Introduction

Narratives of the City

With the economic crises of the 1970s and 1980s, Britain and North America witnessed the economic decline of older, industrial cities and the emergence of a small number of global cities which serve as command and control centres of the global economy. In urban studies, academic interest has, over the past twenty years, tended to focus on these elite global cities, yet there is a growing recognition of the need to consider a wider range of cities which fall outside the remit of the privileged few and have evaded critical attention.[1] Indeed, since the 1990s the cities that were once regarded as having been left behind and dominated by decline have been reinventing themselves. Attempts to achieve this have been made both through the physical redevelopment of city centres and the re-branding of their identity in an attempt to sell the city and regenerate the local economy.[2] Birmingham has cast itself as the 'meeting place of Europe', Sheffield as the 'the city of sport', whilst Bristol has adopted a maritime identity.[3]

Within this context, the image of Leicester has been transformed, from an English provincial city to one of Britain's main Asian cities. South Asians are not imagined as outsiders but rather they are presented as integral and vital to the city's identity. The city council have promoted and celebrated ethnic diversity as a valuable asset and a key tourist attraction. As Jewson observed: 'Tourists are urged to come to Leicester *because* of the city's diverse and lively ethnic communities.'[4] In particular, 'The Golden Mile' in the Belgrave area, home to South Asian shops and annual festivals such as the Mela and Diwali, is seen as a main tourist attraction, with the potential to develop into an 'Asia Town', akin to London's Chinatown.[5] Clearly, Leicester's ethnic diversity and, in particular, its distinctive South Asian character have been seized upon as attractive and exciting selling points for the city

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1 J. Robinson, 'Global and world cities: a view from off the map', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 26, 3 (2002), 531–54.

2 G. Kearns and C. Philo, (eds), *Selling Places: The City as Cultural Capital, Past and Present* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1993).

3 N. Henry, C. McEwan and J.S. Pollard, 'Globalization from below: Birmingham – postcolonial workshop of the world?', *Area*, 34, 2 (2002), 117–27, I. Taylor, K. Evans and P. Fraser, *A Tale of Two Cities*: *Global Change*, *Local Feeling*, *and Everyday Life in the North of England: A Study in Manchester and Sheffield* (London: Routledge, 1996), D. Atkinson and E. Laurier, 'A sanitised city? Social exclusion at Bristol's 1996 international festival of the sea', *Geoforum*, 29, 2 (1998), 199–206.

4 N. Jewson, 'Migrant populations, community divisions and ethnic mobilisation', in N. Jewson, *Migration Processes and Ethnic Divisions* (Leicester: The Centre for Urban History and The Ethnicity Research Centre, University of Leicester, 1995), 109.

5 'Creating golden smiles out of the Golden Mile', *Leicester Mercury*, 13 April 2001.

and marketed as pleasant and welcoming spaces for tourists and professionals to consume. Leicester is not unique here. As Eade has shown, London has also been promoted as a prosperous multicultural city and successful melting pot of different migrant groups.[6]

The reputation of Leicester as a tolerant multicultural city was given a significant boost following the disturbances in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford in 2001 when, due to the absence of ethnic unrest in Leicester, the city was labelled Britain's most ethnically harmonious city and praised as a European model of multicultural success. Articles in the local, national and international press contrasted the apparent tolerance and genial character of Leicester with the northern cities and sought to reflect on why Leicester was successful. The discourse that Leicester was an exemplary model, from which lessons can be learnt, was reproduced in both official reports on the 2001 riots and academic analysis.[7]

Drawing on Walton's analysis of Monterey, the current discourse about Leicester can be seen as a narrative; a constructed story.[8] This is not to suggest that it is invented or untrue, rather it is *one* interpretation of the city. It is important to recognise that there may be competing discourses about a place at particular times and as one discourse becomes dominant other stories and histories are silenced. This book seeks to provide a radically different story about Leicester, one that draws on the interpretations of local white and South Asian inhabitants of the city to reveal the nuances of their experiences and urban social worlds, which are lost in Leicester's story of its multicultural success.

