immigration, the effects it has had on 'indigenous' East Enders and the implications for the younger generations born in the East End, giving white working class and Bangladeshi perspectives and exploring their resentments and tensions. The researchers used data from contemporary reports to build a survey questionnaire for nearly 800 people from which about fifty were selected for more in-depth individual interviews. In terms of Bangladeshis, they found that the community established very quickly and that individuals were gaining meritocratic success and moving away, but that this very success could contribute to undermining the majority whose collective strength was more likely to be found in "...a homeland other than Britain"

(2006:228). The New East End is an important sociological study locating the politics of belonging within the particular context of Bangladeshis in the East End but it does not look specifically at women, does not examine belonging, per se, and does not use narrative methodology.

Thus at the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Bangladeshi community is well established in London's East End. Whilst in general the body of research into various aspects of the community has increased, there have been few projects undertaken specifically about Bangladeshi women, and nothing found to date using a narrative perspective. As such, Phillipson et al's (2003) exploration of the social and economic roles and responsibilities of middle-aged Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets is an important study. It highlights that many of the women were amongst the early economic Bangladeshi migrants to Britain who accompanied their husbands mainly from the 1970s onwards. Most remained in the home and few of them learned English (2003:42). Reliant therefore on family and close friends for their social networks and financial support, their lives were lived mostly within the Bangladeshi community both in Tower Hamlets and in their transnational links with their families in Bangladesh, the latter having "an important impact on daily life" (2003:11).

Questions linking religion and identity reveal that for most of the women their identification as Muslim is crucial to their identity and in creating meaning and continuity in their day-to-day lives (2003:16). The research was undertaken through a thirty-page structured questionnaire with one hundred women, specifically to chronicle the roles of first generation migrant women in their middle years. It also includes some interviews with a small group of young women as a comparison. Thus, whilst undoubtedly a significant work, this study uses a factorised approach

providing a broad analysis which offers limited opportunity for the women to explore their own subjective feelings. In addition, although the question of belonging is implicit within the material, it is not an explicit area of research.

The Narrative Choice

Narrative inquiry is different to other qualitative interviewing and interpretation in three fundamental aspects. In order for interview data to be narrative it must contain chronology, meaning and social context (Elliott, 2005:4). Narrative is the story told of a life which gains meaning through its unfolding of time and sequence within its cultural context. Given this, it seems appropriate to understand the sense of home and belonging that women have through their own narrative telling of their life experiences. For belonging is nothing if not subjective

and without doubt, changes over time, depending on social context and circumstance. Narrative inquiry gives credence to this personal, chronological perspective of the individual. It involves semi-structured interviews and open questions, if not themes of inquiry. Requests encouraging a story to be told, such as 'tell me about...' are vital to elicit meaning, as is good listening on the part of the interviewer (Elliott, 2005:28-31). Hence, the narrative method would arguably be the most apposite for this study.

On this basis, the research question was created: 'To explore through narrative inquiry the sense of home and belonging of different generations of Bangladeshi women living in London's East End'. I wanted to interview women of different generations to get a perspective of how belonging might be perceived differently across age groups. I had hoped to interview three generations but the logistics were too complex for this study. While there are some older Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets, few speak English well enough for such research and I speak neither Bengali nor Sylheti. I did not at this stage want to involve translators and therefore chose to limit the study to two generations.

In addition, my original intention had been to interview Black-Caribbean women as well as Bangladeshi, in an attempt to consider women's experiences from two different ethnic groups that had settled in Tower Hamlets in the latter part of the twentieth century, to some extent as a comparison with my own experience.

However, having undertaken a small pilot study and investigated the literature I found that there was virtually no research about Black-Caribbean women in Tower Hamlets. Although in general there is much written about black political identity, racism, struggle and ethnic identity (Hall, 1990; Hall, 1996; Carby, 2000; Song, 2003; Bryan et al 1986), and belonging is a theme in black fiction (Phillips, 1997), there is no social research related to my intended study. Whilst that lack of written material might be an argument for continuing the study as planned, I felt that there being so much literature relating to Bangladeshis in Tower Hamlets, if not on belonging, would render the study unbalanced, and justice could not be adequately done to the subject. There would clearly be scope however for research to be undertaken specifically on this topic, or as part of a much larger study than my own.

Having outlined the meaning of narrative inquiry and establishing that it would be the most appropriate method for the proposed study, it becomes necessary to explore the methodological approach in greater depth. From continued reading it is apparent that narrative is a complex practice attracting much theoretical debate and numerous varied forms. The complexity is illustrated by the fact that Plummer (2001:187) named thirteen theoretical approaches and declared it impossible to explain them in one chapter. In addition, there are both diverse narrative inquiry and analytic approaches. Mishler offers an overview of analytic method suggesting three ways of considering it, through content, structure or performance, while Lieblich suggests a two-dimensional approach, through either content or form, and either holistic or categorical (Elliott, 2005:38).

Examples within these categories would be the structural model offered by Labov and Waletzky which focuses more on form (Elliott, 2005:42), and the Chicago School which focuses more on content analysis (Elliott, 2005:39). The holistic approach considers that meaning is found in the individual narrative as a whole, while the categorical approach extracts and classifies specific aspects to find meaning. In the proposed study, the intention will be to focus on a content/holistic approach following Lieblich's model. For, notions of belonging relate to the individual's whole sense of self, which is expressed in the substance of her experience within the framework of its social context, and as performed within a narrative interview (Riessman, 2002: 701-704).

An interesting example that explores the relation between content and form is the Biographic-Narrative Interpretive Method (Elliott, 2005:50; Wengraf, 2006). With the intention of providing interpretation purely by the individual storyteller, BNIM follows a definite system with a series of staged sessions of interviewing and analysis in an endeavour to omit interviewer influence. However, this diverges from the mainstream approach that regards narrative interpretation as a construction between the interviewer and interviewee focussing on "...the constructive, relational, 'reality-producing' nature of the interview situation" (Miller, 2000, in Roberts, 2002:15). From this perspective, interpretation is therefore a crucial element of the methodology, for meaning comes not only from the narrator of the story but through the interviewer's interpretation of it.

The subjective nature of the interviewee/interviewer relationship is an essential part of the narrative process and the analytic method since the meaning of the narrative may change depending on when and to whom the story is told. As

Josselson states: "Meaning is not inherent in an act or experience, but is constructed through social discourse" (Josselson, 1995:32 in Roberts, 2002:118). Indeed, Widdershoven argues from his perspective of philosophical hermeneutics that it is not possible to understand life and story as separate entities. They are intrinsically connected "...in that life informs and is formed by stories" (Widdershoven, 1993:2). Also, as Ricoeur argues in terms of literature, it is precisely the interaction between the context of the text and that of the reader that gives the narrative its significance (Ricoeur, 1991:26).

In this hermeneutic approach to interpretation, the closeness of the researcher to the interaction is said to increase the validity of the interpretation (Robson, 2002:197). Plummer's "continuum of involvement" in which he suggests levels of attachment of stranger, acquaintance, friend and lover provides a useful model to contextualise the relationship between myself as researcher and the women storytellers of the proposed study (Plummer, 2001:209). I interviewed two women: one, a middle-aged woman and colleague of a close friend, and the other, a nineteen-year-old friend of my daughter from their schooldays. They would therefore be located as 'acquaintances', the first because we had some knowledge of each other and were not quite strangers, the second because while known to me, the relationship could not be described as friendship.

These considerations also highlight the essential requirement of self-reflexivity in the researcher role. Riessman wrote about the need to place herself emotionally in her research, "...typically stripped from the social scientist's account" (Riessman, 2005:24). Indeed, how can one be reflexive if not emotionally involved? But such sentiment challenges the very essence of scientific objectivity and therefore it may be no surprise that reflexivity is central to feminist methodologies (Etherington 2004:31). Being reflexive also challenges the feminist researcher in having to face up to her cultural context concurring - or not - with that of her interviewee. For it is my world view that will be brought in to the interpretive process of others' stories, and a story will be informed by and understood from the cultural context of both the interviewer and interviewee (Plummer, 2001:206-208). Since my ethnicity and colour are different to those I am choosing to interview, how might the process be affected? Is it impossible for me to understand and interpret another's story whose origin is so different to mine as Atkinson suggests (1998:64)? How will I be perceived as a white person asking them about their belonging? Will my own sense of belonging make any difference to that perception? Does my 'outsiderness' equate to theirs? Am I more or less of an outsider? And then, how much of myself should I bring to the interview?

Bhopal (2001) argues that being a woman is not enough to overcome ethnicity issues when interviewing other women. Being white in itself brings advantage and power. From her experience as an Asian woman researching lives of other Asian women, she believes many would not be as open to a white researcher who, because of her 'whiteness' could not appreciate what it means to be racialised on a day-to-day basis. While I agree with Bhopal, I would argue that the interviewer being of a different ethnicity might also allow feelings or insights to

be revealed that would be unthinkable in the interviewee's own cultural setting. As Riessman proposes, people have various identities which they present at different times, none being more 'authentic' than the other (Riessman, 2002:701). Could it not be that sharing a sense of not belonging, regardless of race, might provide a different 'authenticity'? For these reasons it seemed important for me to begin the interviews by explaining my own sense of not belonging, as a first generation Briton born of Jewish refugee parents.

The questions raised through self-reflexivity also draw attention to the ethical considerations of research relationships both in terms of the interviews and the resulting materials. Whatever care might be put into the planning, and however ethical one tries to be, neither the researcher nor the storyteller can possibly know what hurt, harm or distress might arise from the storying of lives. Sensitivity and empathy must be essential researcher tools. Confidentiality is essential when interviewing a friend or colleague of people close to me. A consent form was produced for the interviewees along the lines of situational relativism (Plummer, 2001:226), explaining issues of confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and the option to withdraw from the interview and their option to read, change and withdraw the transcript. These points were presented in written form and were verbally discussed at the outset of the interviews (see Appendix II). The interviews were recorded with the knowledge and agreement of the interviewees.

In transcribing the interviews no aspects of the transcribed passages have been edited in that all audible words and sounds have been included. What are not of course included are non-verbal responses and reactions which clearly affected thinking and process and which I will attempt to draw out in the analysis. I have followed Miller's transcription conventions (Miller, 2000:108), with the addition of

some practices suggested by Poland for recording garbled words, overlapping speech and quoting other people (Poland, 2001:641). Non-transcribed passages are marked with italicised summaries and their start and finishing times. The transcriptions are line numbered (see Appendices IV and V).

Themes of Belonging

What is belonging? How do you know if you belong or not? Indeed, to what, to where, to whom do you belong? Unlike the objectivity of national or ethnic identity, belonging is the more subjective, emotional sense of being, extending far wider than any constructed boundaries of place or institution and cutting across issues such as gender, ethnicity and class. Where and how you belong is at the essence of personal meaning. Crowley (1999:22) describes belonging as being “thicker” than political or social integration and Yuval-Davis et al (2005:526) argue that it is how people feel about their place in the world and that people’s experience of belonging is defined as much as by exclusion as it is by inclusion. In order to reflect the essentiality and complexity of belonging it made sense for me to explore the women’s belonging through everyday aspects of their lives. The interviews and the resulting analyses were therefore constructed around a range of themes such as family, religion, education, culture and friends, to find meaning

through their unfolding stories. I have thematically analysed the individual interviews and then considered their similarities and differences.

Rasha

Rasha is a secondary school friend of my daughter's whom she occasionally visits in our home. I gave her particular support three years ago when she was experiencing problems at home but have not seen her during the past year. Early in the interview she describes herself as follows:

I'm 19, erm, I'm Bangladeshi, I live in East London, Bethnal Green area and, have quite a big family. I have five sisters including myself and three brothers and I live with my mum and dad. I've just finished college and I'm studying Sport Science, its a BTEC Diploma and an A level in psychology.

(42-45)

Rasha identifies herself as Bangladeshi and in response to my question of how she came to be in Tower Hamlets she relates how her parents came from Bangladesh to Leeds and later moved to Bethnal Green (53-68). She includes herself in this move although she was in fact not born until later. Indeed, she says of Tower Hamlets, "...it's ALWAYS been my home. It's not like I've moved around" (67). Thus while she strongly identifies with her family's story she places herself

emphatically in Tower Hamlets. I wondered if by telling Rasha that my parents came to London as refugees, to explain my interest in belonging, influenced how she told her story, and suggested a way to identify herself with me.

In talking about her immediate family (91-137), Rasha expresses a strong lack of cohesion. She describes the family as being "...just kind of apart and everywhere and nowhere" (92) and she differentiates between their actual relationship and how they connect with each other. Although she interacts with different individuals at different times, she has no sense of them relating to, or understanding each other as a family "...it's not like my family became my family altogether" (127). Some of this may be explained through her description of how the family has been geographically split with various siblings being sent to live in Bangladesh at different times. While Rasha describes having been close to her mother when she was young, their relationship had broken down to the point that they had not spoken for three years (246-248). She saw her dad as peripheral to her life, "...just around and about" (120). Her most stable relationship was now with her brother. "He made me realise, you know, that I do have family, even though I have family, it's different, you need to feel a connection" (113-114).

In Rasha's portrayal she seems to be expressing a very fragmented sense of belonging within the family and the rather disjointed way she elucidates the situation seems to reflect her feelings about it. "...I can still feel distant, I, it wouldn't be that hard for me to cut off my family" (136-137). It is noticeably different to the quite ordered chronology she uses to tell the story of her family coming to Tower Hamlets. Rasha has very little sense of extended family. Most of her mother's family is in Bangladesh where she has been once when she was twelve years old

(284) and she has no personal contact with anyone there. She describes “BARELY” knowing her father’s family (148).

Rasha’s lack of connection with her family is powerfully expressed in her limited Bengali (175-266). She answers the question of whether she speaks different languages with, “I’m meant to” (175). Three small words that suggest not only her separateness from her family but also from the identification she gives herself as Bangladeshi, a point made by Kershen (2005:149), in highlighting the importance of the language in young people maintaining their identity and cultural understanding. In addition, it is not uncommon for older generation Bangladeshis, and particularly women, to have very little knowledge of English (Kershen, 2005:150; Phillipson et al, 2003:64). In an extraordinarily heartfelt statement Rasha sums up her alienation from her parents in their lack of fluency in a common language.

...there’s so much I wanna say to my mum and my dad to make them understand and everything, but I can’t say it. I can’t say it in English cos they won’t understand and I can’t in Bengali cos I can’t speak Bengali.

(238-242)

This frustration is accentuated by Rasha’s need of her siblings to interpret for her (232-233). She emphasizes her alienation and partially explains her inability to speak Bengali by having been made fun of when she attempted to speak and thus, gave up trying (187-189). But she is also defiant in her defence, stating, “...I live in England, I live in London, you speak English” and asserts that her sisters learned because they lived in Bangladesh (177-179).

Religion provides yet another complicated arena in Rasha's life (509-570; 1079-1201). More than ninety per cent of Bangladeshis in Britain identify themselves as Muslim (Census, 2001b) and an ever-increasing number of young Bangladeshis in Britain are identifying first with Islam (Kershen, 2005:150). Rasha appears to hold quite a singular position in precluding religion from her life unlike other young people interviewed (Eade, 2002:154; Phillipson et al, 2003:44-45; Johnsson, 2004:26). Rasha says of herself:

...when people do say . erm .. are you a Muslim I'll say yes, but in my head I'm saying no. But that's only if . if an Asian person says that. If an Asian person says are you Muslim, 'yeah, of course I am', you know, we were brought up like that. If an, if a person who's not Bengali .. says that or . yeah if the person's not Bengali I'll be like, mmm, 'I say I am but I'm really not'. That's the answer I always give.

(522-526)

In this passage Rasha eloquently describes the complexities of her internal and external identification. Also, she finds herself in a minority amongst her friends for whom she believes religion is "...a BIG BIG thing..." (650) and that "...it's too important to them" (656) for her to reveal her true feelings. Although Rasha gives an appearance of being a 'good' Muslim (559-571) she feels increasingly out of place with other Asians, particularly those she does not know, as she fears their judgement (1060-1069). She finds the religion restrictive for young people (1093-1098), even more so as they get older and become more concerned about family reputation (1106-1111).

Very early in the interview Rasha declares that when times had been bad with her family, her friends became her family and, in giving thought to it adds,

“...my friends ARE my family” (96). The importance of Rasha’s friends to her is a very clear and connecting thread throughout the whole interview, within the various themes. It comes into question in her very essence of being Asian (362-379), when she speaks of knowing herself to be Asian but not feeling it. She recognises that she is more comfortable in the company of ethnically mixed friends than with just Asian friends. Her Asian friends question the value of having white and black friends and accuse her of being “white” (375). This accentuates both her alienation and her desire to be independent.

... it’s like being Asian you, you belong to that group and I don’t like .
belonging to a group. I don’t know, I just wanna be me. I don’t wanna
belong to anything.

(377-379)

What she finds herself realising through thinking about her friends is that she has always enjoyed having ethnically mixed friendships. She observes that she would now think of her first family home as her ‘real’ home where there were a mix of families and friends to play with (679-719). Similarly, she describes her years at sixth form college as the best of her life in terms of her friends whilst the worst with regard to her home life (470-474). The importance of her friendships to Rasha cannot be over emphasised for it is while being with them she experiences the most positive aspects of her life. As she says, with them, “...I know who I am, I know what I’m doing, they KNOW me. .” (480).

In trying to understand the deeper meaning of Rasha’s sense of belonging in terms of her friends and family life, it is interesting to consider Shain’s ideas of Asian girls’ “Strategies of resistance and survival” (Shain, 2003:54). Shain suggests there are five strategies that girls employ to make their way in life, sometimes using more than one. Indeed, it can be clearly seen from the examples

Shain gives, how Rasha engages a number of them in her approach to life. For example, "...a preference for white students as friends" and "...identification of themselves as distinct from other Asian students because of their willingness to mix across ethnic groups" place Rasha clearly in the "resistance against culture" category (Shain, 2003:56). However, her unwillingness to "actively resist parental or cultural practices" demonstrates how she also employs the "survival" strategy. For Shain argues that most girls do not overtly rebel, but acquiesce either for their own expediency or out of fear of the consequences (Shain, 2003:56-7).

Rasha expresses such ambivalence with a vibrant web of thoughts in answer to what I thought was a straightforward question about her feelings on her parents wanting her to marry (445-458). The narrative she tells darts backwards and forwards between dichotomous ideas, all arising from a premise that she will be leaving her family sooner or later because at no point is she prepared to marry when or to whom her family desire. Rasha suggests that most Asian girls 'use' college to extend their freedom but then marry, to uphold family and cultural values and avoid hurting their parents (393-406), as suggested by Gardner and Shukur (1994:157). Rasha completely rejects reputation as a value but also, in not wanting to hurt her family, justifies to herself that by 'leaving home' to live at university she will have something of the different and new life that she wants (462-468). She does not necessarily want to break from her family and culture entirely but to have the freedom to make her own choices, straddle the two cultures she has grown up in, and above all, use education to further her future. Much as Rasha finds herself in a minority with these feelings and ambitions, they are indeed more widely felt and well recorded (Eade, 1997:104-1055; Dench et al, 2006: 100; Shain, 2003:129; Shaw, 1988:7).

It becomes clear that Rasha faces dilemmas in nearly all aspects of her life, which have a significant effect on her sense of home and belonging. Having introduced herself as Bangladeshi, she argues that using the term 'going home' with regard to Bangladesh is for her a linguistic term that holds no emotional value, whilst recognising and accepting it as 'home' for her parents (268-278), a point Gardner and Shukur make about many British-born children of migrant Bangladeshi parents (1994:158). Geographically Tower Hamlets has always been home for Rasha and she expects she will always want to live there; not however because she is so deeply attached to the Bangladeshi cultural background, as argued by Eade (1997:100-101). For, in her feelings of alienation, Rasha is quite clear she wants to return to the culturally mixed living she remembers from her early years (739-784). In thinking about her family home, Rasha's own words are revealing:

...I don't know but things are just all confused and whatnot and I don't know where my home is, well I DO know where my home is, like, but when people see themselves [at] home, I just see it as a HOUSE. I don't see it as a home, but I call it my home. That's what its known as.

(975-978)

Where Rasha does feel comfortable and experiences a positive sense of self is in education. She describes school as having been a "refuge" from home (950-951), believes her last year at college was "the BEST year" of her life (471-472) and states, "...education has been like a home to me" (982).

Belonging for Rasha means "...that you have a place in life", her example being that of a doctor who, to make sense of his life, needs to be in a hospital (616-618). Thus it is the meaning of what Rasha does, where, and with whom, that will give her a sense of her belonging. She has a very strong sense of being wanted in the world, but questions that she has yet found any real belonging. She believes she might find a belonging at university but is sure she will experience it when she has her own family (1205-1210). But now she says,

Its weird, I don't feel like that, even if erm . I don't know, its weird
cos I don't, I really don't feel I belong anywhere.

(618-619)

Safiya

Safiya is a woman in her mid forties and a colleague of a close friend of mine working in Tower Hamlets' mental health services. She and I were known to each other and knew a little of each other's story, but we had never met prior to the interview. We spoke twice about the interview on the telephone. Meeting for the first time in her flat, I reiterated my intention to explore belonging and my personal interest in it. I asked Safiya to say a little bit about herself. This is her introduction:

...I came with my husband in England in 1987 and I came straight to Tower Hamlets because loads of Bangladeshi living in Tower Hamlets and that's why er we came to stay with our relatives for

the time being. This is started actually from Tower Hamlets and its been nearly 'bout 19 years erm I've been living in Tower Hamlets.

(2-6)

Safiya came to Tower Hamlets where relatives had already settled, as had so many Bangladeshis before her, "...in cascading chains along increasingly well worn paths of kinship and friendship" (Ballard, 1994:11). Her coming to London also followed the pattern of so many Bangladeshi women, in that she came with her husband and two children (Phillipson et al, 2003:20). In making it clear that it was her husband's choice to come (144-145) Safiya reflects Wilson's interpretation that belonging for a South Asian woman can mean both having a man's protection, and being his possession (Wilson, 2006:9-10). Safiya also somewhat ruefully speaks of having "...had to be [a] housewife" (230) and being "Very traditional" (232) after her marriage, which again fits general findings that the main responsibility of the majority of women in her age group was the household (Phillipson et al, 2003:26-30).

Safiya suggested herself that she differed substantially from the majority of her peers in London in that she came from Dhaka, Bangladesh's capital city, and was educated to what she called 'college' level (156-194) whilst most women came to Tower Hamlets from rural Sylhet and were less educated (Across Seven Seas, 1987:64,157; Eade, 1990:318; Eade, 1997:94; Gardner and Shukur, 1994: 142-157). Indeed only nine per cent of women in Phillipson et al's study came from an urban area (Phillipson, 2003:2) and Safiya suggested it was these differences that enabled her to find work teaching in a mother tongue school soon after she arrived (156-162).

Any ordinariness of her life as a Bangladeshi wife and mother came to an abrupt end two years after Safiya arrived in this country. Very matter-of-factly she tells of how, unknown to her, her husband took her children back to Bangladesh (18-24). She explains that he took her passport and she overstayed her right to be here. Safiya describes having to make what must have been an excruciatingly difficult decision to stay in this country to obtain the right to stay and bring her children back here. She tells how she feared that if she returned to her husband in Bangladesh she would have no life of her own, as Wilson states, "A woman is regarded as belonging first to the men in her family, then to the men in her husband's family but never to herself" (Wilson, 2006:9). Alternatively, he might not take her back which meant she would be ostracised in that "male dominated" society (35-45).