Boundaries are a key motif of the book. On their arrival in Britain, whites effectively relegated South Asian migrants to the margins of society, defining where they could go, what they could do and how far they were accepted.[9] In the case of South Asian women, boundaries were imposed by both post-colonising forces and the patriarchal systems *within* the South Asian communities. This intricate set of relations prompts significant questions: did whites always erect boundaries to exclude South Asians? On what basis were these boundaries formed and were these borders rigid or permeable, static or malleable? How did individuals within South Asian communities live within these constructed boundaries? How were their lives

6 J. Eade, *Placing London: From Imperial City to Global City* (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2000).

7 T. Cantle, *Community Cohesion, A Report of the Independent Review Team* (London, 2002). A. Amin, 'Multi-ethnicity and the idea of Europe', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 21, 2 (2004), 1–24.

8 J. Walton, *A Storied Land: Community and Memory in Monterey* (London: University of California Press, 2001).

9 South Asian is used as a shorthand to describe those who can trace their ancestry to the Indian subcontinent; namely, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Kashmir. The label 'South Asian' is problematic as it ignores the cultural diversity within communities and how caste, religion, regional, or even kinship classifications may be more important forms of identity. 'White' denotes those who are of white skin colour and British origin. This term also suggests an undifferentiated group, although it has not been subject to the same scrutiny as other categories. This reflects the hegemonic position of whiteness, which acts as a privileged viewing point to view 'others', whilst whiteness itself evades inspection and qualification.

confined? How did they create viable lives? Were they the passive recipients of marginality? Did they develop strategies to resist, challenge and subvert constraints? In addition, how did the boundaries of race, gender and class overlap and intersect? Did migration open up new opportunities for women to resist patriarchy? Which were the most important dimensions shaping individuals' lives? Moreover, what were the historical processes behind these complex relations? In addressing these questions this book seeks to show how migration created challenges for both whites and South Asians, for both male and female migrants, and explores how they perceived and navigated boundaries within the local contexts of their everyday lives.

The book has three other main objectives, which need elaboration. The first is to unpack white ethnicity and go beyond the study of a minority ethnic group as somewhat isolated within the host society, to reveal the relations between the white and South Asian inhabitants. With the recent bourgeoning in whiteness studies there is an increasing awareness that focusing solely on minority ethnic groups only serves to problematise them, whilst white ethnicity as a silent and unacknowledged 'norm' remains untouched at the centre. The need to deconstruct white identity is not intended simply to correct academic bias in the urban ethnicity literature, rather it is also recognised as an important project that can help end white privilege and develop anti-racist strategies.[10] It seems an anomaly that whilst there is substantial research documenting the tradition of racial prejudice in nineteenth and twentieth century Britain and the study of discrimination has been identified as the greatest success within ethnic and racial research, there has been a distinct lack of analysis into the roots of racism.[11] Indeed as Dench et al. have observed, it is an issue that has been avoided by researchers.[12] Consequently, scholars have called for a deeper understanding into *why* racial discourses are used as well as the vital need to examine those situations when prejudices are absent and co-operative inter-ethnic relations are fostered.[13]

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10 R. Frankenberg, *White Women, Race Matters: The Social Construction of Whiteness* (London: Routledge, 1993).

11 See for example T. Kushner and K. Lunn, (eds), *Traditions of Intolerance: Historical Perspectives on Fascism and Race Discourse in Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), R. Samuel, (ed.), *Patriots: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity, 3 Volumes* (London: Routledge, 1989), M. Banton, 'Progress in ethnic and racial studies', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 24, 2 (2001), 173–94.

12 G. Dench, K. Gavron and M. Young, *The New East End: Kinship, Race and Conflict* (London: Profile, 2006).

13 A. Bonnett, 'Constructions of whiteness in European and American anti-racism', in R.D. Torres, L.F. Mirón, and J.X. Inda, (eds), *Race, Identity, and Citizenship: A Reader* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 200–18, A. Rattansi, '"Western" racisms, ethnicities and identities in a "post-modern" frame', in A. Rattansi and S. Westwood, (eds), *Racism, Modernity and Identity: On the Western Front* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 15–86, M. Banton, 'The race relations problematic', in E. Cashmore and J. Jennings, (eds), *Racism: Essential Readings* (London: Sage, 2001), 293. T. Kushner, and K. Knox, *Refugees In An Age of Genocide: Global, National and Local Perspectives During the Twentieth Century* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 402.