Thus Safiya found herself left in this country with "really, really poor" language skills (46-47), one relative (132), a problematic relationship with her husband's family (349-362) and stripped of her role as wife and mother. It can only be assumed that at that point any sense of belonging she might have had would be crushed. At the time it seemed so obvious, I took it for granted. Retrospectively it is clear that I should have asked. The long narrative Safiya chooses to tell portrays the most shocking upheaval and must surely fit Plummer's description of "...critical 'turning points' or major life events" in peoples' lives that shape who they become (Plummer, 2001:194).

Safiya remained in this country with none of the usual familial structures of a Bangladeshi family in London (Phillipson et al, 2003:21-22). She had never known her parents, was brought up by her older siblings who she describes as

being “like my mummies” (293), the few aunts and uncles she had were long since dead, she was estranged from her husband’s family and her children had been taken from her (247-362). In terms of the family she feels she belongs to now, Safiya responds by saying “Obviously children. . . And my brothers, sisters” (336) with whom she maintains transnational relationships, a common feature of many migrant women’s lives (Westwood and Phizacklea, 2000:120-145; Phillipson 2003:7-9). As argued by Horst (2006: 143-156), Safiya describes how the mobile phone has transformed her relationships with those of her siblings living in rural areas with whom in the past she could only communicate by letter (883-901). Having managed to make contact with her children for the first time in six years when they moved to America from Bangladesh, she maintained a purely telephone contact with them until 2003 since when she has been visiting them every year. Family to her are also some nephews and nieces who now live in London with whom she is close and a few women friends (264-266).

Religion is not an aspect of Safiya’s life that dominates (583-744). She has absolute certainty of herself as a Muslim woman (565; 586) but makes a clear distinction between Bengali culture and religion. She asserts that many people do not and as a result, mix them up (1104-1129; 1164-1197). The same point is made by Wilson who claims that since the 1990s there has been a conflation of culture and religion in Muslim communities (Wilson, 2006:75). Safiya says she is neither practising nor pious (589-590) but that Islam is a part of her roots (622-623). Whilst Safiya does not directly allude to it, Eade and Garbin argue that few secularists reject their Muslim identity as doing so would sever their family and community bonds (Eade and Garbin, 2006:14).

Safiya views religion as a means of providing moral guidance and, in that, it is of great importance to her (692-725). However, she also believes that religion is potentially divisive, separating people for spurious reasons (592-613). She seems rather guarded in explaining her thoughts on being Muslim and what religion means to her. It may be she is being very careful not to offend anyone but that she is also concerned she is not the right person for me to be interviewing because her views are not typical (731-733). Whilst she does strongly identify as a Muslim, Safiya's perspective on religion appears to be very different from the majority of women interviewed by Phillipson et al who identify foremost as practising Muslims (Phillipson et al, 2006:42-45). However, the questions they asked inextricably join religion and identity which assumes they are not, or cannot be, separate issues (Phillipson et al, 2006:97). As such, they fail to differentiate between self-identification as Muslim and actively practising religion, the differentiation that Safiya clearly makes. Her story illustrates how questions of religious identity are often very complex.

Belonging for Safiya is unquestionably Bangladeshi based. For while she finds different belongings in the various aspects of her life, the essence of virtually all can be found in her very deep-felt Bangladeshi roots – wherever they are found, she can be found. She explains that having been born and brought up in Bangladesh, she brought this profound sense of self with her to Britain (575-576). For her the culture is something that is passed down “generation by generation” which binds people in a shared belonging (550-551). It is this strong presence of Bangladeshi culture, food, language, politics and religion that makes Tower Hamlets a “very homely” place for Safiya and she recognises that without these her transnational links with “back home” might be much stronger (1022-1039). In Tower

Hamlets she is “missing nothing” because everything she wants is available (1022-1028). As one of Eade’s respondents also remarks, belonging is more to do with “...culture and the people at the time, not a place” (Eade, 2002:143). Most of her friends are Bangladeshi and the greater part of her social life revolves around Bengali culture. She is also actively involved in the Labour Party and community politics in the borough (481-491).

While being so clear about her Bangladeshi roots, Safiya is very aware that her belonging is also firmly embedded in Tower Hamlets, where her maturity developed. In response to a direct question about how she would define her belonging, Safiya says:

Mmm. Well, this is, I myself actually find it difficult with this thing because, I told you, I came in here when I was er quite young and my maturity mi, REAL maturity developed in THIS country. I said that. Like, its not meant I married, I got children but, my sense of maturity developed when I’m here. And day by day, I grow up my maturity, my sense, my social life, all this developed there. And THIS sense I feel I’m, I’m here.

(943-948)

Indeed, in the situation she found herself when her husband left her, she had to make a choice, which was to stay in Britain and find her own way in life. Her awareness of not having a life of her own if she went back to Bangladesh, is matched by her understanding that in Britain she has gained a freedom and a sense of safety and security that a woman on her own in Bangladesh would not have. As an independent woman, she neither has to defer to, nor compromise with, a husband (1052-1086). Safiya speaks with some pride in having made those

choices and describes herself as “brave” for having successfully made a life for herself against the odds (1420-1424).

Safiya says there is no straight answer to where she belongs, almost apologetically saying it is “two way” (953). Despite her strong sense of belonging in Tower Hamlets she does not consider herself British because her roots are not in Britain.

...I belong half half. I [xxx] I feel I'm belong to this country, I belong to Bangladesh. Half half.

(1269-1270)

She is pragmatic about having British nationality, seeing it as the means to hold a British passport and remain in the country. In filling out official forms she complies with what she believes her status is, as Bangladeshi-British, but she does not feel British in any way (1251-1281), a situation that is not uncommon according to Yuval-Davis et al (2005:525) and endorsed by Feuchtwang who argues that national identity often has very little to do with belonging (Feuchtwang, 1992:1-13). Safiya's feelings are emphasised when she reflects on her “complicated life” and her future. For while her working, social and political lives give her belonging now, she believes she may feel very differently once she retires. With no extended family in Britain, she believes she may find more of a belonging in Bangladesh where she has family and where neighbours care for each other, but she says, “Not now. I have a plan” (981-1013).

The Complexity of Belonging

Rasha and Safiya have both revealed their sense of belonging through their own considered reflection on their lives. Their narratives tell how they understand themselves from thinking about their past and future, as well as where

they find themselves in the present. Neither of them appears to have a strong sense of any national identity, which concurs with the thinking of 'politics of belonging' theorists. While Safiya has taken on British nationality, it has little significance with regard to her feelings and allegiance. Rasha does not mention nationality per se, but I did not ask her; in retrospect a failing on my part. Similarly, transnational belonging did not feature particularly in either of their lives. For Rasha, born in Britain, it had no significance whatsoever. For Safiya, while she does have important relationships with people abroad, unlike many migrant women in Britain she has no overwhelming need of strong transnational links for fulfilment in her day-to-day life.

However, it is also true that for both, their sense of belonging is by no means clear-cut. Rasha finds her life full of dilemma, confusion and contradiction and this is reflected in the content and the manner of the stories she tells. Her self-exploration through the interview process illuminated the depth of her confusion to herself, which she revealed to me immediately the recorder was switched off. Contrarily, while Safiya's sense of belonging is complex, she is quite clear in its nature of being "half half". This difference between them may well be a difference of age. For Rasha is still in her teens; she has not yet had many experiences and is conscious of how much her future could alter her sense of belonging. Her lack of sense of belonging may also be due to having grown up in a country and with a language alien to that of her parents.

Safiya on the other hand is already well into middle-age, has had an extraordinarily difficult adult life to come to terms with, but has had many years to get to know and understand herself. She also grew up with a very secure sense of

who she was. Indeed, as Wilson argues, mothers are seen to be instrumental in passing on cultural understanding to their children (Wilson, 2006:30). Safiya gained this understanding, albeit not from her mother but from her siblings who, acting in loco parentis, she describes as her “mummies”. Arguably, Rasha grew up without such an influence due to the lack of shared language and understanding with her mother. Safiya fears for the younger generations born in Britain precisely for those reasons and that without knowing their roots, they will have no sense of belonging (1164-1218).

It is realistic to say that both Rasha and Safiya stand out from the traditional expectations for women of their respective ages and are therefore not typical Bangladeshi women. In family terms, Rasha feels mostly alienated from hers and has very different aspirations and expectations. Safiya’s life is not based within a family household that she manages, unlike the majority of her age group. In fact, as a single woman living on her own, she represents only one per cent of Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets (Phillipson et al, 2003:21-22). Similarly, as has been shown, they are both untypical in that religion is not a pivotal aspect of their belonging. Safiya is insistent that she is the wrong person for me to be interviewing because she is so untypical (1327-1335). She had an expectation that I was looking for something in particular which she did not fit. However, I tried to explain that I was not looking for generalisations, or norms, and much less stereotypes. I was trying to explore belonging by looking beyond the generalisations through individual, unique, storied lives. For meaning is in the individual and her story, not the general classifications of who she might be (1336-1348).

However, it is interesting to consider that having developed part of their lives outside usual Bangladeshi expectations, it is no coincidence that Rasha and Safiya were known to me and were prepared to be interviewed by me. Indeed, it could be for that very reason that they could be so open with me, sharing very deeply-felt ideas and concerns. Bhopal reasons that South Asian women may not talk openly and honestly with women who did not share the same cultural understanding (Bhopal, 2001:283-284). I would argue that it may be precisely because I come from 'outside' that Rasha and Safiya felt unencumbered and safe. Rasha in particular is adamant that she would not speak honestly to another Asian about her thoughts on religion (649-664). This could be a generational issue. Unlike Safiya, Rasha was born and brought up in Britain and the people Bhopal might describe as 'outsiders' are in fact the friends Rasha has grown up with, her educators, the people important to her way of thinking, in fact therefore, to her, they are 'insiders'. With Safiya I was aware that there was more of a space between us. Was it because we had not met before? Was it a cultural barrier? In her interview I frequently interjected with "mm", but having made a conscious effort to stop, I found afterwards I clearly had not achieved this. Why was I doing it? Was I simply being supportive because of Safiya's lack of fluency? Was it to confirm understanding? Was it encouraging or was it intruding? However, it was perhaps significant that as the interview progressed Safiya became more engaged and her responses became longer and more fluent.

Belonging in the Future

In a century of rapidly increasing globalisation, evermore sophisticated technology and mixing of races, the question of belonging becomes critical. Will everyone eventually belong everywhere? Or will no-one belong anywhere? Or are they one and the same? Will the individual disappear in an amorphous mass or will she develop new senses of belonging through "...highly versatile interpretations of collective solidarities" as Eade suggests (2002:161)? While notions of 'home' appear superficially obvious and straightforward, they are actually deeply complex and subjective.

This emphasis on individuality firmly establishes the suitability of narrative methodology to the study of belonging. As the Rasha and Safiya interviews and analyses have plainly demonstrated, this approach is particularly successful in

eliciting the richness and depth of personal meaning. The narrative process encourages subjective exploration, not only reflecting a sense of belonging, but also prompting conscious awareness of it. Through this process the complexity and individuality of Rasha's and Safiya's belonging have emerged as they reflected on their past, present and future lives, and insight has been gained into generational differences in their sense of home and belonging.

This dissertation was inspired initially by my own sense of not belonging. I wondered whether the sense of belonging of other migrant and first generation women in Tower Hamlets had any similarity to mine. Would the lack of commonality of culture and skin colour be an obstacle to understanding? My own life story tells me that, while all experiences are racialised, white as well as black, there are different forms of "white", which entail different levels of belonging. The narratives of Rasha and Safiya show that exploring belonging through feeling and emotion can engender shared understandings, and similarity if not sameness, which are not simply racially based.

A strong case can therefore be made for the application of a similar narrative approach to the study of belonging in broader contexts. It would be valuable to undertake further study not only with greater numbers of Bangladeshi women in Tower Hamlets, but with other minority groups, and in wider geographical areas.

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University of East London
PS 3211

From: Psychosocial Studies Subject Area
To: School of Social Sciences Ethics Committee

**RESEARCH THAT INVOLVES HUMAN SUBJECTS MUST HAVE APPROVAL
FROM THE ETHICS COMMITTEE BEFORE THE WORK BEGINS**

Application for the approval of an undergraduate student project

Note: Before completing this form, students must discuss the ethical status of their proposed research with their specialist tutor who is required to approve the student's plan before this form can be submitted to the ethics committee

- 1.1 Title of Course: **Double Dissertation**
- 1.2 Title of project: **Speaking of home: from teenage to old age, Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi women in London's East End reflect on belonging**
- 1.3 Student name and number: **0316280**
- 1.4 Name of specialist tutor: **Corinne Squire**
- 1.5 Expected duration of project: Start date: **February 2006**
Expected completion date: **January 2007**

1.6 Methodology (Please provide a brief outline of the methodology to be used. *This must include* a description of the expected sample and from where the sample will be recruited. Also details of where the work will be carried out.).

The project will be based on semi-structured interviews involving a sample of up to six women. They will all be known to me directly or through close connections of mine. The interviewees will be individually interviewed in their own homes or other place of their choosing. It is intended to entail one interview per person but with the option of a second if necessary for clarification or additional information – at their or my request.

How are you going to collect the data?

The data will be recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed.

How are you going to analyse it?

Analysis will be made through the narrative approach using the hermeneutic tradition, interpreting meaning and understanding from the women's own telling of their experiences.

1.7 Please describe briefly how the following ethical considerations will be addressed:

Obtaining informed consent:

A letter of consent has been specifically produced for each interviewee to sign. (Please see attachment)

Right of withdrawal:

It will be explained both verbally and in writing that the interviewee can withdraw at any time, in terms of both the interview and permission to use any recorded or transcribed material.

Issues of confidentiality:

It will be explained both verbally and in writing that unless the interviewee gives permission, only appropriate university staff will have access to materials produced.

Other ethical considerations (specify):

None

Eg if you intend to work with children or vulnerable adults, you will need Criminal Review Board clearance

I do not intend to but I do have up-to-date clearance

1.8 Is ethical clearance required from any other ethical committee? Yes/**No**
If 'YES' please give the name and address of the organisation:

1.9 Signed (student):

Date: **26 April 2006**

2.0 Name of specialist tutor or supervisor who has approved this form

Corinne Squire

University of East London

Consent to participate in interviews for the purpose of the
PS 3211 Double Dissertation

**Speaking of home: from teenage to old age, Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi
women in London's East End reflect on belonging**

This interview-based project is being undertaken for the purpose of assessment in the third year PS 3211 Double Dissertation pertaining to student u0316280.

The interviews for this project will explore the thoughts and ideas concerning the sense of home and belonging that different generations of Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi women have living in London's East End. The thinking behind this grew from my own growing up as a British born child of refugees in London. I began to wonder about women who had come to Tower Hamlets as I had, or those born there of immigrant parents. Where was home for them? Where did they feel they belonged?

The project will assess how well the student has understood theories and methods of qualitative social science research and been able to apply them. The assessment will in not in any way be considering or judging the interviewee.

The interviewee has the right to stop the interviews or to withdraw from the project at any time, and to withdraw permission for any material created by that time to be used. The transcript will be made available to the interviewee after which she will be able to make changes if she so wishes. The identity of the interviewee will remain anonymous and a pseudonym will be used in all written material.

The recordings made will not be heard by anyone other than the student. The written transcripts and the final project will be for the purposes of assessment only and will be seen only by the module leader and internal and external examiners. Further than that, all parts of the work will remain confidential unless written permission is gained from the interviewee. Should any of the material be requested for use in any form in the future, the interviewee's permission would be required.

The interviewee will be offered a copy of the final project.

Dissertation staff have requested the option to use the final project as an example for future students in which case the work would be made completely anonymous, including the student's identity.

I agree to participate in this project on the terms outlined above:

Interviewee Name.....Signature.....

Student Name.....Signature.....

Date.....

Appendix III

Dissertation Interview Themes
UEL student 0316280

How did you or your family come to be in Tower Hamlets

FAMILY

Tell me about your family: Where they are, how much contact you have with them
what does family mean to you

LANGUAGE

Do you speak different languages. Where, with whom
Does it affect where you feel you belong when you're speaking a particular language

MUSIC

What music is important to you and why.

RELIGION

How important is religion to you

FRIENDS / SOCIAL LIFE / STUDY / WORK

COMMUNICATION ie mobiles, internet

RACISM / POLITICS

FOOD

Where do you feel you belong
Has your sense of belonging changed over time

Appendix IV

Rasha: Interview Transcription

undertaken on 5 August 2006 by UEL student 0316280

NB: Rasha is a pseudonym

1 0:0:00 N: Its Saturday 5 August 2006 I'm Xxxxxx and I'm interviewing Rasha for my
2 dissertation on the sense of home and belonging that Bangladeshi and black Caribbean
3 women have living in East London. Erm, we've talked about other things but not about
4 this yet though Rabea has already read and signed the consent form. 0:0:36 R Yup
5 N: Yuh?, good. Erm, so, I'm just going to say a little bit about how I came to be doing it-
6 R: Yeah, ok
7 N: Just to give you an idea. Erm ..
8 *0:0:47 noisy movement, setting up earphones, testing 0:1:20*
9 0:1:21 N: I came to be interested in the idea of belonging erm and what HOME means,
10 erm after I'd been doing quite a lot of thinking about what it meant for me.
11 R: Yeah
12 N: Erm . and for my mum because erm, I'd done some interviewing with her-
13 R: Yeah
14 N: and it was partly about her identity, well it was very much about her identity and what
15 belonging meant to her. Erm because, er I'm sure you know my mum and dad weren't
16 English, they were refugees-
17 R: Yeah
18 N: to this country and I was the first generation in my family to be born in this country-
19 R: Yeah.
20 N: so I'd I'd erm . always been interested in the idea, what does it mean to belong
21 somewhere,-
22 R: Yeah.
23 N: what does it mean what home is. And I, so what I'm doing now is trying to explore that.
24 Trying to explore what home means to people, but particularly black Caribbean and
25 Bangladeshi women erm, in Tower Hamlets, and . so obviously what thoughts you might
26 have about what belonging and home mean to you. Erm, I'm not expecting you just to be
27 able to talk about it off the top of your head-
28 R: Yeah.
29 N: I'll ask some questions and hopefully it will just generally come out in what you're
30 saying. Erm, so if you could just, if we just start by you saying a little bit just about you
31 and who you are and your age and where you were born and where you live now.
32 R: Yeah. Do I say my name?
33 N: Yeah, why not.
34 R: Ok. I'm Rasha.
35 N: Just say your first name, yeah.

36 0:3:25 R: I'm 19, erm, I'm Bangladeshi, I live in East London, Bethnal Green area and,
37 have quite a big family. I have five sisters including myself and three brothers and I live
38 with my mum and dad. I've just finished college and I'm studying Sport Science, its a
39 BTEC Diploma and an A level in psychology. I originally did four A Levels which were
40 psychology, English Literature, PE and General Studies at M..... but I didn't like the
41 college so I went on to CS. . Is that it?

42 0:4:09 Yeah that's great. That's great.

43 N: So erm, yeah, you said you're Bangladeshi.

44 R: Yup.

45 N: How did you erm, come to be in Tower Hamlets?

46 R: Erm I know from what I know, from my family, both my parents, my parents got
47 married, an arranged marriage and, they got the chance to come over here, I'm not sure
48 how. Maybe like a shortage of workers or something in London, I mean in Britain. And
49 they managed to come over, my dad was really young at that time. And, my older brother
50 was born over there. And, they weren't in Tower Hamlets then, we were in Leeds, well,
51 my family were in Leeds at the moment. And my two older sisters were born in Leeds.
52 And then we came to Tower Hamlets and we lived, still on the same estate I live now but
53 in a flat. And then, one, two three, three of us were born then, in that flat and then we
54 moved over across the road to another flat and then another two . . yeah, or another one.
55 And then, the flat we are living in now, my younger sister was born there. So that made
56 all eight of us, and that's how we came to live in Tower Hamlets cos we came straight
57 from Leeds, from what I know we came straight from Leeds to the flat that we lived in. So
58 we've lived in 3 different places but in the same estate. So it's ALWAYS been my home.
59 Its not like I've moved around. So it's always been there.

60 0:05:42 N: Mmm. Do you know when your parents came over?

61 R: No idea.

62 N: But your older brother was born -

63 R: Yeah.

64 N:, or two of your brothers did you say-

65 R: No, my older brother.

66 N: Your eldest brother was born in, and do you know how old he is?

67 R: He's 26 and they must have [xxx] I think he came over when he was about one or two.

68 N: Oh ok, so they've been here maybe about 25 years.

69 R: Yeah, they have been here a while.

70 N: Right, so since about 1980-

71 R: Yeah.

72 N: about, oh, ok. Right. . Good. and erm.. so Tower hamlets has always been YOUR
73 home.

74 R: Yup.

75 N: Not your family's. Ok.

76 R: Mm.

77 N: Erm, tell me a little bit more about your family. Where are they all. How much contact
78 you have with them. What does family actually mean to you-

79 R: Erm-

80 0:06:33 N: what is family to you?

81 R: Family didn't really mean a lot to me about a couple of years ago, but only because
82 our family's just kind of apart and everywhere and nowhere. It was like it was so
83 disorganised. Now, recently, literally in the last month or so family actually means
84 something to me. But erm, when I, when I wanted to move out of home, I don't, family
85 didn't matter to me. My friends were my family. And I still go by that, my friends ARE my
86 family. 0:07:03 And, like, my older sis, my older brother isn't married, he still lives at home
87 and I didn't really speak to him anyway until I hit fourteen but actually speak to him, have
88 a proper conversation. I don't really, I KNEW that I had an older brother, just you know,
89 he's just someone around the house. It wasn't 'til I turned 14, 15, 16 that area, those
90 couple of years, that I actually started to get to know my brother. And, its weird because I
91 look upon my brother now and he's so different from Asian brothers. Like, a lot of girls
92 that I know, two of my, no one of my friends is, the way you dress, and obviously some of
93 their brothers wouldn't go for that, whereas my brother's fine. You know, he encourages
94 me to have, you know do different things and whatnot. 0:07:44 And I know like one my
95 friends that she, she does have a dad but I actually thought she never because of the
96 way her brother treated her. And her brother actually used to hit her quite a bit, if she like,
97 kinda stepped out of line, in that culture. Whereas for my brother it's nothing like that, not
98 at all. My brother takes us out takes us on our birthdays, always you know. Always
99 interested in our lives. And it's weird cos if I'd known that then, I'd have got to know my
100 brother a lot more cos he's one person I couldn't live without. So he kind of just started
101 what family meant to me. He made me realise, you know, that I do have family, even
102 though I have family, it's different, you need to feel a connection.

103 0:8:22 N: So you didn't feel any connection-

104 R: No, no.

105 N: with your parents?

106 R: No. Well my mum I was really close to. I've gotta say my mum was, was, she's like,
107 yeah, I was close to my mum. Not my dad, my dad wasn't really around when we were
108 younger. He WAS but it was like my brother, just around and about. My mum I was close
109 to because my sisters was sent to Bangladesh so I didn't really know, obviously I didn't
110 know them then, so it was only me and my little brother at the time. And me and my little
111 brother got, you know, we hung out a lot and I obviously bonded with my mum quite a lot

112 and you know, she, yeah, my mum was my family then. But it just changed, just like, then
113 like when it got to, hit secondary school my sister, who's in the same year as me, SHE
114 became my family. So it's not like my family became my family altogether. Its just one
115 person at a time. And now, literally now that everyone's back at home, cos obviously Th
116 left and now that she's back, and erm, now that To's left her partner and come with,
117 that's, now it's like a proper family to me. There's more than one person at a time.
118 There's like my older brother, two older sis, my three older sisters, I've got a nephew
119 now. Erm .

120 0:09:36 My little brother whose in Bangladesh but still, I'm close to him. I'm not THAT
121 close to him, not like I used to be, I used to be really close to him. Now it's just that I
122 haven't seen him for, four years, I think its four years. But I'm not even sure. It's been
123 quite a while. But yeah, slowly it's come together. But I still, I can still feel distant, I, it
124 wouldn't be that hard for me to cut off my family.

125 0:09:58 N: So do you think of family at all beyond your parents and your-

126 R: No.

127 N: brothers and sisters?

128 R: I know we used to be close to my mum's oldest brother's family. We were really close
129 then, but something happened and we didn't really speak. But no, my family is just the
130 house that I live in.

131 N: Ok.

132 R: So I don't really go out from, and I don't, cos, there's not many, I think, there's not
133 many people not really on my mum's side that are in, like in Britain. Most of them are still
134 in Bangladesh. Erm, I don't really know them.

135 0:10:35 My dad's side, I really, I BARELY know my dad's side. I only just like, not even up
136 to a year ago did I find out that, two of my cousins who I just didn't really think were
137 cousins really are my first cousins and it's like WOW. Yeah, they're my first cousins. But
138 then you like, one other person, there's my mum, my dad's niece that I'm close to. She's
139 a lot older than me obviously. She's got her kids and whatnot but its cos when she's
140 come down, she used to live here in London as well 'til they moved up to Manchester.
141 She was one person that yeah, I'd consider outside the family. But nah, it's mainly my
142 family that are my family.

143 0:11:12 N: Mm, so you don't have much connection with the actual family members-

144 R: members-

145 N: in Bangladesh?

146 R: Nah, not at all. Like my uncle came down but he's not my, he's my mum's sister's erm,
147 husband. When I met him I REALLY didn't know who he was. He was, 'you don't know
148 me', I was like, no idea. When he mentioned my cousins name I was like, oh, I do know

149 you I know you by your kids name, but I don't know you by your face or anything. So it
150 was really weird.

151 0:11:40 N: Ok, ok, erm, I'm interested in finding out a little bit about erm, what's important
152 to you in your life like, erm, things like, music, languages, religion, food, those sorts of
153 things. Erm, as you know its, what I'm, what I'm . interested in GENERALLY is, what your
154 sense of belonging is, what your sense of HOME is in Tower Hamlets. Now, in one way
155 obviously, Tower Hamlets is where you've always lived-

156 R: Mm, yeah.

157 N: erm, but its, its that, its what that MEANS to you is what I'm interested in exploring.
158 What does it actually MEAN to you erm, so lets take language. Do you speak different
159 languages?

160 0:12:44 R: I'm meant to. I know English obviously. But Bengali I should, I can understand
161 Bengali most of it, but I really can't speak it to save my life. I really, really can't. It's just
162 that I've not erm, my sisters obviously they LIVED in Bangladesh so they HAD to speak it
163 but, I live in England, I live in London, you speak English. It's like I've, I went to school
164 here, you know, I didn't start Arabic classes 'til I was a lot older, so I, there wasn't any
165 need for me to speak Bengali. I did speak Bengali between my mum and dad obviously
166 but not, more my mum, not my dad, cos I didn't really speak to my dad anyway. And
167 then.. I don't know, obviously I've just spoken the best I could and then.. When I lived,
168 moved into my second house that's when I spoke to my mum a lot obviously so I must
169 have spoken Bengali then but I don't really remember it. When we moved into the new
170 house my older brother and sisters were there, they'd moved, every, obviously we were
171 all there. So I did need to speak, you know. I probably did speak Bengali then but I
172 remember that I couldn't speak it well. And people would take the mickey so I stopped
173 speaking as much as I used to.

174 0:13:53 N: So what people would take the mickey-

175 R: Oh just the way you say it. Cos it's like, it's not an accent but it's just you wouldn't have
176 said the words properly. I found it really hard. And then I got to my teenage years, and
177 obviously teenage years and their parents, you don't really get along, so I didn't really
178 speak to my mum and dad ANYWAY. And then it got to the point where I didn't speak to
179 my mum cos of, you just, we didn't speak and so I've never actually had .. the time to kind
180 of just learn it, or want to. I WANTED to, I do, I've wanted to learn it but I've just . I've
181 gone past that.

182 0:14:27 N: So the person you most spoke, do you, you said erm Bengali do you call it
183 Bengali or Bangla?

184 R: Bengali.

185 N: Bengali ok. Erm, cos some people say Bangla.

186 R: Yeah.

- 187 N: So, ok. So the only person you've REALLY ever spoken Bengali with is your mum?
- 188 R: Yeah.
- 189 N: So, when you were little, does your mum speak English?
- 190 R: Nah.
- 191 N: So, when you were little you must have-
- 192 R: [overlapping] Yeah I must have, yeah. That's why I know I can understand. When
- 193 people talk I know what they're saying. I just don't speak it.
- 194 N: Ok.
- 195 R: I know exactly what people are saying.
- 196 N: Right. But if you really needed to you could-
- 197 R: [overlapping] If I really need to speak it I do speak it like when, obviously you can tell
- 198 I'm Asian and most people can tell that I'm Bengali as well so, when I'm on the street or
- 199 when, you know when, like the one stop shops, and there's a Bengali person but there's
- 200 no interpreters, and they kind of just grab you-
- 201 N: [laugh]
- 202 R: you have to do it. Though it's really difficult cos I'm, I'm not, 'oh my God what do I say,
- 203 how do I say it', so it's really like, that's why I never went for the interpreting job at
- 204 Morpeth and at parents evening.
- 205 N: [laugh]
- 206 R: I couldn't do that, that's embarrassing.
- 207 0:15:35 N: [laugh] Ok, ok. So in the main then your relationship with your mum happened
- 208 in Bengali-
- 209 R: Yeah.
- 210 N: but, no-one else so with your brothers and sisters you don't speak Bengali?
- 211 R: [overlapping] Nah, all English.
- 212 N: All English-
- 213 R: Yeah
- 214 N: and with your dad now?
- 215 R: Er, bit of both. But then, cos I find it hard to speak Bengali, if my brothers and sisters
- 216 are around I do like, I'll say what I'm saying but they'll explain it for me.
- 217 0:16:05 N: Ok. So you actually can't necessarily say everything you would want to say-
- 218 R: Nah.
- 219 N: to your mum and dad
- 220 R: There's a lot I would want to say to my mum and dad but I can't say it. There's SO
- 221 much, if I, that's one thing I'd want to speak Bengali for, because there's so much I
- 222 wanna say to my mum and my dad to make them understand and everything, but I can't
- 223 say it. I can't say it in English cos they won't understand and I can't in Bengali cos I can't
- 224 speak Bengali.

225 N: So you're dad doesn't speak English either?
 226 R: They both do speak but like, you know how, you can speak the odd word here and
 227 there, like that, yeah. My dad understands better than my mum.
 228 0:16:43 N: Ok. That's interesting. And now, for three years you haven't, you and your
 229 mum haven't talked AT ALL?
 230 R: No.
 231 N: Ok. Alright. When you're... when you're speaking Bengali which clearly you haven't
 232 really done very much for a long time-
 233 R: [laugh] No.
 234 N: what does it make you feel, apart from embarrassed because you can't speak it
 235 properly [laugh], does it affect.. does it affect how you think of yourself, does it affect..
 236 where you belong, at all, or your thinking of where you belong, not where you actually
 237 belong? Erm.. when you're speaking either Bengali or English.
 238 0:17:35 R: When I speak English I feel like I belong somewhere. When I speak in
 239 Bengali.. no. No way at all.
 240 N: and R: [overlapping] [garbled]
 241 N: So when you, just stay with that a sec, when you said, no not all-
 242 R: Mm, no.
 243 N: it doesn't make you feel anything you mean-
 244 R: No.
 245 N: speaking Bengali?
 246 R: It just means I can't speak it. It's just, it's like learning French, I thought if I spoke
 247 French or Spanish I'd feel closer, speaking, I'd have more sense of belongings speaking
 248 French or Spanish. I don't know why just, I don't know.
 249 0:18:09 N: Ok, so you were just about to say when we go, we, we-
 250 R: Oh, when we go back, when we, when people, people say, 'oh we're going back
 251 home', I say it as a phrase, people say it when, you know when people say it they
 252 actually mean, I'm going back home. I don't see that as my HOME. Like I know
 253 Bangladesh as where my parents come from, that's their home, but I could never ever .
 254 even to go as a holiday people like, like, I know my friend, he's Span, he's Colombian,
 255 when he goes back home he's like, 'oh yeah I'm going back to Colombia yeah, yeah'.
 256 When I say I'm going back home it's like 'urgh, it's Bangladesh' and it's like 'mmurgh, you
 257 know, nothing interesting there for me'. It would be god, good to know people but it's their
 258 world is so different, it really is, its not even, its, its far too different, I just don't see it as
 259 home, I could NEVER see it as home. .. If I didn't have, if I was to go on my own and,
 260 actually, leave that, I couldn't NEVER go on my own. I'd have to, I would HAVE to go with
 261 somebody who could speak Bengali but speak English so it would have to be somebody
 262 from my family that I'd go with. Otherwise I would NEVER go. . No way.

- 263 0:19:14 N: When was the last time you were there?
264 R: About 11 or 12, when I was 12.
265 N: Oh so it's quite a long time ago.
266 R: Yeah and that was alright because I was a kid then.
267 N: Yeah.
268 R: It didn't really matter to me, we were all kids and I didn't really . I wasn't like, it's
269 different, now that I've grown older I've actually . when I was 7 and when I went in Year 7
270 when I was about 12, it was a lot less restricted, so I could go out with my older brother
271 and my younger brother and I could go out with THEM. And I didn't have to go to the
272 cousins' house and, you know, wear a scarf and whatnot and NOW when I go there I
273 guarantee you I'll have to wear a shalwar kameez which I rarely do. HAVE to wear a
274 scarf, sit with them. I won't be able to go out with my brother and, like when I went in
275 Year, when I was 12 I could go explore the country. I couldn't then, NOW if I was to go it
276 would be different. I don't think I would be able to. And my older brother's not going as
277 well. So it really means that I am STUCK.
278 0:20:04 N: So you're going to erm Bangladesh in a couple of weeks time?
279 R: Mmm.
280 N: And you haven't been there since you were 12.
281 R: No.
282 N: And so you feel that you'll have to wear different clothes-
283 R: Yeah.
284 N: and you'll have to behave differently-
285 R: Definitely.
286 N: And what, what, what does that do for you? What do you think of about that? What,
287 how do you feel about that?
288 R: Its different cos, I'll go over there, wearing a shalwar kameez, I can GUARANTEE I'll
289 have a thousand marriage proposals. And it's like, if I was wearing a pair, you know,
290 denim jeans and wearing a top and you saw the shape of my breasts you'd be like, 'oh I
291 don't wanna marry HER', and it would be like .. and now you think I'm covered up, well
292 you know I'm not, it's .. it's stupid, it's like, you know, you're not marrying who you THINK
293 you're marrying you're, it's just a cover, it's a face, it's .. you know, you're not real. . But
294 then, that's how it goes over there. You get married to people you don't know and I don't
295 want that.
296 N: Mhm.
297 0:21:06 R: It's weird, I would not, I barely wear shalwar kameez here, and I don't know
298 why actually-
299 N: When, when do you wear it here?
300 R: Er probably Eid.

- 301 N: Ok.
- 302 R: That's about it. Or if we're going to cousins' house and I HAVE to go, and I RARELY
303 like rarely, rarely, rarely go cousins' house. If I HAVE to go then I'll wear it. . And that's
304 not even a thing that I have to do, it's like I KNOW to do it cos my mum would, you know,
305 my mum would kill me if I came round in a pair of jeans in going over there. But yeah, I
306 HAVE to do it, its, like I know I have to do it.
- 307 N: So you don't do it for yourself?
- 308 R: No.
- 309 N: You, it's, it's not clothes you would wear by choice?
- 310 0:21:43 R: No. I wouldn't mind. NOW . I wouldn't mind. I don't know why but its . erm
311 recently its been alright, I wouldn't mind but I couldn't do it every day. Like when I wear it I
312 don't mind wearing it I, I you know . it, you know, it's not like when I used to have like och
313 god 'I HAVE to wear this'. But now I don't mind wearing it, I think I look nice in it so its, its
314 alright.
- 315 N: Right, so as you get older you actually-
- 316 R: Yeah.
- 317 N: you mind it less?
- 318 R: Yeah.
- 319 N: And wearing erm a shalwar kameez does that make you feel any different?
- 320 R: Nah. . Actually yeah. Makes me feel more Asian.
- 321 N: It does make you feel more Asian?
- 322 R: Yeah.
- 323 N: And what does that mean?
- 324 R: I don't know you know it just that I'm so, I, I really do think I'm more different from
325 Asian girls. I don't like people putting . like you know how have those stereotypes, I don't
326 like being known as, like what happens is right, if you're wearing, if you've gone out
327 wearing a shalwar kameez yeah, and then someone sees you with a guy. Ok an Asian
328 person sees you with a guy, they'd be like 'ohh, how could she PRETEND to be all
329 innocent and then go out with a guy'. If I were wearing a pair of jeans people wouldn't say
330 that. So its like why, you know, why's your dress sense . show, you know, it's just, it's
331 different meanings and I just find that stupid. And that is really how it IS. I've been around
332 my friends all the time and that IS the comment they come out with and I'm like, . but look
333 they're, they're, they're wearing their you know jeans and whatnot and she's like, 'oh well
334 she's not like that'. Not like WHAT, you know, it doesn't make sense. I really think our
335 culture's really .. I don't know . it's VERY complicated.
- 336 0:23:18 N: So, when you said, sorry I'm just going to move this slightly, when you said
337 erm . it makes you feel more Asian, -
- 338 R: Mmm.

339 N: in what way does it make you feel more Asian?

340 R: Erm I don't know how to explain it, its just, I don't feel, I KNOW that I'm Asian but I
 341 don't FEEL it. Cos I've always had, that's the thing, in secondary school I've always,
 342 actually even in primary school I've always had a mix of friends. Like if you, if you came
 343 to our secondary school, I had, there was eight girls in my class and they were ALL
 344 Asian. And that group was, you know, a group of Asian girls and as I hit, when I got to
 345 Year 10, we all mixed around a lot . for our subjects and I just made SO many more
 346 different friends. And with my friends, they'd be like 'oh I can't really handle, you know,
 347 what's the point of hanging round with erm . people who aren't Asian because they don't
 348 really know how we are'. But if you don't EXPLAIN to them how you are how are they
 349 gonna know? So they were like, ' oh, how can you hang around with white people and
 350 black people and they, you know, they don't get you' and I'm like, 'they DO get me, you
 351 just don't see it, you won't, you won't let yourself . you know, see it like that. And, so
 352 everyone, oh, you, you know 'you're the white girl' rer rer rer. [*as in 'etc etc etc'*] And
 353 that's why I don't feel Asian. I've always had that since secondary school. . I've always,
 354 always had that and it's like, I dunno, I don't like, it's like being Asian you, you belong to
 355 that group and I don't like . belonging to a group. I don't know, I just wanna be me. I don't
 356 wanna belong to anything.

357 0:24:47 N: Mmhm, mmhm. . Ok. . Erm. Mmm. Do, you feel that you're the ONLY . person
 358 . of your age amongst ALL the girls that you've known-

359 R: [overlapping] Yeah.

360 N: Asian girls that you've known that feels like that, you haven't actually-

361 R: [overlapping] I've never come across them.

362 N: come across anyone else who feels the same as you?

363 R: No, like the college I was at there was a group, on my college that I was at is based in
 364 Hackney so it's majority black people, but obviously there's always a group of white
 365 people, Asian people, and there IS actually a group of Asian people and I know two other
 366 Asian people . that weren't part of that group. Three including me. And all of the Asian
 367 people used to hang out in that group. ... So it was really weird, I was like 'oh wow' and
 368 my sister became friends with them and they were like, 'oh how come she, you know,
 369 your sister don't hang around with, you know, us, and I'm like, it's not that its just ... The
 370 way I see it is that they KNOW they're gonna get married and they .. they're using college
 371 as a time to get their freedom, just to let, you know, to make it last longer. I'm seeing
 372 college as my FUTURE. To get somewhere, you know. They would, they would NEVER
 373 dream of, they wouldn't THINK of leaving their family, whereas, . even that obviously ..
 374 even though it like erm .. don't know of the word . even though I may not want to, I still
 375 would do it but they, they've been brought up, I know some of them been brought up to
 376 like, honour their family's reputation and whatnot and my sisters, my older sister has . my

377 sister, older sister thinks like that but like, I just think reputation, what a load of crap.
 378 [0:26:33] [laugh] I don't get it, its you, you know, your own reputation you've gotta worry
 379 about, you've gotta, . you've you know, people see you, you get married, you have kids,
 380 what else do you do, I don't wanna be like that, that's not me. I'm not saying I'll never do
 381 it but, not now, not when I've got so much ahead of me.
 382 0:26:51 N: So do you feel .. alienated from-
 383 R: Yeah.
 384 N: other Bangladeshis?
 385 R: A lot. I honestly don't know, [xxx] I would never, I haven't like, I really do want to meet
 386 someone who's, not gone through it but knows of what I'm talking about. But yeah, in
 387 one, if I'm in a Bengali group and they're talking, about like, getting married and whatnot,
 388 my first thoughts are, I'm not gonna get married now-
 389 N: So what, young women of your age-
 390 R: Yeah.
 391 N: at 19, their main subject would be-
 392 R: Marriage, getting married.
 393 N: getting married?
 394 R: Or they, you know, they sis, I went to my sister's friend's .. sister's wedding and, she
 395 was what, 22, and I'm like, I won't even be out of uni by then and you know, you're
 396 getting MARRIED, its like, really, honestly now its, 22 is a LOT older than what it was
 397 when my sister got married. My sisters was 17 and 18. And that is like 'wow'. I was
 398 thinking the other day, literally the other day, imagine I got married when I was 17. I'd be
 399 married now. I'd be having k, like wow, I, that is . its like for THEM, if you go to a group of
 400 them its like 'yeah, its fine', they, everyone, when I talk to my friends, its like 'oh yeah, I
 401 could get married now, could have kids', they KNOW they've been, they've been brought
 402 up to think like that. I haven, I have been brought up to think like that but I don't think it, I
 403 don't believe it and whatnot. .. And they're brought up to think like that so that's . dunno,
 404 that's what they think of. And going to college, going to university that just, is just prolong
 405 that of getting, of not getting married of having kids. It's just for them to, you know, they
 406 know they don't wanna do it. I can tell. You know you can just tell. But they do it because
 407 they don't wanna . you know, . hurt their parents.
 408 0:28:31 N: So do you think if that were your situation you would . erm-
 409 R: But that depends then. Do I have their frame of mind or my OWN frame of mind. If I
 410 have THEIR frame of mind obviously . I don't know how else, I don't know how that goes
 411 but erm . they'd get, I'd probably get married if I had their frame of mind about reputation-
 412 N: Yeah but you-
 413 R: Yeah. Me as myself, no.

414 N: I mean what happens if your, your parents told you they've found somebody they want
415 you to marry?

416 R: Well, that's what I was thinking of cos with going to uni, obviously mum doesn't want
417 me to go to uni, and I thought, well I'm going to have to leave my home sooner or later
418 because when I get married, I'm NOT gonna want to get married. So, why I'm gonna, if I
419 go to uni now, that's a new life for me. But if I DON'T leave and my mum says 'oh you
420 can go uni' that just means, its just like saying well, in a couple of years she's gonna want
421 me to get married and then I'm gonna leave ANYWAY. So its like, and I DON'T wanna
422 get married so, you know . I'm kind of just drawing out what's really gonna happen. I am
423 gonna eventually leave my family one day because I want to live my life, not the way they
424 want it. .. That's how its going to be. .. I know eventually I will leave one day. And that's
425 why I wanted to go, I'd rather have gone when . even though I'm happy that my mum
426 says she wants me to go to uni I'm not, because it means that . I then do 4 years of uni
427 and I KNOW when I come out of uni my mum will want me to get married. So I might as
428 well just leave now. .. If you get what I'm saying.

429 0:29:59 N: Mm.

430 R: It would be easier to get myself sorted now than later. ..

431 N: So, ... what's your sense of .. do you feel that you belong in your family?

432 R: No. I'm like, I still like, when things got really bad like three years ago I really didn't
433 think of belonging. Like, I know people go to want and kill themselves but I just wanted to
434 run away. Literally just RUN away and . like, not run away like you know how kids run
435 away, but just like, just disappear and it will be a totally new different, more like go to a
436 new country, start all over again, that's what I wanted, I still want that now sometimes.
437 Just to leave. But its only now I feel less of it with uni coming up I am kind of doing that. It
438 will be a new life for me.

439 0:30:39 N: So, the, the, have the last three years been okay?

440 R: No, oh nah. They've been the worst, I've got to say. Worst - of - my - life. But its only,
441 this, this two years, my li, the year like this finished college, like the BEST year. My
442 college friends whoa, my college was wicked. Honestly I felt SO good. I didn't like, even
443 though my home life wasn't part of it, it was just, .. it was really different. I really, that's
444 why I gotta say I really miss my friends now.

445 0:31:14 N: So, your, your friends is where, with your friends is where you belong-

446 R: Yeah.

447 N: more than-

448 R: [overlapping] I know who I am there.

449 N: More than with your family-

450 R: Yeah, I know who I am, I know what I'm doing, they KNOW me. .

451 N: And these friends are from where?

452 R: From secondary school, from like voluntary work, from college, from my other college.
 453 N: And what are their backgrounds?
 454 R: Ahh they're mixed. There's quite a few. There's like obviously I. And she was my, one
 455 of my first closest, closest best friends that I told everything to when I was in Year 10.
 456 Then there was T and that she was from my, out of the group of eight of us, she was my
 457 closest friend. Still is. Then there was J, that, even though I did know her, I didn't really
 458 get to know her, I gotta say, 'til this year. Actually CLOSELY know her. With a friend you
 459 can still call someone best friend but you never know what you mean until you get there.
 460 N: So T's Bangladeshi-
 461 R: [overlapping] –deshi, J's black, but has white parents, I is obviously white. Erm I've
 462 got, there's a guy from my first college at Leyton, he's M, he is called M and he's a
 463 Muslim black boy. Erm, there's E who's Indian and . there's a few college friends and
 464 they're all, three of them are black . and they're yeah, they're quite, and there's two other
 465 Bengali girls from my school. But the things I'm always, oh and there's D who's mixed
 466 race, Her mum's white and her real dad's black but her stepdad who's she's always
 467 known, is Asian. So there's .. quite a big mix and E and S. S is an Asian guy, a Bengali
 468 guy, a Bangladeshi guy, E's a black guy. Yeah, they're my closest friends.
 469 0:32:57 N: So it's a very, very mixed group.
 470 R: Yeah, its very mixed, I've always had it, I haven't intentionally gone out you know . but
 471 its always been like that. ...
 472 N: And, and you're comfortable with that?
 473 R: Yeah, I prefer it like that. ...
 474 0:33:14 N: Tell me where religion, if at all, how religion fits into your life. And what it
 475 means to you, or not.
 476 R: Erm, when people bring up religion, its not that I don't believe in it, its just that I haven't
 477 . nothing like . cos . erm, life hasn't been going, not my, totally my way but its not brought
 478 me any happiness I think well .. you know, how's God been there. But then cos I've been
 479 brought up, this, this what's so difficult about it, like, I don't follow my religion, I really
 480 don't. I used to. When I was, when things were going right for me when I was about 12, I
 481 used to be a practising Muslim I was like, perfect. I'd pray and everything, but now, cos
 482 I've been brought up being a Muslim, there's things that I'll always be like, there's a God
 483 and there's heaven and hell. There's stuff like that that I'll believe. . But then . well I say
 484 that, I don't believe it as well. Its so difficult, cos I don't wanna say well there's not a God
 485 and whatnot cos I still, in my head, I, when I'm, exact when I'm saying that I'm not, oh my
 486 God, God's actually listening to me. I mean, I will get punished for that. So it's a two way
 487 thing, there's like, I do believe it and I don't. And .. erm when people do say . erm .. are
 488 you a Muslim I'll say yes, but in my head I'm saying no. But that's only if . if an Asian
 489 person says that. If an Asian person says are you Muslim, 'yeah, of course I am', you

490 know, we were brought up like that. If an, if a person who's not Bengali .. says that or .
 491 yeah if the person's not Bengali I'll be like, mmm, 'I say I am but I'm really not'. That's the
 492 answer I always give. But no, I don't think I am. I say I am because when it, on the form
 493 where it says 'are you Muslim' right, yeah I am because . we were brought up like that ..
 494 its like the colour of my skin. . I'm brown I'm brown. I'm Asian I'm Asian. Its like that. But it
 495 doesn't have a big part. .