The call to understand the nature of inter-ethnic relations has also been given added impetus following recent developments in Britain including the 'riots' in the northern cities, the growth of Islamophobia after September 11, the rise of identity politics, and the resurgence of the British National Party among certain white communities. These issues have sparked considerable debate about the realities of multicultural British society, focusing, in particular, on what is perceived as fragmentations and divisions between ethnic communities, and the urgent need to foster an integrated, cohesive society. Within these debates there is often an assumption that one way to suppress racism and promote respect and tolerance between ethnic groups is through inter-ethnic contact. This was an underlying premise of the Cantle Report, which criticised ethnic groups that have no meaningful exchanges with each other and consequently lead 'parallel lives'. It is also a view supported by substantial research which has highlighted how racism is deeply entrenched in predominantly white areas.[14] Others have suggested that contact may simply reinforce racial stereotypes and antagonisms; yet, despite these debates, there is very limited qualitative research that actually examines these issues. Consequently, scholars such as Vertovec have called for more research into local negotiations of ethnic difference and the effects of contact between groups.[15] Here the emphasis is firmly on the local. That is, for academic study to move away from public political discourse and for generalisations to emanate from local, specific and historically grounded analysis that shows how particular localities produce particular kinds of racialised identities.[16]

This book represents a response to these developments. Yet it is also vital to note that the research draws on narratives of a white working class group. Depictions of the white working class both in the media and academic domain are typically negative and sometimes stigmatised.[17] Part of this negative identity is the assumption that white working class people are invariably racist and lack the agency or capability

14 For an overview see R.V. Kempen and A.S. Özüekren, 'Ethnic segregation in cities: new forms and explanations in a dynamic world', *Urban Studies*, 35, 10 (1998), 1631–56. For Britain see B. Troyna and R. Hatcher, *Racism in Children's Lives: A Study of Mainly-White Primary Schools* (London: Routledge, 1992), J. Agyeman, 'Black people, white landscape', *Town and Country Planning*, 58, 12 (1989), 336–8, P. Kinsmen, 'Landscape, race and national identity, the photography of Ingrid Pollard', *Arena*, *27*, 4 (1985), 300–10. For recent comment see Y. Alibhai-Brown, 'The countryside's a no-go area for black Britons', *The Independent*, 2 October 2002.

15 S. Vertovec, 'The emergence of super-diversity in Britain', Working Paper no. 25 (Oxford: Centre on Migration, Policy and Society, University of Oxford, 2006).

16 J. Solomos and L. Back, 'Conceptualising racisms: social theory, politics and research', in Cashmore and Jennings, *Racism: Essential Readings*, 354. See also P. Bhachu, 'The multiple landscapes of transnational Asian women in the Diaspora', in V. Amit-Talai and C. Knowles, (eds), *Re-Situating Identities: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Culture* (Ontario: Broadview Press, 1996), 286.

17 C. Haylett, 'Class, culture and urban policy: reconsidering equality', *Antipode*, 35 (2003) 55–74. B. Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2000). See also J. Wills, 'Work, identity and new rhetorics of mobilisation', paper presented at ESRC-seminar Working Class Lives, London, 20–21 October 2005.

to question their own prejudices.[18] This book seeks to provide a critique of such assumptions by showing that whilst working class perceptions did not fit with the vision of a completely genial and tolerant Leicester, neither were the local white population endemically racist. Rather, their ethnic identities were negotiable.

Gender is also a key theme of the book and like ethnicity it is viewed as a dynamic process rather than a fixed entity. Whilst it can no longer be asserted that the study of gender and migration remains under-researched, the topic is often sidelined within mainstream immigration studies. The aim here is not only to counter this marginalisation, but more specifically to contribute to a deeper understanding of the gendered experiences of migration and women's agency. In particular, the book seeks to engage with an on-going debate that seeks to ascertain whether migration is a source of female empowerment or whether it enhances masculine privilege and creates new forms of exploitation and disadvantage for women. Many accounts of migrant women have been blamed for representing women as essentially disempowered victims, suffering endemic disadvantage and double jeopardy.[19] Research on South Asian women has been cited as particularly guilty here and has been heavily criticised for presenting women as oppressed by their religious and ethnic cultures.[20] This book is, therefore, part of the shift in academic attention which highlights the agency of women and their ability to take action to improve their position. It seeks to engage with and advance these current developments.