496 0:35:08 N: And, are your parents very religious?
 497 R: My dad's really religious. . My mum isn't. . But my mum . ISN'T but instils it so much I
 498 don't understand why. So its really, like, confusing. I understand why she takes us, like
 499 we have Arabic classes, all parents do that. Its just like part of our culture, you learn the
 500 Qu'ran. Everyone does that but .. erm she has tried to get us to pray. Like we USED to ..
 501 but she's, she's never done it. Like my friend, you would, you wouldn't know that she
 502 prayed, just because of the way, obviously . she dresses like me, like more in the
 503 westernised style, so when I hear that she prayed 5 times a day I was like 'wow' I would
 504 have never guessed that. And I was like, 'how comes', she goes ' oh I just the way we've
 505 been brought up', and her mum, and her mum's religious. My mum's not religious so its
 506 hard to understand why she wants US to be religious.

507 0:36:00 N: How do you know if she not religious?
 508 R: She doesn't pray. I REALLY don't think she's read the Qu'ran . erm .. yeah . just purely
 509 from that I suppose.

510 N: Have you ever discussed it with her?
 511 R: I remember discussing it once but I'm, not me personally, but hearing about it, its like I
 512 was there in the room. And I know that .. erm . she says something like, the reason
 513 SHE'S not religious is cos that . its . this is kind of still the same now but not as bad, but
 514 the boys of Asian families they, like, they seem so much more superior than women. So
 515 THEY got their reading and writing classes and everything, she never. So its like, she got
 516 taught at home whilst her brothers got taught in a school. So . she's like, she's, she's
 517 always said that's why she's never read but she's always wanted, wanted all of us to
 518 read. And she said, yeah that's mainly on her mum the way her mum brought her up. ..
 519 But yeah, that's why, that's what I've heard. . She never really discussed it. I remember
 520 when she wanted us [xxx] I, we asked her once, 'why don't YOU pray then?' . And, she
 521 just got really angry but never said anything. ..

522 0:37:15 N: So, .. you, you'll, you'll dress appropriately and you'll say that you're religious-
 523 R: Mm.
 524 N: in order to .
 525 R: Just so people don't talk about me really.
 526 N: Ok. So to have an appearance-
 527 R: Yeah.

528 N: of belonging to-

529 R: To that Asian community.

530 N: Ok.

531 R: To me I don't feel I belong there, but I do it just because . its like . you know when

532 people just talk about you, whilst you don't want people talking about you. But its just,

533 yeah ...

534 0:37:55 N: Wh, wh, what, where does music fit into your life? What sort of music do you

535 listen to?

536 R: A lot, quite a range as well. I listen to pop, R&B, hip hop . at the moment I really like

537 indie music. That is my favourite at the moment. Erm since I got into college, they listen

538 to erm, erm bashment and soca and that's more carnival type as well. And its more, you

539 wouldn't hear, like a couple of years ago you would never know was bashment or soca

540 was, and I wouldn't know what it was but it's like, it's a lot erm a lot of black people sing it.

541 You would, I think I know there's one white girl which I found out the other day, E told me,

542 that did a bashment tune, I was like 'wow, that's really weird' its like . erm I don't know

543 how it is, its like er . saying, country music was all white people, its like a black man doing

544 country music, its like that. That's what soca and bashment is.

545 0:38:52 N: But your favourite you say is Indian?

546 R: Ah, indie.

547 N: Oh, INDIE-

548 R: Yeah, yeah.

549 N: I thought you-

550 R: [overlapping] I hate-

551 N: [overlapping]said Indian.

552 R: Oh God I hate Indian music, I hate it, I hate it, I hate it. [laugh] I don't know why.

553 [laugh] I hate it. It annoys me SO much.

554 N: Why?

555 R: I don't know, I ha, I never, just, er, its kind of come from childhood I've just never liked

556 it cos I've ALWAYS wanted to be different, so, all the Bengali girls liked Indian music, I

557 wanted to be the opposite. And then, even now, even if I try to like it, oh it really annoys

558 me and they're so long as well. But nah, I don't know why-

559 N: What about Indian films then?

560 R: Nope. They're too long.

561 N: You don't watch them?

562 R: No, not at all. They're all the same, well actually, up until recently they were all the

563 same. Its either which guy or which girl and it's a poor man or poor girl, its makes me

564 [laugh] laugh. [Laughter] That's what happens. And then they live happily ever after cos

565 the family expects them.

566 0:39:47 N: Ok. . Erm so . from everything you've said it sounds very much that you're
567

568 R: I still don't feel that I belong somewhere, I think that when I find out I belong
569 somewhere is when I have a family.

570 N: You DON'T feel you belong anywhere?

571 R: Mm hm. And I honestly think that when I have a family that is where . I know I'll have a
572 part in life.

573 N: So what, what does the WORD 'belonging' mean to you then?

574 R: Erm .

575 N: Or, or FEEL to you-

576 R: [overlapping] Yeah, feel that you have a place in life. Not a life, but where you are like,
577 people . erm, its like a doctor, he, he, you know, he needs to be in a hospital, that what
578 he's there for. Its weird, I don't feel like that, even if erm . I don't know, its weird cos I
579 don't, I really don't feel I belong anywhere.

580 N: So you don't feel that you-

581 R: I think I miss that I, really, really I'm just a person that's doing what they're doing.

582 N: But do you have a sense of belonging in your community of friends?

583 R: Yeah, that's, yeah, with my friends I know where I am.

584 N: So what is that belonging then?

585 R: That feels good because I know people know me, they know who I am, they know my
586 beliefs, they know my values. Whereas, the reason I don't belong in the Asian community
587 cos they don't feel the same way. Like even, obviously in a group of friends you don't feel
588 all the same way, you don't THINK the same, but its just that . they take me for who I am.
589 There's no cover up. There's no fake person. I speak English I don't need to speak
590 Bengali, I don't . its like, even in my group of Asian friends I do sometimes feel out of
591 place.

592 N: You feel out of place?

593 R: Sometimes I do yeah. There's three, four of us and with them I feel like I belong, you
594 know, I'm, I'm part of that, I've reason to be part of that four. In a bigger community, like
595 there's a, if you add a couple more of us, even though we're close, . part of it I wouldn't
596 know where I am. I would not know, I'd be like 'oh what am I doing here?', you know.

597 0:41:50 N: So the other three in your group of four-

598 R: Yeah.

599 N: are they're, do they have the same sort of feelings and ideas as you do?

600 R: No, no. One of them does. . And two of them don't. Its like two westernised people,
601 two more Asian people but we just kinda, I don't know how we got together but its
602 through secondary school. Like, two are more traditional and me and T are more relaxed

603 about our religion. Well, I'm the only one more relaxed about religion, they don't know
604 how I feel about religion or whatnot. But yeah, . its-

605 N: [overlapping] But you don't really talk to them about it, you don't let on?

606 R: Not religion. Not at all religion. About family life and Asian community I let on, but not
607 religion. I don't know why but religion is a BIG BIG thing that, they would be like, 'what,
608 what do you mean?'. I could never. . To a normal NON Asian person I'd be like, 'yeah, I
609 don't really', you know.

610 N: Mmm.

611 R: But not to, not to them. Even though-

612 N: [overlapping] Its too important to-

613 R: Yeah, its too important to them-

614 N: to Bangladeshi-

615 R: Yeah.

616 N: to other Muslims?

617 R: Yeah it REALLY, really is.

618 N: Mmhm.

619 R: And I might be, I am really close to them but I still couldn't let on. It would be like, I
620 don't know they REALLY probably would think I'm an alien or something, it would be so .
621 they would be like 'wow, how can you think that?'.
622 0:43:01 N: So, thinking about . y, yo, your life in Tower Hamlets-

623 R: Mm.

624 N: erm, how do you feel it all works, because obviously, I mean Tower Hamlets has got-

625 R: Yeah.

626 N: Britain's biggest Bangladeshi community.

627 R: Yeah. I still think, when I, like YOU said, when you think, that if I was to move like to
628 what Australia, I would still think that Tower Hamlets was my home. Because its Tower
629 Hamlets, it's the East End but not as . When I, when people think of Tower Hamlets they
630 think of all Asian people but I don't see it like that. I just see it as the place that I grew up,
631 the place that I made friends. My friends are still there. But, . its cos, I don't think of it as
632 just like, when I go past it everyday I'm like 'oh my God there's so many Asian people
633 here' but when I'm . -

634 N: Is your estate mostly Asian?

635 R: Yeah. It was, no, when we moved, that's why I didn't feel it was more Asian people,
636 when I moved into the house I'm living in now the WHOLE row had white and black
637 people in it. There was not ONE Asian family. We were the first Asian family. As time
638 went on, the WHOLE row, the whole both rows are all Asian. I HATE it. I used to LOVE it
639 when there were, you know, it was a mix. I think there's, the black family that moved in
640 like when we were there and we're still friends with them, that's it. Oh and there's a white

641 family, just a couple of doors down. Them two families, and the rest are Asian. I don't
642 know HOW it happened but the rest are Asian.

643 N: How many houses are we talking about?

644 R: Ermm

645 N: Roughly.

646 R: Thirteen? There's like, there's half on my side. The odds are on my side, the evens on
647 the other side. . Yeah. .

648 N: Ok.

649 R: So that's thirteen.

650 N: So its VASTLY-

651 R: And that's, that's since two, 19, 1998. I moved there in '98.

652 N: Ok, Eight years ago.

653 R: Eight years, . they're all Asian families except two.

654 N: And the rest of the estate is virtually-

655 R: Asian.

656 N: Asian.

657 R: I actually saw, this is gonna sound really rude, but I actually saw a black person there
658 and I really didn't, I was like, 'oh my God'. We haven't had a black person there, on the
659 estate. We probably did but I haven't . like . seen them and I was like really shocked. I
660 was like 'wow'. But yeah, really is an Asian area.

661 N: And .. Being on your estate, does that feel at home to you?

662 0:45:14 R: Nohh. God no. .. Its my home but I don't see it like, as I'm going past there are
663 a whole load of Asian boys, but its like, and there's the one white boy who hangs round
664 with them and its like oohh. I HATE coming past this road. .. I think erm, you know my
665 first flat, that's where I felt, if I look back now, is my home because there was more mixed
666 people. Like D who is my best friend now lived there but like, we played together and
667 whatnot. Then there was a black family on the top floor. And that's who I used to hang
668 around with. That's how I [xxx], always. I don't know why but I've always think that I've
669 never fitted in. I never used to play with the Asian kids.

670 N: You didn't when you were young?

671 R: No, not really. There was the two black families. We didn't have many white people
672 around that area. So it was mainly the two black families that I played with. ..

673 N: And now as a teenager, erm, well, nearly finishing with teenage-

674 R: Yeah.

675 N: erm, so very much getting into adulthood-

676 R: Yeah.

677 N: now, how .. where, I don't even know how to ask the question really. Trying to get my
678 head round it because, you know I'm . hearing, obviously, very new things-

679 R: Yeah.
680 N: that I didn't know. Erm .. er I'm just trying to think how to ask a question about what
681 would make home for you, or a sense of belonging. So, you say Tower Hamlets is home-
682 R: Mm but it isn't as well. Its really comp, its just really confusing its cos I've always lived
683 in Tower Hamlets that I see it as home. But the place that I live in, the house that I live in I
684 don't like, you know. I don't know. And because I don't feel so close with my family . like if
685 I felt close with ALL my family then know it would be home but, I still dread going to my
686 house, knowing that my mum and dad, though not really my dad but my mum's gonna be
687 there. But I like the fact that my nephew and my older brother and sisters' gonna be
688 there. So its so mixed and I think . when I have my family, that is when I feel that I belong.
689 . And that, I don't know how to explain it but I'm, I still think east London as, I still wanna
690 live in east London, when I'm older and whatnot but its still different. Its-
691 0:47:32 N: So east London is home-
692 R: Yeah.
693 N: You wouldn't want to leave east London?
694 R: Hmhm.
695 N: So what do you th-
696 R: But I wouldn't wanna live in an Asian area.
697 N: You wouldn't want to?
698 R: No.
699 N: So what, what is it about east London then that, that is ho, or Tower Hamlets, east
700 London whichever, that is home, but-
701 R: I don't think there's anything particular about it, its just that I've always lived here. I've
702 not known anything different.
703 N: Ok.
704 R: That's probably-
705 N: But you're very clear that you wouldn't want to live in an Asian area or predominantly
706 Asian area-
707 R: Yeah.
708 N: you'd want to live in a mixed area?
709 R: Yeah.
710 N: So, it sort of sounds more and more that what feels comfortable to you, what is home
711 to you is a mix of people-
712 R: Yeah.
713 N: which I know, because I know the school, you very much had at secondary school-
714 R: Yeah.
715 N: I don't think you had that at primary school-
716 R: No.

717 N: it was-
718 R: But-
719 N: Bangladeshi wasn't it, virtually all?
720 R: But then in primary school I used to hang around with the white kids.
721 N: Did you?
722 R: Yeah.
723 N: Though there were very few of them.
724 R: Yeah. And literally I was the only Asian, there was SM, obviously you know, O, W, K, I
725 could name you all the white kids in my class but I could never name all the Asian kids.
726 N: Oh so there were quite a few white children?
727 R: There was-
728 N: Oh ok.
729 R: cos there were two classes. In my class we had quite like, there were about five white
730 kids and I used to be, I used to hang around with them. There was me, the two boys, two
731 girls and . three others from the other class. .. Yeah, I used to hang around with the white
732 kids.
733 0:49:03 N: Have your parents ever . I'm mean you've talked about NOT really having
734 much to do with your parents-
735 R: Mm.
736 N: not talking to your mum for three years but, . they've obviously wanted to influence you
737 into becoming a good Muslim
738 R: Yeah.
739 N: What other sort of, did, have they ever tried to influence who you're with or what you
740 do with your life?
741 R: Yeah, what I do with my life. Erm, I don't know how I managed to persuade my mum to
742 let me do sports. . Then my mum's always been a lot more relaxed about that sort of
743 thing compared to other Asian parents. That's what I find so weird about my mum. .. I
744 don't know what happened, but yeah, she let me still do my sports.
745 N: So she seems to be quite relaxed in some ways-
746 R: Yeah.
747 N: but is then-
748 R: But then when it comes to like me, when I got into a club, I got picked, I got scouted
749 when I was fif, fifteen, and this was to play for a women's team.
750 N: In which sport?
751 R: In netball.
752 N: In netball.
753 R: And when I told my mum that, once it got, she didn't mind me playing netball but she
754 didn't want me playing for a team. .. So I was like, I was really baffled. . And then it was,

755 and then I told her I wanted to be a professional netballer . and she was like, 'oh what
 756 else do you want to be?', and I was like 'oh right, PE teacher', and she said, 'oh well, I
 757 would prefer you to be a PE teacher'. And that's why I probably stopped playing, I didn't
 758 play for that team .. I didn't play for them very long, I played for about a month and that
 759 was it. ... So my mum's just, its weird, my mum's really confusing, and that's how I feel, I
 760 feel really, like, baffled and like I'm all over the place. .

761 0:50:43 N: So, at the same time as erm, in a way not . well you said you haven't spoken
 762 to her for three years-

763 R: Mm.

764 N: but, you do still go with what she says?

765 R: Yeah, I don't know why. .. Its like fear that's instilled in me from when I was young.
 766 That's, I'll always, I don't know why but what my mums says is final. I've always lived like
 767 that. That's a lot, that's, it's the same for a lot of Asian girls. . They do it out of fear, not
 768 because they want to. ...

769 N: So how does that make you feel?

770 R: That's why I don't feel like I belong. I don't wanna be one of those girls that just follow
 771 what their parents say. . I don't like, I HATE it, I don't, you know, that, that's why, erm its
 772 not a regret but I would REALLY do wish that I could speak Bengali so I could tell my
 773 mum how I feel. Not that it would make any difference, my sisters have tried it so many
 774 times. But still, I want her to know. I'm not saying that my mum doesn't care about it but I
 775 know cos she'll be thinking about it, but she won't just, she just won't DO anything about
 776 it.

777 N: Sorry, do anything about?

778 R: Like if we said like, if we told her how we feel-

779 N: Mmhmm.

780 R: she wouldn't change. She wouldn't change it. She wouldn't change the way of life or
 781 treat us any differently. So obviously my mum's thinks she's doing what she be, what she
 782 knows best. But I think she, I'm not saying . that she ISN'T doing was she knows best, I'm
 783 saying that she's doing it but she doesn't really want to. I think she's doing it because of
 784 the way she's been brought up and about reputation. And, if she's, erm how other people
 785 can perceive her. That's why I think she's doing it. I don't think she's doing it cos she
 786 wants to do it. But I think she's doing it cos of that.

787 0:52:27 N: Mmhmm. ...And so you don't want to .. whilst you don't want to live in that
 788 way-

789 R: [overlapping] way its just-

790 N: [overlapping] you also don't want to-

791 R: [overlapping] yeah-

792 N: go against her?

793 R: Yeah. . Its hard. Its like I don't . I don't, its, it really is fear. Like even when I'm coming
794 home and its not even late its about half nine but to my mum its late, I am still scared to
795 put the key in the front door, open it and like, cos . our front door's, say, as I get in the
796 front door . as you look across our hallway's really short. But on the right hand side
797 there's the living room door. But as I walk in on the right hand side there's the, so there's
798 the kitchen, the stairs and the living room and they're all pretty close together so my mum
799 could be going in the kitchen or into the room so she can, you know, I can easily pass her
800 on the corridor, on the passageway so its really like 'oh', that's what I'm worried about.
801 0:53:20 N: So what would happen-
802 R: She would just-
803 N: when you come in?
804 R: She, wou, er it, its not even my mum or that she'd say anything, it's the way she looks.
805 The look of my mum is like 'oh my days', it is scary. And I will not wanna look at her. And
806 if I've come home really late, say if I came home, what, it, it was my friend's mendhi and I
807 came home about eleven, eleven thirty. And she was just, she was saying 'oh where
808 were you, rer rer, and I was like, I don't talk to her so it was like 'what do I SAY to you?'
809 You know, even if I, if I say something, the thing with my mum, if I say something I anger
810 her, if I DON'T say something I still anger her. So, what do you do? It really, its so
811 difficult. . So I do stuff . out of fear but to make sure that I don't, you know, get into trouble
812 or anything. I'd rather really would not rather talk to her. There was a time when I, after I
813 turned 16 I really didn't understand why mum stopped talking to me. .
814 0:54:13 N: So she stopped talking to you?
815 R: Yeah.
816 N: And you don't know why?
817 R: I do, I know its cos obviously T left home and my mum thinks I had something to do
818 with it. That's what I'm guessing. That's, and that's, that's all I can look, guess. I don't
819 know why.
820 N: So you're MUM stopped talking to you, it was a teenage thing of yours-
821 R: [overlapping] Nohh.
822 N: that you said 'I'm not talking to you any more'?
823 R: Nohh, my mum's ALWAYS done that. We're used to it. I just didn't . see it happening
824 to me. It happened to my sister before.
825 N: So for three years she hasn't spoken to you.
826 R: Hmhm.
827 N: Or only maybe to-
828 R: Shout at me or, but not like spoken, spoken. . Not like that. . If she wants something
829 like say . like when she needed my passport to get my ticket, she asked my sister for it.
830 Like, 'has she given her passport' and I'm like, 'yeah'. Well, obviously my sister goes,

- 831 'yeah'. ... Or if I need something from my mum, so say like, with the loan forms, you need
 832 all that erm inland revenue stuff.
- 833 N: Mhmm.
- 834 R: I'll have to call my sister up, get her to call my mum up, you know.
- 835 N: So you wouldn't do that directly with your mum?
- 836 R: No, no. .
- 837 N: You wouldn't because you couldn't because of language or because you just can't
 838 bring yourself to talk to her?
- 839 R: No just, because even if I erm .. er from the experience that we've had, when we've
 840 spoken to my mum, and say we're not speaking to her, she really will tell you to fuck off.
 841 She REALLY would she'd tell you to fuck off.
- 842 N: In English?
- 843 R: Nah. In Bengali-
- 844 N: Oh I see-
- 845 R: But I don't know how to say it in Bengali. [laughter] That is, she REALLY would just
 846 say it like that. Or she just wouldn't look at you. Like I remember . erm when my nan was
 847 living with us, she erm, I don't remember what happened but . I asked her for something
 848 personally but my nan asked her for something but my mum knew it was for me but she
 849 wouldn't say a word. She just would, she just sat in silence so how, you know, I don't
 850 know if she's giving it me or not or . its like, I don't know, she just wouldn't say anything,
 851 she'll just sit in silence. But I have, there have been experiences when I've said, I was
 852 talking to her but I wasn't, so its like you know with those teenage rebellion things. I think
 853 I was and then she just didn't say anything to me. She just stood there. So you never
 854 know where you are with my mum. ...
- 855 0:56:22 N: Mmmm, erm .. have things like erm . ways of communicating like with having
 856 mobiles now. I don't know if you'd remember a time when there WEREN'T mobiles but
 857 presumably you do-
- 858 R: Yeah.
- 859 N: but you would have been much younger. Have things like having a mobile, having the
 860 int, being able to use the internet, have THEY changed anything, have they meant, not
 861 changed necessarily, but have they MEANT anything in terms of how you communicate,
 862 in how you feel you belong, does it make any DIFFERENCE?
- 863 R: Internet does. Cos, even though I don't see, I do see my friends but you know when
 864 you just don't see them, when you don't have time to go in depth about what's going on,
 865 email's so good. I can just talk with my friends. I like just let everything out. And its like
 866 you're still in touch, you're still close, you feel like close with your friends. It's a lot easier.
 867 Mobile phones, yeah they're fine. Just like , I text, obviously I text my friends every week,
 868 but it doesn't, you know, I st, email is the best. .. Email you can just go on and on and,

869 you know, there'd be so much that you can fill up than in a text. Phone's fine but its like
870 but, I don't know, I'm not really a phones person I, I do call people but I just have to talk to
871 you face to face. I prefer it that way.

872 N: Mmhm. . Or by email.

873 R: Yeah, I do like my email.

874 0:57:462 N: Ok. Erm .. I wanna get back to the idea of what Tower Hamlets means to you
875 cos obviously, . as you say, it's the only place you've ever lived,

876 R: Mm.

877 N: erm, . and you've talked very clearly and eloquently about the mix of friends that you
878 enjoy and that you DON'T particularly like living in a erm predominantly Asian area. So
879 that, sort of the, wanting a mix of people in your life is, clearly comes out as a, very
880 important to you. . Wh, what does Tower Hamlets mean to you, where do you go, what
881 have you done in Tower Hamlets, what, what does it hold for you? Cos you say you'd
882 certainly want to stay in east London-

883 R: Yeah.

884 N: What does it mean to you?

885 R: Erm well I grew up here. I, you know, me and my closest friends, went primary school,
886 secondary school, erm, not really college and whatnot but er-

887 N: They were out of Tower Hamlets?

888 R: Yeah. But its just, I think, why it means so much is cos of my secondary school. Cos of
889 Morpeth. That's when life really did start and you learned a lot and, I made my friends
890 there and, it was just, it was cos . school became like a refuge to get away from home.
891 So, like, for every time people mention Tower Hamlets that is the one thing I think of is
892 Morpeth. I don't think about my home but I do think of Morpeth. I don't know why, its just .
893 It's a big, it still IS a big part of my life. And even though I've left a few years ago I'm still,
894 I'm always there, every week, and . that's if I'm, its, yeah, I say Tower Hamlets and I'll say
895 Morpeth as well.

896 0:59:36 N: So when, when you think of Tower Hamlets you think Morpeth?

897 R: Morpeth, yeah.

898 N: But you've done other things as well-

899 R: Yeah.

900 N: haven't you? What else have you-

901 R: [overlapping] I've done like voluntary work and that's Summer Uni. And that's all right.
902 Its just-

903 N: Also in Tower Hamlets?

904 R: Yeah. All in Tower Hamlets. I've done . yeah, erm . my netball was based here cos I
905 played for Tower Hamlets team, I've coached the Tower Hamlets netball team as well. .
906 Er .

907 N: What a schoolgirl team?

908 R: Yeah.

909 N: Mmhmm.

910 R: Erm I worked for the Tower Hamlets Sports Development. So . erm Tower Hamlets
911 does mean a lot to me, but I just won't know exactly what, not 'til, I'm a lot older.

912 N: Why do you think you'll know when you're a lot older?

913 R: Because things are, I don't know but things are just all confused and whatnot and I
914 don't know where my home is, well I DO know where my home is, like, but when people
915 see themselves as home, I just see it as a HOUSE. I don't see it as a home, but I call it
916 my home. That's what its known as.

917 N: So what does home mean to you?

918 R: I don't know yet. .. But if I was, recently I'd say my old college is my home, like B6, ..
919 but I wouldn't say my home was my home. I'd say, obviously you'd call it your home but .
920 at the moment college . education has been like a home to me.

921 N: Mmhmm.

922 R: But no, don't know yet.

923 1:01:00 N: You can't know what it might have been like anywhere else because you
924 haven't lived anywhere else-

925 R: Yeah.

926 N: but east London is in fact very DIFFERENT from even other parts of London, -

927 R: Yeah.

928 N: let alone other parts of this COUNTRY-

929 R: Yeah.

930 N: in that there are few other places that . are as mixed . erm in terms of different
931 nationalities.

932 R: Yeah.

933 N: Erm .. and obviously you've talked about how much you enjoy having a mix of friends,
934 but . have you ever . thought about erm . what that means in terms of politics, in terms of
935 racism, has racism ever affected you?

936 1:01:50 R: I know when the 9/11 attacks happened being Asian that scared me. .
937 Because, obviously people think you got, it did because when we, we was at the park
938 once, you know Meathy Garden right next to Morpeth, well we was there, just a group of,
939 this when I just had my Asians friends, but no, I was hanging out with them for one day.
940 We were at the park and 9/11 had just happened over a week or two ago, and what
941 happened was that these, this white boy came in from school, and he was younger, he
942 was in the year or two younger than us, but these . erm boys from Mor, er from Swanlea
943 came and we knew they were from Swanlea because . they were just like acquaintances
944 of ours, we just knew them from around the area, and they beat this white boy . really,

945 really, really badly and we were like 'oh my God . wh, what, what's happening here', you
946 know we, we were so shocked it was like . it was really hard, its like, what were they
947 doing to this boy and it was like, you know, technically, what the message that obviously
948 Asian people got out was that it should be them beating US up because, for being . for
949 being Muslim. But I think these boys just got the wrong idea and started beating . this
950 white boy up. But I've never actually come across being, like, I never actually come
951 across someone being racist - actually ONCE. I was playing netball and our goalkeeper
952 was a black girl and her name's U. And then somebody goes, the white girl's who's
953 defending me goes, 'ah, speak English'. And I was like, 'WHAT. What are you on about', I
954 was like, 'excuse me?' She was like, 'speak English' I was like, I just thought obviously .
955 playing netball I was taught, not to, you know, you know, fights happen, you just ignore
956 them. But she just really kept digging in and I was like, 'why are you cussing my friend
957 for?', you know. And . that's the only time I've actually felt like, 'oh my God, why's she
958 being racist for'. Other than that I've never actually come across it. . Yeah, I've never
959 actually come across it. . Not si, yeah, nah.

960 1:03:45 N: So in school there wasn't racism?

961 R: Nah. . There . there probably was but not with me. I've never like, no-one's actually
962 ever . 'you're Asian' or, you know, 'you smell' or 'you're a paki' and whatnot. Obviously
963 people go, people always call Bengali people paki, but that's not really bothered me. I've
964 always heard that but like, I just say like, no, I'm Bangladeshi I'm not a Pakistani'. But
965 stuff like that's never really bothered me. .. I've seen it happen to people. Like we were on
966 a school trip, not, I wasn't, I went as part of staff to help Morpeth out, and erm, yeah it
967 was, erm, I don't remember the area, yeah it was an all white area . and we had,
968 obviously there were Asian girls, there were white girls and there were black girls. And
969 one of the people came out of their houses, literally came out of their houses and these
970 girls were no more than 15, they were all 15 or below, and the guy goes, 'oh you niggers'
971 and he stuck his finger up at them and I was like, 'oh my God', I was like 'woww', I was so
972 shocked, and this guy was a GROWN man. . He was a GROWN man and then this, this
973 lady came out to join him and I was like, 'what' and the girls didn't hear. Me . and two
974 other teachers we were there, and we, I didn't hear it but the one of the teachers did and
975 we just kept walking so the girls wouldn't notice. But one of the younger girls heard it and
976 managed to pass it on to the older girls, and obviously they wanted to have a fight but
977 obviously we kept them moving along but I didn't realise it was like that. .. I really didn't
978 realise it, you know. People so, you know, they could, people DO that. Its really weird.
979 I've heard like when I was on the buses, yeah, when I was on the bus once someone go,
980 to another person 'ah, go back to your country you foreigner'. . I've heard that. ... But no,
981 not-

982 1:05:30 N: So certainly, not, there, there, hasn't been anything like that that has affected
983 your feelings about-

984 R: Nah.

985 N: whether . that that this area is your home, that this is where you belong?

986 R: No way. ... No, not at all.

987 N: Ok. .. Do you feel that erm .. your sense of belonging has CHANGED at all . over time.

988 R: When I was younger, yeah, I could actually say 'oh yeah, I'm Asian, I'm Bengali rer rer
989 rer rer rer'. I could SAY that. And, I don't know why but I could probably I would have felt
990 it back then. But now, I don't know. Like, if someone says . like . if . when I was what, I
991 don't know how old I was then, but a bit more than four or five, about seven, I could erm .
992 I suppose I'd be more than ha, comfortable playing with the what er Asian kids. I'd be
993 MORE than, if, if I didn't know them. NOW if I was meant to go with Asians with a group
994 of Asians that I didn't know I'd feel SO out of place. And not because of anything they
995 said cos obviously, you know, no-one's gonna know how you are outside but, in my head
996 I'd feel REALLY out of place. But if I'm with Asian peo, if I'm with a group of Asian people
997 that I KNOW, then I'm, yeah, I'm fine. But with, if I'm not with them, then I'm like, if I don't
998 KNOW them I'm like, 'oh, feeling a bit weird'. I feel that people know who I am, like, that I,
999 that they're gonna judge me for hanging around with like non Asian people, and they're
1000 like 'oh you don't respect your religion' or whatnot and I'm like, but its, its really different .
1001 its really con, its like it confuses ME. I really never know if I'm coming or going.

1002 1:07:12 N: So is there any sense when you're with your white friends or your black
1003 friends that . you feel you DON'T belong, is there any sense of NOT belonging with
1004 them?

1005 R: NOHH, there isn't noh.

1006 N: There isn't?

1007 R: Nah.

1008 N: so it only with your Asian, with Asian people-

1009 R: Yeah.

1010 N: or even your Asian friends-

1011 R: [overlapping] Its cos, cos when I'm with the Asian friends . its not that, its not even
1012 that, its not that they're only Asians but also Muslim . And religion plays a BIG, BIG part
1013 of their life. And it really doesn't for me. Like a lot of people, my friends who aren't Asian,
1014 [xxx] Asian, they think, they don't, they don't like openly discuss that they're erm, they're
1015 Christian or they're Hindu or whatnot. It doesn't, you know, it never comes into it, but
1016 when it comes to being Asian, religion comes straight into it.

1017 N: So religion actually-

1018 R: Is more religion, not being Asian, its religion. Its like-

1019 N: Ok so its religion that is the CORE-

- 1020 R: [overlapping] Yeah.
- 1021 N: of whether you belong or not?
- 1022 R: Yeah. ...
- 1023 N: So when you're with people who-
- 1024 R: When I'm with my Asian friends I feel a lot more restricted, you can't drink, you can't
- 1025 do this, you can't do that, you know. When I'm with my non Asian friends. . its not that
- 1026 their religion ALLOWS it but its just that relig, you know, they can DO what they want.
- 1027 They don't think about religion. Whereas with a Bengali, with an Asian person did it and
- 1028 they're Muslim they'd be like, 'oh, can I do this, is this right, is this wrong'.
- 1029 N: So where you feel that you don't really BELONG with other Asians, it's the religion that
- 1030 is-
- 1031 R: Yeah.
- 1032 N: putting that block. So if there were other Asians who felt similarly to you in terms of
- 1033 religion you'd probably feel more comfortable-
- 1034 R: [overlapping] I'd probably feel more comfortable.
- 1035 N: Ok.
- 1036 R: My friends, the four, like the, the four of us girls when, like, before, religion was a big
- 1037 thing but it wasn't, so that, it was easy to get along, but NOW, religion's, as they grow
- 1038 older, they're worried about their family reputation and everything and I'm like, and then
- 1039 they're like, 'oh our religion won't allow this' and whatnot and its like, its really weird. Its
- 1040 like, and then THAT'S the only reason, yeah religion is a BIG deciding factor, its REALLY
- 1041 hard.
- 1042 1:09:13 N: And reputa, family reputation-
- 1043 R: YEAH, I don't-
- 1044 N: family honour.
- 1045 R: I underst, I don't . I DO understand why it bothers people but, I DON'T. I just think .
- 1046 because some people put their reputation ahead of their family. . [xxx xxx] you know, like
- 1047 a family kil, er family honour killings.. And that's like, you know, how can you DO that, just
- 1048 cos of what people gonna think of you. People gonna think WORSE of you because you .
- 1049 killed a member or your family just, you know, so, yeah religion.
- 1050 N: Is there any other religion that you've . come across that you're aware of that has the
- 1051 same effect on other people?
- 1052 R: Christianity. My friends are, the way they've been brought up, my college friends,
- 1053 mainly black, and erm the way they've been, one of them, one of them been brought up,
- 1054 and he's a, he's not a like, he never outwardly says 'I'm a proper Christian' or whatnot,
- 1055 and, the's, there's the subject of erm gay people came up. And near enough all of them
- 1056 said they would not, you know, they do not like it, you know, they'd rather it never
- 1057 happened and whatnot and I'm like, 'but why' and this one guy goes, because its his

1058 religion, I'm like, 'what do you mean?'. And he's like, you know, 'its not right. God made
 1059 Adam and Eve man and, you know, man and woman it doesn't just doesn't add up" and
 1060 I'm like, 'but if they're happy, then they're happy, you know, we can't do nothing about
 1061 that', and he's like . then I asked him [xxx] 'what would you do if you find that your son or
 1062 daughter . was gay?' They all of them said, near enough all of them said they would beat
 1063 them. And I'm like, 'is that how you've been b', and they're like, yeah, that's EXACTLY
 1064 how they've been brought up. . That's EXACTLY how and I was like, 'but why?', and
 1065 they're like, 'its just not, its not in the bible'. So its really like, I'm like, 'all right then. I'd get,
 1066 you know, I can't say I'd get what you mean cos I REALLY don't, I don't understand why
 1067 its such a big . issue to you because, this is the way I see it. When erm .. you know how
 1068 they see two gay people, as weird, gay people probably see us straight people as weird.
 1069 Its you know, its, its exactly the same its just I'm, there's probably a country that we don't
 1070 even KNOW about that, that there's, you know, everyone's, the majority of people are
 1071 gay and they have the odd straight people, 'oh why are you straight for, you're, you're a
 1072 bit weird'. That's what I honestly think that there is a country out there, and that only got,
 1073 that only got me thinking the other day, cos we, the, the subject of homosexuality
 1074 ALWAYS comes up, I don't know why, it always comes up. Cos we're trying to change
 1075 the boys into, we actually got one boy and he's like, 'yeah', he doesn't mind. He's more
 1076 than happy with it now.

1077 1:11:57 N: More than happy with what?

1078 R: Yeah, the idea of gay people and–

1079 N: Oh I see, so you feel you've converted-

1080 R: Yeah,

1081 N: him?

1082 R: he's, he's

1083 N: Ok.

1084 R: He's really [xxx xxx], I thought 'wow' you know. Thought he was going to beat us or
 1085 something but apparently not. It's really weird. But religion . yeah he was, and I, the thing
 1086 I said to him was like, 'Ah erm C you're like one of those Christian fanatic people', he's
 1087 like, 'I am. I really am'. And I was like, 'all right then'. I didn't know what else to say to him,
 1088 he goes 'yeah I am'. I'm compl, he wouldn't, he, he goes he really wouldn't know what to
 1089 do. . And that's how they'd been brought up.

1090 N: Mmm. So religion can . ensure belonging but can ensure not belonging?

1091 R: Mm.

1092 N: Is there anything else that .. comes anywhere close, do you think, for you?

1093 R: Mmhmm.

1094 N: Other than religion? Do you think that's what beh, is behind your mother's difficulty
 1095 with relating-

- 1096 R: [overlapping] Culture,
 1097 N: to you?
 1098 R: Its just culture. It's the way she's been brought up.
 1099 N: When you say culture, is that religion or?
 1100 R: Er part, religion is part of it. Being Asian is part of it. . Erm your parents beliefs and
 1101 whatnot is part of it. But its just the way my mum's been brought up that's the way she is .
 1102 that's what she's trying to do. And religion is part of it because we're meant to be good
 1103 Muslims. Being Asian is part of it cos with being, you know, Bangladeshi.
 1104 N: But in terms of being good Muslims you say that she's not religious herself?
 1105 R: No, I don't think she is.
 1106 N: So there's confusion there-
 1107 R: Yeah.
 1108 N: because she's-
 1109 R: Cos she wants US to be good Muslims-
 1110 N: [overlapping] wants you to be.
 1111 R: and I think if she thinks she can make us good Muslims then she's a good Muslim.
 1112 N: Mmhmm.
 1113 R: Cos apparently that's what you do in our religion. You know, you get credit for making
 1114 someone else, kinda, a better person. But then it doesn't work if you're not one yourself.
 1115 You've gotta change yourself first before you go and try and change someone else.
 1116 That's why I don't think its worked with my mum. Cos she's not one herself. If my DAD
 1117 tried it on I, I'm more than sure that one of us, you know, would be, a good Muslim and
 1118 whatnot, but its cos my mum's not doing it so we're, we're, we're baffled on, why are WE
 1119 gonna do if YOU don't do it?
 1120 N: So its not just you its your siblings as well?
 1121 R: Yeah. My two of my older sisters they like understand. They're like, 'mmm, why do we
 1122 do it'. Like my brother's NEVER been religious. My oldest brother. He's just . he's so
 1123 different that its unbelievable. My mum's always having a go at him. Cos she thinks that if
 1124 HE was good, like the good Muslim son, then WE'D be . good Muslim daughters but it
 1125 doesn't work out like that. ...
 1126 1:14:37 N: Mmm. . Ok, is there anything else that you ... that has come to your mind
 1127 about any ideas of belonging or sense of home, that we haven't covered that you'd like to
 1128 talk about?
 1129 R: Mm..... No. No I just don't think, I do . its like its really mixed feeling about where I
 1130 belong, if I DO belong. I know that, like, I'm wanted in the world. I KNOW that. But that
 1131 doesn't make you feel that you belong. Its weird, its so weird and that's what I'm so
 1132 confused about and I think, when I go to uni, and I have a fresh start and whatnot, . then,

- 1133 maybe I'll feel like I belong, but, like I said before, when I have my own family, I'll feel that
1134 I'm . that I DO belong somewhere.
- 1135 N: What would you like to belong to?
- 1136 R: My family. Like be a part of the family.
- 1137 N: So that's-
- 1138 R: [overlapping] [xxx xxx] Yeah.
- 1139 N: the most important to you?
- 1140 R: Even though I haven't had a close family, family is still a VERY big imp, you know,
1141 REALLY, really important to me, THAT'S why I started thinking my friends as my family. ..
1142 Cos when like, erm . I honestly think that if one of my friends died and one of my family
1143 members died, I'd probably cry more over my, I'd grieve more for my friend . than my
1144 family. ... Yeah, I would.
- 1145 N: So you want to have that sense of . you, you feel that, that, that the sen , THAT sort of
1146 sense of belonging with your family-
- 1147 R: Yeah.
- 1148 N: is missing-
- 1149 R: Yeah.
- 1150 N: and that's what you'd-
- 1151 R: Yeah.
- 1152 N: like to create?
- 1153 R: That is what I want.
- 1154 N: So place doesn't matter-
- 1155 R: Nah.
- 1156 N: so much to you?
- 1157 R: That's . I still wanna live in the East End, I don't know why. Its just always been .
1158 where I, I've always grown up. I wouldn't live on my estate. . But then I say that but its, its
1159 what I know so its like, why WOULDN'T I wanna live there?
- 1160 N: Well, WHY wouldn't you want to live there?
- 1161 R: Yeah. I don't know. Just cos, mainly Asians, you know.
- 1162 N: So you'd want mixed?
- 1163 R: Yeah, I still want it to be mixed.
- 1164 N: Would you consider marrying outside?
- 1165 R: Yeah, definitely. I would never, I've always, I've always, always said I do not want to
1166 marry an Asian guy. Never-
- 1167 N: [overlapping] [laugh] On principle?
- 1168 R: Never, never, never.
- 1169 N: If you fell in love with one would you?

- 1170 R: Yeah, that's, that's what I, I, I said that this the other day, I said this yesterday, I said,
 1171 as much as I avoid Asian guys I'll probably end up getting married to an Asian guy. I
 1172 KNOW it. I just KNOW it. I've spent my whole years avoiding them and I know it will
 1173 happen. I don't know why but I know it will happen.
- 1174 N: Well is that because you feel that when it actually came to it you wouldn't be able to
 1175 resist your, your family if they were-
- 1176 R: No, not like that-
- 1177 N: arranging a fa, a marriage?-
- 1178 R: [overlapping] I wouldn't have an arranged marriage. . But what I mean is that I don't
 1179 really like Asian, I don't, I've never lo, like, thought, 'oo' you know, 'that Asian guy's cute,
 1180 well I don't mind getting with an Asian guy, but I think, cos I spent so long trying to get
 1181 away from that Asian, that Asian stereotype, getting married to an Asian guy, I'd prob, I'd
 1182 probably end up getting married to an Asian guy, I'd fall in love with an Asian guy.
- 1183 N: Ok.
- 1184 R: Not because my mum would want me to get married-
- 1185 N: right, ok.
- 1186 R: But it would happen like that.
- 1187 N: Yeah.
- 1188 R: I don't know why but I know it will.
- 1189 [Laughter]
- 1190 R: That sort of stuff happens to me.
- 1191 N: Ok. Thank you very much.
- 1192 R: Oh that's good.
- 1193 N: And if it does strike me, or you,-
- 1194 R: Mm.
- 1195 N: that maybe there's something else that comes up, would it be ok if we spoke again?
- 1196 R: Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 1197 N: Great. Thank you VERY much for your time.
- 1198 R: That's cool. How long was that? I was wondering, I kept looking at the red light and
 1199 [machine switched off].

Safiya: Interview Transcription

undertaken on 2 November 2006 by UEL student 0316280

NB: Safiya is a pseudonym
 'Xxxxxx' in the transcript refers to the interviewer

1 0:00:00 *N introduction 0:01:29*

2 0:01:30 S: My name is T, middle name is O and Safiya and I came with my husband in
3 England in 1987 and I came straight to Tower Hamlets because loads of Bangladeshi
4 living in Tower Hamlets and that's why er we came to stay with our relatives for the time
5 being. This is started actually from Tower Hamlets and its been nearly 'bout 19 years erm
6 I've been living in Tower Hamlets. And .. then what .

7 0:02:12 N: Had your father had your erm husband already lived in Tower Hamlets or was
8 he coming for the first time?

9 S: No he came several times but he didn't stayed in er London. That means in England.
10 And when I came with him we came as a visitor. But . we, because I was under 28 and
11 my children under 28 we have got the Commonwealth Law. And [xxx] two years and then
12 er we started, I started work in Bengali mother tongue school.

13 N: Ok.

14 S: And . by that time [xxx] we just, you know, they needed the Bengali mother tongue
15 teacher, not in Tower Hamlets it is in actually in school S Square at that times. And, after
16 two years I have breakdown my er with my husband . and ... then my husband went in
17 Bangladesh and take my children. And I was er stayed in this country. Well not like
18 intentionally, I have to stay in this country. I actually tried to go back. My reason of that, I .
19 when he went back to Bangladesh and took my children from me well it was, it was, I
20 didn't know he took the children. And I found after, day after, he took the children and it
21 was quite a difference actually, a story, and it was like that, how, how can I tell it. Erm .

22 N: You only have to tell me what you want to tell me-

23 S: Yeah.

24 N: you don't have to tell me anything-

25 S: Its going to be get quite long story that's why I'm-

26 N: Ok.

27 S: trying to make shortcut for you.

28 0:04:10 *S recounting how she was 25 when her husband took her children, she thought*
29 *to his sister's house. After some days she learned he had taken them to Bangladesh. Her*
30 *daughter was 8½ years and son 5½ years. She explained that her relationship with her*
31 *husband had been "very bitter". 0:05:45*

32 0:05:46 S: He took my passport. Then I, I tried to look for everything and in between
33 times I already am in the, overstayed in this country, and er then I had the, the some, sort
34 of friends, and they knew about, a little bit about my story er, how I was going with my

35 husband when he was there. Er, then they told me, that if you go back Bangladesh, he
 36 might be not taking you back but you know the, er, in Bangladesh, er the, the male
 37 dominated. And if I am to go back, he might be taking back, back me, but I never gonna
 38 be have my life and he might be not taking back to me and I will be also the sufferer with
 39 the society and the children will be not with me. So many things, then I say, 'ok, I try to
 40 stay in this country. Might be if I am stay in this country then I'll bring back my children. .
 41 But it was not that easy, er happens. And I, mm, started to be look for er, to be how to I'm
 42 gonna be stay in this country. And I get, that time my English was really, really poor, very
 43 poor.

44 *0:07:06 S began English classes and got help to put her case to a solicitor. She gained*
 45 *permission to stay in 2003 having fought for 16 years, by which time her children were*
 46 *over 18 years old - over the age that British law allowed children rights to stay. S didn't*
 47 *see her children from 1989 until 2003. She did not manage to gain contact with them until*
 48 *1995 when they had been taken to America to live by their father, from which time she*
 49 *had managed to maintain contact with them. 0:11:24*

50 0:11:25 S: But you know, time, when you've got a big fight, then time is you know, just
 51 gonna be concentrated with this, and time is not GOES, is make you BORED, is make
 52 you fed up, like that.