The book draws on Bourdieu's model of agency, which is seen as more complex and subtle than those described by other structural theorists, such as Foucault.[21] In particular, Bourdieu goes beyond simplistic paradigms of dominance and resistance and permits a consideration of the complexities of negotiation processes.[22] Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus' is also employed and was formulated to overcome what he perceived to be a false dichotomy between the individual/society or objectivity/subjectivity. It is a particularly useful notion for conceptualising the predispositions, aspirations and common sense worldview of particular groups, gained through experience. It encapsulates how the active residue of a person's past that is grounded in their group's collective history functions within their present.[23] Although for Bourdieu habitus serves to reproduce social structures, the concept integrates the role of competence and improvisation, emphasised by Bourdieu's analogy of people as players in a game, actively pursuing their own goals. Therefore habitus does not

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18 K. Tyler, 'Racism, tradition and reflexivity in a former mining town', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 27, 2 (2004), 290–309.

19 See N. Puwar 'Melodramatic postures and constructions', in N. Puwar and P. Raghuram, (eds), *South Asian Women in the Diaspora* (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 21–41.

20 F. Ahmad, 'Still "in progress?" – methodological dilemmas, tensions and contradictions in theorising South Asian Muslim women', in Puwar and Raghuram, *South Asian Women in the Diaspora*, 43–65.

21 J.M. Barbalet, *Emotion, Social Theory and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 117.

22 L. McNay, 'Gender, habitus and the field. Pierre Bourdieu and the limits of reflexivity', *Theory, Culture and Society*, 16, 1 (1999), 105.

23 See P. Bourdieu, 'Social space and symbolic power', *Sociological Theory*, 7, 1 (1988), 18–26.

strictly determine actions as a fixed structure; rather it provides a set of guiding principles, which individuals deploy in changing contexts.

Feminist scholars have complemented and developed Bourdieu's theories. Ethnocentric concepts which equate agency with autonomy and western views of independence, have recently been questioned and rejected in favour of a more relational and multi-dimensional theory of agency.[24] Here male–female relations are seen as fluid and agency is viewed as creative, generative and variable, involving imagining, planning and strategising. This approach encompasses the resourcefulness and cognitive capacity of the individual to adapt to constraints and develop different strategies. It also important to note, however, that whilst the agency of the women is a key dimension of the book, the focus is also on the experiences of male migrants. This is most significant considering some recent warnings that the focus on women in studies of migration has sometimes led to the neglect or simplification of men's experiences.[25]

There is also a widespread recognition that gender cannot be studied in isolation and that identities are situated. The work of black British feminists have highlighted how individuals are located within power hierarchies and interlocking inequalities in which class, gender and race are not autonomous spheres but enmesh to create a matrix of domination.[26] From this perspective, individuals experience race, gender and class differently depending on their social location within the intersecting hierarchies. Men and women experience both constraint and opportunity depending on their class and race. So for instance, South Asian men may experience a loss of power due to racism, yet their experience of racism will vary according to their class. This book seeks to build on these concepts by showing how experiences, subjectivities and ultimately stories were shaped by these variables, but also a host of other social dimensions including language ability, position within the family hierarchy, timing of arrival, education, religion and household type. The life course emerged as an important differential as the women, in particular, revealed how they adapted at different stages of their life: from daughter, to daughter-in-law, to mother, to mother-in-law; roles which have important implications for access to power.

As we shall see, what emerges is the complexity of experiences and stories that are not heard in Leicester's dominant narrative. It should be noted that others have also made progress here by providing alternative representations of the city. Chessum's study of the African Caribbean population reveals that they were a minority group within Leicester who were compared unfavourably with the perception of successful South Asians, whilst Burrell has sought to highlight the experiences of European migrants as white minorities who have also been deemed as peripheral to the city's

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24 L. McNay, *Gender and Agency: Reconfiguring the Subject in Feminist and Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

25 S.J. Mahler and P.R. Pessar, 'Gender matters: ethnographers bring gender from the periphery toward the core of migration studies', *International Migration Review*, XL, 1 (2006), 50–51.