53 N: Mmm, mmm.

54 S: Specially in the immigration things. I had-

55 N: Mmm, must have been VERY hard.

56 S: I had the immigration things. Always I thought in these, those years, or this could be
 57 solution my case, I might be, be, you know, get result and I'll bring my children and .

58 N: Mmm.

59 S: All these 16 years goes like that . and I couldn't bring them here. .

60 N: Very hard.

61 S: Very hard, yeah.

62 N: Very, very hard. And now, do they come here to -

63 S: Well .

64 N: Have they been here?

65 S: Basically they are not coming yet. Erm

66 N: Mmhmm.

67 S: I'm going every year more or less. Every years I'm going.

68 N: To visit them?

69 S: Mmhmm, mmm. .

70 N: So they're working now in America?

71 S: They, yeah working and studying.

72 N: Mmhmm, yeah. Goodness that's quite a .

- 73 S: Yeah its very difficult, its very difficult and since from, I'm supporting them since from
74 1995, financially-
- 75 N: Really.
- 76 S: Yeah, I'm giving them financial support.
- 77 N: Mmhmm.
- 78 *0:12:42 S explaining that her husband was in Bangladesh for a few years while the*
79 *children lived with relatives in America. He then also moved to America. 0:13:28*
- 80 0:13:30 N: So, when, when you first came with your husband-
- 81 S: Mm.
- 82 N: erm . was he coming here to work? . or just-
- 83 S: Well-
- 84 N: or just coming for a visit?
- 85 S: He came to, for work basically. He came to, for work. He came before but he didn't
86 bring er me, but then he came to for work. But, it not means that, by the way, I was gonna
87 say that I have got the problem with him not from just when we came in England. It was
88 actually from .
- 89 N: Before?
- 90 S: Back home, mmm. But when he came here it goes, at first was quite good with him
91 and then started again, the same, the same sort of problem.
- 92 N: Mmhmm. Mmhmm. . So he, he'd been living in England before you came?
- 93 S: No, he come and go, he come, he didn't stay here.
- 94 N: He didn't stay to work-
- 95 S: No
- 96 N: before?
- 97 S: No, no.
- 98 N: Ok, ok. And, but soon after you came you managed to get the job in the mother tongue
99 school?
- 100 S: Yeah, that times was quite demanding yeah, to teach the mother tongue.
- 101 N: Mm.
- 102 S: And, well, not in Tower Hamlets borough outside, that Camden, that borough. Yeah, I
103 managed to do but it not the full time job, it was like a part time.
- 104 N: And your children were eight and five you said then?
- 105 S: Yeah.
- 106 N: So did THEY speak English when they came here?
- 107 S: My son couldn't speak English that time he was young, he just started a school in the
108 back home. My daughter she, she went in the English Medium School-
- 109 N: Mmhmm.
- 110 S: in Bangladesh and she coped very well.

- 111 N: Mmm.
- 112 S: She's very good.
- 113 N: And where did they go to school when they came to Tower Hamlets?
- 114 S: Canon Barnett.
- 115 N: Canon Barnett, I know, yeah, I know in Aldgate.
- 116 S: Yeah Canon Barnett.
- 117 0:15:21 N: And erm . . . when you erm first came, was it, did you KNOW people here? You
- 118 had family here?
- 119 S: I had not the, not many like now, one or two, like that. Not many.
- 120 N: You had one or two people from YOUR family-
- 121 S: Yeah.
- 122 N: or your husband's family?
- 123 S: My family.
- 124 N: Your family.
- 125 S: One, one.
- 126 N: Ok, one.
- 127 S: And from HIS family quite a lot.
- 128 N: Ok, ok. So you weren't COMPLETELY by yourself when you came?
- 129 S: More or less yeah.
- 130 N: More or less.
- 131 S: Mmm-
- 132 N: Ok.
- 133 S: I was, yeah.
- 134 N: Ok, ok. So erm . . . when you came to Tower Hamlets you came because you knew
- 135 people here or, why did you choose, or why did your husband choose to come to Tower
- 136 Hamlets?
- 137 S: Yeah, my husband choose because and that, er because of the, yeah, Bangladeshi
- 138 people are in Tower Hamlets community and his relatives.
- 139 N: Mmhhh. And did he want to do any particular kind of work when he came? . . .
- 140 S: He, well he actually erm, I think he looked for to set up himself something like er self
- 141 employed.
- 142 N: Uhuh.
- 143 S: But he could, he could not do, do, but wasn't able to do that.
- 144 N: Uhuh, uhuh.
- 145 S: Then he started work and part, part time as well in restaurant.
- 146 N: Ok.
- 147 S: And that sort of things.

- 148 0:16:51 N: Ok. Its, its probably quite unusual for a woman who comes over to very quickly
 149 be able to get work as you did in erm the mother tongue school. Its, it, its quite unusual.
 150 Specially if you didn't speak much English yourself.
- 151 S: Well but things is, two different things might be work there, erm because I was brought
 152 up in city in Dhaka.
- 153 N: Uhuh.
- 154 S: I went to school in Dhaka, I went to college in Dhaka and completely. And not all of,
 155 not, not all of them, I can't say all of them who came from Sylhet, few womens that came
 156 here that was educated, also from Sylhet who came, and they still, they who have got
 157 the, er education er at the college they started job like the mother tongue.
- 158 N: Mmhmm, mmhmm.
- 159 S: But majority of people came from village and they're housewife, they're not er able to
 160 go out, they didn't, haven't been to the, maybe haven't been to the primary school-
- 161 N: Mmhmm.
- 162 S: or maximum secondary school.
- 163 N: Mmhmm, mmhmm.
- 164 S: And's not, and who has been to the secondary school they're not able that much to
 165 teach the children-
- 166 N: No.
- 167 S: if they don't go to the college of the [xxx] city.
- 168 N: And you'd been to college in the city-
- 169 S: Yeah-
- 170 N: in Dhaka?
- 171 S: yeah.
- 172 N: Ok. So maybe you were quite different in some ways to many of the women who
 173 come, who came in the-
- 174 S: Not these days, that time.
- 175 N: At that time.
- 176 S: Not these days.
- 177 N: No.
- 178 S: That time I was bit difference to,
- 179 N: Yuh-
- 180 S: bit different to-
- 181 N: [overlapping] because you'd been to college-
- 182 S: Yeah and I was brought up in city. City is always different-
- 183 N: Yuh.
- 184 S: isn't it.
- 185 N: Yuh, yuh. And the majority of the women who came were from Sylheti villages, yeah?

- 186 S: Erm . Xxxxxx in these days it very, very much people coming to, educated people also
 187 [xxx xxx] from, from outside Sylhet.
- 188 N: Uhuh.
- 189 S: From the other districts.
- 190 N: Ok.
- 191 S: And they are quite educated.
- 192 N: Mmhmm.
- 193 S: Womens are quite educated.
- 194 N: Mmhmm.
- 195 S: Sylhet is, Sylhet is always bit conservative.
- 196 N: Ok.
- 197 S: Always bit conservative. But people, but, historically Sylhet was as advance level of
 198 education in Bangladesh, that time, in Pakistan time.
- 199 N: Mmhmm.
- 200 S: Womens are advanced level in education. And the first er women's school was set up
 201 in Sylhet in Bangladesh, first one.
- 202 *0:19:27 Further explanation of education and Sylhet, extremes of upper and lower*
 203 *classes and that the more educated upper classes did not come to London, rather the*
 204 *less educated who needed work. Few people came from other districts pre 1970s.*
- 205 *0:20:38*
- 206 *0:20:39* N: So when you came over here, 1987, how old were you then?
- 207 S: Erm, I was 24, 25.
- 208 N: 24.
- 209 S: 25, like that.
- 210 N: Ok, so quite young.
- 211 S: Mmm mmm, well. .
- 212 N: Not, n, n not VERY young but already married. Were you working in Bangladesh
 213 before you came?
- 214 S: Erm, not particularly there but I done some, sometimes like when I was in college,
 215 tuitioning.
- 216 N: Mmhmm.
- 217 S: But not after married I didn't-
- 218 N: No-
- 219 S: had to be housewife.
- 220 N: Yeah, yeah.
- 221 S: Very traditional.
- 222 N: Well, very traditional but there's, actually there's plenty of work in being a housewife
 223 and bringing up children.

- 224 [laughter]
- 225 S: Its everywhere it is not only Bangladesh-
- 226 N: [overlapping] Oh no that's right, yeah, yeah, yeah-
- 227 S: [overlapping] to do everything-
- 228 0:21:30 N: everywhere, absolutely. Ok, so, I was going to, I still will ask you, I've got
- 229 different erm, areas I want to ask you about and the first one I want to ask you about is
- 230 about your family and erm, where they are, erm, how much contact you have with them,
- 231 but . not just the practical but also, who do you THINK of as your family. Because families
- 232 can be very small, they can be very big-
- 233 S: Mmm, mmm.
- 234 N: so, I'm just interested in finding out what you think about what family means to you,
- 235 and how important it is and where, for YOU, where your family is.
- 236 S: Mmm. It is like my, I, I haven't got the parents. I lost my parents, is really, before I born
- 237 I lost my father and when I was three I lost my mother. And I was er really, really close
- 238 with my brothers, erm they bring up me in the [xxx]. I got all sort of support from them.
- 239 And my sisters, er I got sisters, brothers and my, in here I got very close with my niece
- 240 and nephews in here. I got a few niece-
- 241 N: In England?
- 242 S: Yuh.
- 243 N: In London?
- 244 S: Yeah.
- 245 N: Uhuh.
- 246 S: I'm very close with them.
- 247 N: Uhuh. And your brothers and sisters are they here?
- 248 S: No, no.
- 249 N: They're in Bangladesh?
- 250 S: They're in Bangladesh.
- 251 N: Mmhmm.
- 252 S: My brothers came, but he came time to time and go, he couldn't stay. And, my sisters,
- 253 she came as well, once or twice but they gone back. But I closest with my er niece. . Two,
- 254 three nieces, erm [xxx] nephews I have. Those in here. And er few women's like, and my
- 255 childrens. Obviously I'm not with the husband, but we do count the husband's family as
- 256 our family. And they are but, at the moment I can't say now, 'yes, they are my family too'.
- 257 N: Mmm.
- 258 S: Not now.
- 259 0:23:55 N: Mm, mm. . So the, do you still have contact with your brothers and sisters?
- 260 S: Yeah I have, oh yes. We have very good contact.
- 261 N: Ok.

262 S: We are very close. Erm, I have got the contact with everybody else. Brothers, sisters
263 er, niece, nephews, yeah.

264 N: And do you have erm uncles and aunts-

265 S: No, no. [laugh]

266 N: in your family? No?

267 S: [laugh] Unfortunately no.

268 N: Oh.

269 S: I haven't got the auntie from mother's side. I got the aunt from father's side but they
270 died been long times ago. No uncle. But mother's side we have, but still they died long
271 times ago. Well, quite long ago.

272 N: Right. So its really quite an unusually small family, your family?

273 S: We are not the small family, we are the quite big family-

274 N: [overlapping] Ok.

275 S: but I know that because of the, I'm the youngest er one in the family.

276 N: Of your brothers and sisters?

277 S: Yeah.

278 N: Ok.

279 S: That's why there gonna be loads of gaps in there, there, with the my, likes my mo,
280 sisters, they're likes my, like my mummies. Er we have the big gaps between, 16 years,
281 17 years like that-

282 N: Ok.

283 S: because of the, I'm the youngest one that's why.

284 0:25:07 N: So how many children-

285 S: Four brothers and four sisters.

286 N: Ok-

287 S: Yeah.

288 N: ok. So, big family-

289 S: Yeah.

290 N: of your parents.

291 S: Yeah.

292 N: Yeah.

293 S: That's right.

294 N: And you have contact with all of your brothers and sisters?

295 S: Almost all of them, yeah.

296 N: Almost all.

297 S: Yeah.

298 N: Ok.

299 S: All of them-

- 300 N: And so some of their children have come to Tower Hamlets?
- 301 S: Yeah, mm.
- 302 N: So now you're mum to them, as well are you?
- 303 S: Er quite close, yeah. They come to me, come to visit, they look after me, and yeah,
- 304 quite close.
- 305 N: That's nice-
- 306 S: My brother's sons and my sister's daughters and sons, mm.
- 307 N: So did they come over as children or adults?
- 308 S: Er . adult.
- 309 N: Adults, uhuh.
- 310 S: Because no-one came in this country, my sister and brothers they didn't come.
- 311 N: Right.
- 312 S: So the children came over.
- 313 N: Yeah. So the children grew up in Bangladesh-
- 314 S: Yeah.
- 315 N: and then they came over to find work?
- 316 S: They some, er some er, some have got married to come over.
- 317 N: Mmhmm.
- 318 S: Er, one or two came for study, like that.
- 319 0:26:14 N: Ok, ok. So what, when you think about family, when you think erm . of the
- 320 word family, what does it mean to you, who would you include in your-
- 321 S: and N: [overlapping] family?
- 322 N: Yeah. ...
- 323 S: Obviously children. . And my brothers, sister.
- 324 N: Mm. . Mm.
- 325 S: Erm . like that.
- 326 N: Yeah.
- 327 S: Brothers, sisters and there are some, sometimes niece and nephews. Depends on
- 328 how intimate I am with them.
- 329 N: Mmhmm.
- 330 S: I've got er many niece and nephews but not very much contact with everybody else.
- 331 N: Ok.
- 332 S: Some of them.
- 333 N: Yeah, yeah.
- 334 S: Yeah.
- 335 N: Ok. And so you don't have contact with your husband's family here?
- 336 S: I have, well, not that, that sense, I'm the member of their family but I have got contact.
- 337 N: Oh you do have contact?

- 338 S: Yeah, yeah.
- 339 N: Ok.
- 340 S: They come sometimes to say hello to me, I do.
- 341 N: Ok, so its friendly?
- 342 S: Its friendly, yeah.
- 343 N: And always has been through the years?
- 344 S: No, no, not really, no. It wasn't at the beginning when he went Bangladesh, it was not
345 that good.
- 346 N: Mhmm.
- 347 S: But gradually they came friendly.
- 348 0:27:31 N: Uhuh, uhuh. Ok, ok, right. Erm . Now obviously, language, I know definitely
349 you speak English, I'm sure you speak Bangla-
- 350 S: Yeah.
- 351 S: and N: [laugh]
- 352 N: I don't know if you speak other languages.
- 353 S: Oh well, erm . I, I'm very, I can speaks fluent Sylheti. Sylheti's not the language,
354 Xxxxxx.
- 355 N: Mhmm.
- 356 S: Sylheti is a dialect, like that. You know the, frompeople come from Scotland,
357 N: Yuh.
- 358 S: That got the differents accent-
- 359 N: [overlapping] Mhmm.
- 360 S: different sort of dialect, like we say 'bus', they say 'boos', like that.
- 361 N: [laugh]
- 362 S: Sylheti's like that but . that is, there is something else, if I'm say its not the language,
363 then again, it is language. They have got the alphabet, Sylheti Nagri alphabet.
- 364 N: Uhuh.
- 365 S: And it's the when Sylhet and Assam was together.
- 366 N: Yeah.
- 367 S: And that, Assam, Karimganj and Sylhet was the same boundary, speak same
368 language. They have got the same alphabet.
- 369 N: Ok.
- 370 S: [xxx xxx xxx xxx] is quite interesting. But, because we separate from the Assam and
371 Karimganj and Sylhet, Sylhet came with the, the Pakistan, and we speak, we speak
372 Sylheti.
- 373 N: Ok.
- 374 S: But, we read and write, proper Bengali, when we speak, dialect is a bit different.
- 375 N: Ok.

- 376 S: Not, not very, very different, is slightly difference in that.
- 377 N: Uhuh. So what do you CALL the language? I called it Bangla. When I used to say
- 378 'Bengali' people would say to me, 'no, its not Bengali, its Bangla'.
- 379 S: Well, -
- 380 N: [laugh]
- 381 S: there are other things is that there, is it. Erm, in England, is not in Bangladesh. We
- 382 always say that, er we, we use, we are say that Bengali, we are Bengali.
- 383 N: Mhmm.
- 384 S: And we speak Be, er Bangla.
- 385 N: Ok. So you call yourself Bengali-
- 386 S: Yeah.
- 387 N: not Bangladeshi?
- 388 S: We say the Bangla, well, [laugh] too many things.
- 389 N: Does it make any difference?-
- 390 S: [overlapping] [xxx xxx xxx xxx] like passport we say that we are the Bangla nation,
- 391 nationality is Bangladeshi.
- 392 N: Uhuh.
- 393 S: And we are, we are Bengali.
- 394 N: Ok-
- 395 S: That means we Bangladeshi-
- 396 N: Yeah.
- 397 S: and we speak Bengali.
- 398 N: Ok.
- 399 S: That's it. But peoples, when peoples say Bangla, I don't know, it is make it in England,
- 400 the different, the word Bangla. It is Bengali.
- 401 N: Ok. So Bangla is from England?
- 402 S: From England-
- 403 N: Yeah.
- 404 S: yeah.
- 405 0:30:12 N: [laugh]. Ok. So, that's interesting how things change. So . when you're
- 406 speaking the different languages, erm .. with which people do you speak the different
- 407 languages? Do you, do you er, work, you work presumably in, in the work you do,
- 408 sometimes you're working with erm-
- 409 S: Sylheti people.
- 410 N: Sylheti people, sometimes English people or not?
- 411 S: Sometimes yeah.
- 412 N: Uhuh.
- 413 S: Sometimes English, most of Bengali, [xxx xxx] majority is Bengali-

- 414 N: Ok.
- 415 S: Maybe take some cases the, e, e, English.
- 416 N: So obviously then you speak Sylheti with your-
- 417 S: Yeah.
- 418 N: with y,y,your erm-
- 419 S: Clients.
- 420 N: Clients. Couldn't think of the word. [laugh] Ok. And erm what about with other people?
- 421 What languages do you speak with which people?
- 422 S: Depends on like the, er in England, like, like you are, speak English. And, some of the
- 423 people come from like er the Dhaka or any other [xxx] district, speak proper Bengali.
- 424 N: Mhmm.
- 425 S: And, er I can't read and write but I can speak in Urdu and Hindi but it is just for, you
- 426 know, manage, its not VERY wonderful. Its not wonderful, things I can do but I manage.
- 427 N: Right. That's fantastic, that's about five languages so far then that-
- 428 S: [overlapping] [xxx xxx]
- 429 N: you can speak. [laughter]. Ok, and-
- 430 S: Hindi and Urdu just you know, people who do, er, people who can't speak English.
- 431 Then just manage with them, like, but is might be not perfect Hindi or Urdu-
- 432 N: No.
- 433 S: I speak, definitely I'm not.
- 434 N: [laugh]
- 435 S: No.
- 436 N: When you're s, when you're with erm other people, other Bengali people, do you erm
- 437 ever speak English with them or do you always speak erm erm-
- 438 S: Young generation.
- 439 N: Bangla?
- 440 S: Young generation. Erm, sometime English, sometimes Bengali.
- 441 N: Ok, so when you say the young generation, people who were born here?
- 442 S: Yeah.
- 443 N: Ok, ok, so you might speak English with them.
- 444 S: Well, erm, mixed.
- 445 N: Mixed.
- 446 S: Both ways.
- 447 0:32:37 N: Ok, ok. And does it affect erm . where you feel you belong when you're
- 448 speaking . different languages?
- 449 S: Means Bengali or English?
- 450 N: Yeah, yeah.
- 451 S: Where I'm belong?

- 452 N: Yeah.
- 453 S: Well I'm in England.
- 454 N: Yeah, but . you're IN England, but erm ... well it's a big question-
- 455 S: [overlapping] [xxx xxx xxx]
- 456 N: Yeah, I mean the WHOLE question, which all these things I want to explore-
- 457 S: Mmm.
- 458 N: do they AFFECT where you FEEL you belong. Because obviously you live in England
- 459 and you've been living in England for a long time now, erm but that doesn't necessarily
- 460 mean that feel England is where you belong.
- 461 S: Its depends on the issue basis. Like erm . my, my, my erm my social life, my er ..
- 462 cultural things and basically mostly the social, the social things I find is here. For myself.
- 463 N: Mmhmm.
- 464 S: But something issue like the the, like patriotic things like the Bangladesh politics and
- 465 the how is Bangladesh going on, then feel for Bangladesh, like that. But, as well as in
- 466 here, like er, is might be diff, different for me, er people are, I am a bit involved in the
- 467 community,-
- 468 N: Mmhmm.
- 469 S: I'm [xxx xxx] by politics and [xxx xxx xxx] in , involved in the Labour Party quite a long
- 470 years-
- 471 N: Uhuh.
- 472 S: and that's might be that I have the little bit difference from other people, other
- 473 womens, majority womens. Minority, quite a lot of womens are now involved in so many
- 474 things, erm this is, this is the thing, this is make me, might be. Might be I'm saying the
- 475 difference.
- 476 N: Yeah.
- 477 0:34:41S: Er ... I'm, I find it very much social issue, I am here.
- 478 N: Ok.
- 479 S: With, even with the Bangladeshi people.
- 480 N: Ok.
- 481 S: Even with the Bangladeshi people I, I'm here. Erm, Is reason is that, that, er, when it
- 482 was my husband gone I was quite young and my maturity, my p, actual maturity I have
- 483 here. .. That, that's why it could be I, er I go through the, the, I feel very comfortable with
- 484 my friends circle.
- 485 N: Uhuh.
- 486 S: I goes with out with them.
- 487 N: So your friends circle is, who m, i, are your friends?
- 488 S: Mm, mostly Bangladeshi.
- 489 N: Uhuh.

- 490 S: And then, mmm, some of the, some of white people but its not much I'm going out with
 491 them. I SEE them time to time.
- 492 N: Mmhmm.
- 493 S: And, but talk with them on telephone.
- 494 N: Mmhmm.
- 495 S: And then most of Bangladeshi people. Bangladeshi people, like we have the common
 496 interest.
- 497 N: Ok. And that is around politics?
- 498 S: Politics, culture, er, there, most of them.
- 499 N: So the politics that you're involved in are local politics?
- 500 S: Mmm.
- 501 N: Yeah? But the culture? What culture when you say-
- 502 S: Ah, this is a completely Bangladeshi culture.
- 503 N: Ok, ok.
- 504 S: This is completely Bangladeshi culture.
- 505 N: So, the politics make you feel you belong here, because the politics are around-
- 506 S: Mmhmm.
- 507 N: London, or-
- 508 S: Yeah.
- 509 N: Tower Hamlets politics-
- 510 S: Tower Hamlets, yeah London like that, Labour Party and what is going on Tower
 511 Hamlets-
- 512 N: Ok.
- 513 S: sometimes the issues going on in the country-
- 514 N: Yeah.
- 515 S: like that, isn't it.
- 516 0:36:29 N: But, but from the point of view then of your social, CULTURAL social life, then
 517 you, then that's Bangladeshi-
- 518 S: Mmm.
- 519 N: and so then you feel Bengali?
- 520 S: Yes, yes. Because it, I, because the, the culture is the, I, like I'm, we going to watch
 521 the cinema, English cinema, NFT, there, this is very common, is not mentioned is belong
 522 to anybody's culture, it is every, all of, worldwide culture, isn't it-
- 523 N: Yeah.
- 524 S: and erm, our culture is little bit different from English culture. Like that we have got
 525 the, loads of er .. cultural events we do-
- 526 N: Mm.

- 527 S: erm, is, is, is been not, its not been [xxx] is a, is generation by generation is coming,
 528 going through like that and we celebrate these things and . like the erm, except the
 529 Christmas . English culture is not very similar with ours.
- 530 N: Mm.
- 531 S: Like the English people going out in the evening to pub -
- 532 N: Mm.
- 533 S: but not me.
- 534 N: Mm.
- 535 S: But I can, I can go with my friends out once or twice but not every day, not every week.
- 536 N: Mm.
- 537 S: Its not like that. That's why its belong to Bangladeshi culture.
- 538 N: And that's by choice that you . culturally, or because you feel you NEED, that's where
 539 you SHOULD be?
- 540 S: Erm not, not really should be. So many things I did but I'm not very much like er
 541 practise, should, I am a Muslim. I do strongly believe I am Muslim.
- 542 N: Mmhmm.
- 543 S: But I'm not practising.
- 544 N: Ok.
- 545 S: That means its not, its not SHOULD be.
- 546 N: [laugh]
- 547 S: It's a, it's a like sort of choice-
- 548 N: Ya.
- 549 S: It is choice, its, its, that is difference with us and new generation because they're not,
 550 they're not getting the cultural, Bangladeshi culture they're not getting involved at all, not
 551 at all. But we who came from Bangladesh we brought it with us.
- 552 N: Mmhmm.
- 553 S: Like that, that's why.
- 554 0:38:48 N: Yeah, absolutely. Erm I'm going to ask you more erm . about er religion later.
 555 Erm, but erm, first of all I want to ask you, before, no, maybe it doesn't matter, maybe I
 556 just go straight on to asking about religion now.
- 557 S: Yes.
- 558 N: You, you, you said, you see yourself as a Muslim-
- 559 S: Mmm.
- 560 N: but you're not practising?
- 561 S: Yes, yes I strongly believe I'm a Muslim-
- 562 N: Mmhmm.

563 S: womans, but I'm not very much ... what I can be, how can I explain it. You know, erm
564 .. one things I'm not the, the practising very much like the people who are practising, the
565 very pious people practising. I'm not that pious.

566 N: Mmhmm.

567 S: And I don't believe the [xxx]. But I believe I'm the, I'm Muslim, fine, that's ok, but most
568 of its not, I don't want to be a, my beliefs make me differents from other people likes from
569 the human being. Religions, I don't like to see anybody make, you know, separate, as a
570 human being.

571 N: Mmhmm.

572 S: I don't like to see that.

573 N: And so, wh, what are you saying, you think that religion can do that? It-

574 S: [overlapping] Yeah-

575 N: Separates?

576 S: Yeah, I know that people [xxx xxx] so many people have got the, even the
577 unconscious mind, they, they are quite strong. Their, their mind [xxx] and socially they are
578 very modern, they not be covering, but in, in, you know, sometimes they, they don't know,
579 they very, er it might be not the conscious, they is unconscious things they stand
580 sometimes near. Er and I thinks every religions has got that variant person to person.

581 N: Mmhmm.

582 0:40:44 S: And I thinks yeah, people [xxx], religions making people so much ... of that,
583 divide.

584 N: So much?

585 S: Divide.

586 N: Mmhmm. Divide, yeah, divided.

587 S: Mmm.

588 N: So what does religion mean to you?

589 S: [laugh] This is the most [comxxx], ah yeah.

590 N: Most complicated?

591 S: Very complicated. What does religions mean. I thinks it faith innit? People believes,
592 what the people have got, the belief, that means the religions.

593 N: But what does it mean to you?

594 S: What does it mean to me?

595 N: Y, you, its-

596 S: I actually .. learn from .. [xxx xxx] generation . because they practising I born and I saw
597 them and I follow them, as born in Muslim family. This is to me.

598 N: Just because you were born into it? It doesn't . its not something that er means MORE
599 to you than that you were born into it?

600 S: Mmmm. Sometimes, sometimes its more to me. Like erm, mm what can say, er its
601 could be . you know, people go to the, even though I went into the church, I find its that a
602 peaceful place.
603 N: Mmhmm.
604 S: I find it a peaceful place.
605 N: Mmhmm.
606 S: Even I'm not, I'm Muslim-
607 N: Yeah.
608 S: I went to church-
609 N: Yeah.
610 S: and I find it nice and peaceful.
611 N: Mmhmm.
612 S: Like that.
613 N: So do you go to the mosque?
614 S: Sometimes. Yeah I went before, not now.
615 N: Mmhmm.
616 S: I went to church not now. [laugh] Church means I went to, just [xxx xxx xxx] nothing
617 else to, its not make the difference. That I went to, went to the mosque, that I went to do
618 the prayer.
619 N: Ok.
620 S: I find it, the religions make people a bit, its people, people's inside. People strongly
621 believe and then people sit and they make erm, try to make them peaceful, that can, that
622 help-
623 N: Mmhmm.
624 S: if they believe, if peoples strongly believes and sit and then give little time to peace.
625 N: Mmhmm.
626 S: To me.
627 0:43:18 N: Mmm. Its very interesting because you say you believe very strongly you're
628 Muslim-
629 S: Mmm.
630 N: but, you're not pious,
631 S: No.
632 N: you don't practice the religion,
633 S: Mm.
634 N: so erm ... for many people their sense of belonging is very often in their religion-
635 S: Yeah.
636 N: how is that for you?
637 S: Learn to respect them.

638 N: You respect them?
639 S: Mm.
640 N: But that, its not like that for you? .
641 S: No, not now. No I don't thinks, no, no. I don't know in future but I'm not now. Not, yeah.
642 But I do, I do respect the people from any religions,
643 N: Yuh.
644 S: any religions they're practising strongly-
645 N: Yuh.
646 S: and if they're honest, I like, I really do respect. I don't like to be with people who are in
647 the fanatic.
648 N: No.
649 S: Not any, any religions.
650 *0:44:17 Telephone ringing. 0:44:34*
651 *0:44:35* N: Again I want to ask you because I want to try and understand exactly how it is
652 for you. That you, you're very clear about being Muslim.
653 S: Mmhmm.
654 N: So what is that belonging to Muslim that is so important to you? Cos it isn't religion?
655 So what is it about being a Muslim what, that, that's what you seem to be saying, that's
656 where your belonging is. What does that mean?
657 S: It is my faith. It is my strong faith.
658 N: Your faith, but not a religious faith?
659 S: Erm, religious mean what? Religious mean what? You talking about the practising?
660 Doing the prayer five times a day? Er the, fasting, or some other things? This things you
661 say, talking about?
662 N: Well I'm asking what YOU mean by it.
663 [laughter]
664 *0:45:29* S: I, I mean myself that there is a, there, you know, the . Islam gave some guides
665 and I think the same all the religions gave the same guides but because of that I born as
666 a Muslim and I, I'm stand on this faith that Islam gave the guides to be honest, to, to be
667 nice with people, to be, treat people as a human being. That's it.
668 N: Ok.
669 S: [overlapping] That's to me my religion.
670 N: Ok. I see what you mean. Ok.
671 S: You understand what I mean?
672 N: Yes.
673 S: And, its not meant beca, if I am, if I was born as a Christian, and maybe I follow, my
674 religion say to me I have to be a, follow this route, do you understand-
675 N: Yeah.

- 676 S: what I mean?
- 677 N: Absolutely.
- 678 0:46:20 S: It is like a guidelines to me.
- 679 N: Yeah, ok. Ok. Its your guidelines for life.
- 680 S: Yeah.
- 681 N: But not in a practising way, in a sense of humanity and how you treat people?
- 682 S: Well, this is the if, if, you got the, the, the clear guideline, what I supposed to do, what I
- 683 supposed to not, and then your humanity will work like that. But if you, there gonna be,
- 684 you can spoil yourself, if, if your humanity say you not follow, you should not, you can't
- 685 follow, you don't need to be follow.
- 686 N: Ok.
- 687 S: But if you get the nice guidelines, then I'm gonna be stand on that.
- 688 N: Ok. So you don't feel that you need to erm, participate in, in prayers or in fasting to
- 689 follow your faith,
- 690 N: you can do it-
- 691 S: Not-
- 692 N: inside of you and its-
- 693 S: No I don't feel that much guilty.
- 694 [laughter]
- 695 0:47:23 S: I don't feel that much guilty as long as I feel I be, should be first an honest
- 696 person. Then I, this is things is secondary for me.
- 697 N: Ok.
- 698 S: BUT, if I'm in the, if I'm, I said I'm Muslim , I'm strongly believe, but, if I'm a Muslim and
- 699 I strongly believe Islam, I have to practise these things, but I'm not practising.
- 700 N: [laugh] But you're not very guilty?
- 701 S: Its not very helpful for you.
- 702 N: Its very interesting for me.
- 703 S: Yeah but its not helpful for you.
- 704 N: And, and I wonder how many people feel the same way as you do?
- 705 S: My fr, quite a loads of people, likes my friends are [xxx], that's what I told you before,
- 706 we are in the common, common interest.
- 707 N: Ahah.
- 708 S: And we, we [xxx xxx] me, if I, if I see someone, the poor, I think of, for THEM, rather
- 709 than I put my money to buy something else.
- 710 N: Mmhmm.
- 711 S: Do you understand?
- 712 N: Mmhmm, yes.

713 S: And this is the, I don't think this, IS my consciousness, but it still I found the guide from
714 the religion.

715 0:48:26 N: Ok, ok. So, . all right, we won't pursue that now, we'll maybe come back to
716 that later. Erm, I gonna ask you about music.

717 S: Mmhmm.

718 N: Erm, what music means to you and does, is there any sort of music that makes you,
719 gives you a sense of belonging in any way?

720 S: Yes, yes. We have got the erm, er loads of loads of so many kind of that, the, er music
721 that we have. Erm is the, somebody like the Tagore. Have you heard the name-

722 N: Yeah.

723 S: Tagore?

724 N: Yeah, yeah.

725 S: He was, he was, he was sort of music we had. And we loves that. We loves that. Very,
726 very literate Bengali,

727 N: Yeah.

728 S: and very, very rich compo, compose and [xxx xxx xxx] the song and compose the
729 music.

730 N: Mmhmm.

731 S: Mm. And we have many others there, like folk,

732 N: Mmhmm.

733 S: soul,

734 N: Mmhmm.

735 S: all these things, yeah, belong to me, very much I am.

736 N: So, when you say folk and soul, you mean in in-

737 S: Folk is very traditional Bangladeshi.

738 N: Tra, Bangladeshi-

739 S: [overlapping] Bangladeshi, very [xxx] because its completely from the root to [xxx] the
740 root,

741 N: Yuh.

742 S: by, by the folk, in, in the folk. And, its very touching-

743 N: Mmhmm.

744 S: to me.

745 N: Mmhmm.

746 S: Er soul is the erm . same but, I don't, you know, that everybody don't like everything.

747 N: Mm.

748 S: That's, like, I do like the Rabindranath's, Javinda's, music, the oldest songs he wrote
749 and put on the music, I loves that. And I loves the folk very much.

750 N: But all, but erm, Bangladeshi-

- 751 S: [overlapping] Most of Bangla, very much in Bangladeshi. English songs is, is,
 752 sometimes I love, I loves it, erm but it difficult to sometimes understand.
- 753 N: Yeah, for me too. [laugh]
- 754 S: I'm being honest with you.
- 755 N: Mm, that's, that's what I want you to be. Ok, so its, your, your real interest-
- 756 S: [overlapping] [xxx] you know the [xxx] thing, one things, if you feel the, like something
 757 melody innit, in English music,
- 758 N: Yeah.
- 759 S: also, you know, its can make you [xxx], 'oh, its nice', you know, 'melody, its nice
 760 music', but even [when] I don't understand some of it.
- 761 N: Ok. So you might like the music-
- 762 S: Some of, yeah.
- 763 N: even if you don't know the words.
- 764 S: Mmm.
- 765 N: Yeah, -
- 766 S: Mmm.
- 767 N: yeah, yeah. Ok.
- 768 S: Maybe its difference on understanding how much you are understanding the meanings
 769 of that, like that, to me, basically, but, English music likes . no I can't say very much very
 770 strongly, because I don't understand [xxx].
- 771 N: Yeah, So the, the, the .. the MEANING is VERY important to you, of music, its not just-
- 772 S: [xxx] music is ok, you know, [xxx] sometimes music is ok but its not that music is
 773 always nice to, music might be, half an hour, one hour, but without meaning you can't be,
 774 how long you gonna be stay with that.
- 775 N: Mm.
- 776 S: I don't know, is to ME, but I don't know how people, but, some people might be the, in
 777 the, er music for dance,
- 778 N: Mm.
- 779 S: [xxx] continuous but . still I can say the human for dance might be an hour, I can dance
 780 with the music then I get fed u, I go tired, [laughter]
- 781 N: Not to say you're not interested any more.
- 782 S: No, that too.
- 783 0:52:24 N: Ok. Erm, and food. Food is another area that erm, people often identify
 784 themselves in terms of where they belong through the food that they eat.
- 785 S: Yeah.
- 786 N: Same as with music, -
- 787 S: Mmm.
- 788 N: you know. How does that erm . affect you? ..

- 789 S: Well, erm, we are Bangladeshi people are the much in fish, in er rice and fish. This is
790 our traditional food.
- 791 N: Mmhmm.
- 792 S: Erm, I am belong to fish and rice. Mostly the fish erm .. this is, but like, I have the
793 oriental food but I can't have that all week. I have to come back to my [laugh]. Do, do you
794 understand?
- 795 N: Yeah.
- 796 S: Like, two days, the maximum three days I can have these diet then I have to come
797 back to my root.
- 798 N: Ok.
- 799 S: Like that.
- 800 N: And tell me why that is.
- 801 S: Taste. .
- 802 N: Taste.
- 803 S: Maybe the taste of-
- 804 N: Mmhmm.
- 805 S: original taste of food.
- 806 N: Mmhmm.
- 807 S: Fish, rice, thats it, vegetables.
- 808 N: Mmhmm.
- 809 S: We, we make loads of curry with the vegetables and fish. Many, many different,
810 different curries.
- 811 N: Yeah.
- 812 S: And not the young generation, this for us,
- 813 N: Yeah.
- 814 S: who come from, who came from Bangladesh.
- 815 N: Mmhmm, mmhmm. So you .. yeah, no I won't go there now, that's taking us in a
816 different route which we don't need to go.
- 817 0:54:00 Erm, in these days, erm . communication has become quite different with
818 technology. With mobile phones, with internet, erm and I'm wondering whether that
819 makes any difference to you about HOW you communicate with people. The possibilities
820 of communication being much EASIER.
- 821 S: Mmm.
- 822 N: Does it make a difference to . wh, how feel, belonging, erm because you can connect
823 differently with people now? Does it make any difference to how you feel you belong?
- 824 S: Not really. Its, its, modern technology bringing people more closer.
- 825 N: Mmhmm.

- 826 S: Like the family. I, I might be not able to speak with my brothers, then I, I, then I write a
827 letter to them.
- 828 N: Mmhmm.
- 829 S: Now these days I can ring to them to the village.
- 830 N: Mmhmm.
- 831 S: That's [xxx xxx]. And, internet is not, its, its for communication for the, very good I, still
832 I can say for in professional levels is still good. But . internet is not for everywhere and is
833 not very . somebody might be, except in the English you can't write in the internet.
- 834 N: Mm.
- 835 S: And people might not able to read it, how I can speak with my dau, with my sister-
- 836 N: Mm.
- 837 S: If I do the internet we, she may be not able to read all this and understand.
- 838 N: Ok. Yuh.
- 839 S: There is, I'm saying it to be the same it is the black erm communities, same it is the
840 Pakistanis communities, India's communities, everybody is not very, as good as in
841 English.
- 842 N: Mmmhmm.
- 843 S: To read the, the internet and operate these things but, tele-communication is
844 wonderful.
- 845 N: Mmhmm.
- 846 S: Everywhere is mobile phone.
- 847 N: So its made a difference to how you can be connected to your brothers and sisters?
- 848 S: Yeah.
- 849 N: Yeah.
- 850 S: Its bring the fa, I find it brings the closer.
- 851 N: Mmhmm, mmhmm. And, have you actually, you've NOTICED that difference yourself?
- 852 In the years since mobile has become more-
- 853 S: Mmm, mmm.
- 854 N: mobiles have become more available?
- 855 S: Yeah, that's true, yeah. Mmm. Definitely.
- 856 N: So more so than when you first came to England?
- 857 S: Mmm, I hadn't got that much contact with my brothers and sisters erm, except er some
858 of them in city like Dhaka.
- 859 N: Uhuh.
- 860 And, everybody haven't got the telephone even, the land telephone.
- 861 N: Right.
- 862 S: Now these days I can speak in village to my brothers and sisters and my niece and
863 nephews.

864 N: Mmm, mmm, so its quite different,
865 S: Mmm.
866 N: yeah.
867 0:56:47 N: you spoke a bit erm about being involved in the Labour Party,
868 S: Mm.
869 N: erm, but have erm, obviously politics have had an effect on your life in terms of you
870 being involved,
871 S: Mm.
872 N: erm and that's very much politics, Labour Party politics, that's very much then a
873 belonging here, in Tower Hamlets.
874 S: Mm.
875 N: Erm, I'm interested if there are other aspects of politics, not necessarily party politics
876 but political activity, or even, er racism, erm, for example which have affected your sense
877 of belonging.
878 S: Mm. .. well, since I been to the erm politics, I was in the, involved in Tower Hamlets, I
879 can say well I go to very nice people, met with very nice people, erm I couldn't actually
880 see the racism affected me, but my work place is affected-
881 N: Mmhmm.
882 S: racism. Not in this one, but previously.
883 N: Mmhmm.
884 S: was affected racism. And, it was er still said to me this is not the, . I myself [xxx] I don't
885 feel that the er any people differents to me. I, I can't see anything. But eh it was affected
886 very er strongly to me in my previous work.
887 N: In, in what way? What was your previous work?
888 S: It was in Tower Hamlets Consortium.
889 N: Uhuh.
890 S: Erm have you heard of the Tower Hamlet Consortium?
891 N: Yuuh.
892 S: It supported kids, supported people learning difficulties, mental health, that sort of
893 thing.
894 N: Ok.
895 0:58:43 S *offering refreshment, taking a break.* 0:59:45
896 0:59:46 N: I suppose I'm just trying to get my head around now where we got to and
897 HOW to think about it. Maybe I don't want to talk about any more of those things
898 specifically but want to erm . ask you .. how you would define .. where you belong. Which
899 might be,
900 S: Mm.

901 N: erm, in different aspects of your life, it might be in different places, so I'm not saying, is
 902 there ONE place that you say you would belong to, but HOW would you define your
 903 belonging. WHERE do you have a sense of HOME and . in what WAY do you have a
 904 sense of home?

905 1:00:32 S: Mmm. Well, this is, I myself actually find it difficult with this thing because, I
 906 told you, I came in here when I was er quite young and my maturity mi, REAL maturity
 907 developed in THIS country. I said that. Like, its not means I married, I got children but,
 908 my sense of maturity developed when I'm here. And day by day, I grow up my maturity,
 909 my sense, my social life, all this developed there. And THIS sense I feel I'm, I'm here.

910 N: Mmhmm.

911 S: But, again, er I told you that, the cultural th things, er like the very [xxx] of family, I feel
 912 back home.

913 N: Mmhmm, mmhmm.

914 1:01:23 S: Two way. Can't give you the straight answer.

915 N: I don't think there is a straight answer.

916 [laughter]

917 S: I can't give one, I'm not able to give you the straight answer, what you ask me.

918 N: Yeah, it wouldn't be so interesting if there was a straight answer.

919 [laughter]

920 S: But I have to be a, erm, what is it, the reality o . of ME, I'm telling you.

921 N: Mmm, mmm. So it's a combined sense of home?

922 S: Yeah, it is combined. To ME. Like erm . maybe some people, I'm not, I'm not, I'm not
 923 talking about any, any other people I'm talking about my, myself.

924 N: Absolutely. Absolutely. And erm .. are you comfortable with your sense of home and
 925 your sense of belonging?

926 S: [sigh] I thinks, [laugh] . to me, er is it, the still is the, the, my, because of the, I have got
 927 the complicated life. My personal life, and . its er I have the same things as compli,
 928 complicated th, in this issue, still I'm not sure er where I'm being, where I will BE. England
 929 or Bangladesh or America because my childrens is in America, they will not come in
 930 England. I'm in England . and . I'm thinking of sometimes about Bangladesh. And for
 931 THIS answer, I'm waiting for myself.

932 N: [laugh]

933 S: To, to another few years to I'll get my, my . answer. To be honest I'm not sure where I
 934 will be.

935 N: But not just where you'll go and live,

936 S: Mmm.

937 N: because, in a way, if you were to go and live in America, that might be your
 938 PHYSICAL home, but it not be-

- 939 S: [overlapping] Yes, mind.
- 940 N: your mental home. .. Erm and so I'm not really just talking about where you actually,
941 physically-
- 942 1:03:29 S: [overlapping] These, these, these things, that when I'm finish . how I . when
943 I'm finish the work here, and er, I'm not sure how much I'll be involved with the
944 community or the erm, socially in, in this country, maybe I'm thinking about the
945 Bangladesh.
- 946 N: Ok.
- 947 S: The, you know the-
- 948 N: So when you've retired from work?
- 949 S: Mm.
- 950 N: Yeah.
- 951 S: I, I, there is the, the some reasons and then, erm this is the reason of the [xxx] to me,
952 like in here, the er, when you come old, you come lonely.
- 953 N: Mmhmm.
- 954 S: And er, you can't depend on anybody, then somebody's coming to see you everyday,
955 or looking after you, or taking care or asking you how are you. But back home still we are
956 think like that.
- 957 N: Mmhmm.
- 958 S: At least the relatives or the, the even the next door neighbours, or the distance
959 relative. Not alone,
- 960 N: Mm.
- 961 S: you will not be alone.
- 962 N: Mm.
- 963 S: Like that, I think like that.
- 964 N: Mm.
- 965 S: I think most of people think about back home like that.
- 966 N: Uhuh. Yeah, that's very interesting.
- 967 1:04:47 N: So, at the moment . would you say that you are living where you would want to
968 be? . Because you say that in the FUTURE you'd like, you might consider going back to
969 Bangladesh.
- 970 S: Mmm.
- 971 N: But now? . Is-
- 972 S: Comfortable to here.
- 973 N: So you wouldn't particularly want to be going to Bangladesh now?
- 974 S: Not now. I have plan.
- 975 N: [laugh]
- 976 S: Yeah, I have plan but not now. I have to be er make everything . [xxx] yeah.

977 N: So your, your work and your politics . are very much a belonging for you NOW, in
978 Tower Hamlets?
979 S: Er . more or less yeah, with my work and my society and my culture and my, yeah, all
980 most in Tower Hamlets, that's very homely in Tower Hamlets.
981 N: Ok. And, but do you HAVE a sense that you, that those things . MAKE you feel, you
982 belong? ...
983 S: Particularly if you talk about the Tower Hamlets we are not missing that much. Like er
984 the . back home.
985 N: Mmhmm.
986 S: Because the, everything is here. We're not missing nothing.
987 N: Ok.
988 S: Er even the cultural [xxx] and then religious [xxx] everyday, you can see the people,
989 and food, everything is available. . That's why might be feel very homely in Tower
990 Hamlets.
991 1:06:20 N: Ok. So, do you think that if those things .. if Tower Hamlets WASN'T like that,
992 S: Mm.
993 N: if you lived in a DIFFERENT part of London, . do you feel then that your sense of
994 belonging would be different?
995 S: Ye-eah, definitely.
996 N: Right.
997 S: If I'm not able to communicate, if I'm not able, miss my culture, culture, if I miss my
998 food, obviously, I gonna be, I might be have the strong link with back home.
999 N: Right. So your belonging is still very, very much in-
1000 S: Root.
1001 N: in your,-
1002 S: Root.
1003 N: In your roots.
1004 S: Yeah, yeah.
1005 N: In your background, in your faith.
1006 S: Yeah.
1007 N: So the fact that its geographically in Tower Hamlets it works ONLY because those
1008 things are-
1009 S: Some of
1010 N: here?
1011 S: the issue also Xxxxxx wor, worked with us like the, the, erm, other womens, all the
1012 mans I can say the economic of that matters and the security matters like, in England it is
1013 a secure place for us. I can live on my own, I can work on my own, I can survive on my
1014 own, I can do whatever I likes to do but, like in sense that, now, these days is change in

1015 Bangladesh but is still, we not that much secure, that's it. Even the man but the womens
1016 are .. much more insecure innit, isn't it, T? [T, a friend who visited S during the interview
1017 and was in the same room] And there, that is the, that is the, the England is safer place
1018 for us.