26 M.B. Zinn and B.T. Dill, 'Theorizing difference from multiracial feminism', in Torres, Mirón and Inda, *Race, Identity, and Citizenship*, 103–11.

identity.[27] Nevertheless, there has been no comprehensive study exploring the experiences of different South Asian migrants and their relationships to the local white residents, despite the city's strong South Asian identity and its status as a model for progressive multiculturalism.

Interviews

The research here draws on 44 interviews from existing oral history archives and 45 of my own life story interviews.[28] Overall, 59 of these interviews were with South Asians. The South Asian respondents were aged between about forty and seventy-five and were first generation migrants, although the sample also included those who attended secondary or sixth form schooling in Britain and have been classified as the 'half-way generation.'[29] Approximately half of the respondents (52 per cent) had been born in or had migrated to East Africa, although there was diversity here. For instance, my own interviews included ten respondents from East Africa and five from India, and also two from Southern Africa and one from Fiji. This diversity was not only reflected in country of origin, but also in other factors such as gender, occupation, education, religion and timing of arrival, although the majority came to Britain in the 1960s and 1970s.[30] The participants were contacted through various 'gatekeepers' within Highfields and although this may present problems regarding the representativeness of the group interviewed, it did prevent possible suspicion from the respondents. As an 'outsider' overcoming suspicion was the main difficulty encountered when potential participants were contacted by myself and the help of the gatekeepers in establishing mutual trust between the respondent and myself proved invaluable.

The bulk of the interviews were conducted in the respondents' homes and followed a life-story method. This method takes a holistic approach to the respondent's life and is not based on the pursuit of generalisations for statistical analysis or accurate objective knowledge; instead, the uniqueness of the subject is valued. The interviews therefore do not represent the views of all white or South Asian people living in

27 L. Chessum, *From Migrants to Ethnic Minority: Making Black Community in Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), K. Burrell, *Moving Lives: Narratives of Nation and Migration among Europeans in Post-War Britain* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006).

28 These archives were from The East Midlands Oral History Archive (EMOHA) and The British Library National Sound Archive (BLNSA), Millennium Memory Bank collection (MMB). For further details see R. Perks, 'The century speaks: a public history partnership', *Oral History* 29, 2 (2001), 95–105.

29 T. Modood, S. Beishon and S. Virdee, *Changing Ethnic Identities* (London: PSI, 1994), 13. This also reflects the relatively young South Asian population in Leicester. See Chapter 2 for more details.

30 Minority South Asian religions such as Christianity were not included. The religion of the respondents in the archives was not always stated, however in my own interviews 47 per cent of the respondents were Muslim, 37 per cent Hindu and 16 per cent Sikh. Biographical details including gender, date of birth, place of birth and date of migration to Britain are given in the appendix and further details are available from the online catalogues on the EMOHA and BLNSA websites.

Leicester. This is not to suggest that they simply celebrate individualism, but rather that personal narratives are anchored in social history and provide a unique insight into how the social and political penetrate people's lives. The interviews followed a basic chronology of the respondent's lives and rather than imposing a rigid interview structure they were encouraged to freely discuss issues they felt had been important in their lives and to explain meanings in their own terms.[31]

The white respondents were aged between 60 and 80 and the majority had lived or were still living in Highfields, in close proximity to South Asians. A small number from Northfields were also interviewed within a focus group. The aim here was to gain a glimpse into the attitudes of the local white population who lived on the outskirts of the city and had minimal contact with migrant groups. White respondents were also asked to talk about their life course and how they had experienced changes in Leicester, with more specific questions on how they felt about immigration and their relations with people from South Asian backgrounds. Prompting whites to articulate their feelings towards South Asians may have been construed as colluding with racist views, empowering racists and reproducing white supremacy, as opposed to challenging their beliefs.[32] Nevertheless, although I may have found some views objectionable, the actual aim of the research was to ascertain white people's perspectives and gain insights into the motivations that underpin racist attitudes.[33] Furthermore, the interview questions were not designed to incite reactionary remarks; instead, respondents often expressed racist views without provocation.

The benefits of using oral history in research have been widely discussed elsewhere yet it is worth reiterating a few points here.[34] Oral history allows an exploration of certain themes; it produces a specific kind of knowledge. That is, one that is attentive to the diversity of experiences, that focuses attention on social networks, family and household dynamics and privileges the agency of the respondents. Rather than being positioned as the object of the research, the respondent is seen as actively

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31 Ibid., 103. K. Anderson and D.C. Jack, 'Learning to listen: interview techniques and analyses', in R. Perks, and A. Thomson, (eds), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2000), 170. Due to financial constraints the interviews were conducted in English. Conducting interviews in the respondents' second language may have prevented individuals from expressing themselves freely and confidently, however, there was only one interview where a respondent possessed a limited English vocabulary and despite this, their sentiments and feelings were clear.

32 C.A. Gallagher, 'White like me? Methods, meaning, and manipulation in the field of whiteness studies', in F.W. Twine and J.W. Warren, (eds), *Racing Research, Researching Race* (New York: NYU Press, 2000), 35–66 and K.M. Blee, 'Evidence, empathy, and ethics: lessons from oral histories of the Klan', *The Journal of American History*, 80, 2 (1993), 596–606.

33 See R. Jenkins, 'Doing research into discrimination: problems of method, interpretation and ethics', in C. Wenger, (ed.), *The Research Relationship: Practice and Politics in Social Policy Research* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 144–60, L. Back and J. Solomos, 'Doing research, writing politics: the dilemmas of political intervention in research on racism', *Economy and Society*, 22, 2 (1993), 178–99.

34 The main text here is Perks and Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*. See also R. Rodger and J. Herbert, (eds), *Testimonies of the City: Identity, Community and Change in a Contemporary Urban World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

engaged in the process of constructing their own narrative, within which they bestow particular events and characters with meanings as they attempt to evaluate and make sense of their past. The focus is on the essence of human creativity and subjectivity, including motivations, perceptions and feelings; in short, on the 'human element which cannot quite be reduced to a scientific norm'.[35] Oral history has also been seen as particularly valuable for research on migrants, whose experiences are simply not available through conventional documentary sources.[36]

The respondents' stories represented what they decided to tell. This was shaped by a myriad of factors including current events and anxieties; the norms and expectations of the society, such as gender roles, which may inhibit the narrator; as well as unconscious factors, such as the need to portray a vision of how their past should have been. The respondents may bring their own motivations and expectations to the interview. They may simply relay a story that has been told many times before, or they may develop and emphasise certain aspects to prove a point. The performance and identity of the interviewer is also crucial to the construction of the narrative.[37] A detailed reflection on my experiences of cross-cultural interviews has been discussed elsewhere; however a few points warrant attention.[38] Firstly, despite the view that the social location of interviewer and respondent should be as closely matched to eliminate power hierarchies and create trust, my experience revealed that 'insider'/'outsider' boundaries were negotiable. My white identity and working class background was not synonymous with complete trust and many white women were reluctant to speak, often stating that they had nothing worthwhile to offer.

In particular, some responded to the topic of immigration with unease and sought to avoid the subject for fear that they would be labelled racist. This was clearly apparent in an early interview with one white woman. I asked her if she had any previous knowledge of Asians before they migrated to Leicester.

> Oh no, not until this lot came in, you've got to be careful what you say these days haven't you?
> *How did the people in Leicester feel about Asian immigration?*
> Well when they started to come in a lot there were quite a few arguments going off. Not arguments, just people saying what they thought, you might say.
> *What did people think at that time?*
> I really couldn't say, we used to talk among ourselves but as I say you have to keep your thoughts to yourself sometimes. I hope nobody's going to sue me for this.[39]

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35 Chiari quoted in K. Plummer, *Documents of Life: An Introduction to the Problems and Literature of a Humanistic Method* (London: Routledge, 1983), 1.