1019 N: Mmhmm.

1020 S: Do you understand what I mean?

1021 N: Yes.

1022 1:07:55 S: Like T. She's living on her own, she, she coming from the, the FF to Tower
1023 Hamlet College, coming to my home, she, if she likes to go back she leaves from here to
1024 ten o'clock at night.

1025 N: Mmhmm.

1026 S: But back home we, we might be not taking that risk,

1027 N: Mmhmm.

1028 S: Quite often. Do you understand?

1029 N: Ok. So its safer?

1030 S: That is the MOST important things is that . staying in this country ... feel to the, make
1031 us the . opportunity if we wants to do, you know, lift up, to go for education, do the more
1032 study. And then we can depend on ourself-

1033 N: Mmhmm.

1034 S: we can for work, find for work, and [xxx xxx xxx]. ..

1035 N: Mm.

1036 S: That is easy innit uh? Especially for single womens I'm not er, I'm not compo, er, eh,
1037 compo, com, comparing at the moment with the husband and wife, HOW they are living, -
1038 N: Mm.

1039 S: how the single womens are living, when I was the, when I was with the husband, I
1040 found more difficult to, you know . I might be have something in inside to go for that but
1041 my husband if he don't allow me or he doesn't like, I can't, you know, eh force him or I
1042 can't overtake and, first I have to be, well, in a point, some point, er I make compromise
1043 ok. But now, as a single womans . if I wants to go to after work to the college, I can go.

1044 N: Mm. Mmhmm.

1045 S: Yeah.

1046 N: One of the things I'm interested in, in asking you about, you started to say when we
1047 were in the kitchen,

1048 S: Mm.

1049 N: and I said, lets wait until we've got this machine on again!

1050 S: [xxx xxx xxx] [laughter]

1051 1:09:39 N: Because you STARTED to talk about how YOU thought that people like
1052 yourself and probably Shaheen are NOT the erm, norm. Ok.

- 1053 S: Oh, yeah,
1054 N: That, -
1055 S: [overlapping] different
1056 N: that you're probably different to many people. -
1057 S: Mm.
1058 N: Tell me a little bit about what you were-
1059 S: [overlapping] Is,
1060 N: going to say.
1061 S: Is only saying there's many people, means the people came over earlier in the 40s,
1062 50s, 60s and that they, they even the 70s, the womens came, and mostly came people
1063 as a wife, depend on husband. Erm, but, the [xxx] husband and wife they are a still as a
1064 housewife, they have got the some sort of barrier, to, you know, come out and do
1065 themselves. Some of, maybe the 20 per cent womens are able to do now, they, and
1066 that's why I said it make my period different because we are more . how can I say, the
1067 more open and more involved in the community and culture. . That's, that's could be
1068 THEIR view, THEIR, their view, and our view bit different. Even their, is tell, people
1069 sometimes made the religions and culture, make together, and we have clear concept,
1070 religions and culture, two different things.
1071 N: OK.
1072 S: Is it [xxx], T? [T: Mmm.]
1073 N: Ok.
1074 1:11:04 S: That is most of people, . most of people, if you go to the erm, interview the
1075 some of these er wom, womens, the main, I can say 80 per cent, they're mixed up, even
1076 the young generation, they mixed up religions and culture together. That is the religions
1077 things is cultural issue, cultural things is religions. Now, culture is completely different,
1078 very rich culture we have, but religions is par, particularly religions. It is that. If you want
1079 to go practise you can do practise, if you follow the, this and that culture, is completely
1080 different, is not the same things.
1081 N: Ok, I'm-
1082 S: [overlapping] That's why I said that-
1083 N: I'm very-
1084 S: [overlapping] we are very, we have very clear concept of that.
1085 N: Yeah.
1086 S: We, we follow like that.
1087 1:11:47 N: Ok. I'm very, very interested in that because they young woman who I told you
1088 I've interviewed,
1089 S: Mm.
1090 N: who is 19, she's a friend of my daughter's, they were at school together,

- 1091 S: I know.
- 1092 N: that's how I knew her, erm and she er was speaking about, she was obviously born in
1093 this country,
- 1094 S: Mm.
- 1095 N: she DOESN'T speak erm Bengali very well,
- 1096 S: Mm.
- 1097 N: her parents, neither of her parents speak English very well,
- 1098 S: Mm.
- 1099 N: so she has real trouble in communicating well with her parents.
- 1100 S: Mm.
- 1101 N: But she was in particular, talking about how erm, er . how . she also feels very strongly
1102 Muslim . but is NOT religious, but DOESN'T tell her friends or her family this because she
1103 feels in HER –
- 1104 S: Home.
- 1105 N: community–
- 1106 S: Mmm.
- 1107 N: she can't say that.
- 1108 S: Mm.
- 1109 N: Because she wouldn't be able to erm . to be accepted really-
- 1110 S: Mmm.
- 1111 N: if she was honest about how she ACTUALLY felt. So she too sees, somebody of the
1112 younger generation, SEES that split very clearly in some ways, or, or maybe not .. yeah, I
1113 think it is conscious for her, she sees that split between religion and culture but ISN'T
1114 living amongst people who actually identify with that-
- 1115 S: Mmm.
- 1116 N: as YOU do. So its becoming very interesting to me, the, the, the sort of different erm-
1117 1:13:24 S: There, there, there is the, there is the question is that, that, that parents are
1118 not educated. Parents also are, they are confused. They mix the religions and culture.
1119 But the point is they are not very rich. I told you at the beginning, erm, if the, the people
1120 live in the village, they have got the some sort of culture and, and they're .. because of
1121 the, the er, also the, the, the Bangladeshi they're 98 per cent Muslim or 95 per cent Islam,
1122 Muslim, the population.
- 1123 N: Yeah.
- 1124 S: And . they make mixed up the culture and religious together. Some occasion we might
1125 be do like Eid, is not the culture, it is actually religious, innit, -
1126 [T: Mm, yah.]
- 1127 S: that we celebrate. But people, some people count it as a culture but its not culture its
1128 religious, part of the religion. Culture, we have the Bengali cultures the very, like the . we,

1129 we do the celebrate the like New Years, Bengali New Years, that's very rich, we have the
 1130 very erm good direction to celebrate the Bengali er New Years. Like, we celebrate the
 1131 same as the New Years. And, in the village, they DO differents there, but they don't count
 1132 it, as it, it is culture. They just do celebrate. As it, the culture is not that, not much counted
 1133 is a culture.

1134 [T: No, except truly agricultural kind of festival.]

1135 S: Yeah. BUT-

1136 [T: That's at harvest time.]

1137 1:14:50 S: Yeah, but, but in the city, when its come to the city, is much more wide, much
 1138 more er rich and the people [xxx] it and [xxx] it like that, isn't it. And put the things, and
 1139 celebrate, we are very nicely celebrate. That so many things and, that I say to you, that
 1140 the, young generation in this country, they're very much in .. how can, what, whats, what I
 1141 supposed to say. If I'm says that they haven't got the knowledge is wrong word. They're
 1142 the, misguided. They are misguided. Because the PARENTS, like MY daughter, I, she
 1143 knew which is culture which is the, is the er religions. She knew. And she, she n, she do,
 1144 she might be, when here we have discussions, she know what she's discussing with me.
 1145 But, its come from basically the parents. The parents are not clear . and they had, that's
 1146 why they all, they're er misguided. I can say they're misguided but other sense, in, in, in
 1147 England now, the new generation also that, they, they might be have got the identity
 1148 crisis. ..

1149 N: Do you think?

1150 1:16:01 S: Ah, I think. These, now I, now, the five six years. Before I didn't think that, now
 1151 I do.

1152 N: In the last five or six years?

1153 S: Six, seven years ago innit.

1154 N: Ok.

1155 S: [xxx] the people, people not that much er very extremes that they don't, they didn't
 1156 cover, like, five, six or seven years ago? I couldn't see that.

1157 N: What that women would-

1158 S: [overlapping] Womens, the young girls-

1159 N: cover themselves. Yeah.

1160 S: how they are.

1161 N: Yeah.

1162 S: Er these parent why they cov, why they, if they are not didn't cover as Islam as a
 1163 Muslim, seven years ago, eight years ago, why are not covering? . That way, that meant
 1164 they wants to, you know, ident, they wanted this as their identity. .

1165 N: Mmhmm.

- 1166 S: And I can say it is identity crisis with the, the younger people, and that's why they don't
 1167 bothering the culture, they bothering the, the religion. That's the practise of the religions
 1168 and they don't know about the culture or the religions, they mixed it.
- 1169 N: Ok. I think we could spend many, many days talking about this. Its very interesting.
 1170 *1:17:04 S asking if what she is saying makes sense to T who declines to comment as it is*
 1171 *S's interview. 1:17:34*
- 1172 1:17:35 N: Just to end up, is there is YOU would ... like to say, anything that I've maybe
 1173 not thought about to ask you in terms of your sense of home, your sense of belonging,
 1174 anything that you would like to say, that maybe hasn't yet come up in what we've been
 1175 talking about?
- 1176 S: Mmmm. Like the, you know, that you didn't talk about the root, the like, the young
 1177 generation, like my daughter, and what they think about, well its not a question to me, but
 1178 its still how I'm thinking the, what they are thinking about, what we are DOING , -
- 1179 N: [overlapping] Mmhmm.
- 1180 S: [xxx xxx] giving them or putting them they can think about their root.
- 1181 N: Mmhmm.
- 1182 S: That is the, that is quite interested to me. Er .. like you, that now, you said that you
 1183 didn't practise that much the, the Jewish, or come from Jewish the culture or the religion.
 1184 The children are born and brought up in this country, some of the [xxx] that they're .
 1185 practising Islam . but . what the end of the day, where they will belong? England or the
 1186 somewhere else. This is my question to me. .. And is my question to their, them also. .
- 1187 N: Do you think its erm, do you think it IS a problem for them, that they won't know?
- 1188 S: .. I thinks the people are well then, everybody have to be, know their root. Have to
 1189 know the, the country they deny or ignore. . There's, I mean yes, they like er . many
 1190 people come as a white skin from east Europe, they know all about the Europe. They are
 1191 not British, they have got the white skin. ...
- 1192 N: Absolutely.
- 1193 S: The, we, we having the, the erm, the British passport and so the Common,
 1194 Commonwealth citizen, British, and we are the Commonwealth, we are not the, the
 1195 British. And who counting us as a British.
- 1196 N: So, do you call yourself British, now?
- 1197 S: I don't call us, the, the, the Bangladeshi British. I'm not the, the British because I had
 1198 the, the nationality here AFTER that was not born here and my root is not here. If
 1199 somebody say yes, er we, you are British, but I'm not.
- 1200 N: But you carry a British passport though?
- 1201 S: Yeah, that is some facility I have, that's why.
- 1202 N: Ok. So that's what you fought for all those years . but-
- 1203 S: Easy to go, easy to move from, you know-

- 1204 N: Yeah.
- 1205 S: there to here, that's why, yeah, otherwise there's nothing difference to me.
- 1206 N: But you wouldn't . consider yourself British. What would you CALL yourself?
- 1207 N: Oh no, no, no. I'm I, I don't consider myself I'm as a PURE British, I say Bangladeshi
- 1208 British, because I have to, I OUGHT. I'm gonna be tell, there say to British I have to carry
- 1209 on the this law and order and this and that-
- 1210 N: [overlapping] Yeah, but forget all of that, what do you actually FEEL?
- 1211 S: [laugh] I don't feel that!
- 1212 N: What DO you feel?
- 1213 S: I don't feel that I'm British.
- 1214 N: No. So what DO you feel you are?
- 1215 S: I feel I'm [xxx] belong, sometimes I belong half half. I [xxx] I feel I'm belong to this
- 1216 country, I belong to Bangladesh. Half half.
- 1217 N: Half half.
- 1218 S: Mm.
- 1219 N: But you don't, but you wouldn't call yourself British. . But I mean you wouldn't call
- 1220 yourself British Bangladeshi or Bangladeshi British?
- 1221 S: [overlapping] When is the paper, I say yeah-
- 1222 N: [overlapping] Yeah, no, I understand that. No I'm ta, I don't care about the paper-
- 1223 S: No, no, no, no, no.
- 1224 N: [laugh] its what you're FEELING I'm interested in.
- 1225 S: No, no, no, no, I do, I don't want be a, but I don't want to say, say I'm British. If I'm say
- 1226 I'm British is not the, the . is not the, the er TRUE word. For me.
- 1227 N: Ok. And your children? Obviously they would never be able to now call themselves
- 1228 British because they maybe lived here for two years or something, but erm .. your OWN
- 1229 children, do they consider themselves Bangladeshi or American.
- 1230 S: I don't think so they consider themself Bangladeshi. [laugh]
- 1231 N: You don't? . So, American?
- 1232 S: [overlapping] they, well, so, some they're like that, they know they are Bangladeshi but
- 1233 they call them they're American.
- 1234 N: Ok.
- 1235 S: But they're not, they are Bangladeshi. They, that's it.
- 1236 N: But what would they call them-
- 1237 S: [overlapping] Same as the ch, children that brought up here,
- 1238 N: Yeah.
- 1239 S: born and brought up here, they, they KNOW they are Bangladeshi but they say that,
- 1240 that they are Br, they are British. ..

- 1241 N: So do you think your OWN children have that same identity crisis you were talking
1242 about? ..
- 1243 S: Ohh, same identity crisis, .. wait a minute, how much I can they're ... they are not, my
1244 children are not really just that much, that's why they, they, I think they, they can say they
1245 are Bangl, they are Bengali, they are carrying on the culture. But . erm I thinks they, my
1246 children has got the er . information from us that they're, that they're religions and the
1247 culture, two different things. They are, I thinks they do understand that.
- 1248 N: So is it possible for somebody to have a sense of their belonging as . Bangladeshi with
1249 either the culture or the religion, or, must it be both? . In your view?
- 1250 S: Er, [xxx xxx] I can't say they must take it both. Its, its very on that person to person, the
1251 which one, which one they takes strongly. Er some people take their religions and they
1252 thinks that we come from Muslim, Muslim, Muslim country and some people take that the
1253 culture strongly, the Bengali culture, and its, its, its very divided that, so I'm know can say
1254 its very divided like that.
- 1255 N: But you very clearly separate it as Bengali culture and Muslim religion.
- 1256 S: Yes, definitely, as I know, I do believe myself. .
- 1257 N: And so your, YOUR belonging is . in both, but not as a practising religious person. S:
1258 No. [laugh]
- 1259 N: But, but your belonging, your identification is still very strongly as a Muslim?
- 1260 S: Yeah, er yes. I'm, I believe I'm, in Islam . and I'm not practising but I said that I believe,
1261 well I said that, I can't say that the er, I've said it's direction of the, its guideline from the
1262 religions, and same direction from the every religions, have to be a nice person, have to
1263 be a honest person. That is the same guidelines from every religion, religions. .
- 1264 N: Ok, thank you very much. Is there anything else you would like to say?
- 1265 S: Mmm, is what I supposed to say?
- 1266 N: No, there doesn't have to be anything, only I want to give you the opportunity if there is
1267 something you . want to say.
- 1268 S: Well, I'm con, I'm just, I'm just, the, you know, thinking, thinking of, I might be putting
1269 on the, the complicated situation. The, er you talk with me and find so much differents
1270 issue I'm talking about.
- 1271 N: But that doesn't matter because it doesn't matter who I speak to, its just . it, its very
1272 interesting, I, I,-
- 1273 1:25:44 S: I told E and E told me, when you told me coming to interview ME and said, I
1274 said, 'E you told Xxxxxx should to interview to the, the other people'. [laugh] [xxx xxx] And
1275 I said that, 'oh my God, she'll get confused when she will interview me".
- 1276 1:26:03 N: No, no, no its not confusion. Its, its terribly important, as well, that, that erm, y,
1277 y, there is a, not that the work I'm doing is going to be widely seen, because that's not
1278 what its for, erm but er .. there's much more a picture that, that, th, erm all the women, all

1279 the, the, the Bengali women are housewives and they don't speak English and they don't
1280 work, and you know, there is a prevailing picture that this is a, a, a, archetypal .
1281 Bangladeshi woman. In fact this is a stereotype. It may well be that the vast majority-
1282 S: Mmm.
1283 N: of women in Tower Hamlets are in that situation but clearly there are also many other
1284 people too. Including yourself, as you, you've erm very clearly explained, that a lot of it is
1285 about education, and what your own backgrounds have been in, in Bangladesh and yes,
1286 maybe you are very different to most in that you came from Dhaka, and not from er-
1287 S: I told you that, that now these days that the from the outside of the Sylhet, that the
1288 people came from the Bangladesh other district, mostly came erm, they're educated,
1289 they're erm majority, minority not been to the school or college, but Sylhet is the
1290 beginning up like that people come from Sylhet. I told you the mostly come from village
1291 who are the Sylheti people from Sylhet, they didn't came the beginning like 40s, 50s, 60s,
1292 even the 70s, and the, the, after the [xxx] now, some people coming er as a student and
1293 some er came in this country go back Bangla, went back Bangladesh and get married.
1294 They have been here, they are quite educated from like that. But from the beginning
1295 Sylhet, from the Sylhet not come any educated.
1296 N: No.
1297 S: and N: [overlapping] [xxx xxx xxx xxx xxx]
1298 N: Most of the people who came earlier were from Sylhet-
1299 S: Mmm.
1300 N: villages, so-
1301 S: Mm.
1302 N: so the, the, the vast majority of Tower Hamlets families come from a Sylheti
1303 background.
1304 S: Yeah, but some-
1305 N: But I accept what you are saying that NOW its changing, in more recent years.
1306 S: Yeah and also that, that, from Bangladesh you can't, if you judge like Tower Hamlets
1307 people to Bangladesh, its not fair. Because, I told you, from outside of the, the, from, not
1308 from Sylhet, other district people came, they are educated. That's why its not, if you just
1309 see that the people Tower Hamlets, living in Tower Hamlets, and that the people came in
1310 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, and it just, would just er, judge by THEM, Bangladesh, its not, its not
1311 very fair.
1312 N: Its not the whole picture.
1313 S: No.
1314 N: No, no. Of course not. But it, but, BUT, I, I mean, absolutely, but still there are many,
1315 many women who ARE in that situation that we've talked about. That's why you've said,

- 1316 that maybe you're DIFFERENT to most, because there are still so many women of your
 1317 age group-
- 1318 S: Mm.
- 1319 N: who came over with, maybe with their husbands, maybe with their families-
- 1320 S: That's it, especially the, the Sylheti-
- 1321 N: Yeah.
- 1322 S: from the Sylhet.
- 1323 N: That's what I –
- 1324 S: But-
- 1325 N: mean.
- 1326 S: Yeah, oh yes, definitely as, Sylhet, like my age, my group, age group, womens came
 1327 in England and from the Sylhet as a housewife, what ever it is, they're not likes me,
 1328 they're not wearing the trousers, going to the Brick Lane, no. Some of working. They are
 1329 working. Working in Tower Hamlets in Social Service and in the school, but they're not
 1330 like ME, isn't it. Not like me, going out, mixing with the-
- 1331 N: But that's, that's exactly what I'm saying, so in a way erm, as you've said, you ARE
 1332 different because the people, MOST of the people of YOUR age group are actually in a
 1333 very different situation. And haven't erm-
- 1334 S: Mmm, I don't know why they don't, the some of the, the single womens also they are
 1335 not coming out like us. They're, are they? Not likes me, naughty. [laugh]
- 1336 N: Are there many single women of your age? Who have come on their own?
- 1337 S: No, no, they are not coming like me.
- 1338 N: No.
- 1339 S: Like I am as a naughty. I can go in Brick Lane, staying out til twelve o'clock at night in
 1340 Brick Lane, nobody's telling me anything. Not, not, not like that.
- 1341 N: But then there must be, you must be in a minority of Bangladeshi women, being on
 1342 your own? Isn't, isn't that the case?
- 1343 S: Not, not the minor, but it differents WHERE Xxxxxx. Well I, I [xxx xxx xxx] I got
 1344 involved in the community,
- 1345 N: Yeah.
- 1346 S: I got the, involved in the politics,
- 1347 N: Yeah.
- 1348 S: That's why I, rapidly I came and mixed in the community and the community accept
 1349 me.
- 1350 N: Yuh.
- 1351 S: So in the-
- 1352 N: [overlapping] So when you say community, who do you mean? Who is that-
- 1353 S: [overlapping] Bangladeshi community.

- 1354 N: Bangladeshi community.
- 1355 S: Tower Hamlets is Bangladeshi community.
- 1356 N: [laugh]
- 1357 S: I know it difficult for the womens to come over like me, to mix with the, the men and
1358 womens, as a single womans in my age. Very difficult, is it not, [to T] especially from the
1359 Sylhet [xxx].
- 1360 N: Exactly. But that's what I'm saying, that's why erm-
- 1361 S: Because I'm brave.
- 1362 N: Maybe it is because you're brave.
- 1363 S: [laugh]
- 1364 N: There must be .. I don't how, I don't know that any numbers but there must be fewer
1365 single women of your age.
- 1366 S: [overlapping] Now it is work [xxx xxx] is work from my family background.
- 1367 N: Ok.
- 1368 S: Is work from my family background. Because of the, when I was in b, back home my
1369 family is the quite educated family-
- 1370 N: Mmhmm.
- 1371 S: very, quite educated family. That is, I can say that my family and . like the Sylhet or
1372 Dhaka and .. when we're saying how we're erm, I'm not wearing the trouser back home-
- 1373 N: Mmhmm.
- 1374 S: But we are not very conservative-
- 1375 N: Mmhmm.
- 1376 S: not at ALL. Not VERY, not at all. I can say my family, they practising Muslim, praying
1377 but they're not very strict or conservative. No.
- 1378 N: Yeah.
- 1379 S: That's the word, I can say that my family background worked, er worked on me.
- 1380 N: Yeah.
- 1381 S: Quite a lot.
- 1382 N: Yeah. Yeah, and still does?
- 1383 S: I thinks they are not interrupting, this is the most important things, they're not
1384 interrupting.
- 1385 N: Yeah. Thank you VERY, very much, its been very interesting.
- 1386 S: T is more, more up to date than me.
- 1387 N: Well, I'm not going to interview T today. [laugh] Though I might be very interested to.
1388 But not now, because this is enough for me to be doing.
- 1389 S: Too much, I know it is too much, why do you come to interview me?
- 1390 [laughter]

1391 *1:33:02 S again jokily exhorting why I should not have interviewed her, that she is so*
1392 *involved in the community, that she is different, not practising. Further thanks from me*
1393 *and offer from Sultana that I should ring her if I needed anything more. 1:34:21*

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