36 There are an abundance of studies; for an overview see A. Thomson, 'Moving stories: oral history and migration studies', *Oral History* 27, 1 (1999), 24–37. See also, R. Benmayor and A. Skotnes, (eds), *Migration and Identity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

37 A. Portelli, 'Oral history as genre', in M. Chamberlain and P. Thompson, (eds), *Narrative and Genre* (London: Routledge, 1998), 23–45.

38 J. Herbert, 'Negotiating boundaries and the cross-cultural oral history interview', in Rodger and Herbert, *Testimonies of the City.*

39 Doris 14 March 2002.

Her response may reflect an awareness that racism is unacceptable, yet it also shows how my white identity did not guarantee openness, perhaps my university education and generation represented social divisions which may have inhibited her.[40] This defensive reaction was overcome in future interviews by employing a more subtle approach rather than using direct questions to elicit information, such as asking them to describe their relationships with their neighbours.

Alternatively, once the gatekeeper had alleviated any possible suspicions, I was able to establish rapport with the South Asian respondents based on a variety of criteria and my university status seemed to accord me a degree of respect, especially from the South Asian men. Women, in particular were extremely open and honest and some women openly stated that they would talk candidly to me 'as another woman.' As an 'outsider', South Asian women were able to disclose information which was critical of their own communities and I was able to ask 'naïve' questions and seek clarification. Whilst my ethnic identity did not inhibit trust, my 'outsider' status undoubtedly influenced what the respondents decided to reveal. This was evident from the 'silences' in the interviews. In particular, topics such as caste or differences within South Asians were not brought to the fore in the interviews. For instance, at the time of the research there were indicators of tension between religious communities in Highfields, but the respondents chose not to focus on these themes in their interviews. A consideration of how life-stories are constructed, particularly by the cross-cultural context of the interview, is interwoven throughout the book and is reflected upon at length in the concluding chapter.

Outline

Chapter 1 provides the context for the interviews and background information on demographic and geographical patterns of South Asian settlement at the national and local level. It also discusses the causes of migration, the role of immigration legislation and the extent of local hostility to South Asian immigration. Chapter 2 draws on interviews with the white respondents and examines their views of South Asians living in Leicester. It elucidates the importance of the colonial legacy and Enoch Powell in shaping world views and it highlights why the respondents used racial discourses to interpret the changes they experienced at the neighbourhood level. The white respondents' narratives of inclusion are also explored, including relations with South Asians as neighbours and the benefits of this interaction. This highlights how the respondents consistently attempted to reconstruct a white identity, though this process was essentially dynamic and in flux.

Chapters 3 to 6 focus on the narratives of the South Asian respondents. Chapter 3 analyses the personal motivations for migration and the decision making process. In particular, the significance of perceptions and expectations of Britain is stressed. The rupture of migration is also examined and this reveals the importance of habitus and the lived body as vital facets of the migratory experience. Chapter 4 focuses

40 For 'race' as a taboo in interviewing see Frankenberg, *White Women*, *Race Matters*, 32–5.

on the respondents' experiences of finding a new home in Leicester and the impact of migration on power relations within the household. A core theme of this chapter is the various social constraints recalled by the female respondents and the coping strategies they developed, which were mediated by their specific stage within the life cycle.

Chapter 5 develops the themes of exclusion and inclusion as discussed in chapter 2. Focusing on the sphere of the neighbourhood, this chapter seeks to avoid the homogeneity and obscuration which has characterised previous studies of social exclusion by dissecting who was excluded and included and by whom or what.[41] This chapter also highlights the positive and negative ramifications of specific forms of social capital and reveals how respondents encountered racialised spaces within particular geographical sites. Chapter 6 casts light on how the respondents experienced racist discourses within educational institutions and the workplace. This includes a discussion of the key themes of hard work and the loss of status which dominated the male narratives, and the positive dimensions of employment stressed by the female respondents. Finally, chapter 7 looks at the South Asians' reflections on 'home', in the context of their life-story and will draw together the main themes. In particular, the aim is to show the significance of the findings beyond the specificity of Leicester.

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41 According to Ratcliffe these questions are rarely tackled. P. Ratcliffe, 'Housing inequality and "race": some critical reflections on the concept of "social exclusion"', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22, 1 (1999), 1–22.